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The Radicalization of the Social Gospel: Harry F. Ward and the Search for a New Social Order, 1898–1936

Doug Rossinow

Since the publication of Paul A. Carter's *The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel* (1954), many scholars have acknowledged the continuing existence of the social gospel. This movement to apply Christianity's message of salvation to society as well as to the individual in an urban, industrial age extends well past the World War I era. Yet numerous historians continue to confine the social gospel to the years between 1880 and 1920.[1] The lingering association of the social gospel with that period of U.S. history derives from an older historiography that attributed formative significance to the social gospel in explaining the rise of the progressive movement of the early twentieth century. (This was prior to the advent of the "social control" critique of progressivism, which reversed the positive evaluation historians previously had rendered of reform activists.) The place of religion in the broader currents of political liberalism and radicalism in the years after World War I is an issue that historians of religion and those of American politics have rarely engaged directly.[2] This is due partly to the lingering power of cold war critiques of the interwar Protestant left, which I discuss in this article, and in part to the typically unspoken assumption that, as one moves further toward the present in any narrative of U.S. history, religion is increasingly less central to the story, all evidence of the American population's continuing strong religiosity notwithstanding.[3]

The social gospel's historical fate remains obscure, as do the boundaries of its essential political character. How much space has the social gospel tradition allowed for truly prophetic stances of social criticism in America? Is the social gospel ultimately a meliorist, middle-class tendency that vainly seeks to end conflict without addressing its underlying causes, as left-wing critics, beginning with Reinhold Niebuhr in *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932), have suggested? Industrial America has nurtured many Christian radicals,

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from national figures to local activists lost to recorded history. But whether they were simply prophets without honor, or whether they bore any important relation to the social gospel and to the broader ranks of the nonreligious left, remains unclear.

Not only did a vigorous U.S. Protestant left exist in the twentieth century's first half, but that Protestant left may be viewed as a left wing of the social gospel. It forged an organic link between a radical, prophetic stance toward the U.S. social system and the far more cautious main-traveled road of "social Christianity." The left wing of the social gospel, which William McGuire King aptly calls the "reconstructionists," were well known and widely respected by their religious peers, despite the intensity of disagreement among left, center, and right. King states that the "radicalism" typically associated with the tumult of the 1930s "developed within the social gospel movement itself" and did so by the early 1920s. However, the reconstructionists were not simply social democrats who invested their vision of God's Kingdom in secular institutional reform. I emphasize, more than does King, that they also tapped elemental sources of Christian belief and hope, their vocation fed by a gut-level outrage at social injustice, a radical outrage that harbored a sometimes hidden welcome to cataclysmic change. Here I explain the connections between the pre- and post-World War I eras of social gospel radicalism by focusing intensively on the career and thought of a single clergyman who was more open than most about this radical opposition. This was Harry F. Ward, a leading reconstructionist, "one of the social gospel's most effective early evangelists" and the main author of the Social Creed of the Churches, the 1908 statement of social ethics that, for a generation, defined the domestic politics of the Federal Council of Churches (FCC). He also was, as one journalist called him late in Ward's life, a "fighting old fool for Christ." Ward maintained the social ethics of the street preacher who saw modern American society, at least at some moments, as Babylon. He was willing not only to promote the gradual, relatively orderly vision of progress often associated with postmillennialist reform but also to embrace a more convulsive, turbulent process of social change. His was a prophetic postmillennialism.[4]

The existence of this Protestant radicalism as something indigenous to the social gospel was blotted out of the historical picture by the intellectual effects of cold war anticommunism in the years after World War II. The relationship of the social gospel's left wing to Protestant reform's larger environment was fraught with tension and conflict, increasingly so after World War I, as this left wing emerged more distinctly and advocated scrapping the existing "social order" for a new and more just one. But the Protestant left was not an alien

and aberrant force within the American religious landscape, as many later accounts suggested. Perhaps the single most prominent activist in the Protestant left during the period between the two world wars was Harry Ward. His emergence as a radical in the 1910s and afterward, and his seemingly ubiquitous activism in religious and nonreligious reform and radical circles during the 1920s and 1930s, makes him an unavoidable person in any consideration of the possibilities of social gospel radicalism and the obvious test case for any thesis concerning the fate of such a tendency. Despite his prominence in his own time, Ward has been largely forgotten, relegated to the fringes in the usual story of liberal Protestantism's twentieth-century history and omitted from histories of the left that accommodate religious radicals only awkwardly.

In this essay, I clarify the process of the social gospel's radicalization and what that tells us about the possibilities of prophetic postmillennialism in modern America by reexamining Harry Ward's career. His ideological development reflected the ease with which an ardent social gospel activist might embrace a doctrine of wholesale social change. Ward believed that his essential ethical commitments had gone unchanged throughout his career, despite his apparent shift to the left after World War I. He sought a "new social order," as the title of his 1919 book put it. George D. McClain calls Ward a "Fabian socialist." Although Ward showed strong sympathy for Marxist analysis, and while he was labeled a Communist repeatedly during his career, it might fairly be said he was more a Leninist in his politics than a Marxist in his thought, at least by the 1930s. Whatever his vision of the future and of social change, he was "consciously through with capitalism," as his Methodist colleague Winifred Chappell said, rather happily, in 1930.[5] In fact, he was through with it as early as 1919, embracing instead a collectivist vision of God's Kingdom. Ward was a vanguard thinker of the social gospel's left wing, a sometime advocate of revolution who was still, paradoxically, much more a part of both the social gospel and American liberal reform traditions than many later champions of those traditions would wish to allow.

Harry Ward and the Social Question, 1898–1907

Harry Ward was born in 1873 into a typical Methodist family of the English middling classes, his father a successful butcher. The British social system did not make it easy for a son of the *petite bourgeoisie* to attend university, and Ward emigrated to the United States when he was seventeen years of age. He began college at the University of Southern California and finished his undergraduate work at

Northwestern University (two Methodist institutions). He found a mentor and friend in George Albert Coe, the religious scholar and philosopher at Northwestern—"John Dewey's counterpart among Protestant educators," in Heather A. Warren's words—and received affirmation as a winning student debater. Ward quickly acquired a master's degree in philosophy at Harvard, and returned to the Chicago area to begin work in social settlements, a "hot" field of endeavor for bright young ministers in the 1890s. In 1898, he began a stint as head resident at the settlement begun in Chicago by his alma mater, Northwestern.[6]

In some respects, Harry Ward always remained a conventional nineteenth-century Englishman. Following a Methodist tradition, he did not emphasize "doctrine," but rather he viewed religion at bottom as "really good ethics," as Beverly Harrison, the feminist theologian who was a student in the 1960s at Union Theological Seminary (UTS) in New York, where Ward was a faculty member from 1918 until 1941, puts it.[7] He stressed proper and moral outward behavior and not, despite his early immersion in evangelical Methodism, spiritual meditation or personal testimony.[8] His inner life remains largely a secret, even to those who have perused his "personal" papers.[9] Afflicted with rheumatic fever as a child, Ward appeared frail for much of his life and, at times, worked himself to exhaustion. Displaying a Victorian-era devotion to the strenuous life, he gloried in hard work, physical as well as mental, exhibiting a lifelong zest for very rustic outdoor activities. In all things, Ward embraced an ethos of practicality and usefulness, implicitly rejecting anything that smacked of morbid introspection. His attraction to philosophical pragmatism during his university years reflected this inclination, as did his apparent decision against seminary study. Ward received ordination in 1900 from the Rock River Conference of Methodists by virtue of his lay preaching experience and some supplemental classes he took. Even though he was a young man, Ward clearly itched to get into practical work and preferred not to spend further time in school; perhaps he wanted to get married and wished to gain employment as soon as possible, but he may also have thought that seminary was a poor place to learn to become the kind of clergyman he wished to be.[10]

In the first phase of Harry Ward's political career, he was preoccupied with class conflict in the United States and sought, by working through the churches, to contribute to a resolution of the "Social Question," the multifaceted concern over urban poverty and industrial conflict that spread widely among Americans in the Gilded Age.[11] From the start, Ward's clear aim was to forge an alliance of the reform clergy and laity with the organized labor movement. He

viewed labor as the major force for progressive change in society, and he thought both labor and organized religion would benefit greatly from such a partnership. But his own arena of activism in the first quarter-century of his political life was the church and its auxiliaries. He was a model for a familiar political type in twentieth-century America: the middle-class intellectual who seeks to speak for the working class but who recognizes he can never be of that class or its organizations. No doubt Ward swelled with pride when a committee representing the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) Propaganda League of Boston stated that his "remarkable exposition of the cause of labor" was such that "one would be led to believe that he had acquired his extensive knowledge of the Labor Movement from actual experience in Industry."[12] At the same time, in Ward's writings, he argued so strongly that the churches and labor belonged together that, at some moments, his rhetoric blurred the lines between these two different social formations.

Chicago, home to an extraordinary number of important thinkers, activists, and writers in the left wing of the progressive movement from its earliest days, was the place where Ward got his political start.[13] As early as 1900, he shepherded workers from the Northwestern Settlement to meetings of the Chicago Federation of Labor that occurred in Hull-House, the most famous of all the settlements. The practice of bringing together middle-class reform intellectuals with labor activists had been a routine one at Hull-House almost from the moment Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr founded it in 1889. Ward's purpose was to drum up support among social gospelers for legislation restricting child labor and hazardous work. Before 1900 was over, he found himself pushed out of the Northwestern Settlement by a governing council that saw in him "a lack of temperamental adaptability to settlement work," a suggestive but vague charge. Ward took a post at the 47th Street Methodist Episcopal Church, in the working-class "back-of-the-yards" neighborhood, where he stayed for three years, becoming known as a "street preacher." In 1903, he took the pulpit at the Union Avenue Methodist Church, a congregation of white-collar workers in the Chicago meatpacking industry.[14] During his years in the Windy City, Ward became friends with Walter Rauschenbusch, the most profound social gospel theologian, who visited Ward in Chicago. Upon the older man's death in 1918, one writer opined, "The mantle of Walter Rauschenbusch seems to have fallen on the shoulders of Harry Ward."[15]

This was more a statement about prophetic leadership than of theological depth. Ward identified himself with the movement for "Christian Socialism," the title of a lecture he delivered in 1907. Here,

and in a lecture he called, even more pointedly, "Religion of Christ and Philosophy of Marx Not Antagonistic," and which he gave many times during the 1910s, Ward spoke of the usefulness of Marxism's insights to Christians who sought social justice, seeing "the principles of brotherhood" and advocacy for the poor in both camps. This, of course, fell somewhat short of embracing Marxism whole. Marxism had many vocal proponents among the labor radicals with whom Ward wished to work, and, at the very least, Ward was making a gesture of friendliness to such radicals and their views. It would be a mistake to conclude that Ward embraced Marxism as an intellectual or political framework at this time; he was seeking a coalition of diverse forces, and it is in the nature of such political coalitions that they are based upon perceptions of shared goals and values that are partial, not entire. As I explain below, Ward, during the interwar period, never advocated the Marxist goal of establishing a proletarian regime that would rule in the name of one economic class, even though he sought the liberation and empowerment of American workers. Ward's vision of humanity's destiny as a "fraternity" (in his male-specific language), a kind of "beloved community," was a Christian vision of an end to exploitation, which he believed was essential to capitalism; it was a millennial vision of the Kingdom of God, and Ward clearly thought that at least some Marxists were working toward the same goal even if they did not understand it in a religious way at all. The very title of Ward's lecture underlines his view of the relation between his brand of Christianity and Marxism: they were compatible.[16]

Unlike Rauschenbusch, Ward would never become famous for new religious formulations, and he never acted as if he wanted to be. Instead, he gained a reputation as a fighter for justice on the ground and a mentor to younger ministerial students who shared his sympathies and fighting spirit. James Dombrowski, one of the best known of these protégés at UTS, later attested that Ward urged his students out of the classroom, getting them to consider Christian scripture from the viewpoint of those who struggled to secure the essentials of life. "For him, everything else was luxury." Ward's superior at UTS, Henry Sloan Coffin, wrote simply, "The wretched plight of the underprivileged in this land of plenty had entered into his soul." Ward was involved in the 1905 strike of packinghouse workers in Chicago, actually taking out a union card, and advocated the cause of the Teamsters and other unions as well.[17]

At the same time, in the century's first years, he achieved higher standing in a circle of prominent bourgeois reform thinkers; he was a "coming man in Methodism in Chicago," as one journalist wrote. He became active in the City Club of Chicago, working on the

Standing Committee on Labor Conditions between 1904 and 1910, part of that time as its chairman. In this role, he led the club to support prolabor legislation in Springfield. The City Club's illustrious membership included Addams and Harold Ickes, as well as the University of Chicago scholars Charles Merriam and George Herbert Mead.[18]

The Social Creed and Progressive Radicalism, 1907–1915

By 1907, Ward had gained the position in national councils of American Methodism of a man to be watched. At the end of that year, he was one of a small group that met in Washington, D.C., to form the Methodist Federation for Social Service (MFSS). Ward was the least well known of all of them. They included Worth Tippy and Frank North, Methodist ministers with more prestigious churches than his. Also present were Edward Devine, a leading figure in the settlement house movement; Judge Ben Lindsay, the "children's judge" of Denver who invented the juvenile court; Mary McDowell, a prominent Chicago social worker; John Commons, the famous labor economist and historian; and the governor of Indiana, Frank Hanley. The idea behind the federation was to disseminate materials offering lessons in "social history and theory" as well as practical organizing guides to Methodist social activists.[19] The Methodists, with their rural and small-town social base, had lagged behind other denominations in pursuing a social gospel, and these individuals wanted to lead their church into the struggle for the Kingdom. They announced the formation of the federation and had a meeting with President Roosevelt. Then they prepared for the meeting of the general conference of the Methodist Episcopal church in May 1908. Ward and others from the MFSS wrote a report on "The Church and Social Problems" that the meeting adopted by acclamation. The report included a brief list of economic principles that quickly became known as the "Social Creed of Methodism." These demands, familiar in the labor and settlement house movements, included both the highly specific—higher wages, one day a week to rest, and the adoption of protective legislation aimed at women and children as well as workers in general—and the loftily abstract. The latter ranged from very secular goals ("equal rights and complete Justice for all men in all stations of life") to Christian bromides ("the recognition of the Golden Rule, and the mind of Christ as the supreme law of society and the sure remedy for all social life").[20]

The secure grounding of these demands in the mainstream of Progressive Era church activism is reflected in the speed with which this statement was adopted by American denominations in the ensuing years. Not only did the Methodists officially sanction the Federa-

tion for Social Service and adopt "The Church and Social Problems" in 1908. Also that same year, the FCC, to be ever after the most important interchurch body of American Protestantism, established itself and embraced the statement, altered somewhat by Frank North, which became known as the "Social Creed of the Churches." Within three years, the Northern Baptists, the Presbyterians, and the Congregationalists also adopted the Social Creed, wholly or in large measure, and set up counterparts to the Methodist federation. In the next decade, denominations with more conservative images did the same, including the Reformed church and the Southern Methodists, among others. The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) hugged the Social Creed tightly, almost like a "little red book," in the historian Eugene Link's words. Even some Roman Catholic bishops endorsed its substance (it differed little, after all, from the principles embodied in the 1919 American bishops' plan for "Social Reconstruction"), as did the Central Conference of American Rabbis.[21]

Ward's lead authorship of the original Methodist creed often went unacknowledged in favor of North, a source of some resentment on Ward's part. He wrote to Daisy in 1909, "at the big Church Federal Council North gets great glory . . . but he incorporates my platform with a few generalizations. . . . I am waiting to see whether he acknowledges my credit to anyone else." But within a few years of the Social Creed's promulgation, Ward had put his stamp on it, elaborating on it by editing collections of essays on the creed's elements and establishing his authority among activists in the American religious world.[22] In 1912, he led the MFSS and the Methodist General Conference in endorsing the goal of "cooperative control of both the process and the proceeds of industry" as "the ultimate expression of Christianity in industrial relationships," a position echoed in 1916 by the FCC's Commission on the Church and Social Service. This call for cooperative control affirmed the idea, in circulation for decades already, that the principle of collective self-government should be extended from the political state into the economic realm in a new society of large-scale industry. The concept of "industrial democracy," given endless variations by liberal and leftist thinkers, would die a hard and lingering death.[23] But, in 1912, it seemed an idea whose time had come. Using the metaphor of "extension," Ward reworded the initial demand of "The Church and Social Problems" for equality and justice into a call for "the extension of privilege." Ward wrote, "Christianity is not satisfied until all the privileges of life become the rights of all the people." He insisted that, in a Christian world, "every man shall have free access to all the opportunities that life affords." His

radical egalitarianism placed him in the minority among progressives. But Ward struck resonant chords when he offered "the worth of the individual and . . . the dependence of the common life upon his realization of that worth" as the logical basis for his egalitarian conclusions. The development of "the common life," and the recognition of "social bonds" that it implied, enjoyed the status of unquestioned values in the wing of the progressive movement represented by reformist social science. Ward argued, along very familiar progressive lines, that concentrated, remote, and narrowly self-interested political and economic power formed insuperable barriers to economic opportunity and meaningful political participation for a great many middle-class Americans, while he also inserted into his presentation a plea for the poor and oppressed.[24]

More controversial perhaps, and certainly not self-evidently true, were Ward's claims that the holiest texts in American culture guaranteed the "extension of privilege" for which he called. In 1912, he discerned in the U.S. Constitution rights of legal, political, and social equality that remained unfulfilled—much like the uncashed "promissory note" of which Martin Luther King, Jr., would speak decades later.[25] But, by 1915, Ward expressed the disillusion of many progressives who, under the influence of Charles A. Beard and J. Allen Smith, had come to view the Constitution as an obstacle to their ideal society, not a set of promises awaiting fulfillment. He wrote, "The Constitution was to a certain extent a class document," and agreed with the view that the economic doctrines embedded in the Constitution were outdated. "I think the world will not stop because we tear a parchment more or less."[26]

In discussing religious, not civil, scripture, Ward again called for the realization of unfulfilled potential for justice. In 1907, he declared, "I believe in a God of justice who has called himself the God of the poor." Five years later, he explained,

> That the Bible is the great charter of human liberties has long been recognized. That Christianity involves a complete democracy of life is just beginning to be understood. That it can tolerate no social groups that bequeath special privileges to their members, nor any whose members fall heir to definite handicaps, the churches here affirm.[27]

It was very far from generally recognized that the Bible offered a ringing endorsement of liberty of any kind or that it expressed such an absolute intolerance of inequality. The Jewish prophets repeatedly protested maltreatment of the poor and excessive pride, and Jesus and his disciples may have practiced a kind of primitive communism.

As well, the Jesus movement might be viewed as revolutionary, although Ward later wrote that Jesus' "revolutionary consciousness . . . was ethical and spiritual not political."[28] But Americans of the early twentieth century gave nothing like overwhelming assent to a politically liberal interpretation of the scriptures, much less to a radical socialist reading. If this was not plain to Ward in 1912, the publication, beginning at almost exactly that time, of the *Fundamentals*, as a reaction against both historical-critical interpretation of the Bible and the political liberalism associated with it, should have clarified matters.[29] Still, the affirmation of the Social Creed by the mainline Protestant denominations was overwhelming and indicated the great strength of Ward's camp in those churches during the progressive movement's heyday. At the very least, the leadership within these churches was on his side and so too were many laypeople. In the 1910s, with the principles of the Social Creed gaining wide acceptance within U.S. Protestantism, Ward maintained his faith in the churches to cope with the Social Question; his faith in the nonreligious political and social system was less firm.

Labor, Ethics, and Socialism

While in the most general and abstract terms Ward's radicalism was clear enough at this time, in specific terms the agenda he and his Social Creed collaborators advanced remained safely within the mainstream of progressivism. The 1912 *Social Creed* volume continued to favor conciliation and arbitration rather than strikes (or lockouts) as the best ways to resolve labor disputes. Ward either did not go so far in his militancy as to see any good in pitched class conflict or he simply tempered his views in the context of this publication—a product of committee work and one intended to garner the widest possible support. Ward deplored the scale of unemployment, but, in the traditional American manner, he distinguished the genuine problem of unemployment from that of "the vicious and incorrigible and the permanently inefficient and unemployable." This sounds anything but radical. Yet, he called on the churches to press for joint economic planning by capital and organized labor so as to prevent, rather than ameliorate, unemployment. Ward's structural perspective on the issue highlights what was most radical about his position. He displayed few qualms about the prospect of a more highly organized economy. In fact, he commented that oligopolistic industries could most easily plan for full employment, obviously a point in their favor to him.[30]

Other writings by Ward that did not require broader approval offer a keener barometer of his views and his particular concerns.

Those concerns focused on the labor movement. Most important for his view of that movement in the 1910s was his insistence that its primary significance was moral, not economic. The organized labor movement was "more than the selfish struggle of a class for power," and it did not issue "a call to the disinherited to rise up and possess the fat of the land."[31] Its support was not strictly proletarian and neither were its aims class-bound. The labor movement, Ward stated in 1910, was "gathering to itself the sympathies and activities of all who long for the ideal social order." First of all, he wrote in 1917, "There is no such rapid division of society into capitalist and proletariat as early Socialism foretold. There is no such abolition . . . of the middle class." In Ward's view, this economic complexity did not render the concept of class obsolete. Instead, he wrote, "The working class today instead of being simply an economic group is an ethical and psychological group. It is a group that thinks in certain terms and has certain ideals rather than a group which has a certain amount of income, rather than a group which is a wage earning group." Furthermore, in Ward's definition, the labor movement was comprised of two parts: the labor unions and the various socialist groups in the United States. He noted that American socialism itself had a diverse class basis. Ward criticized socialists for the "blind devotion" they had shown toward Marxism in the past but expressed relief that "there are signs of revision. Gradually a practical and opportunist attitude is being adopted." Now, schisms and rigid European ideology were being left behind in favor of an ecumenical and, it seemed, rather Protestant mood. Socialism was gaining the "sympathy and support of those of all classes who desire to see a more spiritual order of society." It was "becoming the interpretation and expression of the innate social ideals of humanity."[32] Through simple maneuvers of definition, Ward rendered the labor movement a broad front and a moral movement for a new society, not a movement for the empowerment, partial or complete, of a class.

As for the unions, Ward took pains to show he was not a naïve romantic. He went so far that he expressed views on the issue of productivity that might have given pause to some moral critics of capitalism. The unions were working "toward the abandonment of the strike as a weapon, toward the elimination of that corruption, despotism, and violence that alienate public sympathy, but seem to be the inevitable accompaniment of the sudden acquisition of power, characterizing equally the early history of unions and of large corporations." Ward warned of the need "to avert the catastrophe of class warfare and to secure the successful culmination of industrial brotherhood." Relying on the research of Carroll D. Wright, head of the

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Ward stated that 75 percent of strikes in America occurred because employers would not consent to arbitration. His disdain for strikes indicated his lingering attachment to the old, neutralist social gospel. Moreover, his protests that halts in production were not to be blamed mainly on labor seemed more than mere defensiveness. Ward agreed with Thorstein Veblen in stating that capitalists engaged in far more "sabotage" than workers did by reducing production in order to keep the market value of their products afloat. Sounding a Veblenian note, he repeatedly wrote of the need for "social efficiency," and he regretted that workers engaged in "shirking and loafing." They learned this from their employers, Ward said. Limiting economic production was ethical if done for good social purposes rather than for profit or out of laziness. The antisocial sabotage for which he criticized workers "is simply one evidence of the moral degeneracy that follows after a war and war measures," he wrote, referring to the methods of capitalists in the class war.[33] Ward made clear his view that the proletarian component of the labor movement would need to mature further into a social force fully worthy of social leadership, if not dominance.

On the Move, 1912–1918

Despite his reservations about labor's readiness for social leadership, Ward spent most of the 1910s in tireless efforts to forge a church-labor coalition. He traveled constantly to labor conferences and to churches, not only depriving his family of his presence but also sacrificing his own health. Always reed-thin, he sometimes pushed himself to exhaustion. He took a position at Boston University's School of Theology in 1913 on the understanding that much of his time would be devoted to the MFSS and to his organizing work in churches and union halls. In his first one-and-a-half years at this post, Ward led thirty-six conferences in seventeen states and spoke to 347 gatherings; he continued his active support for workers, for instance, lending his voice to the railway workers' demand for an eight-hour day.[34] He kept up this pace as long as he was able. His broad and continual contact with labor activists inevitably affected his intellectual development, impressing upon him, more than on most thinkers, a sense of the urgency of the class conflict that rent American society in these years. The first years of the Wilson administration featured a public airing of economic conflict in the investigations and the divided findings of the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations. The early 1910s witnessed continuing industrial upheaval: the momentous Lawrence, Massachusetts, mill-workers' strike of 1912, the swelling ranks of the unem-

ployed during the bitter winter of 1913–14, and shocking mass deaths of workers in New York's Triangle Shirtwaist fire in 1911 and in the Ludlow coalfields massacre of 1914.[35] These were things Ward doubtless heard discussed not only from the viewpoint of alarmed and outraged social workers but also from labor activists and radicals.

Ward's social thought took on bolder form in the late 1910s and the 1920s. What stands out most of all in his thought from this period is the duality of institutional and moral imperatives. In the mode of the machine-age left, Ward saw on the horizon a new form of social organization that would supersede capitalism, bringing both fuller human development and greater social efficiency. At the same time, as the preacher he was, he insisted that, at bottom, the challenge of social change was the challenge of rousing humanity's moral instincts. The "new social order" he foretold must be infused, he argued, with a greater feeling of moral solidarity among human individuals than the industrial revolution had produced. This heightened sense of mutual obligation would not be entirely novel, however; it would build upon the existing store of human characteristics. Thus, Ward's thought entwined the hope of the new with a trust in the ancient, a vision of sequential social development with a reliance on an evangelical awakening.[36]

During World War I, Ward attracted criticism for his public statements that were sharply critical of the wartime political atmosphere. Most ministers and priests consecrated the war as a fight not only for democracy but for Christian morality as well, a stance memorialized in Ray Abrams's 1933 book, *Preachers Present Arms*. Ward joined the People's Council for Peace and Democracy, a nationwide antiwar coalition that, while short-lived, foreshadowed the left-liberal united front politics Ward would champion in later years. George Creel, the head of the U.S. Committee on Public Information during the war, complained privately that Ward "puts continual emphasis upon the class struggle" in his speeches. Even as he raised well-placed hackles, Ward remained a rising star in academic circles, and he received an offer from UTS of a faculty position to begin in the fall of 1918. With pressure mounting on the dean of theology at Boston to address Ward's political outspokenness, Ward chose to move to New York.[37]

Democracy and Capitalism

The war's radicalizing effect on Ward was important but subtle and complex. His tone changed more than his basic ideas. As early as 1910, he embraced a radical critique of American capitalism, seeing an irresolvable conflict between that economic system on the one

hand and both Christian ethics and liberal humanism on the other. From early in his career, he looked forward to the emergence of a very different society: more Christian, more cooperative, more human. In 1919, in reply to a hostile query from a U.S. Senate investigating committee, Ward stated that his opposition to "militarism" predated the war; much the same could be said of his social ethics and sympathies overall.[38] But now, Ward peppered his writing with angry references to capitalism and imperialism as well as to militarism. These themes were on full display in *The New Social Order*, his 1919 book. This work proceeded from the premises that global capitalism had entered a period of "decadence" and that a rising tide of agreement with that evaluation was sweeping the world. His description of "the general dissatisfaction with modern civilization" that he perceived, and his projection of the future order, were newly aggressive, and his discussion exuded a far more pungent sense of enemies and allies, of lines being drawn.[39] His use of the militant language of class war reflects his friendliness to Marxism, well established by this time. Yet Ward's borrowings from Marxism were just that, not a full embrace, and were more rhetorical than analytical. He continued to emphasize the need for a moral awakening and for a cross-class alliance to create political change, and he betrayed no sense of urgency to harmonize his liberal and evangelical commitments with those elements of Marxism he found attractive.

Ward now denounced the undemocratic and inhuman principles at the heart of the capitalist system of social relations. The presence of compulsion, which he discerned everywhere under capitalism, violated the spirit of democracy. When "men must work under conditions to which they do not consent, when they must work under conditions which they abhor, that fact is a fact of slavery," he wrote. While liberals in the bourgeois tradition long had linked political democratization with free-market capitalism, Ward saw the two coming unhitched. He placed his hope in the existence of democratic government and aspirations and asserted that, "in form, the new order will be the application of the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity to economic organization." By 1915, he was anything but coy about defining his version of "industrial democracy." He predicted "state socialism," although he warned that a simple process of class expropriation would not reconcile industrial society to democracy. Under this circumstance, "you would simply have transferred the ownership of industrial property from one class to another."[40]

In Ward's view, "the severest indictment against the capitalistic system" was "on moral grounds." Despite his call for an ethical economic system, Ward presented economics and morality as distinct

problems and discussed them in two different rhetorical modes. Ward's fundamental moral complaint about capitalism was that it placed profits and material good ahead of the goal of human development in a fuller sense. "The life of the worker must not be used up in the mere making of goods," he put it simply. "That is a secondary thing. It must be made subordinate to the protection and development of . . . life." Ward made very clear that quantitative changes meant to ameliorate exploitation, such as shorter working hours, better workplace conditions, and higher pay, would not get to the heart of the matter. Even "when you have capitalism in its finest form," he said, "when it is honest and pure and good it still leaves an unanswerable moral question." This was the question of compulsion and power, of the coercion Ward saw at the heart of the wage relationship.[41]

From the Cooperative Commonwealth to the Revolution, 1918–1919

A new and better system would be a "cooperative commonwealth." Not only was this the essential ideal at work in the social gospel, the name for the Kingdom of God that Protestant Americans hoped to build in their country, but it was also the most important idea overall in the American left in the entire period between 1865 and 1929. While to rural populists in the Gilded Age and the 1890s the cooperative commonwealth evoked a vision of local, face-to-face community whose citizens would preserve republican virtue, it also became the name that "reconstructionists," religious or not, gave most often to their goal of a national social democracy. It was the precursor to John Dewey's secularized picture of the nation as a participatory "Great Community" and also to the ideal of a "Great Society" that periodically bobbed above the surface of Anglophone social and political thought between the 1920s and the 1960s. It was vaguely fraternal and was opposed more stoutly to competition and polarization than to a specific economic regime, although those influenced by Marxism often found the idea congenial, and likewise the apostles of cooperation, their perspective rooted in postmillennialist Protestantism, found industrial capitalism obnoxious.[42]

The cooperative commonwealth, in Harry Ward's view, would express a new moral spirit. Morals trumped institutions in his analysis of both capitalism and socialism. It was not enough, he wrote, to establish "collective ownership." Most of all, the new society required "the spirit and ideal of service so that men will bend their necks beneath the yoke of toil, the common burden of the world's work." Without "the spirit and ideal of service," Ward wrote, "your

co-operative commonwealth will be a vain delusion."[43] Ward suggested that, while socialists, likely "the people of higher education," might offer a theoretical structure in which to house this vision of the future, the unions would provide the practical examples of "brotherhood" in action. "One has to go back," he wrote, "to the records of the early Church in the days of persecution to find such instances of mutual self-sacrifice and devotion as crowd the unwritten chronicles of modern labor struggles." He believed that social instincts lay dormant within human nature but that these could be cultivated as a countervailing power to the force of economic individualism; it was wage-earning Americans in the industrial struggles who were engaged in this revival.[44]

He fashioned an anthropology of classes, asserting that each great historic class, when it rises to social power, organizes society around its characteristic "principle." The aristocracy exalted war to this level, and the bourgeoisie ordered its world on the basis of material possession. Amid the wreckage of the Great War, Ward saw the working class on the rise. It was "attempting to organize a social democracy around the principle of productive labor, desiring to enlarge and glorify the instinct for comradeship, proposing to exalt service above possessions." He merged these principles of productivity, comradeship, and service with the "ideal of democracy," which Ward saw frustrated in the economic sphere, and with the Christian ethics to which he long had dedicated himself. That ideal, which had "found its clearest and its loftiest expression in the mouth of the Working Man of Galilee," was the belief that the realization of "the eternal worth that belongs to every individual soul" could only be achieved in "brotherhood."[45]

Ward's ethics and hopes remained what they had been; his new tone resulted from his changed evaluation of circumstances in the world. The Bolsheviks had seized power in Russia in the name of the workers and the peasants, and their Leninist counterparts had done the same in Hungary. The reactionary empires on the southeastern rim of Europe—the Czarist, the Ottoman, the Habsburg—were collapsing and spilling their contents amid defeat and popular uprisings, and the cataract of change did not seem about to stop at the frontier of the liberal industrial West. Revolution, social democracy, and counterrevolution all struggled on the ramparts in Munich and Berlin. In the United States, the steelworkers were the foremost among the labor groups to strike and demand a social democracy in the war's wake, the general strike in Seattle and the Boston policemen's walkout being only the best-known uprisings. "The degree of working-class unrest and revolutionary potential smouldering

between 1918 and 1920 has remained unparalleled in the twentieth century," judges Donald Sassoon. "It was probably the only period during which it was not unrealistic to assume that a 'revolution in the West' was on the agenda."[46] The strikes of 1919 were quelled with force both direct and indirect. A "red scare" emerged almost seamlessly from the wartime regime of political control, dealing the American left blows that forever altered its course. The wave was turned back—everywhere but in Russia. By 1921, Ward and others who had longed for radical change in the United States two years earlier found themselves in an astonishingly stabilized political environment. In the heady days of the international upheavals, many American liberals had enthusiastically welcomed the wave of revolution that had then swept over other parts of the world. It took twenty years for this generation of liberals to resolve fully their conflicted view of revolutionary politics.

This widespread approval of foreign revolutions focused on the new Soviet Union, where the most durable socialist state emerged from the war and where, to the revulsion of leftists and many liberals alike, the U.S. quickly joined a consortium of western powers that sent an invasion force to the new country to assist the "white" or counterrevolutionary forces in the Russian civil war. Reformers and radicals felt compelled to rebut the ceaseless propaganda against the new regime that filled the daily press, where absurd falsehoods mingled promiscuously with reports of genuine atrocities. This indirect defense of the Soviet Union was mixed with an emotional euphoria, fueled in years to come by the steady traffic of visitors to the new regime who came back with glowing reports of a new socialist society. This traffic included almost too many religious activists to mention, many of them accompanying Sherwood Eddy on the annual traveling "seminars" he led for many years through Europe. Harry Ward partook of this enthusiasm, and he had a great deal of company. A trip to Russia became almost a *rite de passage* for left and liberal Protestant clergy in the 1920s and 1930s who wished to advertise their friendliness to social change in America.[47]

The *Congregationalist*, a magazine published in Boston, wrote, in 1919, that Harry Ward "has for some time now been a stormy petrel in Methodism," referring to a sea bird considered a symbol of conflict. This comment was occasioned by Ward's pro-Bolshevik comments early in that year in the *Social Service Bulletin*, circulated widely to Methodist and Congregational Sunday-school teachers and others. The lines that caused him the most trouble were these: "the aim of the Bolsheviki is clearly the creation of a state composed entirely of producers and controlled by producers. This is manifestly a Scriptural

aim." Ward's longstanding contributions to widely used religious instructional materials were dropped due to the uproar. The MFSS expressed its support for Ward, but its executive committee also decided to restrict future coverage of Russia in their *Bulletin.* Queried as to the degree of his bolshevism, Ward criticized the hostility to organized religion among the new Russian rulers and declared his opposition to dictatorship. But he portrayed the Bolsheviks as people of high principle and noble intention who had gone astray.[48]

Violence: Essential or Nonessential?

This defense of the Bolsheviks makes it sound as if Ward agreed with Lenin's goals and simply opposed the method of revolution, which Ward said "leads inevitably to rigorous and brutal repression." "It is plain that no significant change in human history has occurred without violence," Ward wrote in *The New Social Order*, published in 1919, where he offered a fully considered version of his views. At the same time, he stated, revolution was not in fact synonymous with violence, and its goals, rather than the means used to achieve those goals, were the essential matter up for judgment. This moral distinction between means and ends, so conventional, was problematic for Ward, since he stated that the undesirable means were "inevitably" linked to the sympathetic ends of the revolutionaries. His practical point was that, so long as the revolution had occurred, liberals should not support counterrevolution. Rather, liberals ought to defend the Bolsheviks against attacks from the right and "like Jesus . . . help them toward the light." This was a reasoned position and a very defensible one. It foreshadowed the formula that many left-leaning liberals would use in the future to answer questions about their political stance. Yet that practical matter only temporarily banishes from view the thornier complexities, even contradictions, involved in Harry Ward's opinions on the question of revolution.[49]

Hoping to dissipate the American fear of bolshevism, Ward urged what he called "historical discrimination." He wrote, "What effect the Russian Socialist Republic will have upon human development is, in the long run, to be determined by its aim and by the methods which its programme reveals as essential to the aim"—here he conceded that some methods might be so "essential" as to be inseparably tied to goals—"and not by those incidents attendant upon its inception which can be traced to conditioning circumstances more than to the nature of the thing attempted." He compared the Russian and French revolutions, seeing violence "attendant" on each, yet ultimately finding good in each that overshadowed the significance of

that violence. While each was denounced in its day by "the Anglo-Saxon people," the French Revolution since had become renowned for its "contribution . . . to the development of democracy" despite "its bloody excesses." Might the same not become true of the Soviet revolution in the fullness of time? He suggested that much of the violence of revolutions was the fault of the old regime's minions, whose resistance to change put their heads on the block, as it were. It was up to them to decide how bloody social change would be: "Whether or not economic readjustment in the British Empire and the United States is to come by gradual and orderly change," he wrote, "is for the people of property to say."[50] Thus, Ward betrayed lingering uneasiness about the direction in which he had headed. If violence truly were inevitable, then why bother to shift blame for it to the privileged classes? It might seem that the historical determinism Ward projected should have rendered moot the question of personal responsibility that he still felt compelled to answer. Unclear as to whether the course of violence was or was not a choice, Ward wavered between historical inevitability and a radical preacher's moralizing.

If the importance of individual choices were in question, the whole point of *The New Social Order* was that different parts of the world offered alternative paths in search of a common future, a reconstructed world of justice and community in the context of a highly organized industrial society. Ward judged among them as if societies could choose which path to take. He found everything except the Soviet option rather weak tea, but he did not give up on more gradual methods of change. Ward, the avid gardener, employed a horticultural metaphor, warning that "the choice is now between the immediate working out of some such program as that of the British Labor Party or the more communistic plans of Eastern and Central Europe, which will suddenly clip life off somewhere near the minimum standard and gamble everything on its ability by coordinated effort to branch out with renewed vigor and beauty." The possibility of "renewed vigor and beauty" down the road hardly deadened the shock of language such as "suddenly clip life off." Ward stated bluntly, "Those who seek in Eastern and Central Europe to bring in a new order are frankly trusting in the power of mailed might." It seemed that real choices did remain, after all; Ward clearly felt it mattered whether things proceeded amid violent conflict.[51]

Ward maintained qualms about the morality of violence, even though there is little evidence he ever was a pacifist. Or perhaps he simply felt a need to deflect criticism from Americans with hearts more tender than his own. In the same volume in which he endorsed revolution and downplayed the significance of violence, Ward pulled

back from the brink of bolshevik fervor, erecting customary social-democratic obstacles to the importation of revolutionary doctrines to the United States and Britain. It was quite traditional for white Protestant Americans to assert that these countries were exceptionally impervious to class war and conducive to class compromise. Here democracy spelled gradualism rather than opening the door to upheaval. A dictatorship of the proletariat (a "temporary" state of affairs where it was employed, Ward was careful to remark) might be the only way forward in a place like Russia, but it "is foreign to those peoples whose reliance for political and social change is upon reason rather than upon force." Different means were available here, and he hoped that the ruling circles, indirectly and for their own sakes, would use them. Ward was not a gradualist who reluctantly supported revolution abroad. He was a non-Marxist, anticapitalist revolutionary who regretted violence but accepted its necessity and who thought historical context and the wisdom of the privileged would determine whether liberty could survive the inevitable change ahead.[52]

The *Kairos*

Ward mingled materialist, political, and spiritual hopes in a vision of change that was both anthropological and eschatalogical. He saw change, paradoxically, as unidirectional and as the result of perpetual struggle between competing human instincts. The present system was spiritually bankrupt and apparently doomed, yet the new order, when it came, might always be in danger of moral backsliding. His somewhat contradictory perception of how change was proceeding in the world is best captured in the religious idea of a *kairos*, a moment when eternity breaks through the fabric of time, creating inspired intervals of extraordinary possibility. The *kairos* will pass, and it must be seized if its potential is to be realized. He spoke of "a supreme crisis" in the world after the war, as distinct from "the ordinary progress of the world." While "by mixed motives the ordinary progress of the world is achieved," a moment of crisis "requires a single motive; it demands sacrifice." The very spiritual decadence of capitalism, in his view, rendered it unable to muster the spirit of sacrifice necessary to seek the way out of the present crisis. He wrote, "It would appear that the poison of its central principle of self-interest as the motive of action has so weakened its system that it cannot even accomplish as much united action as is necessary to prolong its own life." Only the agents of revolt, of qualitative change, would prove able to sacrifice enough to lead the world now. And this leadership

would establish the moral tenor of the new order, one of common effort and mutual support, not private and narrowly defined interests. "Whether the new order desired by multitudes will now appear," he wrote, "depends finally upon whether those multitudes have sufficient capacity for sacrifice to send new life coursing through the exhausted veins of humanity."[53]

Ward's whole method of comparison served to erode the distinction between reform and revolution, to subsume the alternatives of evolution and catastrophe within broader categories of social change, progress, and reconstruction. His vision of the *kairos* is the key to understanding his intellectual response to the problem, so familiar to political radicals since the international controversy surrounding Eduard Bernstein's "revisionism" in the 1890s, of reform versus revolution, of evolutionary as against revolutionary socialism. Ward contended that "the contrast between evolution and revolution is not justified. . . . The evolutionary process, particularly in human society, at certain points develops such remarkable changes that they are in deed and truth revolutionary. We have now come to such a point." There were "new forms of life" appearing around the world that presaged a new stage of human, and spiritual, development, and the duty of anyone who cherished the continuation of human striving toward spiritual perfection was to support them by the most Christian means available. But again, those means would be defined by those who held the reins of power. "Whether or not the new forms of life that now and again appear in the evolutionary process unduly rend or destroy the old forms out of which they came, depends upon the degree of obstruction to their development."[54] So Ward was *conditionally* committed to supporting the course of revolution, at least east of the Rhine. While many later retreated from their defense of the foreign revolution, Ward was one of those who never did. He never gave up on the *kairos*, and he would pay for this. Despite the problems in his reaction to the phenomenon of revolution, he was more honest throughout his career about those reactions than many others who felt the same in 1919.

According to Donald K. Gorrell, *The New Social Order* was too radical to gain a positive reception among Protestant liberals. William King paints a more nuanced picture, contending that the "reconstructionist" wing of the social gospel, within which Ward, Methodist Bishop Francis McConnell, Eddy, and Kirby Page were leading figures, was simultaneously embattled and coming into its own as a coherent force in American religion during and after the war. This juncture of Ward's political life does not mark his departure from the mainstream of American reform into sectarian obscurity. He

remained a prominent figure among activists in the labor movement and the social work profession. He maintained his position of leadership in the Methodist federation, supported within the denomination by McConnell. During the 1920s and 1930s, with Ward at the helm, the MFSS was the leading organization of the Protestant reconstructionists, prominently advertising its support of criminal defendants such as Sacco and Vanzetti, Tom Mooney and the "Scottsboro boys," and involving itself in uncounted liberal and left *causes célèbres.* Ward continued to express the hope that "a serving, sacrificial church will lead a torn and bleeding humanity to the oneness of the Father's heart," but this hope could only be a realistic one if he broadened his definition of the church.[55]

Ward now placed one foot outside the institutional church world into a more independent sphere of political activism. As the multifarious activities of the MFSS in the 1920s demonstrated, in the aftermath of the Great War, the left wing of the social gospel had moved into more of a freelance mode, working in ad hoc coalitions with sympathetic activists from any and all walks of life, contributing to what King calls "the emergence of a new radical-liberal alignment."[56] Before the war, a radical social critique like Ward's was at home within what seem now like the sedate precincts of the social gospel. The Great War and its aftermath brought into the open the simmering differences of perspective among those who had enthusiastically supported the Social Creed of the Churches and broke the social gospel into a more timid church-based wing and a more independent radical wing.

For a "Union of Forces," 1920–1929

The three main causes in Ward's post-World War I career were his leadership of the MFSS, his work for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which he served as national president for twenty years after its establishment in 1920, and his continuing defense of the Soviet revolution. He intended all these efforts, in different ways, to continue his activity in the larger cause of labor. Yet in Ward's understanding of his civil liberties and pro-Soviet work, organized labor was now a junior partner in the enterprise of social change. In the former case, leadership resided with a cadre of largely middle-class agitators; in the latter case, it lay with a political party.[57]

Of these two causes, the ACLU occupied Ward more in the 1920s. Roger Baldwin, the dominant figure in the organization for decades, recruited Ward to preside over a potentially fractious governing board and the two became close friends and comrades. The ACLU

reconstructed its mission and its image in the years after 1940 as one of impartial advocacy of liberty for all and as one marked by neutrality regarding social outcomes. That image had ample basis in historical fact. Some early ACLU activists undertook their activity in the spirit of simple fair play. For example, the lawyer Albert DeSilver explained his work on behalf of IWW activists on trial by saying, "I just want to see those fellows have a chance." In an angry moment, in 1925, Baldwin wrote to Earl Browder, the Communist leader, "You regard [free speech] as a means to an end. We [the ACLU] regard it as an end in itself." The organization proved its libertarian mettle in the 1920s by supporting the freedom of the Ku Klux Klan and Henry Ford to spread race hatred.[58]

But, in fact, the group's main purpose in its early years was to prevent the destruction of the American left, especially the labor left, by the U.S. government. The ACLU easily documented for the general public its contention that the main opponents of free speech and assembly and those most likely to advocate authoritarian measures by American government came overwhelmingly from the antilabor, antiradical right. Baldwin, who in later years appeared to many the embodiment of a liberalism concerned exclusively with procedural fairness, was, in 1920, an antiwar anarchist recently incarcerated for refusing to cooperate with the draft. When he got out of jail, in 1919, he stated, "I am going to do what a so-called intellectual can do in the labor movement and aid in the struggle of the workers to control society in the interests of the masses." One of the ACLU's first publications, explaining its purposes, stated, "Today the organized movements of labor and of the farmers are fighting the big fight for civil liberty throughout the United States as part of their campaign for increased control in industry." The new group stated boldly, "It is that union of forces which the American Civil Liberties Union serves." While this did not remain the group's exclusive commitment, it was the dominant one until the mid-1930s.[59]

The ACLU evolved from its origins in the Civil Liberties Bureau of the American Union Against Militarism (AUAM) during World War I. Its initial governing board brought together genteel activists from the AUAM, including Jane Addams, John Haynes Holmes, Oswald Garrison Villard, and Norman Thomas, labor radicals such as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and William Z. Foster, and many others, including liberal lawyers such as Felix Frankfurter and DeSilver, who focused on procedural fairness but mainly in order to protect the political left against the state. The list was a virtual who's who of militant liberalism, or of the American left, or of social democracy. The difficulty involved in pigeon-holing this impressive group tells

us much about their political world. Not only the exigencies of repression but also a long history of liberals and leftists cooperating in a broad front for fundamental change in American society facilitated unity at this time. Still, there were differences among them. While everyone involved in the new organization shared certain immediate goals, they nonetheless may well have recognized the need for leadership that they all could support. They chose Ward for this unifying role, keeping him on as chairman of the national board, a post he held until controversies over communism moved him to resign in 1940.

In the 1920s, Ward cast about widely for agents of social change in America, and his work with the ACLU expressed that eclecticism. He emphasized more strongly than he had in the century's first two decades the need for a cross-class alliance in creating progressive change. Organized labor remained a cause to which Ward gave fierce loyalty, but it figured less clearly as the lead force within the progressive movement he envisioned. In 1921, he wrote, in a hopeful appeal to a Methodist readership, "The small business man, the salaried and professional people . . . are fast finding out that the present economic arrangements are pinching them and their children as they have long been squeezing the industrial wage-earner." This echo of antimonopoly progressivism did not linger; four years later, Ward extolled V. I. Lenin and Mohandas Gandhi, sons of the middle class, as the two leaders who "embodied" the "ideas and ideals" that would determine "the future of mankind." What was essential was that leaders, like these apostles of atheistic revolution and religious love, respectively, be "absolutely disinterested" in furthering the interests of "the common people," not that they arise organically from the classes they would lead into history.[60] Middle-class vanguardism, laborist social democracy, or cross-class reform: it mattered little to Ward. He would embrace leadership and activism from any quarter, so long as it embraced what he considered a progressive agenda. Nonetheless, as Eugene McCarraher points out, Ward remained notably wary of the tendency among interwar intellectuals to look toward a middle-class vanguard to lead the way toward a modernist millennium.[61] Ward was drawn both to the plebian social ethics of the street-corner preacher and to the vanguardism that he saw as succeeding in the Soviet context. However, the controlling idea in his political thought was that of a progressive solidarity among different social elements. He never wavered from his view, stated in 1915, that "the only possible way to find a day of release from the common evils that are oppressing all of us is to get the most of us together in the common cause, to get the great mass of workers and the more prominent members of society to join hands."[62] Thus he anticipated the idea of

antifascist unity between often antagonistic class forces, the idea of a "People's Front," which achieved dominance on the American left in the late 1930s but which was anything but new at that time.

As the years passed after 1919, Ward stabilized his position regarding social change, yet he retained an ambiguity, a sense of longing for an elusive path that would combine reformist and revolutionary elements. In 1924, he posed the question, "How Can Civilization Be Saved?" and answered with the impeccable social gospel answer, "The only hope of civilization lies in the religion of Jesus." This smacked of Christian imperialism, but clearly, what he recommended was less the theology than the ethical core, as he viewed it, of Christianity. He went on to explain, in practical terms, that "there is no way out by reform"—no way out of the moral and social afflictions of capitalism, that is. Yet "revolution is too drastic" in the industrial West, he had concluded; it was too destructive of the concrete accomplishments of societies like the United States. Ward was left with the unexplained prescription of "revolutionary reform" as the "substitute for war and revolution," and he did a poor job of linking that formulation to the Christian ethics that he recommended at the outset of his discussion.[63] As in earlier years, a postmillennialist vantage point facilitated an end-run of sorts around the question of reform *versus* revolution. Charles Amidon, a U.S. federal judge in Fargo (whose daughter would work with Ward at the ACLU), wrote Ward in 1920, "The church that has no vision of the activities which will bring the kingdom of heaven into the world here and now, is a dead church," and expressed his "joy" that Ward was working to promote exactly such a vision. Ward's sympathetic view of revolution was well known by this time, yet Amidon invited Ward to travel to North Dakota so that "our liberal people" might hear him speak.[64] In the precincts of the social gospel that Amidon and Ward occupied, liberalism and radicalism happily coexisted in the larger cause of progress. Ward spent the 1920s working on reform efforts that would allow wide scope for radical political activity and for debate over the alternative paths his society faced. He left the impression of one who is waiting for something to happen, for a new set of historic events that would intervene in history and clarify matters; for a new *kairos*, perhaps.

The 1930s: The Left Ascendant

When the Great Depression arrived, it may have seemed that the *kairos* had returned. Radical criticism of society and economy was invigorated in America, not least among the clergy. Harry Ward found his views on the American social structure echoed all around

him. Within his own church, in 1932, official Methodist gatherings pronounced a society "based on profitism . . . inherently unchristian," an "order" that "stands condemned before the bar of Christian justice." Actually, similar statements had come from Methodist conferences during the 1920s. The reconstructionist critique of American capitalism was well entrenched before 1929, and it is quite clear that the social gospel simply did not go away during the 1920s. Nonetheless, the resistance to such criticism was greatly weakened by catastrophic circumstances. Ward might as well have written the declaration of the New York East Methodist Episcopal Conference that "the profit motive must go. The acquisitive desire must be replaced by the desire to serve." The denomination's Chicago Social Action Conference, doubtless under the influence of the MFSS publications that emanated from Ward and his associates in a steady stream, espied a "social conflict" between the "privileged" and "underprivileged," concluding, "We as ministers and church workers are members of the privileged class. . . . The initiative for the breakdown of that barrier (of class privilege) rests upon us." Kirby Page's 1934 questionnaire to his fellow clergy found over one-quarter of the more than 20,000 respondents identified socialism as the political system most likely to usher in the cooperative commonwealth (the Methodists led other denominations in this response, with 34 percent). Fifty-one percent chose a "drastically reformed capitalism."[65]

Moral Man and Immoral Society was the lasting document of Protestant intellectual ferment from that time, and deservedly so. Yet the believers in sweet reason as the solution to the Social Question, whom Niebuhr ridiculed in that book, were being overtaken. In the pit of the Great Depression, an angrier sentiment rose in the ranks of Protestant activists, one that was more despairing of the American way and ready to take sides in a class struggle. In that sense, Ward's *Which Way Religion?* his treatise of 1931 that targeted conservative religion, rather than liberals, was a more directly *engagé* and representative document of the social gospel's radical upsurge. Marxists saw religion as "a middle-class institution" that obstructed social progress, Ward wrote. Yet he insisted that religion had no determinate relation to the movement for increased social freedom. "It affects social change in two exactly opposite ways. It conserves and it alters; it is reactionary and it is revolutionary."[66] There was a choice to be made and a struggle to be joined within the precincts of the American churches.

The crucial choice Ward posed was that between left and right, not that between his entirely this-worldly, activist radicalism and Niebuhr's more traditionally Calvinist perspective. The latter

impression might be inferred from the fact that the two men formed a friendly but increasingly tense radical duo at UTS in the 1930s. Ward welcomed Niebuhr to Union when Niebuhr came on board in 1928 while other faculty members were cool to the new hire, perhaps viewing him as more a journalist than a theologian; one of Niebuhr's first duties there was to serve as an assistant in Ward's course in ethics. When the Wards traveled to the USSR during Harry's sabbatical year in 1931–32, Niebuhr wrote his fiancée, Ursula Keppel-Compton, that he felt "isolated and alone" at the seminary in Ward's absence. Their perspectives and their temperaments certainly were different. Where Niebuhr was expansive in person, ever the brilliant performer, Ward's manner was "slow, low-voiced," tightly controlled. Ward was in the habit of relinquishing the stage in his classroom to students making reports on work outside class. When he did hold forth on political matters, it was in his typically methodical "Victorian" manner, as Duke puts it, locating "the unfolding events of the 1930s into clear categories. . . . Orderly, purposeful effort would bring proper completion to these historical developments." Ward's old-fashioned image was reinforced by the tea and cookies that Daisy served at the weekly gatherings Ward hosted for students in his New York office. Niebuhr lived in an apartment in town, and he offered students beer and doughnuts instead, a difference to which the students apparently attached some importance.[67]

When Niebuhr came upon a group of students who happened to be discussing the difference between the two teachers, he told them, as he related to Keppel-Compton, that it "was simple. I didn't have as much 'guts' as Harry Ward when it came to the realities of the social struggle." The exact meaning of this generous description is unclear, since Niebuhr himself was heavily involved in political efforts at the time, in some cases the same efforts to which Ward lent his name and energies. They mentored left-wing students in tandem and worked together politically. They were united-front comrades, Niebuhr joining the Socialist party while Ward became a Communist fellow traveler. Perhaps Niebuhr perceived whatever CP associations Ward had in 1931 as more "gutsy" than his own Socialist world, a judgment that Communists would have echoed, usually in the teeth of Socialist protests. Niebuhr may have been thinking in less specific terms. Was Ward readier than he to embrace a wholesale, even violent political transformation in American society, notwithstanding Niebuhr's apparent willingness to countenance such a course a year later in *Moral Man and Immoral Society*? It does seem as if Ward, better than Niebuhr, embodied the ideal political activist conjured by the program and strategy outlined in Niebuhr's book. *Moral Man* issued a

famous call for "emotionally potent oversimplifications." In Wilfred M. McClay's words, the preacher who plunged fully into such work would "have to accept an intellectual *kenosis*, a crucifixion on the cross of partiality," and Niebuhr never could stomach ceding his individual independence far enough to be comfortable with such a fate. But Harry Ward, to his detractors and admirers alike, chose the cross of partiality. This was his "guts."[68]

Whether Niebuhr's hard-boiled statements of 1932 were influenced by his desire to remain competitive with Ward for the loyalties of Union's radical students is a matter for sheer speculation. But Niebuhr did worry that he was losing such protégés as James Dombrowski to communism, and perhaps to Ward. After Dombrowski visited the Wards in Canada just before they departed the country in 1931, Niebuhr sensed a new distance from the young man, writing, "He has like some of the other boys become very sympathetic to communism. . . and it may be that he thinks I do not go far enough in my radicalism." We ought to resist the temptation to read later differences into the 1930s; at that time, the rift that emerged gradually between Niebuhr and Ward was a conflict within the left. That is certainly how Niebuhr viewed it. But he betrayed a sense of foreboding about their differences as early as November 1931, when he wrote to Keppel-Compton that he "had a letter from Ward today. He is a complete communist by now and says that nothing he reads from us, that is in our magazines, interests him. It all seems to belong to an old world while he is in the world which represents the future. I just wonder what he will be like when he comes back" from the Soviet Union. Eventually their differences over Communists abroad and at home would estrange the two men completely. But they continued to work together politically throughout the 1930s, virtually up to the time of the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939.[69]

Either Communist sympathies, a higher activist profile, or both made Ward the more controversial of these two faculty members. He was the lightning rod for concerned seminary backers. Coffin condescendingly, if charitably, termed Ward's presence "a valuable stimulant" at UTS—at least in "his earlier years" there. The school fielded "more protests from various Church groups concerning his utterances than concerning all the other members of the faculty combined," Coffin recalled, particularly in Ward's later years of service. One student noted that, in Ward's class, "I was never at ease. . . . That he was a prophet I never had any doubt." Another recalled that he was "inordinately admired by some and equally disliked by others."[70]

Yet Ward's outspokenly anticapitalist collectivism was rooted in the widely shared social gospel vision of the Kingdom as a "Be-

loved Community." This, Ward claimed, was the original goal of Jesus. This was a community in which "modern man can find healing and wholeness . . . as he is conscious of working out an ethical salvation in cooperation with . . . the rest of mankind." It was the place "in which the creatures of time and the timeless spirit find themselves realized together."[71] To cast the telos of conscious, collective self-determination as the end of history was as old as Hegel, and the sublimation of the divine element in this vision of human progress into "spirit" was equally as familiar. Here Ward placed himself in the "personalist" theological movement led by Edgar Brightman of Boston University and George Coe.[72] But for him and for countless others, the real battle for such abstract goals as the fulfillment of "personality" or "wholeness" was the gritty political struggle over what would follow the collapse of a social system that seemed played out. While Ward worked with nonreligious collectivists, within the Methodist federation he and his colleagues agitated continually for a transition from capitalism to socialism, on their denomination's cutting edge. They published a series of "Crisis Leaflets" on the breakdown of the economic system and the problem of how to move to a new one.

Attacks came from other precincts within the denomination but were turned aside. At the 1932 and 1936 general conferences of American Methodism, critics of the MFSS advanced proposals to establish an official church counterpart to the federation that, presumably, would take a milder line on the social crisis. These efforts failed. In 1935, a red-baiting campaign against the federation began in the Hearst press, with articles saying it would be better named the "Marxist Federation for Social Strife" and hoping that the church would "deal with the McConnell-Ward-Chappell radical aggregation without gloves." The federation survived such attacks little harmed at that time, reflecting the strong support its radicalism enjoyed within the Methodist rank-and-file in the 1930s.[73]

"Total Politics": Containing the Protestant Left

Ward was identified into the early 1930s as both a liberal and a radical, confusing though that might seem to us from today's perspective. He criticized liberal ideology, both classical and contemporary, for, in his view, its excessive individualism. He lamented that "liberals are confused by this hangover from the philosophic individualism of the eighteenth century." And even as he provided leadership in the fight for civil liberties, the avowed collectivism of his vision of the coming Kingdom defined both the limits and the purposes

of his libertarianism. While Ward had critical words for both Roman Catholicism and Soviet communism, he favorably contrasted both of them with his own Protestant tradition's entanglement with, as he saw it, the fetish of the individual.[74] Such criticism of individualism as obsolete was very common indeed in the early Depression years; most often this was expressed as the rejection of an economic doctrine and as advocacy of centralized economic planning. Less common, although not peculiar to Ward, was his personalist articulation of "healing and wholeness" as the end in view, what Harrison terms his "almost premodern" conception of the relations between church and state.[75] Certainly Ward never advocated any erosion of church-state separation, but he always saw the spiritual and "secular" realms as, in fact, one in terms of human goals and efforts to reach those goals. His hints of antimodernist collectivism would become stronger as the 1930s wore on. They would, paradoxically, find occasion for expression in Ward's increased attraction to the Soviet Union as the repository for his hopes of humanity's ascension to a higher plane of spiritual and social life, atheism notwithstanding.

The Soviet attraction would prove fatal for Harry Ward's career in American politics and religion and decisive for his place in history. But, in the mid-1930s, ignominy lay in the future. It was only at this time that Ward was moving from sympathy with the Russian revolution to a passionate embrace of Soviet communism as his personal lodestar, a shift signaled in his 1934 book, *In Place of Profit: Social Incentives in the Soviet Union.* Antagonists to his right would accuse Ward of being no more than a Communist stooge. A critic within the left, the historian Hal Draper, would label Ward a small-c "communist," meaning that Ward sought an enveloping, mystical community that led him into the arms of an authoritarian state with humanistic pretensions.[76]

These two criticisms were mingled in the characterization Donald Meyer offered in his classic work, *The Protestant Search for Political Realism* (1960): "In Harry Ward the link between anxiety and total politics became absolute."[77] This terminology may seem opaque today; it was readily understandable in the 1950s and 1960s. It indicted "totalitarian" pro-Communist sympathies and suggested that those with such sympathies were mentally, or temperamentally, inclined to be "true believers," dangerously attracted to absolutist ideologies and exotic sources of inspiration. Among historians, Meyer offered by far the most serious and extended treatment of Ward until very recently. But even to as sensitive and insightful a scholar as Meyer, Ward was useful mainly as a left-wing foil for more respectable figures. The real significance of this denigration was the way

in which it stigmatized the entire radical branch of the social gospel in which Ward had been the leading figure. This radicalism accounted for much of the energy of the social gospel in the years after 1919, and the ideologically driven cold-war tendency either to disparage this religious left or to airbrush it from the historical picture contributed greatly to the interpretive confusion surrounding the social gospel's fate.

In 1936, Ward remained a prominent personage in the landscape of the social gospel. His position at Union remained secure, and protégés such as Dombrowski and Myles Horton, founder of the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, made names for themselves, embattled though they were because of their work against race and class oppression. Horton, by the time he left UTS, was more a follower of Niebuhr—the Socialist Niebuhr—than of Ward. Subsequently, Highlander benefited from the patronage of "independent" leftists (this was code for non-Communist-allied) such as Norman Thomas, Page, Dewey, and Baldwin. Horton remained more steadfast in his criticism of American society than did Niebuhr. But in the mid-1930s, the Protestant left accommodated figures as diverse as Ward, Niebuhr, and Horton, their similarities more significant by far than their differences. This religious left seemed unlikely to be banished from the ranks of respectable Protestantism; attacks against it struck only glancing blows, and its support among the clergy and seminary students, if anything, continued to grow.[78]

This all changed in later years, after the 1939 Nazi-Soviet pact and the red scare of the 1940s and 1950s. The repression of the historical memory of the Protestant left made Myles Horton, along with other unrepentant Protestant leftists such as Claude Williams of Arkansas, Jack McMichael, Ward's successor at the Methodist federation, and Ward himself, inexplicable (except as the tool of an imagined Communist plot) to many Americans in the post-World War II era. That is another story and cannot be told here. Suffice it to note that, by 1953, when Ward, not for the first time, came into the cross hairs of the House Committee on Un-American Activities and responded by professing his independence of all political parties, Niebuhr sneered privately, "Our precious Ward," asking, "Could dishonesty go any further?" Niebuhr, the "realist," had long since left behind him the likes of Ward, as had all others in the Protestant liberal establishment. Even McConnell relegated Ward to insignificance in his 1952 memoir, making no mention of their close, decades-long work together in Methodist politics.[79]

What is important is the need these men felt to erase all vestiges of their once close relations with Ward, who had become a polit-

ical untouchable. The radicalism that had emerged from the social gospel, first among leading activists like Ward, starting in 1919, and then in full force in the 1930s, had to be repressed from historical memory if Protestant liberalism were to remain "respectable" in the McCarthy era. Consequently, the social gospel's development became a confusing matter, with Protestant liberalism seeming more inevitably establishmentarian than it was and with radicals like Ward, Dombrowski, and Horton, when they were noticed, appearing as unexplained phenomena without any context of religious or cultural development. But their prophetic postmillennialism, with its unsettling openness to catastrophe and to radical commitment, was tied by countless threads—of association and of ideas—to a broader liberal-left reconstructionist tendency. The importance of that tendency within the social gospel tradition was difficult to question, even if its ascendancy ended by mid-century; the point of the airbrushing was to defang reconstructionism, to render it as liberal, New Deal-style reformism. In the 1920s and 1930s, Ward was as representative of the reconstructionists as any single figure, especially through his work in the MFSS. During the cold war, many reconstructionists would become tamer figures in a liberal Protestant establishment. But their links to Ward and others like him were manifold and organic. When the time for denials and renunciations came, there would be a great deal to deny and to renounce.

The religious left reemerged as a significant presence in American life in the late 1960s and afterward.[80] This first occurred in the context of the civil rights movement and its religious vanguard; activist preachers such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and James Lawson were schooled in the prophetic postmillennialism that had been kept alive to a far greater extent within the African American Protestant world than among white Protestants. Almost the only white religious figures who were active partisans of this movement from its first glimmerings in the mid-century decades were those, like Dombrowski and Horton, who offered links to an earlier, now obscure radical tradition. One admirer asserted, at Ward's ninetieth-birthday celebration in 1964 (Ward lived to be ninety-three), "There are hundreds of men in pulpits today who studied under him, and live with troubled consciences ever since." It was not for nothing that Benjamin Mays, longtime president of the historically black Morehouse College, in the 1970s, recalled Harry Ward fondly as "the little man with a big voice."[81] But Ward was, for the most part, a forgotten figure, and his world, in which a collectivist vision of the Kingdom seemed natural to a substantial minority within American Protestantism, was a lost one. When the repressed prophetic strain of Protestantism broke

free from its cold war containment once again in the 1960s, its predecessors and historical roots remained unknown to most.

Notes

1. Paul A. Carter, *The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel: Social and Political Liberalism in American Protestant Churches, 1920–1940* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1954). Other standard works, including Charles H. Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865–1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), Aaron I. Abell, *The Urban Impact on American Protestantism, 1865–1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches in Industrial America* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), Robert T. Handy, ed., *The Social Gospel in America, 1870–1920: Gladden, Ely, Rauschenbusch* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), and Ronald White, Jr., and Charles H. Hopkins, eds., *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), take the period between 1865 and 1920 as their time frame for the "classic" period of the social gospel. The finest recent account, Donald K. Gorrell, *The Age of Social Responsibility: The Social Gospel in the Progressive Era, 1900–1920* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1988), also ends its story in 1920. Gorrell writes that he wishes to emphasize what he terms "a period from 1913 to 1919 or 1920 that constitutes the missing years of social-gospel history that have not yet been studied carefully" (3), implying that he considers the social gospel to have a history beyond 1920. But his choice of that year as the terminus of his study reaffirms the older works' conception of the social gospel as a movement that, at least, suffered a loss of cohesion and force with the end of the Progressive Era and represents a declined opportunity to revise the conventional start and end dates of the social gospel.

2. The early, positive evaluation of the progressive movement, focusing on settlement house workers and others influenced by the social gospel, can be found in works such as May, *Protestant Churches in Industrial America*; Robert Bremner, *From the Depths: The Discovery of Poverty in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 1956); Abell, *Urban Impact on American Protestantism*; Aaron I. Abell, *American Catholicism and Social Action* (Garden City, N.Y.: Hanover House, 1960); Clarke W. Chambers, *Seedtime for Reform: American Social Service and Social Action, 1918–1933* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963); and Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Settlement Houses and the Progressive Movement, 1890–1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). Roy Lubove, *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), is slightly less celebratory. Revisionist works propounding the view that progressive reformers sought mainly to gain middle-class control over a restive

proletariat are not as numerous as one might think, "social control" serving more often as a slogan for quick dismissal than as the entry point for extended study. Such studies as do exist, and which deal with the Progressive Era, include David J. Pivar, *Purity Crusade: Sexual Morality and Social Control, 1868–1900* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973); and Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820–1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978); focusing more exclusively on ethnicity than on class relations is Riva S. Lissak, *Pluralism and Progressives: Hull House and the New Immigrants, 1890–1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism, 1885–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Robert H. Wiebe, *Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900–1916* (New York: Free Press, 1963); Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); and Louis D. Galambos, "The Organizational Synthesis in American History," *Business History Review* 44 (1970): 279–90, urge students of U.S. history seeking to understand the progressive movement to direct their attention elsewhere. Recent works such as Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Kathryn K. Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work*, vol. 1, *The Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); and Estelle B. Freedman, *Maternal Justice: Miriam Van Waters and the Female Reform Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), seek to rehabilitate the settlement house workers and to relocate them near the center of the progressive movement, but mainly through the lens of women's history; the place of religion remains a distinctly minor theme.

3. For further thoughts on this matter, see Jon Butler, "Jack-in-the-Box Faith: The Religion Problem in Modern American History," *Journal of American History* 90 (March 2004): 1357–78; David A. Hollinger, "The 'Secularization' Question and the United States in the Twentieth Century," *Church History* 70 (March 2001): 132–43; John T. McGreevy, "Faith and Morals in the United States, 1865–Present," *American Quarterly* 26 (March 1998): 239–54; and Doug Rossinow, "'The Break-through to New Life': Christianity and the Emergence of the New Left in Austin, Texas, 1956–1964," *American Quarterly* 46 (September 1994): 309–10.

4. William McGuire King, "The Emergence of Social Gospel Radicalism: The Methodist Case," *Church History* 50 (December 1981): 437; Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 163; Milton Mayer (writing in the *Progressive*

magazine in 1953) quoted in Robert Moats Miller, *Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam: Paladin of Liberal Protestantism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 584.

5. George D. McClain, "Pioneering Social Gospel Radicalism: An Overview of the History of the Methodist Federation for Social Action," *Radical Religion* 5 (1989): 11; Chappell quoted in ibid., 12. She referred to "a small band of Methodist preachers," not to Ward individually. McClain became executive secretary of the federation, which changed its name to the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) in 1948, in the early 1970s.

6. Heather A. Warren, "Character, Public Schooling, and Religious Education, 1920–1934," *Religion and American Culture* 7 (Winter 1997): 5. Ward actually followed Coe from Southern California to Northwestern. In 1909, Coe took a position at UTS, with Ward ultimately joining him as a colleague. Robert T. Handy, *A History of Union Theological Seminary in New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 125.

7. Beverly Harrison, interview with author, August 7, 2001.

8. See Robert H. Craig, "An Introduction to the Life and Thought of Harry F. Ward," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 24, no. 4 (Summer 1969): 331–32.

9. Ward's papers are gathered in the Harry F. Ward Collection at the Burke Library, Union Theological Seminary, New York (referred to here as "Ward papers"). This collection contains much richer material concerning the years after 1929 than for Ward's early career. Hence, I focus here on Ward's many published writings from the period in question.

10. Link, *Labor-Religion Prophet*, 17; Link, "Latter Day Christian Rebel," 223.

11. On the meaning of the "Social Question," see Dorothy Ross, "Socialism and American Liberalism: Academic Social Thought in the 1880's," *Perspectives in American History* 11 (1977–1978): 15–16.

12. Harry F. Ward, *The Labor Movement, from the Standpoint of Religious Values* (New York: Sturgis and Walton Co., 1917), ix. The authors of the statement were Adolph Lessig, Nathan Herman, Guy Curtis, and John J. Fraser. Ward appreciated the statement enough to include it at the front of this volume.

13. The Chicago reform environment is detailed in works including Chester M. Destler, *American Radicalism, 1865–1901: Essays and Documents* (New London: Connecticut College, 1946); Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work*; and Richard Schneirov, *Labor and Urban Politics: Class Conflict and the Origins of Modern Liberalism in Chicago, 1864–1897* (Urbana: University of

Illinois Press, 1998). Gorrell, *Age of Responsibility*, 46–47, discusses Chicago's importance in the social gospel at the turn of the century.

14. David Nelson Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx: Harry F. Ward and the Struggle for Social Justice* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 50; Frank T. Adams, *James A. Dombrowski: An American Heretic, 1897–1983* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 28.

15. Review of Harry F. Ward, *The Gospel for a Working World* (Missionary Education Movement, 1918), *Nation* 108 (March 15, 1919): 407.

16. Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx*, 64, 79. Duke speculates that Ward read the writings of Karl Marx during a sabbatical year in 1905–1906 and states that "Marxism provided a theoretical framework for his [Ward's] indefatigable social passion." Ibid., 58. Duke does not detail Ward's intellectual engagement with Marxism at this point in his career.

17. Adams, *James A. Dombrowski*, 38; Henry Sloan Coffin, *A Half Century of Union Theological Seminary, 1896–1945: An Informal History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), 100; Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx*, 52.

18. Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx*, 52, 59 (quote on 59).

19. These were the words of the meeting's program committee; quoted in Link, *Labor-Religion Prophet*, 44.

20. See Gorrell, *Age of Social Responsibility*, 90–93, 97–102; Hopkins, *Rise of the Social Gospel*, 289–92; and Link, *Labor-Religion Prophet*, 41–44.

21. Gorrell, *Age of Social Responsibility*, 133–44; Hopkins, *Rise of the Social Gospel*, 302–06, and Link, *Labor-Religion Prophet*, 49–51 (quote on 51). On the bishops' program, see John A. Ryan, *Social Reconstruction* (New York: Macmillan, 1920), and Joseph M. McShane, *Sufficiently Radical: Catholicism, Progressivism, and the Bishops' Program of 1919* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1986).

22. Ward quoted in Link, "Latter Day Christian Rebel," 226–27; Harry F. Ward, ed., *Social Creed of the Churches* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1912).

23. Walter G. Muelder, *Methodism and Society in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2 of *Methodism and Society* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), 62; Robert T. Handy, "Christianity and Socialism in America, 1900–1920," *Church History* 21 (March 1952): 53. See Nelson Lichtenstein and Howell John Harris, eds., *Industrial Democracy in America: The Ambiguous Promise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and Steve Fraser, "The 'Labor Question'," in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930–1980*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 55–84.

24. Ward, *Social Creed*, 13, 9. Daniel Rodgers, "In Search of Progressivism," *Reviews in American History* 10 (December 1982): 124–25, discusses the Progressive language of "social bonds." He presents it there as a rejection of individualism, but clearly many activists and thinkers held onto individualism while embracing a more social perspective.

25. Ward, *Social Creed*, 9; Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream" [1963], in *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard (New York: Warner Books, 2001), 82.

26. Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1913); J. Allen Smith, *The Spirit of American Government: A Study of the Constitution: Its Origins, Influence and Relation to Democracy* (New York: Macmillan, 1907); Ward, *Labor Movement*, 175.

27. Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx*, 64; Ward, *Social Creed*, 9.

28. Harry F. Ward, *Which Way Religion?* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 134.

29. On the rise of fundamentalism, see the classic work of George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), as well as Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Ferenc M. Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880–1930* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1982); and Paul S. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992).

30. Ward, *Social Creed*, 77–78, 85–86.

31. Harry F. Ward, "The Labor Movement," in *Social Ministry: An Introduction to the Study and Practice of Social Service*, ed. Harry F. Ward (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1910; for the Methodist Federation for Social Service), 108, 126.

32. Ibid., 108, 112–13; Ward, *Labor Movement*, 29–30. In *The Labor Movement*, Ward included syndicalism (embodied in the United States by the IWW) as a third major component of the labor movement (see 3, 67, 75). But the IWW's career in American radicalism and labor politics ebbed at the end of the 1910s, and the two-part definition of the labor movement was the more consistent one in Ward's writings.

33. Ward, "Labor Movement," 115; Ward, *Labor Movement*, 14, 21. On Wright, see James Leiby, *Carroll Wright and Labor Reform: The Origin of Labor Statistics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960). See also Thorstein Veblen, *The Instinct of Workmanship, and the State of the Industrial Arts* (New

York: Macmillan, 1914), and Thorstein Veblen, *The Engineers and the Price System* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1921).

34. Link, *Labor-Religion Prophet*, 61; David R. Roediger and Philip S. Foner, *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1989), 228.

35. Several historians in recent years have examined the work and findings of the commission, whose members produced two reports concluding their work, the official one endorsing labor's grievances against capital and calling for a strong state role in ensuring equity, and a minority report (associated with John R. Commons, who was deeply influenced by the early social gospel) taking up a more neutral position. See Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr.,*Visions of a New Industrial Order: Social Science and Labor Theory in America's Progressive Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Mary O. Furner, "Knowing Capitalism: Public Investigation and the Labor Question in the Long Progressive Era," in Mary O. Furner and Barry Supple, *The State and Economic Knowledge: The American and British Experiences* (Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and Cambridge University Press, 1990), 241–86; Shelton Stromquist, "Class Wars: Frank Walsh, the Reformers, and the Crisis of Progressivism," in *Labor Histories: Class, Politics, and the Working Class Experience*, ed. Eric Arnesen, Julie Greene, and Bruce Laurie (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); and Leon Fink, *Progressive Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Democratic Commitment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 80–113.

36. Donald Meyer, *The Protestant Search for Political Realism, 1919–1941*, 2d ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 149, casts a discerning eye on this duality, citing Ward's "sociological anticapitalism" while noting that his hopes for social change "rested in the end upon a pure abstract revivalism, independent of definite social conditions."

37. Meyer, *Protestant Search for Political Realism*, 145; Creel to Mrs. Harlan W. Cooley, March 27, 1918, quoted in Link, *Labor-Religion Prophet*, 68; Ray H. Abrams, *Preachers Present Arms* (New York: Round Table Press, 1933). While there is no good work on the People's Council, Frank L. Grubbs, Jr., *The Struggle for Labor Loyalty: Gompers, the A. F. of L., and the Pacifists, 1917–1920* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1968), discusses the campaign against it organized by Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor. Ward expressed confidence in the dean's ability to withstand pressure in a letter to George Albert Coe, May 20, 1916, in Ward papers, series II, subseries A, box 4, folder 1, correspondence—G. A. Coe.

Ward's position on the war is a murky issue; different sources make contrasting claims, with little documentation on any side. According to Roger Baldwin, Ward supported the war. Peggy Lamson, *Roger Baldwin: Founder of*

the American Civil Liberties Union (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), 127. King echoes this view. King, "Emergence of Social Gospel Radicalism," 445. But Link, *Labor-Religion Prophet*, 64–70, details Ward's outspoken radicalism and his support for war resisters. While Link does not state outright that Ward opposed the war, his discussion strongly gives that impression. Duke's account, which should be the most complete, reflects this confusion, referring to "the kind of antiwar sentiments Ward voiced when he addressed college students" during the war but not stating explicitly either that Ward supported or that he opposed U.S. intervention. Duke relates a revealing anecdote: When J. L. Birney, Ward's dean, read a newspaper article in 1917 tying Ward to the No Conscription League, headed by Emma Goldman, and to the American Union Against Militarism (see the discussion below), Birney demanded an explanation. Ward, who was out of town, replied in writing, "No connection with organization or movement described." Later, the Lusk Committee in New York State reproduced a copy of a 1917 letter in which Ward said he would serve on the Emergency Peace Committee, which Duke terms "an organization promoting neutrality during the First World War." But it is not clear that this advocacy of neutrality extended to opposition to U.S. government policy after the United States became a combatant. Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx*, 93–94, 117.

38. Harry F. Ward to U.S. Senate Committee Investigating German Propaganda, January 28, 1919, in Ward papers, series II, subseries A, box 1, folder 17, general correspondence—1919.

39. Harry F. Ward, *The New Social Order: Principles and Programs* (1919; New York: Macmillan, 1923), 13, 12.

40. Ward, *Labor Movement*, 127, 194, 72; Ward, *New Social Order*, 31. In *The Labor Movement*, Ward criticized expropriation when discussing the Sorelian idea of the general strike. He recognized this syndicalist concept as a myth rather than an actual plan of action, but he considered the possibility that workers might act on it anyway.

41. Ward, *Labor Movement*, 43, 20, 45.

42. For background on the idea of the cooperative commonwealth, see Laurence Gronlund, *The Cooperative Commonwealth* (1896; Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965); John L. Thomas, *Alternative America: Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Henry Demarest Lloyd, and the Adversary Tradition* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983); and Richard W. Fox's opposite comments in *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 140. On the Great Community and the Great Society, see Wilfred M. McClay, *The Masterless: Self and Society in Modern America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 167–68.

43. Ward, *Labor Movement*, 48, 49.

44. Ward, *Labor Movement*, 115, 129.

45. Ward, *New Social Order*, 18; Ward, *Labor Movement*, 180, 181.

46. Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New Press, 1996), 32. For a brief and vibrant summary of the uprisings, see Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 56–71.

47. See Christopher Lasch, *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962); and Peter G. Filene, *Americans and the Soviet Experiment, 1917–1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967). On U.S. policy, see N. Gordon Levin, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

48. "Bolshevism and the Methodist Church: An Account of the Controversy Precipitated by Professor Ward," *Current Opinion* 66 (June 1919): 380–81; Meyer, *Protestant Search for Political Realism*, 146; Craig, "Introduction to the Life and Thought," 339–41; Gorrell, *Age of Social Responsibility*, 312–14. According to Meyer, the offending comments came in the January–February 1919 issue of the *Social Service Bulletin* (vol. 9), which was produced by the MFSS and sent to both Methodist and Congregationalist instructors. But Craig locates the quoted remark in a subsequent article by Ward, *Christian Advocate* 94 (February 20, 1919): 240. The Sunday School Graded Lessons had featured Ward's regular "social" interpretations of bible lessons, and his writings also had appeared in the *Adult Bible Class Monthly*, but no more.

49. Ward, *New Social Order*, 376; "Bolshevism and the Methodist Church."

50. Ward, *New Social Order*, 228, 378. A recent version of this argument, surely less popular now than then, is Arno J. Mayer, *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

51. Ward, *New Social Order*, 221, 379, 377.

52. Ibid., 242.

53. Ibid., 14, 384.

54. Ibid., 377.

55. Gorrell, *Age of Social Responsibility*, 314; King, "Emergence of Social Gospel Radicalism," 440, 442, 445; Harry F. Ward, "Which Way Will Meth-

odism Go?" *Methodist Review* 104 (September–October 1921): 693. On the many activities of Ward at the MFSS in the 1920s, see Robert Moats Miller, *American Protestantism and Social Issues, 1919–1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958), 171, 174–75, 179, 181–82.

56. King, "Emergence of Social Gospel Radicalism," 449.

57. I deal at length with Ward's pro-Soviet activities in "'The Model of a Model Fellow Traveler': Harry F. Ward, the American League for Peace and Democracy, and the 'Russian Question' in American Politics, 1933–1956," *Peace and Change* 29 (April 2004): 177–220. There I document Ward's increasingly strong devotion to the Soviet Union as it related to his leadership of the American League Against War and Fascism, the largest nonpacifist peace organization in America during the 1930s, of which Ward became chairman in 1934 and which changed its name to the American League for Peace and Democracy in 1937. It disbanded in 1940 amid controversy caused by the Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact of 1939. In the late 1930s and after, Ward came to invest in the Soviet Union his longstanding hopes for continuing historical change. His ever more fulsome praise for the USSR, during a period when political opinion in the United States turned dramatically hostile to communism at home and abroad, made Ward *persona non grata* among Protestant liberals.

58. Walter Nelles, *A Liberal in Wartime: The Education of Albert DeSilver* (New York: Norton, 1940), 141; Robert C. Cottrell, *Roger Nash Baldwin and the American Civil Liberties Union* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 146; Samuel Walker, *In Defense of American Liberties: A History of the ACLU*, 2d ed. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 51, 60–64, 110–11.

59. *A Year's Fight for Free Speech: The Work of the American Civil Liberties Union from Sept. 1921, to Jan. 1923*, ACLU pamphlet, Ward papers, series IV, subseries C, box 1, folder 19, pamphlets by ACLU and other groups—1922–1956; *Who May Safely Advocate Force and Violence?* ACLU pamphlet, November 1922, Ward papers, ibid.; Donald Johnson, *The Challenge to American Freedoms: World War I and the Rise of the American Civil Liberties Union* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1963), 198–99; "Civil Liberty: A Statement defining the position of the American Civil Liberties Union on the issues in the United States to-day," a pamphlet reproduced in *Revolutionary Radicalism: Its History, Purpose and Tactics, with an Exposition and Discussion of the Steps Being Taken and Required to Curb It* (a Report of the Joint Legislative Committee Investigating Seditious Activities, filed April 24, 1920, in the Senate of the State of New York) (Albany: J. B. Lyon Co., 1920), part 1, vol. 2, 1985.

60. Ward, "Which Way Will Methodism Go?" 690; Harry F. Ward, "Lenin and Gandhi," *World Tomorrow* 8 (April 25, 1925): 111–12. King notes

that the postwar "social gospel radicalism . . . could engage in a more comprehensive and penetrating critique of American culture" than the earlier social gospel had tolerated "because it no longer looked for the popular approval of middle-class Americans." King, "Emergence of Social Gospel Radicalism," 447. This comment is insightful. My point is that, while Ward and his comrades may have given up hope of gaining "popular" middle-class support at this time, Ward simultaneously was looking more favorably upon exceptional middle-class individuals as candidates for the progressive vanguard. His earlier emphasis upon the labor movement as the vanguard within the vanguard, as it were, fell away.

61. Eugene McCarraher, *Christian Critics: Religion and the Impasse in Modern American Social Thought* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 41.

62. Ward, *The Labor Movement*, 70.

63. Harry F. Ward, "How Can Civilization Be Saved?" *Christian Century* 41 (September 11, 1924): 1176, 1177, 1178.

64. Charles F. Amidon to Harry Ward, July 15, 1920, in Ward papers, series II, subseries A, box 1, folder 19, general correspondence—1920.

65. Muelder, *Methodism and Society in the Twentieth Century*, 136, 137–38; Miller, *American Protestantism and Social Issues*, 36, 101.

66. Ward, *Which Way Religion?* 178

67. Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 105, 112; Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx*, 149, 172; Handy, *A History of Union Theological Seminary*, 192.

68. Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 130; Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx*, 150; McClay, *The Masterless*, 183. In Christian thought, *kenosis* is a "self-emptying," sacrificial love, involving total obedience; it is modeled on God's sacrifice in sending Jesus to die for humanity's sake. Obedience, self-abnegation, sacrifice of (individual) self: Who can consider these characteristics and simply dismiss the old view, rarely voiced today by historians of radical politics, that those who committed themselves fully to the discipline of the Communist party and movement were not pursuing a new, secular religion? Ward did not become a committed CP fellow traveler until later in the 1930s. But his willingness to sacrifice the self in the name of salvation—*social* salvation—was clear already.

69. Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx*, 150, 151. As noted above, in 1934, Ward took the helm at the American League Against War and Fascism, a united-front organization in which he worked closely with Communists, among many others. Niebuhr was involved in the same organization, but not in a leadership role.

70. Coffin, *A Half Century*, 101, 102; Handy, *A History of Union Theological Seminary*, 192.

71. Handy, *A History of Union Theological Seminary*, 155–56, 80

72. Muelder, *Methodism and Society in the Twentieth Century*, 277; McCarraher, *Christian Critics*, 44.

73. Miller, *Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam*, 89–90, 191; Muelder, *Methodism and Society in the Twentieth Century*, 164; McClain, "Pioneering Social Gospel Radicalism," 15. Muelder (159–69) offers the best account of the controversy. McConnell first got into trouble by siding with labor during the 1919 steel strike.

74. Ibid., 79, 107–8. On Christian medievalism in 1920s America, see McCarraher, *Christian Critics*, 51–54.

75. Harrison interview, August 23, 2001.

76. Hal Draper, "The Two Souls of Socialism," http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/contemp/pamsetc/twosouls/twosouls.htm, 17–18 (*New Politics* 5 [Winter 1966]).

77. Meyer, *Protestant Search for Political Realism*, 186.

78. Horton traveled from Tennessee to attend classes at UTS during the 1929–1930 school year after reading Ward's book *Our Economic Morality and the Ethic of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1928). Aimee Isgrig Horton, *The Highlander Folk School: A History of Its Major Programs, 1932–1961* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson 1989), 18–19; John M. Glen, *Highlander: No Ordinary School*, 2d ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 12–13, 20–21.

79. Niebuhr to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., quoted in Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 253; Francis J. McConnell, *By the Way: An Autobiography* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952). While McConnell's mention of Ward is friendly, it also takes the form of a meaningless anecdote; his erasure of Ward from the story of his career, at the height of the red scare, spoke volumes to those in the know.

80. Mark Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left:* Christianity & Crisis *Magazine, 1941–1993* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), provides the best coverage of this reemergence.

81. Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx*, 226, 227. Mays made the comment to David Nelson Duke in 1978. In light of other testimony to Ward's subdued style of speaking, I would imagine that Mays was speaking figuratively. See David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

ABSTRACT A vigorous Protestant left existed throughout the first half of the twentieth-century in the United States. That Protestant left was the left wing of the social gospel movement, which many historians restrict to the pre-1920 period and whose radical content is often underestimated. This article examines the career of one representative figure from this Protestant left, the Reverend Harry F. Ward, as a means of describing the evolving nature and limits of social gospel radicalism during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Ward, the main author of the 1908 Social Creed of the Churches, a longtime professor at Union Theological Seminary (UTS) in New York, and a dogged activist on behalf of labor and political prisoners through his leadership of the Methodist Federation for Social Service, sought a new social order from the early years of the century through the Great Depression of the 1930s. This new order would be the Kingdom of God on earth, and, in Ward's view, it would transcend the competitive and exploitative capitalism that dominated American society in his time. Before World War I, Ward worked to bring together labor activists and church people, and, after the war, he shifted his work toward less expressly religious efforts, while continuing to mentor clerical protégés through his teaching. Ward's leftward trajectory and ever-stronger Communist associations would eventually bring about his political downfall, but, in the mid-1930s, he remained a respected figure, if one more radical than most, among American Protestant clergy. Organic links tied him and his politics to the broader terrain of social gospel reform, despite the politically driven historical amnesia that later would all but erase Ward from historical memory.