

THE BIBLE CLASS TEACHER:
PIETY AND POLITICS IN THE AGE OF FUNDAMENTALISM

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This dissertation is a microhistory of a Bible class teacher from Chicago's West Side named Frank L. Wood. Though a Newspaper editor who never rose above the title of Sunday school teacher, Wood's self-identification as a fundamentalist in 1927 becomes the window through which I reinterpret the rise of Protestant fundamentalism in America. In contrast to the theological conflicts, denominational schisms, and Scopes Monkey Trial historians have traditionally mined, I situate fundamentalism's origins in the mass migration of rural, native born, lay evangelical women and men from the country to the city throughout the turn of the twentieth century. Drawing on an array of often ignored primary sources such as church records, regional Sunday school association minutes, and the ephemera of lay evangelistic societies, I argue that Bible classes were a crucible in which America's evangelical subculture was forged. In their devotional and political lives, lay evangelicals like Wood drew upon the literalism fundamentalist theologians applied to scripture to sacralize the preindustrial, small-town social values, racial hierarchies, and gender roles they brought to the city, and utilized their Bible classes as the organizational network from which to launch a myriad of prohibition, nativist, and anti-evolution political campaigns.

But in contrast to those historians who equate fundamentalism's emergence with the rise of the Religious Right, I uncover a diversity of fundamentalist electoral activity among the laity. Wood himself ran for office as a Socialist, while other Bible class activists similarly supported a number of Progressive reforms typically associated with more theologically "liberal" Social Gospel Protestants. The sacred timelessness lay fundamentalists attributed to their rural origins, I argue, not only informed their efforts to recreate its homogeneity through legislation like

Prohibition, but also informed their support for policies intended to restore a preindustrial moral economy. The conservative tipping point, I argue, lay in the evangelical encounter with the city's increasing diversity. Wood returned to the Republican Party in the 1930s, for example, not by fundamentalist critiques of the New Deal, but through his reactions to Prohibition's end, the Great Migration of black southerners to Chicago, and the ethnic control of City Hall.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Christopher D. Cantwell received his Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire in 2003, and a Master of Arts in History from Cornell University in 2006. Currently, he is the Assistant Director of the Dr. William M. Scholl Center for American History and Culture at the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois.

To Grandpa, in Memory

To Kelly, with Love

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I sometimes wonder why I am blessed with so many real, delightful, inspirational friends.

- Frank L. Wood, 1918¹

Like most forms of scholarly work, the acknowledgements that preface academic projects are texts rooted in convention. Often, they open with a quip on how ironic it is that the seemingly solitary task of writing relies so heavily on community. From here, authors tend to progressively shower praise upon the institutions, sources of funding, personal mentors, colleagues, hosts, and confidants that made completing the manuscript possible. It is often only at the end of the acknowledgements that those individuals who mean most to the author receive mention in personal statements of thanks that are supposedly enhanced by the preceding pages of gratitude. Last, but not least.

I feel, however, that I would be remiss if I did not declare from the outset my love, gratitude, and respect to Kelly Michelle Cantwell for making this dream a reality. She has been with this project as long as I have, and she more than anyone else in my life has shared in the joys of research and the traumas of writing. Along the way, she shouldered more than her fair share of household duties and childcare responsibilities to help me finish, and accorded me far more patience than I deserved when I struggled to do so. More importantly, she is the cornerstone of the life that transcends this project, the one that sustained me throughout its completion. The mother of my child (soon to be children), the most intimate of friends, and the household accountant, Kelly truly is everything to me. Love may keep no record of wrongs, but it is a debt that I will happily pay for the rest of our lives.

¹ FLW to WBC, 1 Mar. 1918, oversize folder 2, WBCR.

In addition to Kelly's singular importance, however, I benefitted greatly from a variety of personal, institutional, and financial sources. As a graduate student at Cornell University, research grants and fellowships from the History Department, the American Studies Department, the Graduate School, and the Society for the Humanities made much of the dissertation's early research possible. Even more important, my colleagues at Cornell were surpassingly generous in offering their time, support, and friendship. From my first week at Cornell, Derek Chang has been an unfailing supporter of both the dissertation and myself. He gave me ample space and time to think and grow on my own, while also having an uncanny ability to know when I needed a word of encouragement or a deadline. Anyone familiar with the work of Nick Salvatore—or who pays attention to the footnotes—will quickly recognize my debt to him. But citations can only convey a portion of how much I have gained from Nick's mentorship and friendship. The time, interest, and candid feedback he has given this project serves as a constant source of inspiration, and I hope the finished product lives up to the high scholarly standard he sets in his own work. As both a teacher and a mentor, Ileen DeVault encouraged me to think outside disciplinary traditions. Both the dissertation and myself have benefitted from her theoretical, but always practical, advice and generous copyediting!

In addition to the members of my dissertation committee, Cornell also afforded me other invaluable relationships that propelled my intellectual growth. Among the faculty Ed Baptist, Jon Parmenter, and Ray Craib were particularly helpful, either as leaders of the Americas History Colloquium where presented early chapter drafts, or as the organizers of pick-up soccer games where I worked off the stress of said colloquiums. For other forms of guidance, good teaching, or signatures I'd like to thank Mary Beth Norton, Maggie Washington, Jeff Cowie, Glen Altschuler, Dick Polenberg, Aaron Sachs, Robert Travers, Durba Ghosh, Vic Koschmann, Dominick

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Though I began the dissertation among bucolic scenery far above Cayuga’s waters, I finished it surrounded by the pavement and three flats of Chicago. The funding that made this relocation possible included an Albert J. Beveridge Research Grant from the American Historical Association, a Provost’s Diversity Fellowship, and Mellon Dissertation Completion Fellowship from Cornell University. While in Chicago, a Dissertation Completion Fellowship from the Louisville Institute and a Charlotte Newcombe Dissertation Fellowship from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation gave me a year of uninterrupted time to research and write. This time gave me the opportunity to meet many wonderful people whose charge it is to preserve the past. Amy Koehler introduced me to the Moody Bible Institute’s rich, if untapped, special collections. She, along with her partner Dan, housed and fed me on research trips and have become fast friends.

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The Newberry Library occupies a special place in the archipelago of Chicago archives, but it occupies a particularly special place to me. I began the project under the auspices of a Newberry Library Short-Term Research Grant, and finished it as Assistant Director of the Dr. William M. Scholl Center for American History and Culture. In that span, numerous people became both colleagues and friends. Danny Greene and Heather Radke were supportive Scholl Center colleagues, while Brodie Austin, Doug Knox, Scott Stevens, Karen Christansen, Diane Dillon, Jim Ackerman, Jim Grossman, Rachel Bohlmann, Hana Layson, Liesl Olson, Rachel Rooney, Carla Zecher, John Brady, Ginger Frere, and Matthew Rutherford offered a mix of personal encouragement and scholarly advice.

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A central argument of this dissertation is that friendships matter in the study of history, and I arrived at this conclusion as much from personal experience as primary research. Matthew

Miller and David “CM” Michael have been brothers to me since youth, and neither wars on terror or Scandinavian educations could keep them from supporting this project. Both Kelly and I have been endowed with the friendship of Josh and Kristyn Bochniak and Shane Stennes and Stacy Deery Stennes who, as Frank Wood suggested could happen, sustained us as family. John and Rebecca Rowley, Ian and Vanessa Toevs, Scott and Kirsten Gabriel, Ben and Joy Thomas, Rebecca Heidkamp, Brett and Tolu Badders, and Moses Ong also encouraged me with their fellowship. To Barclay Sylvester, Dave Macdam, Shane Mueller, Melissa Runyon, and Christ Medina, I’m grateful for the couches and meals that made research trips bearable.

But blood does matter, and these acknowledgements cannot pass without reference to the lifetime of support my family has provided. My mother Deidria taught me to love knowledge, and my father Danny instilled in me the work ethic to attain it. As my sisters Elizabeth and Stephanie know, they are responsible for the poetry of my prose. Grandma Lanita gave me little jolts of encouragement every time she bragged about me. But they all seemed to intuitively understand the mindset of a graduate student, always asking “How is the dissertation coming?” and never “When is it going to be done?”

To Grandpa Louie I owe my interest in history. As a child, he carted me about in various Chryslers to visit America’s historic landmarks. What I don’t think he ever understood, however, was that it was his childhood memories of Pike County, Kentucky, that drew me to the past, and never the Washington monument. I’m deeply saddened he did not live to see this dissertation take shape, but it is dedicated to him, as his memory inspired it.

Emerson spent too many Saturdays away from daddy to see this project finished. But he constantly reminded me there were more important things in life than Frank Wood, like

discovering the world anew. My hope for him is that he lives a life with acknowledgments that are as rich and as rewarding as these.

And finally, because tradition matters, this work is dedicated to Kelly. This day could someday be, an anniversary.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN NOTES

BCHS	Reference Files, Bureau County Historical Society. Princeton, IL.
CCSPP	Cook County Socialist Party Papers, 1912-1935. UIC Special Collections, Richard J. Daley Library.
CEWWPF	Catherine E. Wood, Widower Pension File, National Archives and Records Administration, RG 15, Certificate No. 664592.
CWP	Charles Watts Letters ca. 1810-1851, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.
EETHPF	Elijah E. T. Hazen Pension File, National Archives and Records Administration, RG 15, Certificate No. 411425.
EGPCC	East Garfield Park Community Collection. Special Collections and Preservation Division, Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, Illinois.
FLWSB	Frank L. Wood Scrapbooks, 1886-1945. Special Collections and Preservation Division, Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, Illinois.
FLWLB	Frank L. Wood Letter Books, 1863-1940s. Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ.
JBL	Jacob Baldwin, Letters, 1855-1856. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Springfield, Illinois.
LABP	Louis Andrew Bowman Papers, 1876-1959. Special Collections and Preservation Division, Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, Illinois.
MMECR	Malden Methodist Episcopal Church Records. Bureau County Genealogical Society, Princeton, Illinois.
WAMECR	Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church Records. United Methodist Church Northern Regional Archives, United Library, Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois.
WBCR	Wesleyan Bible Class Records, 1905-1956. Special Collections and Preservation Division, Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, Illinois.

- WGPPC West Garfield Park Community Collection. Special Collections and Preservation Division, Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, Illinois.
- WMZP William M. Zearing Papers, 1799-1849, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois.
- WSCP West [Near West Side] Community Collection, 1854-1960. Special Collections and Preservation Division, Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, Illinois.

INTRODUCTION: EPISTLE

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; . . .

- Galatians II: 20 (KJV)

Religion is a belief, but it is also a life.

- Frank L. Wood (1936)¹



It was two weeks before his sixty-third birthday and he was living in a two-flat on Adams Avenue, not ten blocks from the street on which he was raised. His once taut skin now sagged with the weight of age, his hair remaining only in neatly matted strands atop the crown of his head. His posture, once a flawless comportment forged by decades in public speaking, now buckled with the lingering effects of a recent illness. He continued to work editing a daily legal paper—a job he had held for half of the thirty-eight years he had been married to his wife—but his weakening condition and advancing age made the commute and daily stress just a little harder to bear.

Such a confluence of personal consistency and inexorable change had come to mark these later years. At one point, he had been a member of nearly thirty civic, political, and religious organizations committed to reforming the city of Chicago in which he had long lived. But now, after having left or been expelled from nearly every one, he remained only a member of the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church where he continued to teach a Bible class he had helped organize nearly fifty years ago. But even here, the church's stately sanctuary, which could

¹ FLW, *The Layman's Galilean* (Chicago: Grant's Printery, 1938), 135.

seat thousands, now counted only two hundred members after most of them had left for the suburbs; and there were rumors that the city planned to raze the church to widen the street for all the cars that drove through the neighborhood and no longer stopped. He took the exodus to be a visible portent of not only his own eventual passing, but also the twilight of some far greater age. For while he would go on to live for another eighteen years, Frank Louis Wood sat down to write as if at the end of his days as he watched another summer close in September of 1927.²

In all likelihood Wood sat at the stately, glass-topped mahogany desk where he composed many of his letters, his pen dipped in a well of green ink set aside for special correspondence like this. The desk was a gift from a prominent English Sunday school teacher, the inkwell a shell casing that had purportedly killed a friend in the Great War, and on the shelves and walls of the surrounding study, hundreds of personal mementos were also displayed. There were pictures of friends, portraits of Jesus, and busts of Abraham Lincoln. On his shelves sat editions of the *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* he edited, issues of the *New Adult Bible Class Monthly* he contributed to, and annual reports from the Cook County Sunday School Association he once worked for. On his walls hung memorabilia from the Thirteenth Ward Republican Club he officered, flyers from his 1906 race for the state senate as a Republican, and tracts from his 1914 run for Congress as a Socialist. And on his desk sat his worn, leather-bound copy of the King James Bible he had received as a child. But more than anything else, Wood filled his study walls with pictures of fellow members of the Wesleyan Bible Class he continued to teach at the Western Avenue church. Indeed, the walls were so filled with these snapshots that they spilled

² On the WAMEC's declining membership see *Journal and Year Book of the Eighty-Eighth Session of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, First Methodist Episcopal Church Oak Park, Illinois, October 5-10, 1927* (Chicago: Rock River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1927), 130. On Western Avenue's widening see "Road Widening is Pushed Over 36 Mile Total," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 11 Jun. 1927.



Figure 1: Frank L. Wood at his desk, c. 1930. Chicago Public Library, WBC 1.29.

out of his study doors and crowded the hallway, where Wood had also placed a number of other keepsakes and souvenirs. He called it his “Hall of Far Places,” after the increasingly great distance such tokens had traveled to reach his home.³

It was to these intimate “Wesleyan Friends” that Wood wrote on 13 September 1927. Over a thousand women and men from Chicago’s West Side had joined the class since Wood became its teacher, but much like the Western Avenue church its attendance had also whittled

³ Discussion’s of FLW’s study and its contents can be found in Mrs. Mary L. Hayford, “The Captain’s Room,” in *Ahoy! The S. S. Wesleyan of the Olivet Methodist Line Announces Its Next Sailing Dates*, fifty-sixth anniversary program dated 17-20 Oct. 1936, folder 29, box 1, WBCR; “Have You A Hobby?” *Austin News*, 3 Apr. 1940, clipping in folder 15, box 1, WGPCC; “Travels Abroad Via Notes from Bible Students,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 Jul. 1940.

down to about a hundred. But with letters such as these, Wood remained in regular contact with nearly every member. The date was the thirty-first anniversary of his having taken over the class, but annual letters such as these were but a part of an elaborate system of correspondence he had maintained for decades. And as he sat in a room surrounded by portraits and visages of friends he had known for nearly half a century, in a neighborhood and a city that looked almost nothing like it did just a decade before, Wood began his epistle.

September 13, 1927

Dear Wesleyan Friend,

That salutation includes every kind of member; Home, Suburban, Absent, regular, irregular, those filled with class spirit and those who have toward it a cold-footed attitude. Because you are dear to me. There are no exceptions; no mental reservations.

Only a few hours have passed since I have seen some of you. Thirty years have come and gone since I have looked into the faces of others.

But I have not forgotten.

Your pictures hang in the gallery of my memory. Every one is on the eye line.

Often I stand before them and think of the past. Especially is this true at anniversary time.

At the beginning of the forty-eight year as a member of the class and the thirty-second as its teacher, I have been walking through this gallery. There isn't a person pictured there whose friendship has not meant much to me. My life is richer because I have known you. I want to thank you from my heart for your loyalty and your love.

There are many things about which I should like to write, but I am limited as to space, and must needs choose from among them that which appeals to me as most important.

Because of the materialism of our day; because service is being heralded as a substitute for salvation; because social uplift is being emphasized instead of spiritual regeneration; because ministers and teachers are denying the fundamentals of Christ's teachings, I desire again to reaffirm my faith:

I believe in God. I believe that He is a spirit and that those who worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord. I believe in His deity. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary. I believe in His miracles because I believe that the power that can create, can rule and over-rule. I believe in the story of His life, death, resurrection and ascension as left by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I believe that He returned in the spirit at Pentecost and has been here since that time, for I have felt Him in my heart. I believe that on the cross He tasted death for every man, and that by faith in Him we are redeemed from the power of sin. I believe that what He did here in the flesh, He does now through the spirit, to soul and body.

This was my belief when I first before you on September 13, 1896. After all these years of study and experience, this is still my belief.

I regard these things as fundamental.

I would no more think of being a Bible class teacher and denying them, than of being a navigator and denying the principles of navigation.

I would have the right to make the denial, but I would resign from my job, surrender my commission, leave the bridge, and no longer claim to be a navigator.

May I ask you to join me in praying that the coming year, in spiritual power, may be the greatest of all the one and thirty we have been together.

Yours always,

FRANK L. WOOD⁴

With that, Wood declared to over a thousand of his closest friends that he had become a fundamentalist.



Scour the footnotes of American religious history and you will find no mention of Frank L. Wood. No monograph notes his name; no study considers his theology; no scholarship accounts for his politics. And nor is this surprising. A minister's busy pen or a denomination's printing press has traditionally provided much of the material for the study of American evangelicalism generally, and of Protestant fundamentalism in particular. Scholars have taken the doctrinal positions and political stances of prominent ministers or national associations to be not only representative of the experiences of those who followed them, but also somehow tantamount. Laypeople who never rose above the title of Sunday school teacher are often of little consequence.

Such a perspective has clouded our understanding of the emergence of Protestant fundamentalism in America. It has cast the term not as an aspect of the lived experiences of those women and men who took up the term to describe their religious identity, but as a kind of amorphous school of theological thought that somehow animates the religious worlds of ordinary

⁴ FLW to WBC, 13 Sep. 1927, in *A Presidential Decade: Triple Anniversary of the Wesleyan Bible Class*, forty-seventh anniversary program dated 16-18 Oct. 1927, folder 20, box 1, WBCR.

people. Over the course of the last decades, historians have argued that fundamentalism was, at its core, “primarily a religious movement” driven not by immediate social concerns, but by debates surrounding “genuine doctrinal traditions” whose histories date back as far as the eighteenth century.⁵ Out of these longstanding theological disputations, there emerged at the dawn of the twentieth century a number of ministers and prominent laymen who argued that the intellectual developments then current in modern theological thought betrayed the central tenets of these longstanding doctrinal traditions. In response they organized a plethora of interdenominational, para-church organizations to defend what they called the “fundamentals” of the Christian faith with the goal of driving intellectual and theological modernists from any official denominational position.⁶

This book takes a different approach. In contrast to the longstanding historiographical reliance upon the lives and thoughts of prominent ministers, it charts the life of an ordinary Bible class leader from Chicago’s West Side who in 1927 declared himself to be a fundamentalist. It uses the religious devotions, intimate friendships, social activities, personal theology, and political thought of one unknown, but amazingly well documented Sunday school advocate as

⁵ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 3, 4.

⁶ For similar studies in this vein see George W. Dollard, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1973); Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875-1982* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academic Books, 1983) David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850* (Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1986); George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991); Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970); Joel A. Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929-1942,” *Church History* 49, no. 1 (Mar. 1980): 62-75; Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, eds. *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (Knoxville, 1991); D. G. Hart, *That Old-Time religion in Modern America: Evangelical Protestantism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002).

windows through which to view how other Protestant laypeople came to adopt this potent doctrinal term to describe their everyday lives.⁷

Raised in a tiny farming hamlet in central Illinois in the 1870s, Frank Louis Wood was in many ways a native son of the small-town Midwest. He claimed his boyhood home of Malden, Illinois forever remained to him a “sacred place,” and anchored much of his social and religious worldview. Here he claimed to have learned that the tenets of evangelical Christian morality—with its emphasis on an individual’s personal, spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ as the source of salvation, the inspired and authoritative nature of scripture, the necessity of earnest, temperate living for spiritual growth, and the need for believers to advance these beliefs in their immediate worlds—were essential not only to an individual’s spiritual development, but also to the greater social order. Evangelicalism’s emphasis on earnest industriousness ensured society’s unending march of material progress, while its concern for the spiritual and moral wellbeing of others ensured industry’s more acquisitive edge would be tapered. Of course, the viability of this worldview rested solely upon the social, economic, and demographic peculiarities of the

⁷ The choice to funnel this argument through the life of a single individual is somewhat motivated by the fact that the history of fundamentalism has been given to an uncanny number of biographies on prominent theologians and revivalists. See, for example, Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Kathryn Lofton, “The Preacher Paradigm: Promotional Biographies and the Modern-Made Evangelist,” *Religion & American Culture* vol. 16, no. 1 (2006): 95-123; D. G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America* (New York: P & R Publishing, 2003); Barry Hankins, *God’s Rascal: J. Frank Norris and the Beginning of Southern Fundamentalism* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2010); C. Allyn Russell, *Voices of American Fundamentalism: Seven Biographical Studies* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976); William Vance Trollinger, Jr., *God’s Empire: William Bell Riley and Midwestern Fundamentalism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); Daile Edward Soden, *The Reverend Mark Matthews: An Activist in the Progressive Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001). It seems only appropriate that the laity receive its biography as well.

religiously homogenous Midwestern frontier, but they were nonetheless principles that profoundly guided Wood throughout the remainder of his life.

Upon his coming of age in Chicago in the 1880s, Wood continued to anchor both his religious activity and political engagements in a worldview that granted social acceptance upon personal morality, and expected every upright, responsible citizen provide a modicum of comfort to society's less fortunate. His earliest involvement with the Wesleyan Bible Class in the 1880s and Chicago's Republican party in the 1890s revolved around manifesting his own social and religious respectability while also providing outlets for advancement for all society's respectable citizens. But as Chicago's cultural, economic, and demographic profile increasingly departed from the homogenous world of his childhood throughout the twentieth century, Wood's religious and political commitments took on increasingly sharper valences. The growth of the city's non-Protestant, ethnic population, which remade Wood's own neighborhood into a district of immigrant enclaves, hardened his theological positions on personal morality and spiritual propriety as he looked to recreate the community he envisioned not in a particular place, but around a set of religious ideals. At the same time, the intensification of the city's class conflict and the blatant municipal corruption in the governance of vital city services also propelled Wood's involvement in increasingly radical political causes, culminated in his candidacy for a number of public offices as a Socialist throughout the 1910s.

Though Wood, who was never willing to compromise upon the spiritual mission of the church for political gain, looked upon these two activities as separate enterprises, they ultimately contributed to a singular aim of creating a world in which evangelical principles guided both and personal decisions and social interactions. And it was his failure on all of these fronts that led Wood to declare himself a fundamentalist in the fall of 1927. Though the term itself had

originated in a dispute among Northern Baptists over their denomination's statement of faith, for Wood the identification had a much more malleable and capacious definition. It incorporated not only his longstanding commitment to theological orthodoxy and devotional rigor, but also his vision of the good society, rooted in individual's magnanimous, and friendly, treatment of each other.

Nor was Wood alone in this evolution. As a charter member and then teacher of what contemporaries called an "adult Bible class" to signal the spiritual maturity of its young members, Wood was involved in a devotional revolution then sweeping America's Protestant denomination. Known as the Adult Bible Class Movement, this devotional crusade similarly emerged largely in cities across the county, attracting rural Protestant migrants with their promise of an immediate community and personal advancement. Out of these local, congregational Bible classes—which, as the International Sunday School Association Conservatively estimated in 1922 included five million Americans in over fifty thousand Bible classes nationwide—emerged a number of city federations, state associations, and denominational organizations that also engaged in a number of evangelistic and political campaigns intended to restore personal morality and civic responsibility at the center of social life.⁸ These organizations and their publications became the outlet for the writing of many fundamentalist theologians and authors, and many of these campaigns advocated predictability conservative Protestant goals such a Prohibition, anti-evolution, or anti-immigration. But their efforts to enact legislation that mirrored the morality and equanimity of their small town origins also led to an involvement in a number of campaigns in support of legislation typically

⁸ Raymond A. Smith, "The Adult Bible Class Movement," (B.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1922), 26.

association with more liberal, Social Gospel Protestants such as mandatory arbitration, basic labor laws, and the municipal ownership of city services.

This dissertation, therefore, does not situate fundamentalism's emergence in the longstanding debates of countless seminarians, but in the lived experience of that generation of ordinary Protestants for whom the term "fundamentalist" would become a meaningful source of personal identity for many. Instead, it argues that in addition to fundamentalism's theological valences, the term itself has a social history specifically grounded in the mass migration of ordinary evangelical Protestants from the American countryside to the nation's urban centers at the turn of the century. And in doing so, it not only expands existing interpretative paradigms to include the laity, but also challenges a growing consensus that with the emergence of Protestant fundamentalism in the early twentieth century lay the origins of the Christian Right in the late twentieth century. In both popular discourse as well as academic debate, all things fundamental tend to be but a prelude for modern social and political conservatism.⁹ But as the social and political engagements of numerous Bible class teachers like Wood suggest, the industrial origins of the first wave of American fundamentalism allowed for a certain political diversity that the present, post-industrial manifestation American fundamentalism does not allow. As these ordinary Protestant laypeople lived out their lives in rapidly industrializing cities, the term "fundamentalism" would become for them not only an expression of spiritual consistency, but

⁹ See, for example, Barry Hankins, *Jesus and Gin: Evangelicalism, the Roaring Twenties and Today's Culture Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*; Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2010); Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalists in the City: Conflict and Division in Boston's Churches, 1885-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

also an idiom through which to conceive of their efforts to preserve other pre-industrial forms of association, political economy, and social life.



Using the narrative arch of Frank Wood’s life as its guide, the dissertation proceeds in five chapters that not only chart his evolving identity as a Methodist, evangelical, socialist, and fundamentalists, but also simultaneously uses Wood as a window through which to explore the social and devotional experiences of millions of other laypeople like him who were involved with the Adult Bible Class Movement. **Chapter 1, “A Congregation of the People,”** explores the religious world of Wood’s childhood home in the village of Malden, Illinois. Here I argue that for young Frank, as for numerous other Midwestern Protestants who would migrate to the region’s cities throughout the turn of the century, local churches were the focal point of a community’s social life. In numerous rural communities, churches housed schools, courts, and social functions in addition to worship services, and such overlap heightened the church’s importance in the community even as it rested on the shaky demographic foundations of country life. The chapter also argues that this heavy emphasis on church-like fellowship imparted to Wood the belief that every morally upright citizen was worthy of the community’s aid. The chapter also covers Wood’s early years in Chicago to show the influence of local churches upon community life even in major metropolises.

Beginning with Wood’s forced departure from schooling in 1878, **Chapter 2, “Prodigal Son,”** also follows him as he becomes a charter member of the Wesleyan Bible Class two years later. The chapter broadly situates Wood’s enrollment in the class in what contemporaries called “the young people’s movement,” which was born of a nationwide fear that the Protestant church was losing its youth. Local churches across the country devised devotional and organizational forms like Bible classes or young people’s associations to retain young people to the church. The

cumulative effect these Bible class efforts was to ensure that a generation of Protestant youngsters continued to look to the local church as the center of their community. But for Frank, who benefitted spiritually, politically, and professionally from the Wesleyan Bible Class, it also continued to sustain the notion that a major role of the church was in shaping economic and social life.

Though **Chapter 3, “Where Two or More,”** continues chronologically by beginning with Wood’s appointment as teacher of the Wesleyan Class in 1896, it is also a broader analysis of the evangelical discourse of “friendship” at the turn of the century. Frank Wood talked, thought and wrote about friendship incessantly; and the membership records of the Wesleyan class suggest a number of individuals joined the Bible class in search of friendship as well. But Wood and his Wesleyans were also a part of a much larger discussion among conservative Protestants about finding and making lifelong—indeed, eternal—spiritual friendships in an increasingly secularized world. I argue this concern for “friendship” became the idiomatic foundation of modern America’s evangelical subculture, a code word for the unique relationships evangelicals claimed to have with each other and that the broader world did not share. To Wood and millions of others, the term was as narrow as it was deep, pitting one’s spiritual “friends” on the other side of a chasm from modern America. Such friendships sustained Wood in both his private and profession life. The chapter then charts how this notion of a community of friends became the foundation for certain political coalitions as well, grounded in the notion of preserving these friendships and the communities they nourished.

Chapter 4, “Doers of the Word,” next explores how these tight-knit, Bible class communities of “friends” became the foundation for political action at the dawn of the twentieth century. Increasingly coordinated by the ecclesiastical activities of laypeople like Wood, this

new “Adult Bible Class Movement” would become the rallying cry of countless local political campaigns as evangelical Bible class members sought to translate their devotional solidarity into a political coalition. But the chapter focuses particularly on Wood’s political career in the city, moving from Wood’s failed run for the Illinois state senate in 1906 as a reform-minded Republican, through his years as a Bible class organizer with the Cook County Sunday School Association, and finally to his time as a Socialist political candidate throughout the 1910s. I argue that all of these political positions were rooted in the social and religious values Wood had drawn from Malden. Each in its own ways expressed his longstanding conviction that the local church should be at the center of community life, and that every member of that community was entitled to life’s basic necessities.

Finally, **Chapter 5, “The Word Made Flesh,”** charts Wood’s self-identification as a fundamentalist in 1927. The chapter situates Wood’s declaration within the broader activities of the fundamentalist movement throughout the 1920s, but argues that unlike the clergy and prominent laymen who ran these organizations, the fundamentalism of Frank Wood was grounded, as it always had been, in the immediate circumstance of his social and devotional world. Far from a skilled theologian, Wood’s fundamentalism was not grounded in the defense of a specific doctrine or theological system, but was motivated by his concern that the Wesleyan Bible Class specifically, and the Protestant church more generally, remain spiritually relevant and vibrant in a rapidly changing world. Specifically, Wood plaintively attempted through his devotional and doctrinal stridency to recreate the community of friends he once had in the Wesleyan class, before the rapid social and demographic changes of Chicago’s West Side drove many of them to the suburbs.

The wonderfully well-documented nature of Frank Wood's life, perhaps unprecedented for a layperson, makes this project possible. The Chicago Public Library houses all ten volumes of Wood's personal scrapbooks that cover his public career as a evangelical activist from 1886 until the year before his death in 1944 as well as the records of the Wesleyan Bible Class, which include annual reports, class correspondence, and a complete run of the class' newsletter. Finally, there are four self-published volumes of Wood's writing—two collections of verse, and two collections of his most popular Bible lessons and public addresses. Finally, Princeton University's Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts have recently made a collection of Wood's personal correspondence available. These two collections are the core of my primary source material. They provide the chronological outline of Wood's life, which I then supplement from other collections on the organizations he joined or remained active in. Where the gaps in Wood's life exist, his involvement with the city of Chicago, the Rock River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and especially the Adult Bible Class Movement provide material to reflect upon potential routes his thought and activity could have taken by considering the millions of other ordinary Protestants like him.



Frank L. Wood may never have composed a significant text, nor founded an organization of national prominence. But in declaring himself to be a fundamentalists, Wood placed himself at the center of one of the most profound theological and cultural development in American history. This dissertation uses the narrative framework of Frank Wood's life to build upon and challenge prevailing interpretations of the rise of American fundamentalism. His life provides an unprecedented glimpse into the ways in which the social, political and devotional world of Protestant laypeople became the crucible from which modern America's evangelical subculture emerged.

CHAPTER ONE:
A CONGREGATION OF THE PEOPLE

Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness,
And for his wonderful works to the children of men!
Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people,
And praise him in the assembly of the elders.
He turneth rivers into a wilderness,
And the water springs into dry ground;
A fruitful land into barrenness,
For the wickedness of them that dwell therein.
He turneth the wilderness into a standing water,
And dry ground into water springs.
And there he maketh the hungry to dwell,
That they may prepare a city for habitation;
And sow fields, and plant vineyards,
Which may yield fruits of increase.
He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly;
And suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

- The Book of Psalms 107: 31-36 (KJV)

When I think of the teaching and the guidance and the inspiration that was so generously poured into my life in this church, and the love and friendship and regard with which I was surrounded in this community, I feel with the Psalmist the urge to abundantly utter the memory of God's great goodness bestowed upon me in the associations of this place.

- Rev. Frank Field, former Bureau County resident (1938)¹



To many once and former residents of Bureau County, the hamlets, villages, and towns that dotted this patch of Illinois countryside at the time of Frank Louis Wood's birth in 1864 were, at their core, religious communities. Reminiscing some fifty years later, former resident Frank Field claimed "the Bible had its rightful place" there. A native of the village of Dover who

¹ "Dover Church Memories Told by Rev. Field," *Bureau County Republican* 5 May 1938, "Churches" Reference File, BCHS.

attended its First Congregational Church alongside members of Wood's extended family, Field claimed that unlike the irreligious life of most Americans, the lives of Bureau County residents were steeped in scripture. Adults learned of the book in church, children memorized its golden verses in school. Even those who did not read "between the covers of the Great Book itself"—and Field assured their numbers were few—still learned of their "relationship with God and . . . obligations to each other" from "the men and women who composed the church." "I give it as my honest conviction," Field appraised, "that we were thrice blessed in being born into a community of humble and honest people; men and women, who like Christ himself, knew how to work with their hands and were not ashamed of it; where folks knew each other and were neighbors and friends, friends in the sense of the little boy's definition that 'a friend is a feller that knows all about you, but likes you.'"²

Frank Wood shared many of Field's sentiments. Though only ten when he left, Wood forever referred to the village of Malden in which he was raised as "a sacred place." It was a community of matchless intimacy, where "everyone knew me and I everyone," and where such familiarity fortified an even more profound mutuality that made every resident both a partner and a benefactor in society's economic and spiritual progress.³ In contrast to the city of Chicago where he would spend the rest of his life, Malden seemed almost heaven on earth. In the hectic pace and cultural disunion of modern urban life, the forms of Christian fellowship that

² Quoted in Mildred L. Anderson, *Gems of Yesteryears: The History of Dover, Illinois, 1833-1967* (Madison, WI.: College Printing & Typing Co., Inc., 1968), 73-74; "Dover Church Memories Told by Rev. Field." See also *The First One Hundred Years of the First Congregational Church, Dover, Illinois: Organized March Twenty-Fourth, Eighteen Hundred Thirty-Eight at the Brigham Farm* (n.p., 1938), 19-21; Ella Warren Harrison, et al., *The Hampshire Colony Congregational Church: Its First Hundred Years, 1831-1931* (Princeton, IL: The Bureau County Record, 1931), 27.

³ "Wesleyan Bible Class Caravan to Malden, Illinois," program dated 8 Jun. 1941, folder 15, box 1, WGPCC.

purportedly once structured Bureau County's social life were now only imaginable in a kingdom yet to come. As Wood wrote, as he was so often wont to do, in poetic verse,

How oft mid the rush and the city's confusion,
It's turmoil and hurry, its care and alarm,
My heart has turned backward with deep felt emotion,
To the dear old time when a boy on the farm.

.....
The boys and the girls who were childhood's dear playmates,
Are scattered afar, over mount, plain and sea;
And we'll meet ne'er again till the heavenly gates,
Will I trust, open wide, for them and for me.⁴

Like millions of other Midwestern Protestants who migrated from rural communities to urban centers throughout the late nineteenth century, both Wood and Field constructed almost utopian visions of their childhood homes. Bureau County appears as if a new Eden from which humanity had been banished for its sins of industrial greed and materialistic consumption. Such an interpretation may seem appropriate to the nostalgic musings of an aging fundamentalist, but it obscures a far more complex history. Metropolises like Chicago did embody a far greater diversity that villages like Malden, and the advent of industrial capitalism and consumer culture within them profoundly changed the ways in which most people lived and understood their lives. But the theological and political consequences of these developments were never as self-evident as Wood, and many historians, have suggested. For no matter how far "back" he had to look to see Malden, Wood's faith was forged in the city in which he would spend the majority of his life. Without tracing this history and moving beyond the rural-urban, traditional-urban dichotomies that have defined the history of fundamentalism, Wood and those like him of necessity appear as befuddled curmudgeons, yearning for a simpler time.



⁴ Frank L. Wood, "On the Farm," in *A Few Chips From a Block of Wood* (Chicago: Harlo R. Grant's Printery, 1899), unpaginated, folder 15, box 1, WGPCC.

In many respects, Bureau County began as a church.

On 6 July 1831 a ragged band of migrants from Hampshire County, Massachusetts arrived upon the undulating tall-grass prairie that stretched north of Big Bureau Creek. Comprised of six bachelors and two married couples, the troupe was the first organized party of white migrants to settle upon the plains of Big Bureau's plains. Exhausted from their nearly two-month journey, the party had been reduced to eating tree bark. But the troupe's tattered state did not delimit their grander ambitions, for they were also the vanguard of the Illinois Colonial Association, a cooperative formed the preceding winter by a number of Hampshire County residents who desired to "improve their condition" by acquiring land in the west. Yet as the preamble to its constitution made clear, the Association also found "the subject of settling the valley of the Mississippi by colonies of industrious and moral men from the Atlantic States . . . to be of vast importance to the future of the inhabitants of that valley and to the common good of our country . . ."⁵

Like many pious New England observers, these self-described "sons of Pilgrim Fathers" believed that the unsettled West, bereft of such institutions as schools and churches, threatened to become a moral and economic drag upon not only the nation, but also the Christian church. As American Sunday School Union missionary Stephen Paxson observed of the area at the same time, "the Mississippi Valley is to decide the destiny of America; and the Sunday-school is to decide the destiny of the Mississippi Valley; and the Church is to decide the destiny of the

⁵ *Hampshire Gazette*, 9 Feb. 1831, quoted in Harrison, *The Hampshire Colony Congregational Church*, 3-4. See also H. C. Bradsby, ed., *History of Bureau County, Illinois* (Chicago: World Publishing Company, 1884), 126-30. My decision to root FLW's life in the long history of the community he came from draws inspiration from Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

Sunday school.”⁶ In this vein, the Association, months before its departure, gathered and organized the Hampshire Colony Congregational Church to serve as the colony’s religious and administrative center. The colony held meetings after church, conducted business after prayer, and registered transactions in the church’s record book. To Association President and Hampshire Colony church Deacon Ebenezer Strong Phelps, this braiding of municipal, economic and religious life was the settlement’s central purpose. The colony, he argued in circulars meant to attract members, existed “not so much to promote the private interest of its members as to advance the cause of Christ by planting religious institutions in the virgin soil of the west and aiding the cause of Christian education in its various departments.” A distinctly missional community, the colony’s farms were to be but a platform for its churches from which pious and industrious New Englanders would grow and spread throughout the state. It was this grand vision of piety and prosperity that had sustained the travelers from Hampshire County on their lengthy migration—a sojourn extended by the party’s refusal to travel on the Sabbath. And when they arrived in that summer in 1831, the colony, starving but finally settled, gathered as a church, held a concert of prayer for the conversion of the world, and went about developing their claims.⁷

⁶ B. Paxson Drury, *A Fruitful Life: A Narrative of the Experiences and Missionary Labors of Stephen Paxson* (Philadelphia: The American Sunday-School Union, 1882), 176. See also Carrie Prudence Kofoid, “Puritan Influences in the Formative Years of Illinois,” in *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society for the Year 1905: Sixth Annual Meeting of the Society, Springfield, Ill., Jan. 25-26, 1905* pub. no. 10 (Springfield: Illinois State Journal Co., 1906), 368-70; Richard Lyle Power, “A Crusade to Extend Yankee Culture, 1820-1865,” *New England Quarterly* 13 (1940): 638-653; Richard Lyle Power, *Planting Corn Belt Culture: The Impress of the Upland Southerners and Yankee in the Old Northwest* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1953), 5-9, 12-14, 34-39; John Randolph Willis, *God’s Frontiersmen: The Yale Band in Illinois* (Washington, D.C.: The University Press of America, Inc., 1979), 16-21; S. Scott Rohrer, *Wandering Souls: Protestant Migrations in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 202-14.

⁷ Illinois Colonial Association Circular, quoted Harrison, et al., *The Hampshire Colony Congregational Church*, 4. See also *ibid.*, 5-10; Bradsby, ed., *History of Bureau County*, 128-30.

The hardships and seemingly limitless opportunities of the prairie frontier would challenge such commitments. By the time the Illinois legislature carved Bureau County out of Putnam County in 1837, the Hampshire Colony, as well as with two other colonial associations, had dissolved as members abandoned their religious missions for more lucrative ventures. As the pioneer-turned-historian Nehemiah Matson recorded some years later, Bureau County's colonial associations never met "the expectations of [their] projectors."⁸ Most went to what they thought were literally greener pastures, abandoning God for mammon. Yet throughout midcentury the Hampshire Colony Congregational Church continued to occupy a central place in the county's development. Situated atop a hill overlooking what became the county seat of Princeton, the church's corniced, whitewashed edifice served as the county's courthouse, schoolhouse and town hall for nearly a decade.⁹ Even after the county separated its administrative and judicial offices from the church in 1848, Bureau County residents continued to draw a sense of its civic identity from its churches. Upon his arrival in 1857, the Reverend Flavel Bascom commented that the county still had a "more than ordinary whole hearted allegiance to the cause of Christ." A member of the "Illinois Band" of Yale Theological Seminary Students who had been organizing churches, Sabbath schools, and temperance societies throughout the state since the 1820s, Bascom was particularly impressed by the county's financial commitment to its spiritual wellbeing. The county's wealthiest families willingly shouldered much of his \$1000 salary as

⁸ N. Matson, *Reminiscences of Bureau County* (Princeton, IL: Republican Book and Job Office, 1872), 333. On Bureau County's other colonies see *ibid.*, 331-33; Alice Bittner, comp., "History of the Providence Congregational Church, 1837-1956" typescript mss. mimeographed by Betty High, in "Churches" Reference File, BCHS; Karen H. Stephan and G. Edward Stephan, "Religion and the Survival of Utopian Communities," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 12 (1973): 95.

⁹ Matson, *Reminiscences of Bureau County*, 204-05, 255-56, 331-35, 340. See also Bittner, comp., "History of the Providence Congregational Church," 12.

pastor of the First Congregational Church in the village of Dover, and even those in “moderate worldly circumstances” gave “freely of their property” to organize a private academy that provided the county’s teachers with moral and pedagogical training. Such collective devotion, Bascom concluded, was the source of Bureau County’s “peaceful, virtuous and thriving community.”¹⁰

In connecting Bureau County’s success with its sense of churchliness, Bascom was by no means peculiar. Other visitors similarly found causal linkages between the sincerity of the county’s piety and the extent of its prosperity. Charles Watts, an English immigrant who tried to farm outside the village of Dover, similarly found such connections to be unavoidable, although their practice ultimately bewildered him. Most of Bureau County’s farmers, he observed, were “professed Christians” from “old Eastern states” who, in addition to being “intelligent, enterprising, and benevolent,” observed the “strictest morality.” Most not only abstained from the consumption of alcohol, but also eschewed extravagant dress and holiday frivolities as sinful diversions from a whole-hearted, contemplative faith. To Watts’ utter surprise, however, he found many of these same abstemious yeomen also tended to hoard five times as many acres as they needed to subsist. “The fact is,” he grumbled to his brother back in England, “many of them are too greedy to get rich and sow more land than they can attend to for you know it is much

¹⁰ Flavel Bascom, “Autobiography of Rev. Flavel Bascom: Or A Memorandum of a Few Leading Facts and Events in His Life, Already Protracted Beyond Three Score Years & Ten,” handwritten MS [c. 1870s-80s], Hammond Library, Chicago Theological Seminary, 219-20. On the Yale Band see Willis, *God’s Frontiersmen*; Joseph E. Roy, “History of Congregationalism in Illinois,” in *Congregational*, vol. I of *Illinois Society of Church History: Historical Statements and Papers* (Chicago: Press of David Oliphant, 1895), 28-33; George B. Harrington, *Past and Present of Bureau County, Illinois: Together with Biographical Sketches of Many of its Prominent and Leading Citizens and Illustrious Dead* (Chicago: The Pioneer Publishing Co., 1906), 117-18; Anderson, *Gems of Yesteryears*, 89-93.

easier to put in the seed than to reap the produce, consequently much is wasted by poor tillage and slovenly harvesting.”¹¹

Disgusted, Watts, who struggled for years acquire his own plot of land, believed such agrarian covetousness betrayed the county’s sanctimonious nature. Yet though vexed, Watts had in fact uncovered a central feature of Bureau County’s self-understanding. The thousands of men who designated themselves Bureau County’s pioneers were as ambitious as they were pious. Though they looked to the earth and their calloused hands for their wealth, they, like most migrants who settled throughout the Midwest, fancied themselves captains of agriculture at the forefront of commercial life. Nearly half of the county’s twenty-five hundred farms were over a hundred and sixty acres in size—more than ten percent were over three hundred—and all of them frenetically grew crops almost solely for the market. Indeed, though Bureau County’s settlers had cultivated less than a tenth of the county’s tillable acres in 1860, they were still the state’s largest wheat grower and third largest pork producer with over 40,000 hogs. As the more bookish Princeton lawyer William M. Zearing complained in 1863. “If you go in to our busy marts of trade you hear but two subjects discussed. One is, what is the price of pork. And the other, How to make money.” “We have too few literary men,” he lamented.¹²

¹¹ Charles Watts to Edward Watts, quotes from 22 Nov. 1846 and 26 Dec. 1847, but see also 30 Nov. 1839, 16 Apr. 1842, 20 Dec. 1845, 26 Dec. 1846, CWP.

¹² William M. Zearing, “Inaugural Address Delivered before Zearing Literary Institute, Oct. 8, 1863 in Parlor at Clifton House,” 1, WMZP; Bureau of the Census, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860: Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 30-31, 197; John Herbert Cordulack, “The Artisan Confronts the Machine Age: Bureau County, Illinois, 1850-1880,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1975), 42; Isaac B. Smith, *Sketches of the Early Settlement and Present Advantages of Princeton: Including Valuable Statistics, Etc. Also a Brief Sketch of Bureau County and a Business Directory* (Princeton, IL: Isaac B. Smith, 1857), 51.

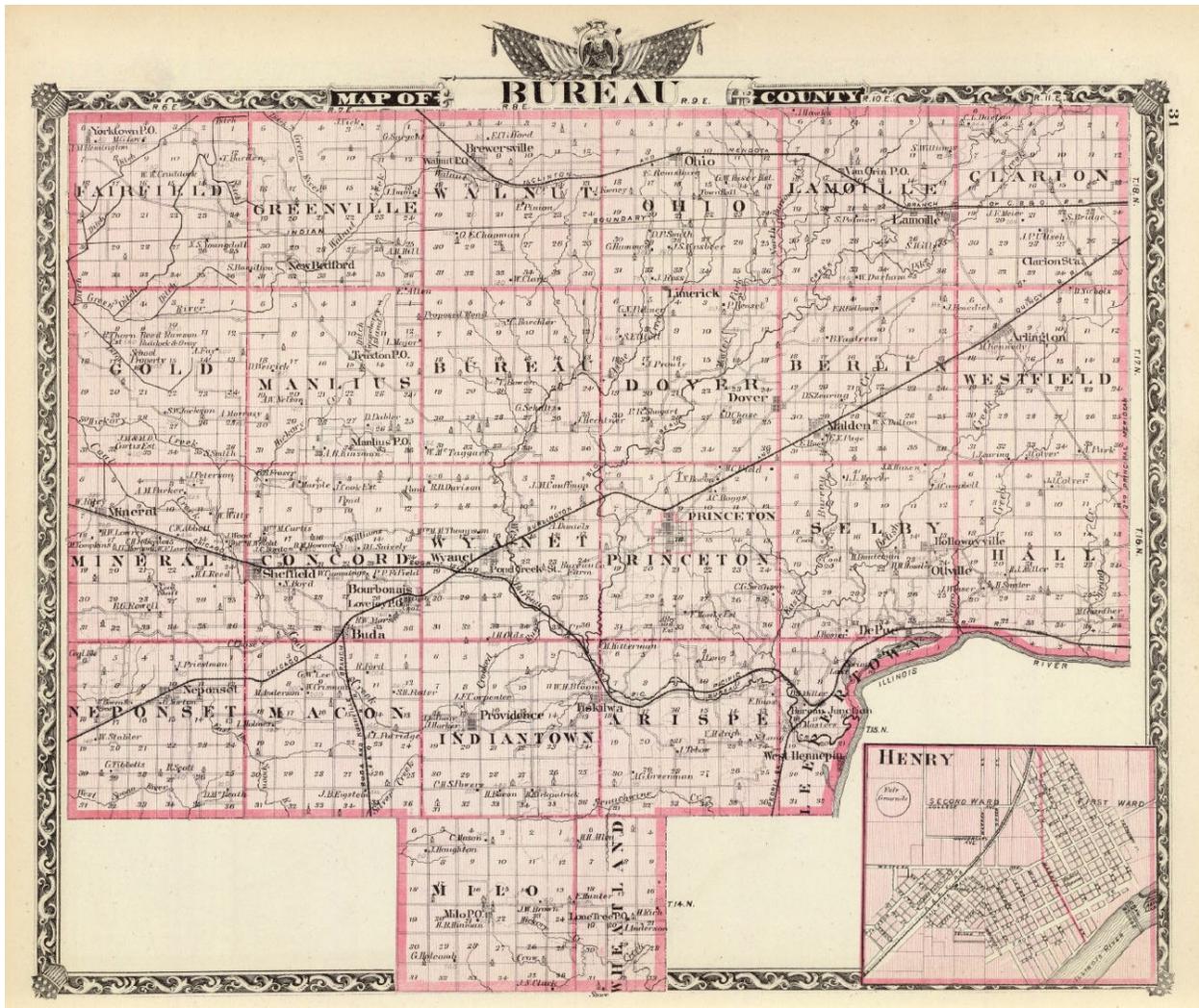


Figure 2: *Atlas of Bureau Co. and the State of Illinois to Which is Added an Atlas of the United States* (Chicago: Warner & Beers, 1875).

For many such Midwestern pioneers, however, their move westward embodied that era’s unbounded—and unfounded—belief that any man could improve his condition through upright conduct and unyielding effort. To them, the Mississippi Valley’s thick, black topsoil promised to yield a man’s personal independence alongside its rows of grain. In a paean to the county’s farmers at its 1859 fair, for instance, the Reverend Owen Lovejoy—the brother of the martyred abolitionist Elijah, minister of the Hampshire Colony Congregational Church, and the county’s Republican representative in both the state and federal House of Representatives throughout the 1850s—portrayed these aspirations as fullest realization of a Christian manhood.

Serf, slave and villain, are the terms applied
 To those who labor, by the sons of pride.
 But here, the laborer is a man of wealth,
 The bone and sinew of the commonwealth;

 Owner and tiller of his loved freehold,
 He laughs at fear, and cannot be controlled.
 Knows no dependence, save upon his God,
 Bows to no scepter—cowers at no one's rod.¹³

In many respects, the material realities of the Illinois frontier reinforced Lovejoy's juxtaposition of personal devotion, commercial development, and individual self-worth. Breaking the tangle of tallgrass reeds and wildflower roots that thatched this isolated, landlocked prairie was backbreaking work and made thrift, sobriety, and industry virtues that were as essential to survival as Christian morality. Moreover, in a community where every endeavor was ultimately subject to unpredictable climatic forces, any measure of prosperity seemed to be a form of blessing. But with sentiments that bordered on hubris, many of Bureau County's leading men also offered far less devotional formulations of the "underlying religious faith" that purportedly underwrote the county's economic prospects. In numerous editorials, civic addresses, and published sermons, county leaders portrayed the county's collective success to be but "divine emanations" that signaled God's unending favor upon even the most avaricious of aims.¹⁴

Reality, of course, was far less egalitarian and sacrosanct. To begin with, no Bureau County pioneer was such a completely self-made man. Though relegated to the background of

¹³ Owen Lovejoy, *An Agricultural Poem By Owen Lovejoy, M.C., Delivered Before the Bureau County Agricultural Society, October 1859* (Princeton, IL: Bureau County Republican Book and Job Print, 1862), 15.

¹⁴ Bradsby, ed., *History of Bureau County*, 180. On the economic ambitions of Mississippi Valley farmers see John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 7073; Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995 [1970]), 13-15.

the county's political and economic life by the purportedly ancillary nature of their tasks, women—and children—were vital in such agrarian economies. On most family farms wives and daughters regularly participated in every agricultural task, and typically undertook such chores in addition to other duties expected of every “true women.”¹⁵ Nor did all of Bureau County's devout share equally in the riches that supposedly stemmed from its robust religiosity. When they spoke of their “underlying religious faith” and the fortunes it shaped, county leaders by no means included the Catholics, Native Americans, or African Americans who had also contributed to Bureau County's development. The county, for instance, was an early Republican Party stronghold and center of anti-slavery activity. Indeed, as the home of such outspoken abolitionists like Lovejoy and John Howard Bryant, who used their houses as stations on the Underground Railroad, the county had a reputation as the “nigger stealing” capital of the west.¹⁶ Most Bureau County churches drafted breathless proclamations decrying slavery, raised support for the Free Soilers in Kansas, and raised funds for the colonization of Africa by freed slaves in the years leading up to the Civil War. Yet the hundreds of gun-toting residents who gathered at every rumor of a harbored runaway more acutely reflected the county's racial sentiments. They may have been willing to liberate slaves in distant lands, but Bureau County's white, native-born Protestants were wary of such racial equality in their midst.¹⁷

¹⁵ On the labor of frontier women see Faragher, *Sugar Creek*, 100-05; Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith, *Pioneer Women: The Lives of Women on the Frontier* (New York: Smithmark, 1996); Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1880* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1979).

¹⁶ Quoted in Edward Magdol, *Owen Lovejoy: Abolitionist in Congress* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1967), 40.

¹⁷ *Bureau County Republican*, 17 Jan. 1861; “Princeton and the Underground Railroad,” *Marshall County Republican*, 9 Jan. 1868; Bradsby, ed., *History of Bureau County*, 163, 189-91; Silas Baldwin to Cousins, 24 Feb. 1854, JBL; Magdol, *Owen Lovejoy*, 40-59; Karen Berfield, “Three Antislavery Leaders of Bureau County,” *Western Illinois Regional Studies* 3 (1980): 46-

For all its failings, however, Bureau County's religious culture was more than just a façade for self-interest or the nostrum for the self-interested. Though they ultimately mistook their demographic and institutional hegemony for normalcy, Bureau County's white, native born, pioneer Protestants fashioned a religious culture that powerfully structured daily life. It suggested that the tenets of a shared Protestant, evangelical faith were essential not only for a community's collective prosperity, but also for the personal success of its individual, implicitly male, members—a collective prosperity most rural Midwesterners measured in the health of their churches. As one English visitor put it when traveling through the area in 1870, wherever churches could be found “in that abundance peculiar to America,” residents inevitably claimed “civilization had made rapid strides.”¹⁸ These diverse, yet parochial small hamlets and rural villages widely regarded churches as pillars of the community and granted them a measure of influence in society's governance. Church membership was practically a prerequisite to attain any measure of social prominence, and the prevalence of church members in the community brought the congregation's influence into nearly every aspect of the community's social life. As Walnut village native Don Marquis acerbically recalled in a fictionalized memoir of his Bureau County childhood, nearly every country church was an “informal, self-constituted committee” that supervised nearly “every department of communal life.” “Life,” this embittered expatriate recalled, “was a good deal easier if one were a Protestant of some variety.”¹⁹

65. Indeed, as Nehemiah Matson wrote in a revealing footnote in his county history, “Those engaged in assisting slaves to escape, were regard by many as wild fanatics, violators of law, and therefore could not be good citizens.” Matson, *Reminiscences of Bureau County*, 358-70.

¹⁸ Parker Gillmore, *Prairie Farms and Prairie Folk* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1872), I: 12.

¹⁹ Don Marquis, *Sons of the Puritans* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., 1939), 29.

Such social and ideological centrality, however, rested upon a number of conditions that were common to the rural American frontier, but in no way permanent. First, the populations of hamlets and villages like those in Bureau County were remarkably homogenous. In 1860 nearly ninety percent of the county's 26,500 inhabitants were from New England or the Ohio Valley, while the remaining immigrants hailed from the British Isles.²⁰ While a minister with the Bureau Association of Presbyterian and Congregationalist Churches more than exaggerated when he claimed the county was "thoroughly evangelical in word, work and doctrine," the similarities of the population's origins did translate into a kind of religious commonality.²¹ Twenty-two of the county's twenty-six religious societies in 1860 were Methodist, Congregational, Baptist and Presbyterian Churches who collectively understood themselves to be the standard bearers of Protestant evangelical orthodoxy.²² Revivals, with their calls to individuals to repent, convert, and establish a heartfelt relationship with Jesus Christ, were common throughout the county, and ministers regularly used their pulpits as platforms from which to publicly demand a more earnest piety of the community. In the absence of robust denominational connection, many of these churches also cooperated in their evangelistic endeavors. The county was one of the first in the state to organize a Sabbath school union, while Methodist circuit rider Stephen R. Beggs found that, to the consternation of his ecclesiastical superiors, he could hold "unusually successful"

²⁰ US Census Bureau, *Population of the United States in 1860*, 102; Cordulack, "The Artisan Confronts the Machine Age," 111-18.

²¹ Lathrop Taylor, "History of Central Association," *Illinois Society of Church History Historical Statements and Papers* vol. 1 *Congregational* (Chicago: Press of David Oliphant, 1895), 92

²² Social Statistics, 1860 U.S. Federal Statistics, Illinois, Bureau County, Roll 1. The other four societies were two German Lutheran Churches, a Union Church and a Christian Disciples congregation.

camp meetings with the Congregationalists.²³ Such interdenominational cooperation conveyed a sense that despite differences in style or doctrine, Bureau County's churches were united in their emphasis upon Biblical reverence, personal conversion, and holy living. Yet this religious uniformity manifested itself in more quotidian ways as well. The frontier's lack of ecclesiastical resources often forced many of Bureau County's devout to traverse denominational lines to attend worship. The Reverend Bascom, for instance, was initially aghast to discover that, for lack of their own religious society, a number of Unitarians were attending the Hampshire Colony church. Upon further inspection, however, he found that even this "chilling soporific element" had, through the church's influence, "evidently grown in grace and divine knowledge "becoming more steadfast in faith and efficient duty."²⁴

A second factor was institutional. Similar to the Hampshire Colony Congregational Church's dual usage, churches were often some of the first public structures in many frontier

²³ S. R. Beggs, *Pages from the Early History of the West and North-West: Embracing Reminiscences and Incidents of Settlement and Growth, and Sketches of the Material and Religious Progress of the States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri, With Especial Reference to the History of Methodism* (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern, 1868), 109-10; "Annual Convention of the Bureau County Sunday School Association Report," *Bureau County Republican*, 10 Jun. 1869. For other examples of the county's evangelical impulses see Taylor, "History of the Central Association," 91-95; *Minutes of the General Association of Illinois, at their Seventeenth Annual Meeting, Held in Aurora, May, 1860, With the Narrative of the State of Religion: The Constitution, Articles of Faith, Rules of Business, and the Statistics of the Churches* (Quincy, IL: Steam and Power Press of the Whig and Republican, 1860), 31. On the decline of denominational preferences on the frontier see Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 157-78.

²⁴ Bascom, "Autobiography of Rev. Flavel Bascom," 227-28. For examples of the interactions between Bureau County's denominational societies see Historical Record, MMECR; Palmer and Bohman, *The First Presbyterian Church of Princeton*, 46; Jerusha Whitmarsh Clark, "Childhood Reminiscences of Princeton," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 49 (1956): 103; Lewis, *History of the LaMoille Baptist Church*, 17-18," "Churches" Reference File, BCHS. On the loosening of denominational preference on the frontier generally see Johnson, *Illinois in the Fifties*, 81-82; Doyle, *Social Order of a Frontier Community*, 165-66.

communities that, in the words of one northern Illinois Baptist itinerant, “paid the double debt” by serving as community meetinghouses.²⁵ With the exception of the county seat in Princeton, Bureau County’s smaller villages and towns had no theatres or meeting halls, and fraternal organizations like the Grange or the Masons did not begin to appear in until the 1880s. The county’s churches, however, could seat nearly half the county in 1860 and became the center of its social life throughout midcentury.²⁶ Village meetings were often held in churches or on their lawns, and the evangelistic concerts or fundraising socials congregations sponsored were, in the absence of any form of commercial leisure, often the only opportunities of public amusement available. Indeed, even the church’s Sunday worship could entertain, as one central Illinois resident recalled of the 1850s. “Right or wrong, the fact remains that very many people went to church for diversion and entertainment. This was markedly true during protracted meetings.”²⁷

Yet this architectural overlap of religion and social life was more than mere expedient. In rural communities like Bureau County, churches retained a certain measure of prominence because, as the Reverend Bascom observed, residents considered them essential in the formation of any “peaceful, virtuous and thriving community.” Through the centrality of its institutions and

²⁵ Jeremy F. Tolman, *History of the Fox River Baptist Association: Formerly the Northern Baptist Association of Illinois, from its Origin in 1835 to the anniversary in 1858, with an Introduction containing a brief account of the settlement of northern Illinois, and the Character of the Immigrants; also Copious Statistical Tables, and an Appendix* (Aurora, IL: Bangs & Knickerbocker, 1859), 7. See also Bittner, comp., “History of Providence Congregational Church,” 17.

²⁶ J. D. B. DeBow, ed. *Statistical View of the United States, Embracing its Territory, Population—White, Free Colored, And Slave, Moral and Social Condition, Industry, Property, and Revenue; The Detailed Statistics of Cities, Towns and Counties; Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census* (Washington, D.C.: Beverly Tucker, 1854), 219-20

²⁷ Charles Beneulyn Johnson, *Illinois in the Fifties: Or, A Decade of Development* (Champaign, IL: Flanigan-Pearson Co., 1918), 82-83. For examples of socials in churches see *Bureau County Republican*, 5 Mar. 1868, 25 Mar. 1869, 5 Jan. 1871; *Bureau County Herald*, 12 Jun. 1872, 3 May 1873.

influence of its members, churches served as the moral arbiters of many small towns in ways that further extended the reach of their Protestant evangelical culture. Since its organization in 1840, for instance, the Rock River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, repeatedly disparaged the theatre, card games, circuses, dances, necromancy, and, especially, the consumption of alcohol as “inconsistent with the character of a Christian and contrary to the laws of God.” On Sundays in particular the Conference, whose territory stretched from Chicago to the Mississippi River, expected a complete “cessation from play” from its churches altogether.²⁸ Of course, such proscriptions and their repeated cataloging implicitly confirmed such transgressions were common; one need only to read any edition of the county’s papers to learn of the liquor-induced fisticuffs, drunken horse races, and licentious revelries that also constituted the county’s social life.²⁹

But in a community where court was held in a church—and the latter met far more frequently than the former—churches could influence the contours of acceptable behavior, and did so regularly. In 1861 an organized group of ministers publicly withdrew their support from a festival organized by the Bureau County Soldier’s Relief Society until they removed “all dances and games of chance.” The society complied.³⁰ More aggressively, one village temperance

²⁸ “Minutes of the Rock River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840-1852,” typescript manuscript of the original journal, held at United Library, Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois, 191-92; *Register of the Thirty-Second Session of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held in Galena Street Church, Aurora, Ill., Commencing Wednesday, October 11, 1871* (Chicago: Methodist Book Depository, 1871), 25. See also *Bureau County Patriot*, 21 Jan. 1863, 1 Jan. 1867, 22 Dec. 1872; *Bureau County Republican*, 2 Jun. 1870.

²⁹ See, for example, *Bureau County Democrat*, 9 Jun. 1863, 8 Mar. 1864.

³⁰ J. Milligan, John Winter, G. H. Hagerty, B. C. Johnson, H. L. Hammond and J. K. Stratton to the Soldiers Relief Society of Princeton, 20 Dec. 1861, Ministers’ Collection, BCHS. See also *Bureau County Patriot*, 21 Jul. 1868.

society publicly shamed an offending patron by forcing him to march through town with a bell around his neck and a sign that declaimed his drunkenness. The spectacle was but a prelude, however, to the offender's dunking in a nearby creek as if to mock his infraction of dry principles.³¹

Such moments of social and devotional tension betrayed the inextricably austere and repressive impulses that lay within Bureau County's virtuous community. To most country ministers and many of their congregants, safeguarding the moral well-being of every community member justified repressing the leisure activities of the few. The trade in such potentially deleterious habits as drinking and gambling, they argued, was "calculated to entrap the youthful and the verdant" and thereby justified broader community control. As such, the popularly elected county council set exorbitant liquor license fees and banned all men under eighteen from even entering a saloon.³² In their perception of their community, however, most of Bureau County's devout understood such severity to be decidedly secondary. More than simply enforce virtue, the county's religious culture profoundly transformed the disparate collection of individuals who resided in the county into a fellowship of peers. Many observers detected this bond in the seemingly boundless camaraderie of many farmers. Besides simple and God-fearing, travelers throughout the Midwest almost universally described its inhabitants as "friendly." Compared to

³¹ *Bureau County Patriot*, 21 Jul. 1868. See also Bradsby, ed., *History of Bureau County*, 244-45; Bascom, "Autobiography of the Rev. Flavel Bascom," 217. On the influence of church discipline over the governance of rural communities see Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Christopher Waldrep, "'So Much Sin': The Decline of Religious Discipline and the 'Tidal Wave of Crime,'" *Journal of Social History* 23 (1990): 535-52; Harry S. Stout and Catherine Brekus, "A New England Congregation" Center Church, New Haven, 1638-1989," in James P. Wind and James L. Lewis, eds. *American Congregations*, vol. 2, *Portraits of Twelve Religious Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 62-63.

³² Quotes from *Bureau County Patriot*, 15 Aug. 1865, See also *ibid.*, 28 Sep. 1869, 19 Jul. 1870; *Bureau County Herald*, 8 Jul. 1872.

the cold social relations of eastern cities, foreign and domestic travelers were struck by both the frequency in which residents would gather to socialize and the rapidity with which farmers offered even strangers their assistance. As one British military officer, incredulous at being offered a bed for a night after his party had gotten lost at dusk traveling through central Illinois, noted, “The only distinction shown to the guest was that of his being served first, and this with a liberal hand.”³³

Indeed, rural communities throughout the Mississippi Valley evinced what one historian has called a “remarkable degree of gregariousness.”³⁴ When not at church, farmers spent most evenings—and much of the winter months—either informally visiting their neighbors or attending private parties where even the pious were known to dance a little. Such conviviality, however, was a manifestation of an even broader social and economic interdependence. Their claims of having cultivated their plots with their own “strong and busy hands” notwithstanding, the diaries and reminiscences of many Bureau County farmers betray that they regularly relied on each other for food, shelter, tools and labor while developing their claims.³⁵ As Milo Kendall claimed before a gathering of the county’s oldest settlers in 1865, a belief that “God would rule

³³ Lt.-Col. Arthur Cunyngamme, *A Glimpse of the Great Western Republic* (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), 109-10. For other descriptions of the American Midwest as intrinsically “friendly” see James Phinney Munroe, *The New England Conscience* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1915), 174-75; James Shaw, *Twelve Years in America: Being Observations on the Country, The People, Institutions and Religion with Notices of Slavery and the Late War and Facts and Incidents Illustrative of Ministerial Life and Labor in Illinois with Notes of Travel Through the United States and Canada* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1867), 348-50.

³⁴ Faragher, *Sugar Creek*, 131

³⁵ Rebecca Zearing Carse, “Our Trip Out West in 1842, And a Sketch of Our Lives in Illinois In That Early Day,” unpublished typescript mss., 1920, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum, Springfield, Illinois, 6.

as justly in Illinois as elsewhere” informed “the many instances where . . . timely aid and personal sacrifices have brought relief to the distressed, and tears of gratitude for his reward.”³⁶

But in these reciprocal relations, as well as in the broader collaborative practices common to the rural Midwest like barn raisings, corn huskings, and quilting bees, the community appeared to become a partner invested in the success of its individual members, if only fleetingly. Of course, the privations of an undeveloped prairie frontier demanded such cooperation, and would die off with the introduction of agricultural machinery. But to many Bureau County residents, like so many other farmers and artisans throughout the Mississippi Valley, they were components of a moral economy that suggested every decent, upright Christian citizen was entitled to the community’s support in making a living. Such a belief not only informed the individual acts of assistance, but also underwrote an even more profound demand that individual enterprises contribute to the progress of the larger community. Towns, for instance, required each of its men to contribute several hours of public work for the maintenance of the county’s roads. And when one landowner closed off a patch of untillable swampland that had long been used to attain marsh grass for feed, residents responded by destroying the mower the landowner had used to harvest the entire field.³⁷

³⁶ *Proceedings of the Old Settler’s Society, at their Meeting in Converse Hall, Princeton, Ills., On January 5, 1865, and February 22, 1867* (Princeton, IL: Republican Book and Job Printing House, 1867), 17-19. See also Bradsby, ed., *History of Bureau County*, 89-90.

³⁷ Harrington, *Past and Present of Bureau County*, 54-57, 106-07; Doris Parr Leonard, ed., *Big Bureau and Bright Prairies: A History of Bureau County, Illinois* (Moline, IL: Desaulniers & Company, 1968), 82-83. For examples of Bureau County’s reciprocal labor and general gregariousness see Matson, *Reminiscences of Bureau County*, 304; Carse, “Our Trip Out West in 1842,” 4; Leonard, ed., *Big Bureau and Bright Prairies*, 22-23; Annor Coddington, *1869 Diary of Annor Coddington (Age: 21) Princeton, Bureau Co., Illinois*, transcribed Reda Thornton Duckworth (Germantown, TN: Reda Thornton Duckworth, n.d.) 27 Jul. 1859 and 27 Dec. 1859; *Bureau County Herald*, 5 Jun. 1872. On the ideology and practices of frontier mutuality see Faragher, *Sugar Creek*, 132-35; Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press,

Of course, the “peaceful, virtuous and thriving community” idealized by Bureau County’s white, native-born Protestant residents ultimately rested on a number of remarkably unstable foundations. It would last only as long as the population remained demographically similar, the local economy remained largely agricultural and relatively underdeveloped, and the church remained not just a respected institution, but also a center of the county’s social life. Many of these conditions would pass within a generation of the county’s founding. By the time Frank Wood arrived in 1865, nearly a hundred miles of railroad coursed through the county, carrying as much coal from a number of recently opened mines as grain and corn, and light manufacturing had even commenced in the more cosmopolitan county seat of Princeton.³⁸ Yet like so many towns and villages throughout the Midwest, this sense that, at its core, a community should be a fellowship of individuals as devoted to the church as to each other continued to pervade Bureau County even as those foundations began to fracture. According to Ebenezer Strong Phelps, who by 1860 was still a county resident and deacon with Hampshire Colony church, the communal feeling the county proclaimed and the industrious spirit its ministers praised remained viable even after the county became thoroughly cultivated. At the inaugural gathering of the county’s Old Settler’s Society in the winter of 1861, he declared organizations such as theirs showed “those who have recently settled among us that we are friends and brethren and that the love and respect kindled in years gone by have not died out, but still live and are

1990), 99. On the church’s centrality to rural communities see Robert P. Swierenga, “The Little White Church: Religion in Rural America,” *Agricultural History* 71 (1997): 415-41; Shirley B. Faile, “‘So Dear to My Childhood’: The Rural Church Site as an Artifact of Material Culture,” *Methodist History* 36 (1997): 55-63; Robert C. Ostergen, “The Immigrant Church as a Symbol of Community and place on the Landscape of the American Upper Midwest,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 1 (1981): 224-238; Sonya Salamon, *Prairie Patrimony: Family, Farming, and Community in the Midwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 193-97, 243-44; Doyle, *Social Order of a Frontier Community*, 157-78.

³⁸ Smith, *Sketches of the Early Settlement and Present Advantages of Princeton*.

cherished in true friendly hearts.”³⁹ This effort to maintain this sense community in towns, villages and cities across the country would mark the lives of many white, native-born Protestant Americans in the years to come.



Frank Louis Wood grew up in this community after Edson A. and Catharine E. Wood adopted him in the spring of 1865. Born on 25 September 1864 in North Manchester, Indiana, Frank was the youngest of three surviving siblings and the second son of Elijah E. T. and Matilda (Reed) Hazen. We know nothing of Matilda other than that she was born in Ohio, went by “Tillie,” and died four months after Frank’s birth in North Manchester. At the time of her death, Elijah was serving in the 130th Regiment of the Indiana Volunteer Infantry in Georgia, and the decision was made—it is not known by whom—to send the infant to Elijah’s sister, Catherine, in Bureau County sometime that spring. What became of the other two children is also not clear; they may have accompanied Frank to Illinois. What is certain, however, is that Elijah survived the war, returned to claim his eldest children, and then left Frank with Catherine to head for Iowa. He made no known attempt to contact the boy for the next twenty-five years.⁴⁰

By most accounts, Frank was fully aware of his adopted status, and his severed relationship with his biological father turned Wood into a profoundly private man in regard to his own home life. Despite these later silences, however, family surrounded Frank in Bureau

³⁹ Bradsby, ed. *History of Bureau County*, 89. On Old Settler’s Association and frontier nostalgia, see Lewis Atherton, *Main Street on the Middle Border* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 206-09; Faragher, *Sugar Creek*, 219-25.

⁴⁰ Picture of Tillie and Elijah Hager [sic], WGPCC, photo 1.189; “Biography—Wood, Frank L.,” folder 15, box 1, WGPCC; Pension Application dated 7 Nov. 1889, EAWPF; J. Merriam to Bureau of Pensions, 15 Jan. 1898, and Affidavit for Pension dated 1 Mar. 1881, EETHPF; entry for Elijah Hazen, 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Iowa, Page County, Nebraska Township, roll M593_414, p. 454B; Elijah E. T. Hazen to Frank L. Wood, 16 Feb. 1909, FLWLB.

County. In joining Edson and Catherine's household, Frank was adopted into an extended network of kin that had been involved in the county's social, religious, and political life for decades. Edson, a native of Saratoga County, New York, born sometime in 1838, had migrated to the village as a boy with his parents and five siblings in 1849. As with most nineteenth century migrations, Edson's move west took place within a larger chain of family relocations that by 1860 provided Dover as much as a fifth of its 960 residents.⁴¹ Neither subsistence farmers nor members of the agricultural elite, the Woods all farmed modest plots around this spry, unincorporated little village. Each, moreover, was within walking distance of the other, a geographic representation of the close relationships that bound this extended family together.

By all accounts, Edson aspired to a position similar to his many relatives. As he came of age in the 1850s, Edson began working life as a farmhand, laboring and boarding on farms around the village as he saved to purchase his own plot of land. In May 1859, he married Catherine Elizabeth Hazen, the twenty-three-year-old daughter of a New Jersey migrant who owned a hundred-and-sixty-acre farm, and a little less than nine months later became the father of a son, Otto Elmer.⁴² Yet Edson's steady rise within the county was ultimately truncated by the

⁴¹ For my knowledge of the Woods' multigenerational presence in Bureau County I am greatly indebted to Betty Smith, a Wood family descendent who graciously shared her genealogical research. Betty Smith, "The Descendents of Jonathan Wood," unpublished typescript mss, 2010; *The Biographical Record of Bureau, Marshall, Putnam and Stark Counties, Illinois* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1897), 383-84; John C. Bailey, comp. *Bureau County Directory for 1858 & 1859; Containing the Name, Occupation and Address of Every Resident Within the Towns of Princeton, Sheffield, Malden, Tiskilwa, Buda, Wyanet, Neponset, Dover, and Other Residents in the Several Townships of the County* (Chicago: William H. Rand, 1859), 58-63, 88-92; entries for Zenas, Lewis, Lewis, William H., Edson A. Wood and Increase, Jonathan and Elias Hoyt, 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Dover and Berlin Townships, Bureau County, Illinois, Roll M653_158, pp. 173, 176, 179, 370, 374, 389.

⁴² On the Hazen's see Harrington, *Past and Present of Bureau County*, 394-97; entries for Joseph K. and David W. Hazen, 1860 U.S. Agricultural Census, Illinois, Bureau County, Selby Townships, Roll 33, pp. 11-12. For the shards of evidence from Edson's life in the 1850s see entry for Lewis Wood, 1855 Illinois State Census, Bureau County, Berlin Township, Roll 30-

onset of the American Civil War. Edson spent six of the eleven months as a private in the 57th Regiment of Illinois Volunteers confined to a hospital bed suffering at various points from measles, dysentery, bronchitis, and several other ailments. By August 1862, the regiment had declared Edson to be “totally unfit for military service” for so long that they formally discharged him for Phthis Pulmonalis, a catchall nineteenth-century medical term for chronic lung ailments.⁴³ Once back in Dover, Edson received word that his brother had died from wounds sustained at the Battle of Shiloh while his father and two of his uncles passed within the following year. Somewhere in this span young Otto would pass as well.⁴⁴

With the exception of a brief stay in Chatsworth, Illinois, some sixty miles to the south, Edson and Catherine remained in Bureau County in the years after the war. Edson attempted to continue to farm, but the “tenacious mucous” and “chronic diarrhea” he had contracted during the war made sustained agricultural work nearly impossible. For a time, privation forced the couple to board with Catherine’s brother Joseph until Edson felt “compelled abandon his usual occupation” and took far less taxing work as a butcher in the village of Malden a mile to the east. Perhaps the only joyful moment for the couple during this difficult period was young Frank’s arrival in the spring of 1865.⁴⁵

2187, p. 12; and entry for Edson A. Wood, 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Bureau County, Berlin Township, Roll M653_158, pp. 374; 1865 Illinois State Census, Bureau County, Selby Township, roll no. 31-21, p. 149-50.

⁴³ William W. Cluett, *History of the 57th Regiment Illinois Volunteer Infantry, From Muster in, Dec. 26, 1861, to Muster Out, July 7, 1865* (Princeton: T. P. Streeter, Printer, 1886), 117; “Army Certificate of Disability for Discharged” dated 23 Aug. 1862, CEWWPF.

⁴⁴ Smith, “Descendents of Jonathan Wood”; Cluett, *History of the 57th Regiment Illinois Volunteer Infantry*, 116.

⁴⁵ Edson Wood, 1865 Illinois State Census, Bureau County, Selby Township, roll no. 31-21, p. 149; “General Affidavit” dated 2 Jun. 1880, CEWWPF.

The Wood family's condition improved markedly in the decade after Frank's arrival. As a stop along the recently completed Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy Railroad, Malden provided Edson with plenty of work. By 1870, Bureau County had become the state's largest livestock producer, shipping out nearly 80,000 heads swine and cattle annually, providing Edson with steady wages in his newfound work as a butcher.⁴⁶ With steady wages, the Woods soon moved into a tidy, two-story home just off of main street. In the years after Edson and Catherine settled in Malden, much of the couple's extended family had also moved to the village after the spate of deaths that hit the family during the war.⁴⁷ Frank's earliest years, then, were spent in relative comfort in a small town filled with extended families with whom his parents were very close. When not home with his mother or grandparents, he spent his days cavorting about Sutton's Hill or sending rafts down East Bureau Creek with a number of friends who were also likely relatives.⁴⁸

Like so many nineteenth-century Protestant children, Frank's first sustained encounter with the world outside his home was through the church. At the time, Malden's population of just under two hundred boasted three churches, which included a Congregationalist society. But Catherine's extended family were all lifelong Methodists who had helped found the village's church in 1856, and, at the age of three, Frank attended Malden's Methodist Episcopal Church.

⁴⁶ Bureau of the Census, *The Statistics of The Wealth and industry of the Untied States, Embracing the Tables of Wealth, Taxation, and Public Indebtedness; of Agriculture; Manufacturing; Mining; and the Fisheries; With which are Reproduced, from the Volume on Population, the Major Tables of Occupations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 131.

⁴⁷ *Biographical Record of Bureau, Marshall, and Putnam Counties*, 384; Bradsby, ed., *History of Bureau County*, 542; Harrington, *Past and Present of Bureau County*, 394; Historical, Probationer and Class Records, MMCR; Photo 3.3, WBCR.

⁴⁸ "Wesleyan Bible Class Caravan to Malden," program for 8 Jun. 1941, folder 15, box 1, WGPCC.

But so too did most of the village. Malden's Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches both struggled to retain a minister throughout midcentury. The village itself was new, founded only in 1854 by land speculators after the CB&Q had built its depot, and had yet to attract enough residents to sustain all of its churches.⁴⁹ With a steady supply of appointments from the Rock River Conference, however, Malden's Methodist Episcopal Church reliably held meetings and was often the only service in town. As a result, a great deal of the village's devout, including the Congregationalists Woods, attended the church if they did not become members. Though the church only claimed about a hundred members on its rolls, Sunday attendance often equaled the village's population when hinterland farmers came in for worship.⁵⁰ Malden's Methodist church also followed a familiar pattern of anchoring the village's social life. In 1870 the Reverend T. Chipperfield recorded in the church's records that "sociables [sic] have been kept up all the year" for the benefit of the community. Such events included ice cream socials, gospel concerts, and public lectures that in addition to contributing to the community's entertainment always ended with a call for the unchurched to convert and join the congregation.⁵¹ Frank's first encounter with the village, then, was in a church that seemed symbiotically linked to the broader community in which it was located. Malden's Methodist church had a strong presence in the community through its social activities, while the community was equally embodied through the church in its

⁴⁹ H. F. Kett, *The Voters and Taxpayers of Bureau County, Illinois: Containing, Also, a Biographical Directory of Its Tax-Payers and Voters: A History of the County and State: Map of the County: A Business Directory: An Abstract of Everyday Laws; Officers of Societies, Lodges, Etc., Etc.* (Chicago: H. F. Kett & Co., 1877), 156-57.

⁵⁰ Historical, Probationers and Class Records, MMCR, BCGS; *Biographical Record of Bureau, Marshall and Putnam Counties*, 384; *Malden Beacon*, 31 May 1877, BCHS; Bradsby, ed. *History of Bureau County*, 192.

⁵¹ T. Chipperfield, "Brief History of M.E. Church Malden from Oct. '69 to Oct. '70," Historical Record, MMCR; "A Gambler's Faith, Thirty Years of a Gamester's Life," program dated 24 Apr. 1874, Former P Files, BCHS; *The Malden Beacon*, 31 May 1877.

attendance. In fact, involvement in such village churches in many ways became an avenue to attaining a measure of public prominence.

With only three general stores, a lumberyard, and a handful of artisan shops set on a main street surrounded by residences, Malden was an embroidered little village of streets stitched upon a large swatch of unending farmland. But like most rural, Midwestern farm-towns, a ruling class did emerge in the village. The Zearings were by far the most prominent family in the county, a handful of sons who parlayed the massive freehold of their pioneer founder into educations that allowed them to become the county's few judges, physicians, politicians, and capitalists.⁵² Both the Woods and Hazens, by contrast, all farmed modest plots of about a hundred acres with a diversified crop of corn, wheat, oats and potatoes that probably went toward feeding themselves and their few livestock before reaching the market.⁵³ But in a community that accorded a degree of social distinction to earnest religious commitment, both families rose to become distinguished community members through their involvement in Bureau County's churches. Frank's uncle Joseph Hazen, for instance, first served as Malden Methodist's steward before going on to securing an appointment as county Roads Commissioner, while Jonathan Hoyt, another uncle on Edson's side who served several terms as a County Supervisor, established his reputation in the

⁵² On the history of the Zearing family see *Biographical Record of Bureau, Marshall and Putnam Counties*, 55-56, 168-69, 268-69; Bradsby, ed., *History of Bureau County*, 426-27, 703-04; Carse, "Our Trip Out West in 1842," 8-11; entries for Martin R. and David S. Zearing, 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Bureau County, Berlin Township, Roll M432_99, p. 186A; entries for Martin R. and Lewis [sic] and Samuel Zearing Berlin, 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Bureau County, Dover and Westfield Townships, Roll M653_158, pp. 171, 367, 370, 567; and entries for Martin R. and David S. Zearing, 1860 U.S. Agricultural Census, Illinois, Bureau County, Dover and Berlin Townships, Roll 33, pp. 43-46.

⁵³ Entry for Zenas Wood, 1850 Illinois State Agricultural Census, Bureau County, Dover and Berlin Townships, Roll 1, pp. 321-322; and entries for Lewis and Zenas Wood, 1860 U.S. Agricultural Census, Bureau County, Dover and Berlin Townships, Illinois, Roll 33, pp. 35-36, 45-46.

community by serving as Sunday school superintendent and active member of the Bureau County Sunday School Association.⁵⁴

However, it was Frank's great-grandfather Asahel Wood who most clearly conveyed the kind of prominence church life provided individuals on the Mississippi Valley frontier. The first Wood to settle in the county, just outside of Dover, in 1842, Asahel never farmed more than eighty acres his entire life. Through his involvement in Dover's Congregational Church, however, he became a pillar of Bureau County's mythic past. A deacon in the church for over forty years, Asahel oversaw the construction of the church's stately brick edifice in 1848, and served as its delegate to the American Board of Commissioners on Foreign Missions. From here, Asahel went on to serve as Dover's Justice of the Peace throughout much of the 1850s, watching over the village's youth both inside and outside the church with a cane he apparently wielded judiciously, but sternly. Known as "Deacon Wood" even to non-church members, Asahel was literally both church father and town disciplinarian. His life suggests the ways in which religious activity and public authority overlapped on the Midwestern frontier. When he died in 1883 at the estimable age of ninety-one, county newspapers hailed him as the county's last pioneer.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Bradsby, ed., *History of Bureau County*, 425-426. On Hoyt's time in Dover see Harrington, *Past and Present of Bureau County*, 99, 188; Roger M. Sargent, "Historical Sketch of Congregational Church in Dover, Ill.," *Illinois Society of Church History Historical Statements and Papers* vol. 1 *Congregational* (Chicago: Press of David Oliphant, 1895), 115-16; *Biographical Record of Bureau, Marshall and Putnam Counties*, 384; Probationer's Record and Alphabetical List, MMCR; Kett, *Voters and Tax-Payers of Bureau County*, 353.

⁵⁵ On Asahel's life and reputation in Dover see Bradsby, ed., *History of Bureau County*, 107, 628; Bailey, comp., *Bureau County Directory for 1858 & 1859*, 89; General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United State, *Minutes*, 10; American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, "Annual Meeting of the Board," *The Missionary Herald*, LXI, no. 11 (Nov., 1865): 331; "Dover Church Memories Told by Rev. Field," uncited newspaper clipping dated 5 May 1938, BCHS; *Bureau County Republican*, 1 Apr. 1898; 19 Apr. 1883.

In his early involvement in Malden's Methodist church, Frank was similarly instructed to appreciate his religious activity as a platform for attaining a wider acceptance that could promote social mobility. At six, he joined what was perhaps the central institution of American Protestant childhoods, the Sunday school. According to Frank, every Sunday, Catherine would dress him in his finest attire to reflect both the reverence and personal reputation that were at stake in his attendance. To Frank's utter embarrassment, this ritual included Catherine crafting his hair into a fluffy "coxcorn" for effect. When Frank figured out he could escape his peer's teasing by destroying the coiffure on his way to church, Catherine countered by simply fixing the boy's hair in class.⁵⁶ Yet the church's influence on young Frank's ambitions went far beyond comportment to shape his ambitions in the wider world. When a traveling evangelist came through the village and held protracted meetings, a seven-year-old Frank was so taken with the revivalist's performance that he approached him after a service to pay his compliments. The itinerant, possibly hoping to encourage an interest in the ministry, gave young Frank a copy of the New Testament that he would keep until his death.⁵⁷ No evidence survives to suggest Wood

⁵⁶ "Wesleyan Bible Class Caravan to Malden, Illinois." On the importance of clothes to Protestant religious life see Leigh Eric Schmidt, "A Church-going People are a Dress-loving People": Clothes, Communication, and Religious Culture in Early America," *Church History* 58 no. 1 (1989): 36-51.

⁵⁷ *Annual Letter of the Wesleyan Bible Class: Sept. 13, 1941- Sept. 12, 1942*, folder 5, box 3, WBCR.



Figure 3: "Celebration, Malden, Ill.," c. 1880. Bureau County Historical Society, Princeton, Illinois.



Figure 4: "Malden, Ill., Residences," c. 1880. Bureau County Historical Society, Princeton, Illinois.

ever considered a pastoral career, but he did show a keen interest in the art of oratory. At a monthly Sunday school concert of Malden's Methodist church in 1874, an eight-year-old Frank took to the stage and, as he later put it, "spoke my first piece."⁵⁸ As a devout young Methodist, Frank took—or was given—the classic temperance hymn, "Have Courage My Boy to Say No," a tune which embodies many of the ambitions, fears, and opportunities he would associate with public speaking. Ostensibly written by a mother to a boy who is about to depart home as a man, the tune is a warning for all young men to avoid "gambling halls" and "billiards saloons" whose vices are like "poison that stings from an adder." Yet more than a warning of specific sins, the hymn is an anthem to moral certitude, self-mastery, and success. As the final stanza reads, the boy who stays "true to your manhood" would not only have the courage to say "no," but to conquer any challenge.⁵⁹

Indeed, Wood's early interest in elocution suggests a certain desire for prominence. Skilled elocutionists were minor celebrities in nineteenth-century America, and no civic or religious event was complete without some kind of speechifying. Enterprising young men—and women—wishing to raise their stature in the public sphere could learn the art of the public lecture through a number of manuals or courses before moving into the public sphere.⁶⁰ But

⁵⁸ "Wesleyan Bible Class Caravan to Malden, Illinois."

⁵⁹ "Wesleyan Bible Class Caravan to Malden," program dated 8 Jun. 1941, WGPCC; *Bureau County Republican*, 2 May 1872; J. N. Stearns, comp., *The Temperance Speaker: A Collection of Original and Selected Dialogues, Addresses and Recitations, for the Use of Temperance Organizations, Schools, Bands of Hope, Anniversaries, Etc.* (New York: National Temperance Society and Publication House, 1869), 71-72. On the hymn's legend see Joe Mitchell Chapple, ed., *A Treasure Chest of Memories* (New York: Chapple Publishing Company, 1905), 210.

⁶⁰ On the centrality of public speaking in nineteenth century America see Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 10-13; Donald Scott, "The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 66 (1980): 791-809.

equally as important to Wood's burgeoning ambitions was the institution that fostered them, the Sunday school. The monthly concert where Wood "spoke his first piece," for instance, was one of several Sabbath school events of recent invention that encouraged children to perform religious acts typically reserved for adults like addressing the congregation. As one English Methodist minister observed while traveling through central Illinois in 1860, rural families held these monthly concerts, quarterly temperance meetings, anniversary celebrations, and annual "Children's Days" so often that they tended to stimulate a child's spiritual advancement "to an indulgent excess that too generally results in an early precociousness that is often unbecoming."⁶¹ This deprecating traveling minister failed to appreciate, however, that while many advocates looked to Sunday schools to shelter Protestant children from the world of work to protect their innocence, many lay Protestant parents looked to them to expedite both their children's spiritual and social maturation.⁶²

⁶¹ Shaw, *Twelve Year in America*, 92. On the growth of Sunday school concerts and similar activities see R. G. Pardee, *The Sabbath-School Index: Pointing Out The History and Progress of Sunday-Schools, With Approved Modes of Instruction, Examples in Illustrative, Pictorial, and Object-Teaching; Also the Use of the Blackboard, Management of Infant-Classes, Teachers' Meetings, Conventions, Institutes, Etc., Etc., Etc.* (Philadelphia: J. C. Garrigues & Co., 1868), 66, 212-24; Asa Bullard, *Fifty Years with the Sabbath Schools* (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks and Company, 1876), 50, 223-34; Stephen H. Tyng, *Forty Years' Experience in Sunday Schools* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1866), 124-30. For examples of Bureau County's Sunday School concerts and celebrations see *Bureau County Republican*, 17 Jun. 1869, 10 Feb. 1870, 15 Jan. 1871, 16 Mar. 1871.

⁶² On the American Sunday school as an institutional extension of childhood see Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988); idem, "Sunday Schools and Changing Evangelical Views of Children in the 1820s," *Church History* 48 (1979): 320-33; Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 90, 232; Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), 116-19; Macleod, *The Age of the Child: Children in America, 1890-1920* (New York: Twayne, 1998), 130-32, 146-47; Jack L. Seymour, *From Sunday School to Church School: Continuities in Protestant Church Education in the United States, 1860-1929* (New York: University Press of America, 1982).

The impetus for these heightened expectations largely lay in the economic and institutional realities of the agricultural life. The centrality of child labor on most family farms often demanded early manifestations of maturity from children so they could take on some of the responsibilities of agricultural work.⁶³ But on the undeveloped prairie frontier, Sunday schools also became important institutions in preparing children for work beyond the farm. Malden, for instance, counted two public schools, both of which Frank attended. But only the Methodist Episcopal church boasted a library of any kind with a collection of five hundred volumes.⁶⁴ It was a pattern that was repeated throughout the state. In 1870, for instance, only 1,122 of 11,835 common schools in Illinois had libraries. The state's churches and Sabbath schools, however, claimed over 2,300 libraries with substantial collections.⁶⁵ Though superintendents and ministers encouraged Sunday schools to collect books in order to attract children and divert them from more lascivious literature, libraries were far more potent symbols in nineteenth century America. As repositories of the textual manifestations of human achievement, nineteenth century Americans considered libraries essential to any kind of self-improvement. Not only did the knowledge within books instill wisdom, but the very act of patronizing a library also validated the content of an individual's character. Sunday school catalogues ultimately differed little from their secular counterparts, highlighting history, geography, theology, and the possible addition of didactic temperance literature. In their practice, however, Sunday schools attempted to meld

⁶³ Elliott West, *Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 76-85; Steven Mintz and Susan Kellog, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 96-100; Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 136-46.

⁶⁴ "Wood, Frank L.—Biography," folder 15, box 1, WGPCC; *Register of Thirty-Second Session of the Rock River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church . . . 1871*, 43.

⁶⁵ Commissioner of Education, *Report of the Commissioner for the Year 1872*, (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1872), 873-74.

piety deep within erudition. In most schools, borrowing privileges were a reward for attendance or scripture memorization. Teachers gave books as gifts at Sunday school concerts or anniversaries, further reinforcing the social respectability of reading as an act of both religious devotion and personal growth. For many children, the personal enjoyment and social encouragement of reading was vital in their earliest commitment to the Sunday school. Future Secretary of the International Sunday School Association Marion Lawrance recalled that even as a seven year old he loved his rural Ohio Sunday school “very much” for “We got a paper every Sunday and a book we wish.”⁶⁶

This, then, was the community in which Wood spent his earliest years, and was the social world he would fondly recall for the rest of his life. Of course, Wood’s exceptionally narrow and incomplete understanding of Bureau County, grounded in the daily experiences of a late-nineteenth-century rural youngster. By the time of Wood arrived in 1865, much this world was already giving way before the rapid economic, social, and cultural transformation of the industrial era. Indeed, Wood’s home in Malden embodied many of these changes. The village of Dover that the Woods had helped build in the 1840s resembled the New Hampshire town from which its drew its name for it was built around a public commons flanked by churches that anchored its community. However, Malden’s sole reason fro existing was the rail line that split the village in half. By the time of Wood’s arrival, Bureau County had over a dozen such depot towns like Malden that similarly budded from the tracks in a short period of time like peapods on a vine, as Carl Sandburg would later famously describe them, shuddering with every passing

⁶⁶ Quoted in Harold G. Lawrance, *Marion Lawrance: A Memorial Biography* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1925), 36. See also Boylan, *Sunday School*, 48-52; Addie Grace Wardle, *History of the Sunday School Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1918), 153-56; Thomas Augst, *The Clerk’s Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), chap. 4.

train.⁶⁷ The immediate effect of the railroad's arrival was simply to accelerate its growth. By 1870 Bureau County's population had increased from its 1850 total by 350% to count over 32,000 residents who farmed nearly every arable acre in the county. In that same span, the cost of the county's farmland increased by nearly sevenfold. Land that went for eight dollars an acre in 1850 sold for as high as fifty-eight dollars 1870.⁶⁸ Such developments had no doubt frustrated Edson's efforts to acquire his own farm, regardless of his health. Yet the county's statistical growth masked an even more profound transformation in its once purportedly cooperative economy. In addition to accelerating the county's growth, the railroad also intensified it by easing the introduction of agricultural implements and opening the county to absentee investors. Malden, in particular, reflected these changes. Like the migrants who arrived by railcar instead of prairie schooner, many of the homesteaders who settled near Malden aggressively farmed far larger plots and valued their freehold more as an investment than a pathway to manly independence. Julius Benedict's 1,300 acre cattle ranch just outside of Malden, for instance, was but one venture in a portfolio that included several California mines and a 7,000 acre Nebraskan ranch.⁶⁹ Able to operate his farm solely with hired help, Benedict had little use for the

⁶⁷ Kett, *The Voters and Tax-Payers of Bureau County*, 155-56; Leonard, ed., *Big Bureau and Bright Prairies*, 118; *Bureau County Republican*, 24 Mar. 1904; Sandburg, *Smoke and Steel*, 243.

⁶⁸ See Smith, *Sketches of the Early Settlement and Present Advantages of Princeton*, 51; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 78-81, 104-05; Bureau of the Census, *The Statistics of the Wealth and Industry of the United States*, III: 130-37, 291, 340; Bureau of the Census, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860*, 30; Theodore L. Carlson, *The Illinois Military Tract: A Study of Land Occupation, Utilization and Tenure* Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences, vol. XXXII, no. 2 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1951), 114, 187.

⁶⁹ Bradsby, ed., *History of Bureau County*, 455. On Berlin's economic structure see Kett, *The Voters and Tax-Payers of Bureau County*, 348-55; Simpson, "Complete History of Bureau

interdependent economy that once governed the county. But by the 1870s, neither did much of the county.

Had Wood stayed in Bureau County for a few more years, he would have seen the consequences of these changes that were at the time invisible to him. Had he stayed a few more years, he would have witnessed the county's first organized, mass protest against absentee ownership and exorbitant freight fees charged by the railroads. He would have seen the county's immigrant population and Catholic churches double and thrive. He would have watched as a number of magic troupes, circuses, and other secular commercial amusements came through the county by rail and challenged the church's prominence as the center of village social life. Had he stayed for a few more years, Wood would have seen Bureau County transformed. But Wood did not stay. In the summer of 1874, the same year Wood "spoke his first piece" on the dangers that awaited young men about to embark on life's journey, Edson, Catherine, and Frank Wood left Bureau County and traveled the hundred miles east to Chicago. In good, orderly Methodist fashion, the Woods took out a letter of dismissal from Malden's Methodist Episcopal Church on 22 July 1874. Edson, the son of Congregationalist who perhaps joined the church only at the behest of his wife, never formally ended his relationship with the church and was dropped from the rolls some year later.⁷⁰



Like so many rural, Midwestern migrants to the nation's burgeoning industrial centers, the precise reason for the Wood family's move remains unknown. Though the family survived in Malden, they were by no means well off and owned little personal wealth. Perhaps Edson may

County," II: 37; Smith, *Sketches of the Early Settlement and Present Advantages of Princeton*, 52; *Malden Beacon*, 31 May 1877.

⁷⁰ "Alphabetical List," MMECR.

have also yearned for the broader possibilities the city afforded both himself and his son. He had been stationed just outside of Chicago at Camp Douglas in the early days of his military career, and though he contracted the first of the many illnesses there, Edson wrote favorably of the city to his wife. Moreover, before his death in a hospital in Covington, Kentucky, Harrison had written to his brother to tell him of the opportunities that lay beyond their rural home. “Edd,” Harrison wrote his brother days before his death, “I wish you had some of the chances for a good position that I have had offered to me without lagging your life on a farm . . .”⁷¹ But health issues, a constant problem for Edson after the war, also likely influenced his decision, for soon after moving to Chicago he submitted an application for a military pension as a “greatly disabled” veteran.⁷²

Whatever their reasons, when the Woods arrived to Chicago sometime in the fall of 1874, they joined an immense stream of newcomers that was then remaking the city. In October of 1871 a catastrophic fire had razed much of the city’s downtown and northern neighborhoods, destroying 18,000 buildings, killing hundreds and leaving over a hundred thousand others—a third of the city—homeless. Within days, however, Chicago’s indomitable businessmen had begun to rebuild. By 1875 over 65,000 new arrivals had already poured into the city to take advantage of the opportunities to be had in the city’s resurrection and, like the Woods, the vast majority of these newcomers settled on Chicago’s far West Side. Within a year of the fire, the less settled areas west of Union Park had already grown by fifty thousand refugees and

⁷¹ Harrison Wood to Edson Wood, 27 Apr. 1863; Edson Wood to Catherine Wood, 11 Nov. 1861 FLWLB.

⁷² “Declaration for Original Pension of Invalid,” dated 29 May 1875, CWPF.

newcomers, and would only continue to grow in the coming years.⁷³

The Woods were intimately, if incidentally, bound up in the West Side's rapid post-fire growth. When his health permitted it, Edson found his steadiest work as a streetcar driver with the Chicago West Division Railway Company—a job he secured after one of the firm's timekeepers boarded with the family. Frank's first job outside of school, likely secured for him by his father, was running lunch pails to the other conductors.⁷⁴ More than any other feature of city life, the streetcar both reflected and shaped the forces of industrialization and urbanization then fueled Chicago's growth and set it apart from the close-knit community of Malden. Able to move large numbers of people from one part of the city to another both quickly and consistently, the streetcar not only enabled the West Side's largely residential development but also integrated the neighborhood with the every part of the city. Few, however, would have expected the streetcar's future portent, however, from its early history.

Chicago's economic potential had already become the stuff of legend when Franklin Parmelee arrived in 1853. The son of pioneering New York farmers, Parmelee had come to Chicago with the hopes of amassing his own fortune but began by clerking for a liveryman. Within a year of his arrival, however, Parmelee convinced his employer to organize a handful of omnibus lines with the stable's idle horses for extra income. A shrewd investor in an era that celebrated prudence, Parmelee established private routes with hotel proprietors to transport

⁷³ Elias Colbert and Everett Chamberlin, *The Great Conflagration* (Cincinnati: C. F. Vent, 1871), 285-87, 201; A. T. Andreas, *History of Chicago: From the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Chicago: A. T. Andres Company, 1886), III: 124; Homer Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 102.

⁷⁴ Henry Tallman, "General Affidavit," 23 April 1881; Clarence L. Chancey, "General Affidavit," 22 April 1881; Catharine E. Wood Widow of Edson A. Wood Pension Files, cert. no. 664592, can. no. 54217, RG15, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. [hereafter cited as Wood Pension Files]; "Wood, Frank L.—Biography," typescript ms., folder 15, box 1, WGPCC.

guests from the train depot in order to ensure a steady return. Commuter traffic was an afterthought. Six years later, however, Parmelee bought the routes from his employer, partnered with other businessmen, and incorporated the Chicago City Railway Company to expand the omnibus's residential reach. With their incorporation, Parmelee and his partners, Henry Fuller, David A. Gage and Liberty Bigelow, also secured a franchise from the state that granted the firm eminent domain to lay tracks and operate cars throughout the city's south and west sides. In return, the railway was to pay a third of the cost to maintain and improve the streets. Without any competition, Parmelee's undertaking proved an instant success and soon employed over two hundred men to run thirty streetcars throughout the a rapidly expanding city.⁷⁵

Like many pious businessmen at midcentury, the early financiers of Chicago's transit companies understood their success to be an affirmation their personal integrity and commitment to Chicago's community. With the exception of Bigelow, a wealthy Boston capitalist, all of the railway's partners were local businessmen who claimed the fruits of their personal gain became communal goods in the moral imperatives that guided their philanthropic and religious engagements. All three men were active not only in Chicago's business and civic life, but had also helped found such charitable and religious organizations like the Young Men's Christian Union, and they demonstrated their commitment to serving the city by serving as the railway's

⁷⁵ Samuel Wilbur Norton, *Chicago Traction: A History Legislative and Political* (Chicago: Samuel Wilbur Norton, 1907), 20-21; J. Seymour Currey, *Chicago: Its History and Its Builders* (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1910) IV: 190-193. See also Robert David Weber, "Rationalizers and Reformers: Chicago Local Transportation in the Nineteenth Century," (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1971), 10-15. The state of Illinois granted a similar franchise for the city's north side to a different group of investors with the North Chicago City Railway Company, "The Chicago City Railway Company," *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 12 January 1863.

first conductors.⁷⁶ Parmelee in particular believed his fortunes both validated and propagated a moral code that linked personal piety with worldly gain. Though he certainly understood his wealth to be the product of his own efforts, he argued that a shared valuation of character as a quality worthy of reward had paved his path to success. A devout Universalist, Parmelee carried in his pocket a needle and a spool of black thread his mother had given him the day he left home in 1827. The gift was an admonishment not only to keep his outward appearance as neat and pure as his personal life, but also to heed Christ's warning that a camel could more easily pass through a needle's eye than a rich man could enter heaven's gates. Parmelee claimed the kit was the "secret" of his success—the thread helping him to "appear to advantage before others" and the needle instilling in him a humility that accompanied his success.⁷⁷ Such commitments, even if undertaken merely to win public support, indicate the enduring strength of an ethic that saw high moral character and a commitment to the commonweal as prerequisites to financial success even in a burgeoning city like Chicago.

⁷⁶ Edwin Oscar Gale, *Reminiscences of Early Chicago and Vicinity* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1902), 341; Philo Adams Otis, *The First Presbyterian Church: A History of the Oldest Organization in Chicago With Biographical Sketches of the Pastors and Copious Extracts from the Choir Records* (Chicago: Clayton F. Summy Co., 1900), 49; *The Chicago City Directory and Business Advertiser, 1855-56* (Chicago: Robert Fergus Book & Job Printer, 1855), 196; Andreas, *History of Chicago*, III: 101, 392, 416, 655; Edward T. Blair, *A History of the Chicago Club* (Chicago: n.p., 1898), 10-11, 80.

⁷⁷ Parmelee gifted a spool and thread to each of his four children, Currey, *Chicago*, 190, 193. Investors with the North Chicago Railway Company, chartered in 1859 alongside the City Railway Company with a similar charter for the city's north side, also understood their investment and success as part of a similar set of shared values. The North Chicago Railway's investors included William B. Ogden, the city's first mayor, as well as John B. Turner, president of the Chicago and Galena Union Railroad, Turner's son Volentine C., physician Charles V. Dyer and Board of Real Estate and Stock Brokers President James H. Rees who were all Chicago residents who engaged in a number of religious and philanthropic endeavors. See Weber, "Rationalizers and Reformers," 14-15; Norton, *Chicago Traction*, 21.

While Parmelee had inaugurated Chicago's traction history, however, it lay with J. Russell Jones and his political associates to develop the transit system of an industrial metropolis. The youngest of four children born to devout Presbyterians in Conneaut, Ohio, in 1823, Jones had abandoned a career in the ministry to seek more material opportunities in the lead-mining boomtown of Galena, Illinois, by way of a tiny farming community named Rockton. Arriving in 1840, Jones eked out a living in retail until fortuitously gaining a clerkship with one of the state's most successful wholesalers Benjamin H. Campbell. The position itself was lucrative, but Jones' clerkship also provided the ambitious teen access to Galena's most powerful citizens, including a young military officer named Ulysses S. Grant. By 1860, Jones had joined the boards of several wholesale firms, married Campbell's niece, and parlayed his connections into a term in the Illinois House of Representatives as a Republican.⁷⁸ With Lincoln's election and Grant's rise to fame during the Civil War, Jones secured an appointment to serve as northern Illinois's U.S. Marshall.⁷⁹ The position required a move to Chicago where Jones purchased a home near Union Park and quickly took advantage of the West Side's business opportunities, purchasing a controlling interest in the Chicago West Division City Railway Company in July of 1863. Incorporated only two years earlier, the company was initially the effort of a number of local businessmen to secure a franchise from the state to build more streetcar lines. When their efforts failed, however, the railway's initial investors sold their stock to Jones and a group of

⁷⁸ I have culled Jones' brief biography from Currey, *Chicago*, IV: 4436-438; *Biographical Sketches of the Leading Men of Chicago: Written by The Best Talent of the Northwest* (Chicago: Wilson & St. Clair, 1868), 121-125; *The History of Jo Daviess County, Illinois: Containing A History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, Etc., A Biographical Directory of its Citizens, War Record of Its Volunteers in the Late Rebellion, General and Local Statistics, and Portraits of Earl Settlers and Prominent Men* (Chicago: H. F. Kett & Co., 1878), 493, 617-618; George R. Jones, "Joseph Russell Jones," *Lincoln Herald* 75 (1972): 41-52.

⁷⁹ Currey, *Chicago*, 438.

partners that included Campbell read like a directory of Galena's elite.⁸⁰ Foregoing the previous investor's failed attempts to petition the state for a contract, Jones promptly raised \$200,000 and purchased Parmelee's twenty-five year franchise on all West Side transit lines, effectively controlling streetcar traffic throughout two thirds of the city.⁸¹

Jones' takeover also came at an important moment in the history of American urban governance. Prior to the Civil War, most antebellum cities required little administrative powers beyond judicial or police authority to function. Other services were either voluntarily provided like fire fighting, or individually attained like water. After midcentury, however, the rapid growth of most urban centers increased both the need for organized municipal services as well as the interest of many state politicians to influence who provided them. Beginning in the 1850s, Chicago, like most American cities, witnessed an increasing number of revisions to its charter, granting the state legislature the power to create and appoint any number of departments or commissions that governed a plethora of urban issues. By far the most extensive—and certainly most lucrative—power state legislatures held over city affairs, however, was the issuance of franchises, or contracts, that exclusively chartered private firms to provide public services like sewage, gas, and railway services.⁸²

⁸⁰ *History of Jo Daviess County*, 513, 618-619; *Biographical Sketches of the Leading Men of Chicago*, 124; Augustus L. Chetlain, *Recollections of Seventy Years* (Galena, IL: The Gazette Publishing Company, 1899), 281-283; Norton, *Chicago Traction*, 21-22. The West Division Railway's investors included W. Henry Bradley, a former Galena bookkeeper now serving as clerk of Chicago's federal courts, Jones's brother-in-law William H. Ovington, Republican Congressman Eliu B. Washburne, wealthy Galena banker Nathan Corwith, and, of course, Campbell, who had also moved to Chicago to serve as Illinois' new U.S. District Attorney.

⁸¹ Andreas, *History of Chicago*, II: 121; Currey, *Chicago*, IV: 193.

⁸² Bessie Louise Pierce, *A History of Chicago* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), II: 309, 315-318, 335 and chap. 8. On the expansion of state legislatures on city governance see Maury Klein and Harvey A. Kantor, *Prisoners of Progress: American Industrial Cities, 1850-1920* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976), 330-338; Jon C. Teaford, *The Unhealed*

A well-connected politician in his own right, Jones and his partners masterfully played this governing structure to their benefit. Less than two years after his purchase of Parmelee's franchise, he helped the Illinois legislature hurriedly pass over the governor's veto "An Act Concerning Horse Railways in the City of Chicago" that not only extended the franchise of the city's three streetcar companies from twenty-five to ninety-nine years, but also barred the city from passing transit ordinances without each companies' consent. Derisively called the "Ninety-Nine Year Act" by the press, the law's passage came with a number of protests and charges of bribery, and in a very important way signaled a shift in the relationship between municipal service providers and the communities they served.⁸³ Legally, the act for the first time separated the interests of transit firms from the public. Property owners whose lots abutted streetcar routes had previously failed to challenge the railway's claim of eminent domain because the railways argued that their enterprise served a larger public good. With the terms of the railways' franchises frozen in 1865 by the Ninety-Nine Year Act's ban on emendations, however, the railways henceforth argued any city ordinance that regulated fares, determined schedules or raised rates of assessment constituted an infringement on their corporate rights.⁸⁴ In fact, Jones, along with the other railways, even evaded the contributions to street maintenance that were

Triumph: City Government in America, 1870-1900 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 83-98.

⁸³ Norton, *Chicago Transit*, 35-39. On the state's influence in franchise distribution see Charles W. Cheape, *Moving the Masses: Urban Public Transit in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, 1880-1912* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); "The Ninety-Nine Year Act," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 17 January 1865; cited in Norton, *Chicago Traction*, 39. See also R. E. Heilman, "Chicago Traction," *American Economic Association Quarterly* 9 (1908): 3-6; Robin L. Einhorn, *Property Rules: Political Economy in Chicago, 1833-1872* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 219-221; Weber, "Rationalizer and Reformers," 49-51.

⁸⁴ Einhorn, *Property Rules*, 218-220; John A. Fairlie, "The Street Railway Question in Chicago," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 21 (1907): 372-374.

outlined in the original franchise. By 1886, Jones and his fellow railway managers had become so skilled at evading their fiscal obligations that Chicago collected nearly as much revenue from the sale of dog tags as from all the taxes and fees of the three streetcar companies combined.⁸⁵

This legal separation, however, was ultimately reinforced by an even more profound social disunion that increasingly severed the city's elite from their sense of connection to the city as a community. After he was elected President in 1869, Jones' friend and former business partner Ulysses S. Grant appointed Jones ambassador to Belgium, where he would serve until 1875 when Grant appointed him Collector of the Port of Chicago.⁸⁶ Upon his return, Jones filled the railway's board with a number of federal politicians and international businessmen and completely divorced the West Division Railway's success from the West Side's well being.⁸⁷ When, in the same year that Edson and Frank joined the railway, the city proposed a licensing fee to build bridges the streetcars would use, Jones publicly threatened to reduce service, raise fares, and slash his employees' wages in order to defeat the ordinance.⁸⁸ A similar pattern emerged in nearly every major public utility. Few investors now even pretended to argue that the

⁸⁵ Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistic, *Ninth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Illinois, 1896* (Springfield: Phillips Bros. State Printery, 1897), 473-474 cited in Pierce, *A History of Chicago*, III: 327-328. See also "The Street-Cars," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 March 1878; "The West Side," *ibid.*, 27 July 1879; "J. Russell Jones," *ibid.*, 7 September 1880; "West Side Railway," *ibid.*, 28 November 1880; "Street-Car Liscenses," *ibid.*, 3 December 1880; Einhorn, *Property Rules*, 222-224.

⁸⁶ Seymour, *Chicago*, 439-441; A. N. Watterman, *Historical Review of Chicago and Cook County And Selected Biography* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1908) III: 1077-1079; M. L. Ahren, *The Political History of Chicago* (Chicago: Michael Loftus Ahren, 1887), 135-135.

⁸⁷ Andreas, *History of Chicago*, II: 122, III: 128; Fremont O. Bennett, comp., *Politics and Politicians of Chicago, Cook County, and Illinois, Memorial Volume, 1787-1887* (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Company, 1886), 111.

⁸⁸ See "J. Russell Jones," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 September 1880.

community would benefit from their private gain while revelations that many firms paid for their franchises with bribes belied the notion that high moral character was the pathway to personal success. In 1872 the Chicago Gas-Light & Coke Company purportedly spent \$40,000 bribing city officials in order to close a competitor; nineteen of the city's twenty aldermen were indicted in the affair.⁸⁹ Though they may have walked the same streets as the people they served, by the 1870s many of the men invested in Chicago's infrastructure, increasingly looked upon the city less as a community of his peers and more as a bounded market of consumers who demanded a service they completely controlled.



Ten years old and a newcomer to a city he knew nothing about, Frank Wood was likely oblivious to these developments. The stunning contrast between his former home and the burgeoning metropolis in which he now lived provided enough of a shock to the young lad's senses. When the Woods arrived, the city's population of 400,000 was nearly tripled that of Bureau County's. By decade's end, the city would also become the nation's third largest manufacturing center by every measurable index, boasting over 80,000 manufactories that employed hundreds of thousands of workers who produced \$250,000,000 in goods annually.⁹⁰ Yet to merely juxtapose Wood's time in Bureau County with the shock of the city would be misleading. Chicago was certainly not Malden, but to a young boy living on Chicago's far West Side, there was much about the far West Side in which he lived that would have appeared familiar, and which reinforced many of the values he had learned in Malden.

⁸⁹ See Andreas, *History of Chicago*: II: 51, 467, III: 845, 856-864; Pierce, *A History of Chicago*, II: 297-299, 320.

⁹⁰ Andreas, *History of Chicago*, III: 124; Pierce, *A History of Chicago*, III: 533.

Upon their arrival the Woods settled on the city's far West Side, renting a home on Washington Boulevard two blocks west of Western Avenue, fully three miles from the city center. Sparsely settled and with churches the most prominent public structures, this expanse of the city's West Side appeared more like a small town such as Malden than an appendage to the nation's fastest growing metropolis. Longtime resident James Carr recalled that in the 1870s Central Park's development was so limited to churches, schools, and homes "as to give the neighborhood the appearance of a religious settlement" more than an urban neighborhood.⁹¹ Toward the east near Union Park lay one of the more fashionable residential districts of the city, "wholly occupied with elegant detached residences or stylish row homes."⁹² To the west, however, lay tracts of unsettled prairie broken only by Central Park and a "few shanties and farmhouses, some of which had been built twenty years ago."⁹³

This rapidly settling district to the east of Central Park resembled rural communities such as Malden in other ways as well. In addition to being the least populated area of the city, the two wards that lay between Central and Union Parks where the Woods settled were also the most native-born. In fact, the majority of the new residents who were occupying the area were rural migrants like the Woods. While the city as a whole was witnessing an influx of German,

⁹¹ James Carr, "History of Garfield Park," typescript ms., WGPPC. On the West Side's development see also Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago*, 102-17; Richard Sennett, *Families Against the City: Middle Class Homes of Industrial Chicago, 1872-1890* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 31-38.

⁹² Chamberlin, *Chicago and its Suburbs*, 253. On the Woods' residence see *Lakeside Annual Directory for the City of Chicago for 1874-75* (Chicago: Williams, Donnelley & Company, 1874), 1173; *Lakeside Annual Directory for the City of Chicago for 1875-76* (Chicago: Williams, Donnelley & Company, 1875), 1061; *Lakeside Annual Directory for the City of Chicago for 1876-77* (Chicago: Williams, Donnelley & Company, 1876), 1079; *Lakeside Annual Directory for the City of Chicago for 1877-78* (Chicago: Williams, Donnelley & Company, 1877), 1058.

⁹³ Andreas, *History of Cook County*, 793-96.

Scandinavian, and Irish immigrants, the Thirteenth Ward in which the Woods resided was largely comprised of recent arrivals from rural Ohio, New York, Kentucky, and, more than anywhere else, Illinois. The streetcar was again essential here, allowing these migrants to recreate a village-like community in Chicago's hinterland while remaining connected to the opportunities that lay just a few miles east. As one observer noted, "through the electric streetcar the city is being ruralized and the country is being urbanized."⁹⁴ Indeed, in the recollections of many West Side residents, the neighborhood smacked of Malden's "peaceful, virtuous and thriving community." As one Central Park resident wistfully recalled with sentiments that bespoke of the changes that would eventually transform the area, the West Side of the 1870s was one of "groups of houses with vegetable gardens, some cows, [and] many chickens. In these homes were typical American families with many healthy, happy, well-cared for children."⁹⁵

In this recognizably semi-rural district, Frank Wood's early years in the city followed a recognizable pattern. Alongside Catherine, he continued to attend both services and Sunday school at the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church. The church itself was a recent addition to the West Side and resembled the one-room, clapboard structure that Wood had attended in Malden. Organized in 1869 as a mission Sunday school for the district's new migrants, the church of nearly three hundred had located to the corner of Western and Monroe

⁹⁴ Frederick C. Howe, *The City: The Hope of Democracy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967 [1905]), 18; George Leidenberger, *Chicago's Progressive Alliance: Labor and the Bid for Public Streetcars* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006). Bureau of the Census, *The Statistics of the Population of the United States: Embracing the Tables of Age, Race, Nationality, Sex, Selected Ages, and Occupations: To Which Are Added Statistics of School Attendance and Illiteracy, of Schools., Libraries, Newspapers and Periodicals, Churches, Pauperism and Crime, and of Areas, Families, and Dwellings, Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census (June 1, 1870)* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 110.

⁹⁵ Frances Bates Patterson, "Highlights of Our History," unpaginated typescript ms., folder 9, box 2, EGPCC.

the year before the Woods arrived.⁹⁶ When not in church, Wood also continued to roam the neighborhood's "weed infested paths" that passed for streets.⁹⁷ Unlike his time in Malden, however, Wood began a more sustained engagement with the world outside his home, for he attended Chicago's public schools. But even here Wood continued to witness a symbiotic overlap between personal faith and public prominence.

He attended the Hayes School, a new, two-story brick structure only four blocks from his home. The city had recently built the school to accommodate the West Side's growth. But like even the oldest school in Chicago, the Hayes School rooted its instruction in Christian moralism. Chicago's Board of Education mandated every class day begin with a reading from scripture, as if to suggest all worldly knowledge emerged from Christian instruction, and much of the school's curricula was rooted in the spiritual development of its pupils. As Board of Education Superintendent William H. Wells instructed the city's teachers, "No part of the teacher's work requires more watchfulness, and more painstaking, than the shaping of the child's moral character."⁹⁸ Wells' work in Chicago would actually shape the development of public schools nationally. His systematic "grading" of the schools' curricula to incrementally increase in difficulty as children aged became a widely adopted practice. In Wells' course of study, students were simultaneously to acquire the skills needed for social mobility as well as the moral acuity to wield them. Each grade, according to Wells, was but a step in the students' social, moral and

⁹⁶ *Directory of the Western Ave M. E. Church*, unpaginated.

⁹⁷ FLW, "Reminiscences," unpaginated typescript mss, folder 8, box 1, EGPCC.

⁹⁸ Chicago Board of Education, *Graded Course of Instruction for the Public Schools of Chicago* 4th rev. ed. (Chicago: Bryant, Walker & Craig, 1872), 17.

spiritual awakening for the guiding principle of every teacher should be “not how much they know, but how much better they have become.”⁹⁹

Wood’s surviving eighth grade penmanship notebooks from 1877, for example, convey how the thirteen-year-old studiously engaged the moral world in which he was raised. In each, he repeatedly inscribed such dictums as “Manners with learning makes a gentleman,” “Lose no time, harm no one,” “Avoid all excess,” and “Arm yourself against any temptation.” The extent, number, and consistency of the inscriptions evince the studiousness that would later become a hallmark of Wood’s personality. But for a new teenager, they embody a measure of his ambition. The assiduously reproduced arches of his “A’s” in “Avoid,” and the uniform delicacy of his “L’s” in “Lose” reveal both a steady hand and a disciplined pupil. Yet the form and content of these exercises also promulgated the notion that self-control and Christian morality were vital in an individual’s social advancement. In an era before mechanical writing aids like the typewriter were readily available, clear and consistent penmanship was an essential technical skill for any kind of work above manual labor and the most important subject in Well’s curriculum. The precision of one’s pen also said something about the person who wielded it. Embedded in the absolute uniformity of word spacing or letter shapes were laborious hours of practice needed to acquire such consistency. Wielding a disciplined pen, therefore, also signaled the writer’s disciplined will through regimens intended to bring about order in one’s life as well as upon the

⁹⁹ Ibid., 8. On the importance of Wells in American public education see William J. Reese, *America’s Public Schools: From the Common School to ‘No Child Left Behind* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). On the centrality of religion to nineteenth century education generally, see David B. Tyack, “Onward Christian Soldiers: Religion in the American Common School,” in *History and Education: The Educational Uses of the Past*, Paul Nash, ed. (New York: Random House, 1970), 212-255; Robert S. Michaelsen, *Piety in the Public School: Trends and Issues in the Relationship Between Religion and the Public School in the United States* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1970), 45-53.

page. The elaborate, yet controlled, curvature of Wood's written words reified the internal restraint the very maxims he reproduced conveyed.¹⁰⁰

For Frank Wood, then, his early years in Chicago seemed very much like his earliest years in Malden. He walked in a world where it seemed a certain Protestant sensibility covered and wove through every facet of his life together in a seamless community of peace, virtue, and prosperity. Broadly evangelical, and defined only in the vaguest of terms, the strength of this notion resided in its ubiquity. To Wood, the Sunday school concerts of Malden's Methodist church, the civic activity of the church's prominent members, and the penmanship books of his Chicago school days all seemed to contribute to a timeless truth that made the virtues of Christian character a prerequisite to any kind public prominence, and demanded that even the lowliest citizen was entitled to certain basic needs if they too were upstanding.

But the foundations upon which this worldview rested would be challenged in the years to come, for in the end, Chicago was, indeed, not Malden. Even in its sparsely settled far West Side, the city's industrial foundation and diverse population would come to shape the lives of even the remotest resident. In September of 1875, for instance, the Chicago School Board voted to end the practice of reading Bible verses and reciting the Lord's Prayer at the start of every school day. The city's Catholic communities had been pushing for the measure for at least a decade, knowing full well that the board only required the King James Bible to be read. Protestant ministers vehemently protested the measure, but, by 1875, they were largely outnumbered by the nearly continuous arrival of largely Catholic European immigrants who

¹⁰⁰ Frank L. Wood Penmanship Books, folder 16, box 8, WGPCC. On penmanship in American culture see Augst, *Clerk's Tale*, 8-11, 31-33; Tamar Plankins Thornton, *Handwriting in America: A Cultural History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).

were remaking the city at a rate much faster than rural migrants like the Woods.¹⁰¹ None of the Woods recorded their impression of this demographic change and its effect on the city's religious life. But for Frank, it may not have mattered, for other forces shaping the city soon forced him to quit school.

If Malden's Methodist church had provided Wood a means to which he could understand the nature of the village's community life, then the Western Avenue church in many ways embodied the new circumstances in which the Woods found themselves, even if Frank only dimly understood them. A congregation of nearly three hundred, the livelihoods of the Western Avenue Church members reflected the recognizably modest but fundamentally different economic conditions the family encountered. Carpenters, bricklayers, foremen and others in the building trades worshiped alongside a slightly smaller number of bookkeepers, salesmen and real estate agents. A small number of railroad workers from the massive eighty-acre rail yard of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad that had recently opened only five blocks north of the Woods' home also sat in the church's pews. That a handful of business owners did so as well hinted at the kind of opportunities available in the city, but their scant numbers underscored the inescapably wage-earning character of the city's West Side. More drastically perhaps for young Frank, the exponential growth of the city in the years after the fire combined with the sudden onset of a prolonged national depression in 1873 led to high turnover rates within the church. Where Malden's Methodist Church had been a stable body of family and friends, the Western Avenue Church was constantly remade into a congregation of strangers. "The community in which our Church is situated has not the permanent characteristics of longer settled

¹⁰¹ Andreas, *A History of Chicago*, III: 146-147; L. T. Chamberlain, *The Bible in the Public Schools: A Sermon, Preached in the New England Church, Chicago, October 31st, 1875* (n.p.); U.S. Census Bureau, *The Statistics of the Population of the United States . . . Ninth Census, 1870*, I: 352.

neighborhoods of our city,” the church’s directory noted in 1877, “As an index of the changes that time has wrought it may be stated that not one of the names indicated in the first Church Register of Officers are now with us, and it may be further stated that hardly one hundred members of probationers are on our record.”¹⁰²

The Woods continued to attend the Western Avenue church, but they too were succumbing to these economic difficulties. Though he was able to land steady work with the Western Division Railway, Edson struggled to provide for his small family. His continued ill health drove him to bed for extend periods, and even when he could work the railway generally paid substandard wages. Soon, Catherine turned to the time-honored strategy among working people of taking in boarders to supplement’s Edson’s income. But even with Edson’s occasional wages, his pension, and whatever money the boarders brought in, Frank was soon forced into the world of work to contribute to the family’s income. At first the boy only worked during the summer mowing the grass of Central Park where he used to play. Soon, however, the family’s condition became such that in 1878, several years before graduation, Frank left the public school “because of the necessity of earning a living.”¹⁰³



As a teenager, Wood in all likelihood did not fully perceive the ways in which the realities of Chicago’s world of work would drastically differ from the social and religious

¹⁰² Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church (Chicago), *Directory of the Western Ave. M. E. Church* (Chicago, Published by the Church, 1877-1878); *Lakeside Annual Directory for the City of Chicago for 1876-77* (Chicago: Williams, Donnelley & Company, 1876).

¹⁰³ *Lakeside Annual Directory for the City of Chicago for 1874-75*, 1173; *Lakeside Annual Directory for the City of Chicago for 1875-76*, 1061; *Lakeside Annual Directory for the City of Chicago for 1876-77*, 1079; *Lakeside Annual Directory for the City of Chicago for 1877-78*, 1058; entry for Edson Wood, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, Chicago, ED 120, p. 279; “Wood, Frank L.—Biography,” folder 15, box 1, WGPCC.

ideology he inherited from Malden. In many respects, however, it would not have mattered. Wood saw nothing in his condition to be the result of the inequalities of industrial capitalism. Rather, Wood perhaps thought he had been prepared for such a time as this. He entered the workforce firm in his belief that ambition and a restrained Protestant morality were as essential in the development of a greater self-worth and personal prosperity as schooling. The same year Wood left school to work full time, he also became a member of the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church. Of course, the move in many respects was symbolic. Wood had been attending the church since he was three. However, Wood's decision and the church's consent to add his name to the church book as well as the Sunday school roll was an important rite of passage for a teenager about the embark on life's journey. By all accounts, Frank Wood was coming of age.¹⁰⁴

But it was an uncertain age. Gainfully employed and a church member but still fifteen years old and living at home, Wood entered the 1880s as a young man who embodied all of the ambiguity inherent in those two words.

¹⁰⁴ "Wood, Frank L.—Biography," folder 15, box 1, WGPCC.

CHAPTER TWO: PRODIGAL SONS

But the father said to his servants, “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”

- The Gospel According to St. Luke, 15:22-24, KJV.

This is the age of the young people.¹

- Rev. John H. Vincent, “The Coming Church,” (1892)



Over half a century after Calla Scott had enlisted him to become a member of the Wesleyan Bible Class in 1880, Frank Wood recounted what those years meant to him to a gathering of Bible class teachers and students. Narrating his adolescence with tropes more suitable to his later years, Wood conceived of his youth in explicitly doctrinal terms. “It was a time mental fog and spiritual storm and great unrest,” he intoned. “When a boy, I gave my heart to Jesus Christ,” but at “the high school age I read Robert Ingersoll and drifted toward infidelity.” Wood claimed that Ingersoll, a Civil War veteran, noted Republican politician, and famed agnostic orator whose antireligious texts *The Gods* (1876) and *Some Mistakes of Moses* (1879) antagonized the devout throughout the late nineteenth century, directly challenged his belief in Jesus’ divinity and the Bible’s authenticity. An apparently unwilling skeptic, Wood claimed he sought to address his unbelief but found that neither the guidance of church leaders nor the writings of contemporary Christian thinkers could rebut Ingersoll’s critiques. In fact, Wood maintained that the treatises of many prominent ministers “on the harmony of science and religion” simply compounded his

¹ John H. Vincent, “The Coming Church,” *Independent*, 7 Jul. 1892, 929.

skepticism. It was only after he joined the Wesleyan class and Calla Scott Willard “implanted in me a desire to renew my boyhood covenant” did Wood claim he again “gave my life into the care and keeping of the man of Galilee.” “At last I put my faith in action,” he concluded, and from that moment Wood declared he committed himself to bringing a similar “revival of faith” to the world about him; a revival of “faith in the personality of Jesus Christ as the world’s Savior; faith that as a word, is not usurped by theologians, but is a way of daily experience.”²

In emphasizing internal doctrinal conflicts and eliding the social, cultural and economic forces that had also shaped his adolescent years, Wood construed his passage into adulthood as the maturation of a kind of holy warrior. Apostasy and irreligion had come to dominate modern thought and directly threatened the old time religion, he implied. Only a personal reaffirmation of Christ’s divinity and an aggressive defense of an inspired Bible could restore evangelical Protestantism to its former place of public prominence. It was a tidy narrative, and one that was more appropriate to Wood’s later persona as a grassroots fundamentalist than to the considerations of a young man in his late teens. Yet by the time Wood recounted this tale, such renderings of the turn of the century had become common. Throughout the twentieth century many early fundamentalists—and most of their historians—looked upon the closing decades of the nineteenth century as a peculiar moment of theological crisis. The acceptance of Darwin’s theory of evolution in America’s universities, the arrival of Biblical criticism in the nation’s seminaries, and the popularity of agnostics like Ingersoll in the public sphere all combined at century’s end to inaugurate what in their view was an unprecedented attack upon the doctrinal

² Frank L. Wood, *The Layman’s Galilean* (Chicago: Grant’s Printery, 1938), 159-61. The text is a published version of Wood’s “The Victory That Overcometh” address given at the Wesleyan Bible Class’ Eleventh “Other Class Sunday.” See *Eleventh “Other Class Sunday” in the Wesleyan Bible Class*, unpaginated program, 7 Mar. 1937, folder 4, box 3, WBCR. On Ingersoll see *The Gods and Other Lectures* (New York: D. M. Bennett, 1876); *Some Mistakes of Moses* (Washington, D.C.: C. P. Farrell, 1879).

traditions and cultural authority of the Christian church. Many fundamentalist ministers and influential laymen framed their later religious militancy as a long overdue response to the influence of these late-century heresies. Pastor of Boston's Tremont Temple Baptist Church, Cortland Myers, for instance, portrayed his attempt to purge theological modernists from the Northern Baptist Convention as an exasperated counterattack to decades of doctrinal infidelity. "We have passed thirty years of criticism from those who have tried to destroy this Book," Myers recounted at the inaugural General Conference on Fundamentals in 1920. "What the ministers of God need today," he decreed, "is to understand that this thing is not, can not, will not be shaken."³

Whatever these recollections and their later rhetorical power, however, Frank Wood's coming of age ultimately embodied a complexity that he neither recalled nor at the time realized. For many lay Protestant men of Wood's generation, the late nineteenth century's nascent theological conflicts existed alongside, and occasionally were subordinate to, far more immediate concerns. Finding work, starting a family, and becoming an accepted member of the community were matters that often weighed more heavily than the perspicacity of scripture. Yet these endeavors were never solely material concerns. They were informed by, and in many instances emerged from, longstanding evangelical conceptions of the family, the economy, and the state that spoke directly to the interconnected and purportedly ordained roles of every

³ Cortland Myers, "Things Not Shaken," in *Baptist Fundamentals: Being Addresses Delivered at the Pre-Convention Conference at Buffalo, June 21 and 22, 1920*, Gilbert N. Brink, ed. (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1920), 156-57. Myers, in fact, also identified Ingersoll as a key participant in the *fin-de-siècle* attack on the church. "In my brief experience," he wrote, implying but not naming Ingersoll, "we have had a period of atheism led on by that mocker and blasphemer of America and some other secondary followers here and some across the water, who gathered in his fortune from the pockets of his fellow men and women from whom he stole all their faith and the real riches of the life, and they were fools enough to pay him. . . . I passed through that period when this Book was torn apparently into shreds. He took it in front of his audience and tore page after page out of it, and even the covers he threw into the fire."

independent, self-regulating Christian man. Such notions had once structured the social life of many small towns and village communities throughout the rural, pre-industrial Midwest. But in the context of a rapidly industrializing society, where cultural conflict and the rights of capital would shape society's governance more than community control, their value and their efficacy seemed under attack.

For Frank Wood and countless others like him, Sunday school classes and young people's societies like the Wesleyan Bible Class became a crucible in which all of these concerns merged. Their social and devotional life became the idiom through which many Protestant young people comprehended and engaged the social transformations of their age. The Sabbath lessons, recreational events, and self-improvement activities of many Bible classes helped these participants accommodate themselves to this emerging industrial order. They inflected older understandings of character and community with tones more suitable to the bureaucracies of corporate, industrial work. Yet in doing so, Bible classes also brought into the modern world such countervailing notions as the church's role as a moral arbiter to the community, and that every upright Christian deserved just compensation on account of the content of their character.



Neither Frank Wood nor the eleven other souls who became charter members of the Wesleyan Bible Class in May of 1880 were alone in having been recruited by church leaders to join an organization intended to augment their relation to the church. Throughout the final decades of the nineteenth century, local ministers and denominational leaders across the country were similarly convinced Protestant youngsters were rapidly abandoning the local church. In nearly every denomination, record keepers discovered that in relation to the Sunday school's almost constant growth, church membership as a whole was declining. While the children of Protestant parents joined Sunday schools, church leaders found that many, if not most, failed to become

members of a congregation. One Boston Monday Minister's Meeting in 1881, for instance, revealed that nearly forty percent of the city's Sunday school scholars never joined a church. Though the ministers confessed the figure was "better than some supposed," the meeting could not avoid the inevitable conclusion that churches would eventually wither if "the children of Christian parents are growing up unconverted and going out into the world unsaved . . ."⁴

Of course, adults had long fretted over the moral condition of society's young. Since the eighteenth century, parents and guardians had nearly all understood the transition to adulthood to be a perilous moment of human development, full of dangers and temptations that could lead a child toward ruin. But in the decades after the Civil War, many white, native-born Protestants became particularly concerned about the relationship between young people and the local church. The children of Protestant parents, they worried, increasingly looked beyond the local congregation as the center of their social world. Instead, a variety of social clubs, recreational spaces, and public institutions had come to anchor young people's community and serve as a locus of authority over their lives. There was a particularly urban dimension to many of these fears. Where churches had once claimed a certain measure of influence over the smaller communities of the Midwestern hinterland by virtue of their institutional prominence, they were but one of many social spaces in the region's rapidly industrializing cities. As William Bell Riley

⁴ "The Church and the Young," *Congregationalist*, 27 Apr. 1881, 2; "Children and Church Services," *Congregationalist*, 11 May 1881, 2. In comparison to the litany of studies that would follow, the Boston Monday Minister's Meeting's report was a relief. By the 1890s some surveys found the number to be the reverse, with only forty percent of Sunday school attendees eventually joining a church, and if a church's prayer meeting was included that figured dropped below thirty percent. See for example F. E. Clark, "Church and the Young People," *Sunday School Times*, 27 Jul. 1895, 475-476; James J. Hill, "Sunday School Leakage," *Sunday School Times*, 25 Jul. 1896, 423-474; World's Sunday School Convention, *The World's Sunday-School Convention: Held in the Congregational Memorial Hall and City Temple, London. A Complete Record of its Proceedings Day By Day, July 1 to 6, 1889* (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1889), 231-232, 300-301.

discovered upon leaving his pastorate in the small Illinois town of Bloomington in 1893 for a more renowned opportunity at Chicago's Calvary Baptist Church, the institutional variety of city life greatly reduced a pastor's social and cultural influence. As his wife Mary Acomb Riley recalled some years later, Riley "discovered that, whereas at Bloomington what he said reached and influenced the entire city, in Chicago he was circumscribed to the narrow limits of a congregation of some sixty people to begin with, and only of about 500 after four and one-half years of hard and exceptionally successful work."⁵

For Riley, this first urban pastorate convinced him that the world had become irreparably immoral and, again according to his wife, started him "on the fight for 'fundamentalism.'"⁶ But for many turn-of-the-century Protestants, responsibility for the church's waning social influence lay solely with the churches themselves. To both doctrinal conservatives and theological liberals, the statistical discrepancies between Sunday school attendance and church membership signaled more of a failure on the part of local churches to retain the young than the success of other "doubtful associations" to lure them away.⁷ Churches, they charged, lacked both the devotional style and organizational space to appeal to America's budding youth. According to critics, the pedantic sermons, doleful prayers, and vapid hymns of the average weekly worship service created an atmosphere so "dignified and critical that only the old men seem competent to breathe

⁵ M. A. Riley, *The Dynamics of a Dream: The Life Story of Dr. William B. Riley* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1938), 51, quoted in Walter Edmund Warren Ellis, "Social and Religious Factors in the Fundamentalist-Modernist Schisms Among Baptists in North America, 1895-1934," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1974), 101. For more on Riley's view of urban spaces as intrinsically lost see his *Messages for the Metropolis* (Chicago: Winona Publishing Company, 1906).

⁶ Riley, *The Dynamics of a Dream*, 52, quoted in Ellis, "Social and Religious Factors in the Fundamentalist-Modernist Schism Among Baptists in North America," 102.

⁷ S. W. Pratt, "Young People's Associations," *Sunday School Times*, 29 Dec. 1877, 820.

freely in it.”⁸ And where the Sunday service or midweek prayer meeting was too hoary, the Sunday school was too puerile. As the “nursery of the church,” charged one layperson in 1885, where teachers referred to their pupils as “little ones” and spoke only in “platitudes and infantile stories,” the Sunday school treated young women and men on the cusp of adulthood as simply larger children.⁹ Too old for the Sunday school but too young for the church, young people were literally out of place in the local church. In this structural gap, the Reverend Thomas Chalmers recalled, was “a wide desert through which the waters of Christianity and church life had to run, and there was considerable leakage away into the sands of sin and indifference.”¹⁰

The impulse behind this critique of Protestant devotional stodginess was in large part informed by a much broader debate about the nature of juvenescence. Throughout the late nineteenth century, both popular culture as well as medical discourse increasingly understood a child’s transition to adulthood to be less a passage between two life stages and more a unique, self-contained third stage in human development. The emergence of the American high school, the creation of juvenile courts, and the growth in pediatric medicine were all manifestations of a mindset that viewed a child’s pubescent years as a formative, universal, and distinct phase of life.

⁸ “Young People’s Prayer Meeting,” *Sunday School Times*, 12 Jan. 1878, 19-20. See also “The Young People of the Church,” *Christian Advocate*, 2 Sep. 1869, 276; “Notes on Open Letters,” *Sunday School Times*, 25 Jan. 1880, 50; “Children’s Church Attendance,” *Sunday School Times*, 21 Feb. 1880, 113-14; H. B. Hemenway, “Young People’s Meetings,” *Christian Advocate*, 11 Oct. 1883, 643; “How to Keep Young People in the Sunday School,” *Sunday School Times*, 15 Oct. 1887, 660-61; Frank Otis Erb, “The Development of the Young People’s Movement,” *The Biblical World* XLVIII (Sep., 1916): 130-32.

⁹ Benjamin H. Bayliss, “How to Increase Adult Attendance in the Sunday School,” *Sunday School Times*, 5 Dec. 1885, 772-73.

¹⁰ Thomas Chalmers, *The Juvenile Revival: Or, the Philosophy of the Christian Endeavor Movement* (St. Louis: Christian Publishing, 1893), 35; quoted in Christopher Coble, “The Role of Young People’s Societies in the Training of Christian Womanhood (and Manhood),” in *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism*, Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Virginia Lieson Brereton, eds., (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 74.

Within American Protestant communities, the very use of the term “youth” and recognition that young people had needs and interests distinct from those of adults and children indicates their awareness of this growing trend.¹¹ But the concern of many Protestant ministers and Sunday school teachers about the church’s failure to reach the young was also often the veiled form of a more particular and, to them, more profound fear over the church’s inability to retain young men. The very complaints critics lodged against the church—the effeminate and jejune Sunday school, the impotent and aged church—betrayed that their anxieties were just as much about the virility of the local church as the age of its audience. For instance, in an address before the International Sunday School Convention in 1881, the Reverend John Heyl Vincent, pastor of Chicago’s Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church and Corresponding Secretary of that denomination’s Sunday-School Union, seamlessly conflated a concern for the young with a concern for men. To be young, Vincent argued, was to be in a state of “betweenity.” A child was neither boy nor man, neither girl nor woman, but rather stood “between the two classes” as a distinct “class of society which we call our young people.” At this stage, Vincent cheekily continued, shifting his focus to young men, the average young person begins to “twirl his cane” and “feels about his upper lip for the promise of manhood.” Such were “legitimate aspirations of his being,” Vincent maintained, but “In the Sunday school we put senior and primary on the front seat and have them all sing ‘I Want to Be an Angel.’” “And then,” Vincent pronounced to resounding applause, “we

¹¹ On the development of adolescence in American social, political, and medical thought see John Demos and Virginia Demos, “Adolescence in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* vol. 31 (Nov. 1969): 632-638; Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), 133-43, 183-89; Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 173-78, 192-99.

meet in Conventions and express wonder that ‘our young people don’t remain longer in our Sunday School classes.’”¹²

Such lamentations resonated with Vincent’s audience, for by the late nineteenth century they had become widely accepted. In fact, by the 1880s most local ministers and other church workers were frantically experimenting with new organizational forms to retain Protestant youth. In his 1881 address before the International Sunday School Convention, Vincent himself advocated for the creation of what he called the “Assembly” that would take a church’s girls and boys over fifteen years of age out of the Sunday school, offer them more mature forms of fellowship, and guide them toward joining the church. Where the church’s young had been “identified with children,” Vincent argued, again conflating young people with young men, in the Assembly “he is identified with men” and “looks up all the way beyond him to the men and women occupying the highest social positions; the cultured men and women of the community.”¹³ Three years later Vincent convinced the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church to endorse what he called the “Oxford League” as the denomination’s official young people’s society. Open to “Methodist youth” of any age, Vincent intended the League to

¹² John H. Vincent, “Our Young People,” in *Third International (Eighth National) Sunday School Convention of the United States and British American Provinces, Held in the City of Toronto, Canada, June 22, 23 and 24, 1881* (Toronto: The Executive Committee, 1881), 198-99. Vincent would deliver a similar, and much more developed, version of this address before the Illinois State Sunday School Convention the following year. See Vincent, “Our Young Folks,” in *Proceedings of the 24th Illinois State Sunday School Convention, Held in the Presbyterian Church, Champaign, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, May 16, 17, & 18, 1882* (Chicago: James Guilbert Printer, 1882), 68-77. On Vincent see Leon H. Vincent, *John Heyl Vincent: A Biographical Sketch* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1925).

¹³ Vincent, “Our Young People,” *Third International (Eighth National) Sunday School Convention*, 200.

encourage Bible study, teach denominational history, and compel active participation in the devotional and evangelistic activities of the local church.¹⁴

By the time Vincent had secured this denominational approval, however, the Oxford League was but a small part of an explosion of young people's societies and Bible classes then occurring not only within the Methodist Episcopal Church, but in local churches everywhere. In 1881 the Reverend Francis E. Clark organized the young people at his Williston Congregational Church in Portland, Maine, into what he called the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor. Clark's society proved such a success that twenty nearby churches adopted the model within a year. By decade's end Clark had overseen the organization of over twenty thousand other classes that claimed over a million members.¹⁵ Two years later at a Methodist camp meeting outside of Chicago, a number of ministers and laymen organized the Young People's Methodist Alliance to encourage the piety of the church's youth between summer camp sessions. Henry S. Date, a successful Chicago art dealer, formalized the Alliance by gathering an executive committee to draw up courses of study and issue a monthly paper. Within four years over two thousand youngsters from camp meetings across the Midwest had joined the Alliance.¹⁶ The following year Baptist Conventions in Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and Michigan all recognized Loyalist Societies as the denomination's official young people's society, which by that date had

¹⁴ On the Oxford League see Joseph F. Berry, *Four Wonderful Years: A Sketch of the Origin, Growth, and Working Plans of the Epworth League* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1893), 12-16; Frank Otis Erb, "The Development of the Young People's Movement," 143-44.

¹⁵ Leonard Woolsey Bacon and Charles Addison Northrop, *Young People's Societies* (New York: Lentilhon & Company, 1900), 29-30. Thankfully, the Christian Endeavor Society has its historians, and the society's history is full traced in Christopher Lee Coble, "Where Have All the Young People Gone?: The Christian Endeavor Movement and the Training of Protestant Youth, 1881-1918" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2001).

¹⁶ Berry, *Four Wonderful Years*, 8-12.

already recruited over 30,000 members.¹⁷ And the list goes on. By 1887 the proliferation of young people's societies had become so numerous and so rapid that the evangelical periodical *Zion's Paper* could report that "The names of these societies were almost as numerous as the organizations, showing the great need of some such movement . . ."¹⁸

Despite their diversity, these leaders of what contemporaries came to call the "young people's movement" almost universally agreed that if the church was to remain at the center of the next generation's social world, it needed to create some kind of new organizational space that would accommodate youth's peculiar needs. Francis Clark, for instance, referred to the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor as a "halfway house to the church," where the young could be sheltered from the world's temptations and trained to become members.¹⁹ In these new congregational spaces, youth workers devised a number of strategies intended to fortify the relationship between young people and the church. Nearly every society required members to sign some sort of devotional pledge promising to adhere to a defined moral code and participate in the larger workings of the church. The Epworth League—which the Methodist Episcopal Church created in 1889 out of a merger between the Oxford League, Young People's Methodist Alliance, and three other societies—required its members to promise:

¹⁷ Baptist Young People's Union of America, *Proceedings of the First National Meeting: Chicago, July 7th and 8th, 1891* (Chicago: J. C. Dranke, 1891), 18-23; Donald D. MacLaurin, "The Baptist Young People's Union of America," *Independent*, 7 Jul. 1892, 5-6.

¹⁸ "Young People's Convention," *Zion's Herald*, 2 Nov. 1887, 348. On the development and variety of young people's societies generally, see Bacon and Northup, *Young People's Societies*; Frank Otis Erb, *The Development of the Young People's Movement* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1917).

¹⁹ F. E. Clark, *The Children and the Church and the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor as a Means of Bringing them Together* (Boston: Congregational Sunday School and Publishing Society, 1882), 52-53.

I will earnestly seek for myself, and do what I can to help others attain, the highest New Testament standard of experience and life. I will abstain from all those forms of worldly amusement forbidden by the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. And I will attend, so far as possible, the religious meetings of the chapter and church, and take some active part in them.²⁰

In addition to such promises, most young people's societies also introduced young people to what had long been a staple of Protestant congregational life, committee work. Many authors suggested delegating age-appropriate tasks to the church's young both within the society as well as out in the church would encourage young people to feel like stakeholders in the local church. Or, as one Methodist minister put it more bluntly, "the question of saving our young people reduces to one of *work*. Give them something to do."²¹

Yet in addition to betraying their attempts to retain and guide the devotional lives of young people, the leaders of denominational young people's societies also conveyed a particular understanding of the role and nature of the church. Throughout much of the nineteenth century the vast majority of white, Protestant congregations understood the church to be, primarily, a spiritual institution. Across denominational lines the organizational components of most congregations focused almost exclusively on the explication of doctrine or the inculcation of devotion. Sunday schools pushed to convert the church's children, Bible classes instructed the church's adults, missionary societies evangelized those outside the church, and the weekly worship service edified all. To most ministers, and many laypeople, the church bore little responsibility for the social and recreational lives of its members. In fact, many evangelical churches and holiness Protestants looked upon most forms of amusement as, at best, distractions from the cultivation of more pious habits. At their worst, forms of entertainment like gambling,

²⁰ Jacob Embury Price, *Epworth League Workers* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1893), 157.

²¹ "Saving our Young People," *Christian Advocate*, 25 Mar. 1880, p. 200.

dancing or the theatre were sins of commission. While some churches in urban areas across New England had begun to hold annual “reunion” socials or sponsor the occasional entertainments as early as the 1850s, the vast majority of churches throughout the south and much of the Mississippi Valley eschewed such activities. As late as 1881, for instance, one Midwestern minister received a hearty round of applause from the tri-annual gathering of the International Sunday School Association for never having held a social or festival in his pastoral career.²²

In fashioning the organizational structure and regular activities of many young people’s societies, most denominational leaders reflected this view. The proscribed pledges, prayer meetings and annual conventions all conveyed the primarily devotional purpose they were intended to play. Though most societies did have a social committee or entertainment department among its litany of other divisions, handbooks heavily circumscribed the range of acceptable behavior. Most only permitted the simplest social gatherings of a “spiritual and intellectual” character such as musical lyceum lectures, religious debates, essay contests or Bible quizzes. Theatrical performances, dramatic readings and “out-of-door games” were all strictly prohibited. “One of the duties of the Social Committee,” W. F. McCauley instructed the Christian Endeavor Society in 1893, “is to prevent people from being too sociable.”²³ As one southern leader of the Epworth League more explicitly instructed, “It is no part of the gospel commission to go into all

²² *Third International (Eighth National) Sunday School Convention of the United States and British American Provinces*, 155. On the devotional nature of nineteenth century church life see Holifield, “Toward a History of American Congregations,” 33-38; Charles D. Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home: Life in British and American Reformed Congregations, 1830-1915* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2000); R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 91-94, 99-102.

²³ W. F. McCauley, *HOW: A Handbook of Christian Endeavor Methods* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1893), 46-47, quote on 49. See also John Hugh Morgan, *The Epworth League* (Rochdale: Thomas Champness, n.d.), 15, 25-28; J. B. Robinson, *The Epworth League: Its Place in Methodism, A Manual* (Cincinnati: Cranston and Stowe, 1890), 85-86; Thomas F. Anderson, “Young People’s Societies,” *Zion’s Herald* LXIII no. 48 (1 December 1886): 382.

the world and make fun for the dying millions of human souls.” “Fun enough,” he continued, “will come into the League without planning for it, and without its assuming the office of fun maker. Let it come incidentally.”²⁴

Though overshadowed by the groundswell of interest in this rapid organization of young people’s societies, the formation of Bible classes like the Wesleyan Bible Class were intimately a part of this interest in saving Protestant youth. Though Bible classes had been a part of the Sunday school since its inception,²⁵ Sunday school workers looked at them anew in the rush to create organizational space to retain Protestant youngsters. Many increasingly referred to them as “adult” Bible classes, as if to more firmly convey their hope that the young women and men who joined the class would come out upstanding Christian adults. And while both Bible classes and young people’s societies had coed membership, many Sunday school workers felt they were particularly appropriate for young men. Church leaders particularly encouraged young men to serve on the committees of local societies, and in many instances reserved these positions for them. And as retail magnate John Wanamaker claimed before the International Sunday School Association in 1896, Bible classes were the best “Men’s clubs” churches could offer.²⁶ However,

²⁴ O. P. Fitzgerald, ed. *The Epworth Book: IN Five Parts: Epworth Springs, Epworth Principles, Epworth History, Epworth Story and Poem, Epworth Symposium* (Nashville: Southwestern Pub Company, 1893), 65-66. See also *Sixth Annual Session of the Baptist Congress, For the Discussion of Current Questions Held at First Baptist Church, Indianapolis, Ind., November 15th, 16th and 17th, 1887* (New York: Baptist Congress Publishing Co., 1888), 120-148.

²⁵ On the early history of Bible classes see American Bible Class Society, *First Report of the American Bible Class Society, Made at Philadelphia, May 22, 1828* (Philadelphia: W. F. Geddis, 1828); Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 109-14.

²⁶ *Eighth International (Thirteenth National) Sunday School Convention, Held in Tremont Temple, Boston, Massachusetts, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, June 23, 24, 25 and 26, 1896* (Chicago: W. B. Jacobs, 1896), 91-92; Coble, “The Role of Young People’s Societies in the Training of Christian Womanhood (and Manhood).”

while local ministers, denominational leaders, deacons, Sunday school teachers and countless Protestant parents organized these societies and classes for young people, the millions of young women and men who poured into these classes at the turn of the century would largely determine their content.



Though Frank Wood would later cast his recruitment in the Wesleyan Bible Class as a personal watershed that oriented the rest of his life, there was little in the class's early history that suggested such portent. By most accounts, the Wesleyan class was, in its early years, a decidedly typical Sunday school class. Every Sunday afternoon Willard gathered "her boys" into the southern wing of the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church. That the church had reserved its commodious southern annex solely for the class's use, Scott recalled, "added not a little to their consciousness of increasing dignity."²⁷ Here she led the class through a Bible lesson, likely drawing upon the International Sunday School Convention's Uniform Lesson Series or some other curriculum published by the Methodist Episcopal Church. To Scott and other members of the Western Avenue church, this emphasis on training the Biblical knowledge and religious comportment of the students was paramount. For a class of young men whose spiritual future was in question, Scott devised a number of strategies to keep the class connected with the church. She regularly administered exams to assess the class's progress and annually rewarded high scholarship with copies of Webster's Dictionary or some edition of the Bible. Outside its weekly meeting, Scott also expected the class to contribute to the larger mission of the Western Avenue church by personally participating in one of the congregation's evangelistic endeavors.

²⁷ Calla Scott Willard, "Our Origin," *Quarter Century Anniversary: Souvenir Invitation & Program of the Wesleyan Bible Class, The Twenty-Fifth Year Since Its Foundation The Ninth Year Since Its Re-Organization, October Fifteenth to the Twenty-First, 1905*, WAMECR, [hereafter cited as *Our Quarter Century*].

And perhaps to augment such religious rigor, Scott hosted weekly socials at her home to entertain the young men.²⁸

Such theological instruction and religious activity suited Wood. He served as the class's first valedictorian and, according to classmates, was its most zealous recruiter.²⁹ But while the Wesleyan class's lively schedule betrayed Scott's desire to occupy the idle time and wandering minds of wayward young men, its activities were never mere busy work for many of its members. Like Wood, the growing number of young men who joined such classes were newcomers to the social world that surrounded them. The average age of the twelve single men who formed the Wesleyan class, for example, was eighteen. Each was a clerk, a student, or some kind a skilled laborer, but all of them either lived with their church-attending parents at home or boarded nearby.³⁰ As these young men entered the workforce in 1880, they encountered a city in

²⁸ Ibid.; "Travels Abroad Via Notes from Bible Students," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 Jul. 1940, W3A. On the types of curriculum available to a Methodist Sunday school teacher like Scott see Addie Grace Wardle, *History of the Sunday School Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1918), 129-42.

²⁹ "Our Church Paper," clipping dated May 1932, 5-6, folder 8, box 2; Adams to the Wesleyans, 9 Sep. 1952, folder 44, box 1, WBCR.

³⁰ Of the eleven charter members who could be found in the 1880 census, their names, ages and occupations are as follows: Peter Pilgrim, 21, confectioner, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 119, Family History Film 12541954, roll 194, p. 240A; Walter V. Tagg, 20, shirt cutter, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 119, Family History Film 12541954, roll 194, p. 248A; Samuel Hawkins, 20, machinist, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 127, Family History Film 12541954, roll 194, p. 454A; Raymond Radcliffe, 16, student, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 117, Family History Film 12541954, roll 194, p. 197A; Clayton E. Ford, 19, student, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 119, Family History Film 12541954, roll 194, p. 250A; Edwin Harvey, 14, clerk, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 119, Family History Film 12541954, roll 194, p. 245C; Frederic J. Webb, 23, mason, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 121, Family History Film 12541954, roll 194, p. 301A; Morton J. Date, 15, student, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 119, Family History Film 12541954, roll

the throes of almost unparalleled social, economic, and demographic growth. In the decade following the Wesleyan class' organization, Chicago's industrial production multiplied twenty-one times and its population more than doubled to over a millions residents, of which nearly eighty percent were of foreign-born parentage. The neighborhood around the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church in particular witnessed even more intensive development. The two wards that lay between Union and Garfield Parks experienced growth rates far above others in the city and became the site of several major recreational centers. The Chutes water park, the Garfield Park Race Track, and the White Stocking's National League Ball Park—where a young outfielder named William Ashley Sunday played—all emerged within ten blocks of the Western Avenue church. With them came any number of restaurants, theatres, saloons and what one pious West Side resident called “drunken, boisterous, noisy, demonstrative” crowds.³¹ In fact, the area around the Wesleyan Bible Class's church home had witnessed such a rapid growth in places of amusement that the area became known as Chicago's “back yard.”³²

194, p. 246B; Frederick G. Croker, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 122, Family History Film 12541954, roll 194, p. 317D; John Croker, 18, clerk, *ibid.*; Frank Wood, 15, works in publishing house, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 120, Family History Film 12541954, roll 194, p. 279B; Thomas Williams, 18, clerk, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 119, Family History Film 12541954, roll 194, p. 248A.

³¹ “Sunday Races,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 Jun. 1885, 13.

³² August E. Dasso, “Reminiscences,” undated typescript ms., folder 5, box 1, NWSCC. On the commercial, demographic, recreational development of Chicago's west side see U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880)* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1884), 132; *idem.*, *Report on Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), 103; Harlo Grant, “Reminiscence,” undated typescript mss., folder 5, box 1; *idem.* to Gertrude Jenkins, 28 Jan. 1939 and Mrs. Joseph S. Hass to Gertrude Jenkins, n.d., folder 6, box 1; Frank E. Locke, “Reminiscence,” typescript mss. 15 Mar. 1940, folder 1, box 3; Harlo Grant, “Oakley Hall,” undated typescript mss., folder 6, box 4, WSCC; Henry W. Forster, “Race Track Recollections,” typescript mss., 9 Jun. 1937; “Garfield Park Race Track,” typescript mss., 11

It was this interplay between the city's material realities and the ambitions of young men to carve out their role within it that fueled the numerical and organizational growth of the Wesleyan class and other Bible classes like it. For these young men, the Wesleyan class's weekly meetings and social gatherings not only bound them to the religious community of their family, but were also central to their aspirations to become respected churchmen and community leaders in their own right. Through the class its members not only developed an understanding of their world but also forged the relationships that were necessary to engage it. As one lay Bible class teacher in Washington, D.C. expressed his class's intent, "Let us be men! Men clear through, men big enough to acknowledge the Man who came to save, who has all power and all right and all might. Let us bow in submission to Him."³³

To members of the Wesleyan class, such pronouncements were more than just soaring rhetoric. They constituted the central endeavor of their adolescence. In addition to providing religious instruction and supervised social gatherings, the Wesleyan class, like so many other Bible classes, offered its young men avenues to develop their self-understanding and public identity. In part, the Wesleyan class's schedule allowed its members to project a particular image of themselves as trustworthy, reliable young men. Attending class, for example, did not just begin on Sunday morning, but implied that a student had organized his week around the class, studying the lesson in preparation and retiring early to rise on time. As one New York Bible class teacher remarked, "It is a great thing that at nine o'clock young people and mature people who

Jun.1937, folder 8, box 1; WGPCC; Dominic A. Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 113-21; Perry R. Duis, *Challenging Chicago: Coping with Everyday Life, 1837-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 215-33.

³³ Nelson Morehouse Blake and Richard Spencer Palmer, comps., *The Vaughn Bible Class, Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.: A Fifty Year History* (Washington, D.C.: The Franklin Press, 1940), 5.

lead a very busy and active life and come to Saturday night, most of them late, with weariness should . . . gather upon Sabbath morning at that hour to study God's word."³⁴ For the Wesleyan class's members, their active participation in the class conveyed the personal diligence and social virtue they believed would appeal to future employees and potential wives. By serving as the class's valedictorian, participating in a social program, or recruiting other men to join the class, these young Wesleyans both reinforced and performed the propriety of their social and spiritual lives.

In a rapidly evolving, yet still developing, industrial society where employers still hired applicants based as much upon their personal character as their professional qualifications, such public affirmations of the Wesleyan class's respectability and reliability was vital. But in addition to providing young men opportunities to validate their developing character, members of the Wesleyan class also drew of modicum of professional training in their religious practice. Like nearly every other social event in the late nineteenth century, nearly all of the class's activities involved at least one oration from one of its members. Scott often appointed students to craft an address for the class, using these familiar surroundings to train these young men in one of the era's most valued talents. In addition to these frequent lectures, members of the Wesleyan class also organized a number of other oratorical and professional exercises. Wood organized a class debate team, while a number of other students induced a suburban lawyer who attended the Western Avenue church to host mock trials.³⁵ In these semi-professional training exercises,

³⁴ *Earnest Workers Bible Class: Farewell Session in Forty-Third Street Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1895), unpaginated.

³⁵ "Reunion Program of Wesleyan Bible Students at the Class," 8 Jun. 1886, and "Program for Second Annual Opening Session of the Wesleyan Bible Class," 26 Oct. 1886, FLWSB, I: 1; Charles Lane, "The Class as I Knew It," *Quarter Century Anniversary*, WAMECR; John A. Logan to Frank L. Wood, 25 Mar. 1886, and Edward Payson to FLW 29 Mar. 1886, LWCLB.

young men barely removed from school practiced the etiquette and protocol of the professions to which many of them aspired.

Of course, the Wesleyan class's informal lessons in oration or courtroom demeanor could not replace formal schooling. But by involving established, successful members of the church in such events the class did provide its students with an important social network that was vital to any aspiring young man. Scott's efforts to keep these young men in the church did not only occupy their time, then, but also allowed them to network with the Western Avenue church's older, more established members. The class's informal setting and Scott's insistence that members participate in the activities of the larger church allowed students to form potentially beneficial relationships with a number of prosperous West Side businessmen who assisted the class. City bond salesman Marmaduke "Duke" Farson, for instance, led a young men's Sunday morning prayer meeting for the class, while art salesman, and founder of the Young People's Methodist Alliance, Henry Date recruited the class to join his "Wesleyan band" of gospel singers.³⁶ The benefits of such relationships existed at a number of levels. Most tangibly, the class's affinity with the church's prosperous congregants provided some members with material assistance. Newcomers to the city who attended the class, for instance, occasionally boarded with church members.³⁷ Yet in affording young men access to established church members who, if

See also the Rev. Joseph H. Twichell, "The Young People's Meeting," *Sunday School Times*, 24 Sep. 1887, 622-23.

³⁶ Willard, "Our Origin," *Quarter Century Anniversary*, WAMECR; entry for Henry S. Date, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 119, Family History Film 12541954, roll 194, p. 264B; Perry, *Four Wonderful Years*, 8-9; John Glenn Collins, comp., *Annual Compendium of Methodism in Chicago for 1878* (Chicago: John Collins & Co. Printers, 1878), 127; William Kostlevy, *Holy Jumpers: Evangelicals and Radicals in Progressive Era America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 49-50.

³⁷ See entry for James Dammarell, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 119, Family History Film 12541954, roll 194, p. 248A.

only to influence their spiritual development, took an interest in their temporal wellbeing, the Wesleyan class also provided its members the more immaterial, but no less important, benefits of guidance, advice, and character references. One Bible class student recalled, for instance, that his teacher, an established civil servant with the War Department, attracted the majority of his students by allowing them to “to come to his home to consult with him about their various problems and troubles. He straightened out many difficulties, cheered many a saddened heart, and often helped in a merciful way, thus making known that there was at least one man who cared for them in their perplexities.”³⁸

For Wood, the opportunities for community and social mobility that the Wesleyan Bible Class offered was vital. A farmer’s son with a truncated education and few identifiable skills, the class and its interactions within the Western Avenue provided him with role models to aspire to and a social network to help realize those aspirations. Though informal, such activities were the extent of Wood’s professional development throughout the early 1880s and quite successfully provided him with opportunities beyond what his parents had achieved. After leaving school Wood initially could only find work as a newsboy and as a factory hand at a nearby planing mill while he continued his studies at night. Through the Wesleyan class, however, Wood supplemented his education through the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, a correspondence course in the liberal arts founded by John H. Vincent that promised what one advertisement called “the college outlook” to those individuals who could not attend university. This, along with his debate class and mock trial experience, constituted the extent of Wood’s formal education throughout the early 1880s. Soon after joining the Wesleyan class, however, Wood gained more respectable, and far more lucrative, employment as a clerk, first with the A.

³⁸ Blake and Palmer, *The Vaughn Bible Class*, 3.

N. Kellogg Newspaper Company and then with the Glen Falls Insurance Company, where J. L. Whitlock served as Chicago's branch manager. The position marked the beginning of Wood's professional career. Soon after he enrolled in evening classes at Souder's Business College, and along with fellow Wesleyan Morton J. Date opened his own printing firm in 1883 that issued a neighborhood weekly appropriately entitled *The Enterprise*.³⁹

Insofar as they embodied the ambitions and advanced the pecuniary well-being of their participants, the Wesleyan class's social activities primarily served the needs of its members. But in the context of the massive economic and demographic transformations then transforming Chicago's West Side, the class's devotional and social life were also very public symbols of the relationship among leisure, morality, and community life. They represented Scott's efforts and the Wesleyan class's desire to keep the local church at the center of community life. As the decade progressed, however, the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church's community, as well as the communities of churches across the urban north, constituted a smaller and smaller segment of the larger neighborhood in which it was located. If the church was to remain a community anchor in this increasingly diverse and cosmopolitan city, more direct action beyond the organization of another Tuesday evening social was needed.

³⁹ "Wood, Frank L.—Biography," folder 15, box 1, WGPCC; A. N. Marquis, *The Book of Chicagoans: A Biographical Dictionary of Leading Living Men and Women of the City of Chicago* (Chicago: A. N. Marquis & Co., 1905), 626; Willard, "Our Origins," *Quarter Century Anniversary*, WAMECR; H. R. Hayden, ed., *The Annual Cyclopaedia of Insurance in the United States, 1890* (New York: Underwriter Printing and Publishing Company, 1891), 272; "C.L.S.C. Graduates—Class of 1886," *The Chautauquan* VII (Apr. 1887): 447; *The Lakeside Annual Director of the City of Chicago: Embracing a Complete General and Business Director, 1886-87* (Chicago: Williams, Donnelley & Company, 1887), 1676, 1678; "Chautauqua Circles," *Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean* 7 Nov. 1886. On the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle see Andrew Chamberlin Reiser, *The Chautauqua Moment; Protestants, Progressivism, and the Culture of Modern Liberalism, 1874-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 71-72, 104-08, 175-77.

Edwin L. Harvey joined the Wesleyan Bible Class as a charter member in 1880 when he was just a fourteen-year-old clerk. Soon after joining the class, Harvey developed a friendship with Duke Farson and an interest in converting the increasing number of poor, Catholic immigrants that settled in the city. With Farson's funds and friendship, Harvey purchased a lot on the city's south side in 1890 and built a mission to proselytize the German, Norwegian and Swedish residents he believed were intemperate, spiritual reprobates. Despite resistance from many in the neighborhood, Harvey soon oversaw a Sunday school with a weekly attendance of over five hundred. Farson, who was listed as the mission's pastor, purchased all of the supplies and even hired an omnibus to bring others from the Western Avenue church to serve in what he and Harvey called the Metropolitan Methodist Mission. Proselytizing to a neighborhood of immigrants and poor working people who partially resented his presence, Harvey's missionary efforts not only fulfilled the evangelistic calling of his faith, but also embodied his ambition to become a recognized community leader. By decade's end, both Harvey and Farson had become prominent men within Chicago's Protestant circles. A sought after speaker on the benefits of business principles in evangelistic work, Farson became one of the largest contributors to the city missionary efforts. Harvey went on to attain a number of influential positions within the Rock River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.⁴⁰

Frank Wood never went as far in his religious work as Harvey in his youth. But these concerns over the church's role in a rapidly growing city were equally as vital to him. As his zealous participation in the Wesleyan class suggests, the church remained central to Wood's

⁴⁰ Willard, "Our Origin," *Quarter Century Anniversary*, WAMECR; entry for Edwin Harvey, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 119, Family History Film 1254194, roll 194, p. 245C; William Kostlevy, "E. L. Harvey: The Price of Discipleship," in *Portraits of a Generation: Early Pentecostal Leaders*, James R. Goff and Grant Wacker, eds. (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 21-22; *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, 11 Aug. 1897; "Meeting of Leagues," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 Jul. 1892.

social world. In his own efforts to become an upright, successful Christian man, however, Wood would have to determine the social, economic and political implications of such a belief.



The efforts of Frank Wood and other members of the Wesleyan Bible Class to gain acceptance as successful, upright, Christian men were aspirations that were in no way unique to them. For many Protestant youth, that ambition constituted the whole of their adolescence. Widely discussed and highly regarded in the success manuals, religious periodicals, and published sermons of the day, this notion of Christian manhood spoke directly to the singular importance of men in society's progress as fathers, citizens, and Christians. Like many of the nineteenth century's configurations of manliness, it demanded men materially provide for their wives as breadwinners and morally guide their children as the household's spiritual head. It also expected men to contribute to the moral and civic governance of their communities through political participation, economic enterprise, and church membership.⁴¹ At its core, however, this white, native born, Protestant vision of manhood pivoted on its specifically evangelistic functions. It demanded that every facet of a man's life should add glory and greater numbers to the Christian church. In part, this meant directly contributing to the conversion of lost souls—partaking in some form of Christian service, donating resources to other missionary endeavors, and personally witnessing to one's immediate community. In its totality, however, this evangelical inflection of American manhood demanded laymen exceed those expectations society placed upon all men to stand as an affirmation of and public witness to Christianity's purported

⁴¹ For discussions on turn of the century conceptions of manhood see E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

superiority. As one southern Sunday school worker expressed it 1890, “the very highest specimen of manhood is the Christian exemplar in whatever calling God may have placed him to serve.”⁴²

In theory, this conception of Christian manhood was the fundament that bound all men together into one grand Christian brotherhood. Whatever his past or social standing, every man who answered the Great Commission was an equal partner in the quest to extend Christ’s kingdom. But in braiding a man’s worldly success with his personal testimony and religious worth, this concept of Christian manhood also contained contradictions and hierarchies that produced a number of social tensions. This was particularly true in the economic realm. In its crudest form, this belief in the evangelistic power of personal success underwrote a “Gospel of Wealth” that suggested the prosperity of Christian capitalists resulted, in part, from the depth of their piety. “Most of the suffering poor are the victims of vice,” reasoned success manual author Wilbur F. Crafts in 1883. “Most of the well-to-do are those who have been in a large degree loyal to the laws of God.”⁴³ Of course, the inescapable weakness of this formulation was the nation’s many prosperous un-Christian businessmen who seemed not to need faith’s aid to succeed. Somewhat surprisingly, however, the onus to close this loophole rested largely upon Christian men to prove by their own success that fortunes could not only be attained, but enhanced through Christian principles. As pastor of Boston’s Trinity Episcopal Church, Phillips Brooks instructed a gathering of aspiring merchants, lawyers, and brokers, it was their “awful

⁴² Remarks by Judge J. B. Estes, *Sixth International (Eleventh National) of the United States and British North American Provinces Held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June 24th, 25th, 26th & 27th, 1890, in Machine Hall, Expository Building* (Chicago: James Gilbert Printers, 1890), 19.

⁴³ Wilbur F. Crafts, *Successful Men of To-Day and What They Say of Success: Based on Facts and Opinions Gathered by Letters and Personal Interviews from Five Hundred Prominent Men, and Many More Published Sketches* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883), 111.

and beautiful responsibility” to prove “that man may be a Christian and yet do business; and, in the second place, to show how a man, as he becomes a greater Christian, shall purify and lift the businesses that he does and make it the worthy occupation of the Son of God.”⁴⁴

To Brooks and many of those like him, the action demanded by such thinking involved a mix of modeling Christian principles to one’s superiors and imposing moral standards upon subordinates. For society’s business elite, it endowed them with a with a certain spiritual authority over those in their employ, and informed many of the company churches, factory Bible classes, and morally pedantic workplace rules that marked labor relations in the early industrial era.⁴⁵ Among the less prominent, however, Christian manhood’s invocations to make one’s work one’s witness conservatively required a great deal of deference. It demanded that the Christian clerk and worker prove to even the most immoral employer that his faith had worth through unyielding industry and unfailing loyalty. Or, as the *Sunday School Times* more candidly moralized in 1883, “The mechanic who is powerful in class-meeting and weak at his trade is no credit to the cause he professes.”⁴⁶

At its root, however, this belief that a Christian man’s most profound witness lay in his performance in the market ultimately sanctified the unbridled competition of the industrial capitalism as the crucible ordained to test men’s spiritual mettle. It demanded men accommodate themselves to and attain success within this competitive world in order to authenticate not only

⁴⁴ Phillips Brooks, “The Duty of the Christian Business Man,” in *Phillips Brooks’ Addresses*, Julius H. Ward, ed. (Boston: Charles E. Brown, 1893), 93-94.

⁴⁵ See Thomas Winter, *Making Men, Making Class: The YMCA and Workingmen, 1877-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Richard J. Callahan, Jr., Kathryn Lofton and Chad E. Seales, “Allegories of Progress: Industrial Religion in the United States,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (2010): 1-39; James P. Bjelopera, *City of Clerks: Office and Sales Workers in Philadelphia, 1870-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

⁴⁶ Quoted in Wilbur F. Crafts, *Successful Men of To-Day and What They Say of Success*, 123.

their only piety, but the broader tenets of the Christian faith. “The fact that some Christian principles seem to be inconvenient in business life, and that they do not directly and always turn to gold,” concluded one author, “keeps off these insincere camp-followers, who are too shallow to see that nevertheless the path of the just is the path to success.”⁴⁷

Buried within this conception of Christian manhood, however, was another tradition. Another strand of thought argued that the evangelistic purpose of a Christian man’s life compelled men to conduct their worldly affairs in a manner that would allow the greatest number of other men to attain all of the promises of Christian manhood. It demanded that in order to edify and evangelize other men, Christian employers should moderate their desires for wealth, provide their workers with a living wage and, just as importantly, treat them not only as equals, but as brethren. As Washington Gladden argued from the pulpit of Springfield, Massachusetts’ Congregational church in 1877, “There is no testimony by which the Christian business man can more strongly support the faith which he has professed, than by *showing* to all those with whom he deals that the concerns of religion are dearer than those of traffic; . . . by using his business benevolently, by conducting it not solely with an eye to personal aggrandizement, but also as a means of serving others.”⁴⁸

To Gladden and other theologically liberal ministers, this belief that just compensation was a form of Christian witness on par with, if not superior to, other forms of evangelism was a doctrinal innovation for the industrial era, and was a part of the large theological projects surrounding what came to be called the “Social Gospel.” But for many Protestant laymen, the notion that the Christian community bore some responsibility for both the spiritual and material

⁴⁷ Ibid., 111.

⁴⁸ Washington, Gladden, *The Christian Way: Whither it Leads and How to Go On* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1877), 101-02.

well-being of the community stretched as far back as the communal visions of the Second Great Awakening's many colonial associations. A community that advanced the causes of Christ was one that could focus on the upbuilding of religious and educational institutions because the physical needs of every member had been met through neighborly acts, communal aid, and personal effort. In this view, the idea of evangelism was commensurate with certain notions of justice without participating in theological introspection of the Social Gospel. And for many evangelical Protestant laymen, it embodied a critique of the emerging industrial order. A survey by George Hodges, the rector of Pittsburgh's Calvary Church, on whether the city conducted its business on Christian principles found that while the "men at the head of great industries" were "unanimous and emphatic" in affirming that the city's economy was structured just as Christ intended it, Pittsburgh's less prominent devout disagreed. Nearly all of the negative answers, Hodges found, came from "the small traders, the clerks, the commercial travelers" who had only recently established themselves. To them, the intensity and lack of fraternity in the city's economic life was decidedly unchristian in nature. In one response that Hodges claimed was "as long as two sermons," one Pittsburgh layman averred that there was "little in the business world that will bear comparison with ideal standards and Christian holiness. The dominating principle in business is selfishness under the form of competition. The rule of Christianity is to love your brother as yourself. These principles evoke inevitable conflict."⁴⁹

Able to both buttress and critique America's emerging industrial order, this notion of Christian manhood defined the lives of many turn of the century Protestant youngsters. By narrowing the scope of a man's spiritual life to the successful completion of a number of normative social tasks, it cast many of the obstacles and conflicts encountered in establishing

⁴⁹ George Hodges, *Christianity Between Sundays* (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1892), 20, 25.

themselves as distinctly religious crises. By century's end, however, the doctrinal implications, theological consequences, and political manifestations of these crises remained unresolved. Much would depend on the lived experiences of many. For Frank Wood, attaining the status of a vaguely defined successful Christian man had guided his adolescence and informed his active involvement with the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church and the Wesleyan Bible Class. But in the latter half of the 1880s, as Wood became even more engaged in the economic and political life of one of the nation's most aggressive industrial metropolises, this notion of Christian manhood, and its economic and political implications, would require fuller definition.



In the five years after he had joined the Wesleyan Bible Class, Frank Wood had begun to attain the trappings of an upright, successful Christian man. By the time he was twenty, Wood had gained an education through great personal effort, had risen from the status of newsboy to publish his own neighborhood newspaper, and, most importantly, had become an adult member of the church in good standing. He continued to live at home as a bachelor, likely supplementing his father's meager pension and intermittent wages as a streetcar driver with the West Division Railway. But by any standard, Wood's life had become a model of the notion of Christian manhood he strove to emulate, and his efforts had largely been rewarded with respect, relationship, and employment in the community in which he lived. As the decade progressed, however, and the city's industrial development intensified, the once unquestionable bond between manly virtue, public prominence, and personal success seemed far less certain. Wood personally would have witnessed the evolving relationships between these terms as he went about his life in 1885. That summer, the Chicago West Division Railway Company became not only embroiled in a strike with its streetcar drivers, but also became locked in conflict with the entire West Side.

By the middle of 1885, Chicago was entering the second year of a brief, but severe, recession. As early as the first of the year, several manufacturing firms continued to layoff workers or reduce wages in order to retrench on labor costs in the face of steep losses. On the West Side, the West Division Railway Company reduced the number of daily trips its employees made, effectively cutting their pay. In early June, the West Side Streetcar-men's Benevolent Association petitioned the Railway to shorten the length of time conductors and drivers received probationary pay, include the time spent taking streetcars in and out of the barn, and dismiss an assistant superintendent the Association found contemptible. The Railway initially agreed to the demands, but then began systematically to lay off workers affiliated with the union over the course of the month, including Association President Luke Coyne. When a committee from the Association presented the Railway with resolutions demanding it provide cause for these workers' dismissal on June 29, Superintendent James K. Lake's secretary shredded the communication in front of them. That evening, the Association voted to strike.⁵⁰

According to the executives of the West Division Railway, the Association's demands amounted to a takeover of the entire company. If the Railway consented to discuss its reasons for discharging employees, President J. Russell Jones argued in the *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, then the company was conceding that it was "debatable whether we have a right to discharge men or not."⁵¹ In its arguments to the press, however, the Streetcar-men's Association claimed the strike was less about the Railway's prerogatives and more about the dishonorable way in which the company treated its men. The strike disrupted the community's progress and infringed upon the

⁵⁰ "Conductors and Drivers," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 18 Jun. 1885; "Are You a West-Sider?," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 Jun. 1885; Richard Schneirov, *Labor and Urban Politics: Class Conflict and the Origins of Modern Liberalism in Chicago, 1864-1897* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 168-69.

⁵¹ "The Strike," *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 3 Jul. 1885.

rights of employers, but in light of the offense the company inflicted upon its employees' manly character it was justified. In a statement to the entire city, the Association pronounced it had no "desire to be judges of whom the company shall employ or discharge." But on this occasion, "considering the efficiency of the discharged men, and their long terms of service," the Association found it a "spiteful and arbitrary act" to dismiss the men without just cause. If the company would "produce and substantiate their charges" against the dismissed men, then the Association "abide by the decision" and return to work.⁵² Or, as one conductor more bluntly put it, "Strikes are false in theory and pernicious in practices and I am opposed to them as a rule. At the same time we have been treated like dogs, and I believe in resenting the treatment like men."⁵³

The first day of the strike passed with little incident. Over a thousand streetcar workers patrolled the trunk lines running out of the Western Avenue, Milwaukee Avenue and Halsted Street car barns, harassing the few cars the Railway attempted to run. On July 1, however, the Railway attempted to run cars more regularly with the protection of police and private detectives. As cars began leaving the Western Avenue barn at the dinner hour, thousands of lunching workers joined the strikers in jeering the strikebreakers and their police escorts. Within blocks of where Frank Wood and Morton Date ran their small printing shop, the crowd soon began to hurl stones and glass along with their insults. By the time the cable cars reached Halsted Street, the throng of strikers and their sympathizers had become so aggressive that a police captain named John Bonfield fired upon the crowd.⁵⁴

⁵² John J. Flinn, *History of the Chicago Police: From the Settlement of the Community to the Present Time* (Chicago: The Police Book Fund, 1887), 236.

⁵³ "Will Probably Strike," *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 29 Jun. 1885.

⁵⁴ Flinn, *History of the Chicago Police*, 236-37.

The striking streetcar drivers so readily earned the support of their neighbors because many looked upon “Cobblestone” Jones and his West Division Railway as the epitome of the numerous monopolistic private utility companies that exploited Chicago’s West Side. In the years leading up to the strike, residents along Chicago’s settled fringe increasingly charged that the city’s private utility companies failed to provide the services outlined in their extremely generous franchises. Many complained that parts of the neighborhood had become unregulated, unofficial garbage dumps for industrial and human waste; that half-finished sanitation projects allowed raw sewage to fill numerous residential cellars; and that an inadequate supply of streetlamps and sidewalk planks made travel after dusk hazardous. By the 1880s, the situation had become so dire that wards across the West Side began to organize Improvement Clubs to lobby city officials to force the city’s gas, sewage, and sanitation firms to fulfill their existing charters.⁵⁵ To these West Side citizens, many of them first generation city residents like Frank Wood, Jones was the figurehead of this broader municipal neglect. His skillful manipulation of state and local governments in acquiring the Railway’s ninety-nine year franchise had granted him a virtual monopoly over the area’s traction services and left him without any accountability to provide them. Since the late 1870s many city residents complained the Railway neither ran enough cars nor established routes that allowed businessmen in the city’s hinterland to travel downtown. Yet throughout Chicago’s residential districts, and particularly across the West Side, residents articulated even more profound critiques of the railways that suggested the firms had also broken some kind of broader public trust. Many West Side residents charged that by failing to help maintain the city’s streets or extend their lines to the city’s limits, the West Division Railway had violated an implicitly shared social ethic that obliged private enterprises to help

⁵⁵ See for example “For West Side Improvements,” 18 Mar. 1888.

advance the community from which they drew their patrons. Slow service and dirty cars were a nuisance, one pained West Side resident wrote to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, but that Jones, himself a West Side resident, had “never shown any spirit of conciliation or fairness or endeavored, by the extension of [the railway’s] lines beyond the points where they would pay *large* dividends, to assist in the development of sparsely-settled portions of the city” had truly angered West Side residents.⁵⁶ To many, the railway companies’ manipulation of state and local governments for their own private gain was far more than corruption. It was an outrage to a sense of community many still shared.

Such sentiments fueled the West Side’s participation in the streetcar strike. So many West Side residents boycotted the Railway that by July 2, the third day of the strike, an entire alternative transportation system of horse carriages, wheezy carts, and wheelbarrows had developed to shuffle sympathetic commuters downtown. That evening seven thousand residents attended a rally held by the Chicago’s Trade and Labor Assembly in Haymarket Square and called for the revocation of the Railways charter; while on the city’s southwest side a Knights of Labor Local Assembly called upon the city to take over all streetcar lines.⁵⁷ By 1885, however, the functioning of Chicago’s municipal government had become so detached from the needs and lives of many in the city that even such community support proved futile. Publically, Republican Mayor Carter Harrison claimed to be neutral, proclaiming to “let the public decide which side is right,” and even recommending the company commit to arbitration. In a series of personal

⁵⁶ “The Rival West Side Railway Company,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 10 October 1880, italics from original. For other variants of this critique see “Let Us Walk,” *ibid.*, 8 April 1881; “The West Division Railway Company and the California Avenue Cars,” *ibid.*, 22 November 1881; Citizen’s Association of Chicago, *Annual Report of the Citizen’s Association of Chicago, October, 1883* (Chicago: Geo. K. Hazlitt & Co., 1883), 9-1.

⁵⁷ Flinn, *History of the Chicago Police*, 240; “The Strike,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 Jul. 1885; Schneirov, *Labor and Urban Politics*, 169-70.

meetings with James Lake, prominent railway stockholder Levi Leiter, and Police Superintendent Arthur Doyle, however, Harrison consented to utilize the full force of the city's police to protect the company's right to run its cars.⁵⁸

The move was unprecedented. To date, the city police had remained neutral in most labor conflicts, partly because officers often had relatives or friends on the other side of the picket line. On the morning of 3 July 1885, however, Captain John Bonfield ordered over four hundred officers and seventeen police wagons to escort the West Division Railway streetcars on their routes. In his address to the officers at dawn, Superintendent Doyle proclaimed that no matter the men's personal relationships, "property must be defended."⁵⁹ Bonfield ordered his men to arrest anyone who used the word "scab" and authorized the use of clubs upon any obstinate resident. What followed was the most violent confrontation between workers and the state the city had seen since the 1877 railroad riots. As the first cars left the Western Avenue barn in the morning, a crowd instantly toppled one, pelting its guards with rocks and bricks. Bonfield staggered every streetcar thereafter with a car filled with officers. A riot ensued. As the next block of cars drove east passed Frank Wood's home, residents erected barricades of lumber and pipe to slow their progress. Officers swung their batons at approaching residents; squads charged crowds to disperse them; and hidden units of police throughout the city arrested any loiterer. By the day's end the West Division Railway's cars were running regularly. The police had arrested 150 residents and severely clubbed twenty-five others. Of those arrested, less than half actually worked for the West Division Railway. The rest, to the city's surprise, were what one officer

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Flinn, *History of the Chicago Police*, 241.

called “foolish respectable people” who sympathized with the strikers and were as equally offended at the Railway’s offense to the community’s sense of common good.⁶⁰

The strike officially dragged on for another five days, but for all intents and purposes Captain Bonfield’s violent tactics quelled any organized protest. Both the strikers and the company refrained from any activity over the Fourth of July weekend, but by Tuesday the West Division Railway was running at nearly full service.⁶¹ What role, if any, Frank Wood or his father played in the strike has not survived. Much of the strike’s more violent moments occurred directly across the street from Wood’s home at the Western Avenue car barn where Edson worked. Too ill to work regularly, Edson may not have had the stamina to engage in the strike’s raucous affairs. According to many West Side residents, however, the West Division Railway kept careful records of every conductor involved in the strike; and if Chicago’s city directories are to be believed, Edson never worked in the city as a streetcar driver again.⁶² Frank’s relation to the strike is even more difficult to situate, as there are simply no written records from this year of his life. But if Frank was anything like the church community he called home—and as his active participation in the Wesleyan Bible Class suggests that he was—then there is much to suggest that he too understood that the West Division Railway’s calculated dismissal of its employees and refusal to arbitrate constituted an affront upon deeply held notions of manhood

⁶⁰ Ibid., 243; “The Cars Were Run,” *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 4 Jul. 1885; Schneirov, *Labor and Urban Politics*, 169-70.

⁶¹ “No Bloodshed,” *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 7 Jul. 1885; “It is Over,” *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 8 Jul. 1885; “Everything is Lovely,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 9 Jul. 1885; Flinn, *History of the Chicago Police*, 248-49.

⁶² “The West-Side Car Company,” *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 12 Jul. 1885; *The Lakeside Annual Director of the City of Chicago: Embracing a Complete General and Business Director, 1884-85* (Chicago: Williams, Donnelley & Company, 1885), 1479; *The Lakeside Annual Director of the City of Chicago: Embracing a Complete General and Business Director, 1885-86* (Chicago: Williams, Donnelley & Company, 1886), 1592; Schneirov, *Labor and Urban Politics*, 171.

and community. If this was the case, he also would have found that a growing number of the city's religious leaders did not share these sensibilities.

On the Sunday following the violence that erupted between the city's police and West Side residents, Chicago's pulpits erupted with a flow of commentary on the strike as equally as fierce. On the whole, most of the city's ministers plaintively urged both parties to show restraint. When pressed, however, many confessed that the Streetcar-men's Benevolent Association's had committed the far greater sin in systematically disrupting streetcar service and thereby burdening the entire city. As pastor of the Fulton Street Methodist Episcopal Church J. P. Brushingham argued, while the strikers had every right "to stop working if they wanted to, . . . they had no right to prevent others from running the cars." In fact, to many ministers the strikers demands came so close to "infidel socialism" that they justified the city's strong-arm tactics. In fact, the Reverend Dr. E. P. Goodwin of the city's First Congregational Church argued that, "The police should clear the streets if they have to leave a corpse at every stop."⁶³

From the lectern of the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, however, the Reverend William H. Burns offered the intellectual framework that supported the demands of the striking streetcar drivers, with Wood likely in attendance. Taking as his theme the Hebraic notion of "The Law" as embodied the universal ethical and legal codes of the Torah, Burns argued that in every sphere of existence laws enforced a certain measure of restraint that while constraining of our personal liberties was "necessary for the best government of the community." Newton's law of gravity bound us to the earth, but such a natural law prevented humanity from spinning into space; statutes against theft and murder might limit our personal freedom, but such civil laws ordered society; and that the "man who is a hod-carrier is a part of the community and his

⁶³ "The Churches," *Chicago Daily News*, 6 Jul. 1885.

interests should be protected” is principle that infringes upon the community, but such a moral law was essential for the “good of mankind.” “Each and every man has rights his neighbor is bound to respect and it is only by respecting these rights that we are enabled to build those works which we will leave behind us for the benefit of posterity.” The great question for the industrial age, Burns pronounced, was how could men live freely with these restraints placed upon their lives? “The only answer,” Burns continued answering his own question, “is that perfect conformity to the law is the freedom looked for.” If “those who worked for their bread and those who employed them” would only recommit themselves to these natural, civil, and moral laws,” then both “could be satisfactorily and peacefully adjusted.” There would be “no necessity for the application of certain laws to some classes of the community, because those people will obey these laws by instinct and would conform to them even had they never been put upon the statute-books.”⁶⁴

Burns’ vision has a certain utopian quality to it—a belief that all of the traumas of labor conflict could be solved with simply a little more Christian kindness. But to many Protestant workers and laymen like Wood, the respect and confraternity embedded in notions such as Christian manhood and community were visceral desires. In the years following the streetcar strike, Wood would again and again convey his commitment to these notions. In May of 1886, as workers across the city collectively walked off their jobs in a coordinated national strike to attain an eight-hour workday, Wood launched a new publishing venture he called *The Argus*. Named after the hundred-eyed mythical Greek creature who guarded the purity of a priestess Zeus lusted for, the paper was “published monthly in the interest of the Young People of the Western Avenue Church.” With a circulation of fifteen hundred in the area surrounding the church, the

⁶⁴ Ibid.

paper was an extension of Wood's efforts to assert his own growing sense of himself as a man worthy of respect. In its pages, Wood jocularly criticized rival Methodist papers for their "phiz" and "florid language" that, he thought, demeaned the gravity of the Christian message. Twenty-one and owner of his own business, Wood declared himself a tastemaker.⁶⁵

In an essay Wood published in that same edition, fellow Wesleyan John Crocker offered what was, perhaps, a conception of Christian manhood that most nearly mirrored Wood's. An essay Wood found to contain enough import to serve as the issue's lead, Crocker's piece was a character sketch of the British statesman William Gladstone that he had originally read at a reunion meeting of the Wesleyan Bible Class. In what amounted to an inventory of those manly qualities Crocker believed had vaulted Gladstone to success, the essay implored its readers to emulate Gladstone's "modest demeanor, earnestness of manner and eloquence, [which] won him the admiration of all." Though a man of eminent responsibilities, Crocker claimed, Gladstone still worked every morning with his hands chopping wood, and devoted every evening to his mind by reading poetry. Most important to Crocker, however, was Gladstone's commitment to use all of his "renown and merits" as an Anglo Saxon hero to advocate for Home Rule in Ireland. "Young men of today," Crocker concluded, "I covet for you that manliness of character and devotion to God, which is so beautifully exhibited in the life of Mr. Gladstone, and though we may none of us reach the pinnacle of fame that he has attained, we can be useful in our own spheres and be honored men of God, and ultimately reach the archives of a better existence."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ *The Argus*, II (Jun. 1886), folder 1, West Side Newspaper Collection, 1880-1966, Neighborhood History Research Collection, Special Collections and Preservation Division, Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago Public Library [hereafter cited as WSNC].

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

In proscribing those elements of manhood he thought young men should celebrate, Crocker, and, by extension Wood, positioned himself as one the church's leading men and no longer one its children. Every issue contained a section especially devoted to "Our Boys and Girls," an implicit proclamation that the paper's editor was no longer a young person, but instead had become a mentor to the young. Wood reinforced this maneuver in the publication's heavy emphasis on temperance. Every issue contained a column of "Temperance Notes" where Wood reported upon the prohibition work of church workers and other locals. In addition to informing the church of opportunities to participate in the then growing temperance movement, Wood devoted space to encouraging his reader's commitment to the principle in the face of public slander. While many may call a dry Christian a "crank," Wood noted, he reminded his readers that, "What is a more sad and disgusting sight is there than to see a human being, made in the image of his maker, reeling through the streets of wallowing in the gutter? The man who falls to such a depth is little better than the beast. The man who causes it will have a large account to settle some day."⁶⁷

Wood's emerging sense of his own self-worth and role as a upright Christian man went far beyond the written page. At the same time he launched the *Argus*, Wood also embarked on his first political endeavors and public speaking engagements. His first foray into the oratorical sphere was ambition enough. Along with a number of other men from the city's West Side, Wood helped organize the Lakeside Senate in 1884, a debate club modeled after the U.S. Senate in which every member took up the causes and political needs of a state and then debated the day's political issues from the point of view of their state. For at least one year, Wood

⁶⁷ Ibid.

represented the state of Virginia. Sufficiently impressed with his own efforts, Wood even took the time to write Illinois' Senators to share his endeavors and his role in organizing them.⁶⁸

It was in such acts that Wood's commitment to specific understandings of manhood became actualized, as the efforts of his life became less about articulating his conception of manhood and more about establishing a community in which that ideal was recognized, rewarded, and celebrated. In this regard, the Lakeside Senate could only partially fill this role. Open presumably to any young man, the Senate embodied a level of diversity that mirrored not only the nation it mimicked but also the city in which it was located. But the particularities of Wood's conception of Christian manhood would increasingly require him to not only become a man but establish a community in which that manhood was recognized. Again, Wood's commitment to temperance as a manly virtue that evinced self-mastery and other qualities of leadership was key. His involvement in the movement began simply enough, addressing at first a number of West Side Young People's Literary and Social Societies and lodges of the IOGT in 1886 on the life and character of famed temperance advocate John B. Gough. The following year, however, Wood had attained enough of a reputation as a respectable church member that the Reverend C. Perren invited to address a meeting of the Twelfth Ward Prohibition Club. The club, which was open only to those "who are opposed to the saloon, and in favor of the election of city officers who will secure to the city a clean and judicious administration of its affairs,"⁶⁹ not only involved Wood in his first explicitly political activities, but also increasingly connected him to a social, cultural, and political community that revolved around the church. At the

⁶⁸ "Lakeside Senate First Anniversary Meeting Program," 1 Dec. 1885, Lake Side Senate Meeting 29 Apr. 1889, FLWSB, I: 1, 7; Edward Payson Roe to Frank L. Wood, 29 Mar. 1886, and John A. Logan to Frank L. Wood, 25 Mar. 1886, FLWLB.

⁶⁹ Flyer for Perren and Wood, 2 Apr. 1887, FLWSB, I: 3. See also "Young People's Literary and Social Circle," 1 Apr. 1886, Aqua Pura Lodge, 13 Apr. 1886, *ibid.*

Temperance Day meeting of the Fulton Street Methodist Episcopal Church in March of 1888, for instance, Wood, along with C. A. Guthrie, Clarence Abel, and Jason H. Hammill, headlined the event. According to the *Chicago Herald*, the four young men were “loudly applauded” for what the reporter considered “very radical opinions on the subject” that state and local governments should actively regulate the trade in alcohol and tobacco to limit its sale to minors.⁷⁰

That the church was increasingly becoming the center of Wood’s adult world was evident in his early political activities. But by the end of the 1880s the Wesleyan Bible Class had also risen to take on an even more central role in the personal and social life of Wood and many other Wesleyans. Sometime in 1888 Wesleyan class founder Calla Scott married local West Side businessman Samuel G. Willard and soon followed him to Lincoln, Nebraska. In her place a successful suburban lawyer Charles Lane who attended the Western Avenue church took over the class in September. Up until that time, Lane had been teaching a Bible class of young women at the church, and when he agreed to take over the Wesleyan class he proposed combining the two classes. Several opposed the move, but Lane, perhaps summoning all of the innuendo a good Victorian could muster, recalled that the “enthusiastic earnestness” of the men in the class to the idea convinced them otherwise.⁷¹ Within a year, Wood courted and married Isabelle O. Watson, the daughter of a longstanding Chicago resident originally from Venezuela who had lived in the city since before the 1871 fire. Within a year of the couple’s 26 March 1889 marriage, Isabelle gave birth to a son that bore the middle name of the child Catherine and Edson had lost in the 1860s, Elmer Whitlock Wood.⁷²

⁷⁰ “Raiding Liquor and Tobacco,” *Chicago Herald*, FLWSB I: 36.

⁷¹ Chalres Lane, “The Class as I Knew It,” *Quarter Century Anniversary*, WAMECR; “Anniversary of the Wesleyan Bible Class,” 7-9 Oct. 1939, box 1, folder 32, WBCR.

⁷² *Book of Chicagoans, 1905*, 626.



By 1890 Frank Wood had become, if not in his own estimation, then certainly in that of his peers, a man. As husband, father, business owner, church member, and active Christian citizen, the entirety of Frank Wood's social world seemed bound up by the principles of Christian manhood he so cherished. Its tenets had given direction to his adolescence, and had come to provide his adulthood with meaning. But in ways that he was not aware, the concept of Christian manhood Wood so cherished carried with it a series of potential conflicts with the world in which he lived. This was particularly the case in the maturation of Frank Wood. In order to attain all of the trappings and recognition as an upright Christian man, Wood slowly, and, at the time, unknowingly, created a growing distance between the community he found in the church and the world in which he lived. For instance, in providing young men like Wood the opportunity to perform those features of Christian manhood that were suitable to the proficiencies of industrial work, the social and devotional lives of Sunday school classes and young people's societies like the Wesleyan Bible Class in many ways accommodated themselves to this emerging industrial order. Yet in doing so, Bible classes also brought into the industrial world such countervailing notions as the church's place as a community's moral anchor and that every upright, Christian deserved just compensation for the content of their character. Ultimately, however, in a community saturated with saloons, dancehalls, and other places of leisure, this also meant young evangelicals like Wood increasingly could only find a network of friends and peers who valued sobriety, propriety and self-control within the church.



Figures 5 and 6: Frank L. Wood and Isabelle O. Watson, 1880. Chicago Public Library, WGP 1.190 and 1.193.

As Wood entered the 1890s as a father, husband, and Christian citizen, however, such conflicts were only an inkling. To Wood, the path to personal success and public prominence still led through the church, which continued to provide the anchor to his social world. In the early 1890s, for instance, Wood made a calculated move to increase his own standing within the broader world of Chicago's local politics. After having been involved for several years with the Twelfth Ward Prohibition Club, Wood formally joined the Twelfth Ward Republican Club. At the same time, Wood enrolled in night classes at the city's Kent College of Law. The two, in concert, rapidly advanced Wood's professional and political career. After only a short time in law school, Wood secured a position as a deputy clerk in the Cook County Probate Court. By the fall of 1894, Wood had officially become a spokesman for the city's Republican party, stumping in the Twelfth Ward for congressional candidates.⁷³

⁷³ "Biography—Wood, Frank L.," box 1, folder 15, WGPCC.

In taking a more active role in the city's political life, moreover, Wood began not only to convey his personal political sensibilities, but also the ways in which his early days in Malden and current status as a streetcar driver's son had shaped his political commitments. In the Congressional elections of 1894, Wood clearly aligned himself with a reformist branch of the Republican party that connected with the party's older free labor sympathies forged in rural places like Bureau County. In stumping, Wood declared himself a proponent for high tariffs, for as he argued, "Free trade, against which the Republicans are now fighting, has brought nothing but disaster."⁷⁴ In doing so, Wood walked into what was then a growing intraparty conflict within the city.

For nearly two decades, the city's West Side Republican clubs had been largely controlled by Congressman William Lorimer. Known as the "Blond Boss" for his golden locks and rotund personage, Lorimer was one of Chicago's first immigrant bosses. A Scotch-Protestant immigrant who had married an Irish Catholic, Lorimer used these ethnic connections to forge one of the city's strongest political machines. He ruled over Chicago's West Side wards for nearly forty years, but in the 1890s he had reached the pinnacle.⁷⁵ His politics largely reflected that of the emerging ethnic communities. Whereas Wood and other native born, evangelical Protestants anchored their vision of a prosperous community in an orderly, and temperate life, Lorimer and many of the city's immigrants embraced a philosophy of "personal liberty" that argued neither the state nor the community had any roll in shaping the personal choices and leisure habits. The greatest tension between these competing philosophies lay in the issue of temperance. Ethnic communities bristled at the Sunday closing law and high saloon licenses

⁷⁴ "Twelfth Ward Republicans Meet," *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 4 Oct. 1894.

⁷⁵ Joel Arthur Tarr, *A Study in Boss Politics: William Lorimer of Chicago* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 6-12.

Protestant reformers like Wood advocated, quite rightly seeing them as an assault on their ethnic heritage as much as their cultural practices. This “liquor question” became the defining issue of most of the city’s municipal, state, and federal elections at the turn of the century.⁷⁶

But Lorimer had parlayed these sentiments for personal liberty into one of the city’s most formidable political machines. From this immigrant base of support, Lorimer engaged in the selling of city franchises through his political networks, and purposely blocked any effort to reform the franchise system. And in joining the party’s more reformist wing, Wood joined forces with an increasing number of Republicans who sought to unseat Lorimer.

It was in this ambitious context that the members of the Wesleyan Bible Class approached Wood about the possibility of taking over the class in the summer of 1896. The previous year, Charles Lane left Chicago and, therefore, the class of nearly a hundred young women and men was without a teacher. Retired minister and Dwight L. Moody protégé J. Alexander Youker taught the class for a few months, but his health quickly gave out and the class, for a time, disbanded. In September of 1896, ten of the class members approached Wood about teaching class. As he later recalled it, referring to himself in the third person, “To him, the request of a Wesleyan was synonymous with a command; he loved the founder of the class, her successors, its former members, and all its inspiring history. Above all, he felt called to it as definitively as others feel called to preach the Gospel.”⁷⁷ Whatever his recollections, however, the class also approached Wood at a moment when he was feverishly working to advance his own public and political persona. His leadership of the class would validate his public standing

⁷⁶ On temperance and Chicago’s politics see Schneirov, *Labor and Urban Politics*, 82-84; Richard J. Jensen, *The Winning of the Midwest: Social and Political Conflict, 1888-1896* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

⁷⁷ Frank L. Wood, “The Last Nine Years,” *Quarter Century Anniversary*, WAMECR.

in the community in the same way his rising success had made him a candidate for the teaching position. But as Wood entered the twentieth century, the social world in which he lived increasingly became divided into separate, competing camps of those he associated with the church and those that lay beyond it. Such a process did not take the form of identifying enemies, however. Rather, it began as a process of making friends.

CHAPTER THREE:
WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

- The Gospel According to Matthew, 18:20 KJV

We ought to make more of our Christian friendships, the communion of the saints, the fellowship of believers.

- Hugh Black, 1898.¹



The concept of friendship that so motivated Frank L. Wood in his reorganization of the Wesleyan Bible Class in the fall of 1896 was in no way peculiar to him. Both the word itself, as well as themes of interpersonal intimacy, saturated Anglo-Protestant culture on both sides of the Atlantic at the turn of the century. For many, the term spoke directly to the deep sentiment that personal relations that constituted social life. The romance of companionship had long been a motif of Victorian literature, an emblem of the purest, and most meaningful, form of relationship. Gift books, those ubiquitous tokens of bourgeois amity, similarly filled the bookshelves of a consuming Protestant public with distilled collections of poetry, musings and maxims that also exalted friendship's virtues.² Yet the turn of the century Protestant concern for friendship was

¹ Hugh Black, *Friendship* (New York: Fleming H. Revell & Co., 1898), 38.

² The literature on friendship as a theme in Victorian literature is legion. For examples on relationships between women see Christine Palumbo-DeSimone, *Sharing Secrets: Nineteenth-Century Women's Relations in the Short Story* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000); Carolyn Oulton, *Romantic Friendship in Victorian Literature* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007); Janet M. Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). On men see Axel Nissen, *Manly Love: Romantic Friendship in American Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

also markedly pietistic. Congregations sang hymns like “Blest Be the Ties that Bind” not only in worship services, but also at the plethora of church socials, Sunday school picnics and holiday celebrations that had become the hallmarks of Protestant congregational culture since midcentury.³ Even more profoundly, the popular Christology of nineteenth century gospel hymnody downplayed Jesus’ historic portrayal as the arbiter of the afterlife to emphasize his affinity with humanity. Such favored and widely republished hymns as “I’ve Found a Friend in Jesus” and “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” constructed Christ less as a regal King of Kings

2009); Caleb Crain, *American Sympathy: Men, Friendship and Literature in the New Nation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); and Chris Packard, *Queer Cowboys: And Other Erotic Male Friendships in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). On gift books see Cindy Dickinson, “Creating a World of Books, Friends and Flowers: Gift Books and Incriptions, 1825-1860,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 31 (1996): 53-66; Margaret Linley, “‘A Centre that Would Not Hold’: Annuals and Cultural Democracy,” in *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities* Larel Brake, et al., eds. (New York: Palgrave Publishers, 2000), 54-76. Of the many examples of turn of the century gift books and annuals devoted to the concept of friendship see Wallace and Frances Rice, *The Wealth of Friendship* (New York: Barse & Hopkins, 1909); Samuel McChord, et al., *The Book of Friendship* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1910); Frederic Lawrence Knowles, ed., *The Value of Friendship* (Boston: H. M. Caldwell Co., 1904); Mary Allette Ayer, *The Joys of Friendship* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1905); Arthur Franklin Fuller, *Friendship and Other Writings* (Los Angeles: Wayside Press, 1918); Volney Streamer, comp., *In Friendship’s Name* (Chicago: n.p., 1891); Edwin Osgood Grover, comp., *From Friend to Friend: A Partnership in Friendship* (Chicago: P. F. Volland & Co., 1913); Ray Woodward, *For Auld Lang Syne: A Book of Friendship* (New York: The Platt & Peck Co., 1911); Paul Elder, comp., *Friendship* (San Francisco: Paul Edler & Company, 1901); *Friendship: Marcus Tullius Cicero, Francis Bacon, Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Chicago: Albert & Scott, 1890); *For Friendship’s Sake: Essays on Friendship by Emerson, Lubbock, Bacon, Etc.* (New York: Dodge Publishing Company, 1900); Eliza Atkins Stone, *Concerning Friendship: A Year-Book* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1896).

³ On the rise of social gatherings in local churches see Charles D. Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home: Life in British and American Reformed Congregations, 1830-1915* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 200); E. Brooks Holifield, “Toward a History of American Congregations,” in *American Congregations*, vol. II *New Perspectives in the Study of Congregations*, James P. Wind and James W. Lewis, eds., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 38-43.

and more as the sinner's most intimate companion.⁴ As internationally renowned evangelist Dwight L. Moody, who made extensive use of gospel hymns in his revivals, often concluded his sermons throughout the late nineteenth century, "I want to stand here to-day to tell you that He [Jesus] is the best friend the sinner has got. He is just the friend every man needs here."⁵

Indeed, to many prominent Protestant authors the concept of friendship was more than an allegory for the Christian faith but its theological cornerstone. Henry Clay Trumbull, for instance, the longtime owner and editor of the *Sunday School Times*, claimed that humanity's very existence was an extension of friendship's divine origins. In his four hundred page magnum opus *Friendship the Master Passion*, Trumbull argued there was no "profounder and more sacred affection" than friendship. By "the Bible standard," he claimed, friendship was "the love of loves." Unlike the love of kinship or marriage, the love of friendship, or "friendship-love" as he called it, lacked the bonds of blood or matrimony that reinforced other forms of human relations.

⁴ On the personalization of Jesus in gospel hymns see Stephen Marini, "American Protestant Hymns Project," in Mark A. Noll and Richard J. Mouw, eds. *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 251-64; Sandra S. Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion: The Rhetoric of Nineteenth-Century Revivalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978); Mary G. De Jong, "I Want to be Like Jesus": The Self-Defining Power of Evangelical Hymnody," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LIV (1986): 464-71; June Hadden Hobbs, "I Sing for I Cannot Be Silent": *The Feminization of American Hymnody, 1870-1920* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 91-97.

⁵ Dwight L. Moody, "What is Christ to Me?" in *Dwight Lyman Moody's Life Work and Gospel Sermons: As Delivered by the Great Evangelist in his Revival Work in Great Britain and America Together with a Biography of His Co-Laborer Ira David Sankey*, Richard S. Rhodes, ed., (Chicago: Rhodes & McClure Publishing Co., 1907), 35. For more on the intimate Christology of nineteenth century revivalism see Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 69-79; Richard Rabinowitz, *The Spiritual Self: The Transformation of Personal Religious Experience in Nineteenth-Century New England* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), 177-78; Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 120-30; Richard Wrightman Fox, *Jesus in America: Personal Savior, Cultural Hero, National Obsession* (San Francisco: Harpers, 2004), 251-67, 278-82.

Little beyond the commitment of friends kept a friendship intact. Yet far from a weakness, this absence of institutional support was the very source of friendship's supremacy. To Trumbull, friendship was neither a social obligation nor a reciprocal relationship. One could be a friend, after all, without having them. Rather, friendship was ultimately a personal trait or disposition that cared only for the wellbeing of others and not for one's self. It was the act of loving with no concern for being loved; it was "love for another because of what that other is in himself, or for that other's own sake, and not because of what that other is to the loving one."⁶ Such a selfless, sacrificial love, Trumbull reasoned, could only be divine in origin. It drove creation, motivated Christ's crucifixion and compelled his eventual return. Mortals could never hope to attain such an unalloyed temperament. But in our earthly friendships, Trumbull concluded, one glimpsed such an inspiring love. "In a pure friendship with its generous impulses and its ennobling influences," went a *Sunday School Times* editorial almost assuredly written by Trumbull, "we have, perhaps one of the best earthly types of the love of God and Christ. . . . [W]e have in our earthly friendships a faint type of what that final consummation of love shall be . . ."⁷

⁶ H. Clay Trumbull, *Friendship the Master Passion: Or The Nature and History of Friendship, and Its Place as a Force in the World* (Philadelphia: John D. Wattles & Co., 1894 [1891]), quotes from 18, 25-26, 49-50, 386-87; and Philip E. Howard, *The Life Story of Henry Clay Trumbull: Missionary, Army Chaplain, Editor, and Author* (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Co., 1905 [1904]) 366-69, 408-10.

⁷ *Sunday School Times*, 13 Jan. 1883. For similar formulations that suggests Trumbull penned the editorial see Trumbull, *Friendship the Master Passion*, 386.

In addition to grounding his very cosmology, the concept of friendship was also the lodestone of Trumbull's intellectual and literary career. His first book was a biographical paean to Henry Ward Camp, Trumbull's "tent-mate and intimate friend" during his tenure as Chaplain of the Tenth Connecticut Infantry Regiment who died outside of Richmond in 1864. He would pen a similar work when another dear friend and fellow member of the International Sunday School Association Lesson Committee Henry P. Haven, died in 1888. When Trumbull took over the *Sunday School Times* and became increasingly interested in biblical archaeology and the study of what he called "oriental social life," he found evidence of a "primitive rite of covenanting a sacred friendship" in everything from threshold covenants, blood rites, to salt

Originally published in 1891 and republished five times by 1912, the popularity of Trumbull's tome suggests just how widely interest in the concept of friendship circulated at the turn of the century. By 1903 one author could simply refer to "that great, red book" to reference Trumbull's scarlet cloth binding.⁸ But to many lay Protestants, and especially to those active in the devotional life of the local church, friendship's sacrificial foundation was tempered by an interest in the social and instrumental benefits of service, empathy and affinity. A friendly temperament not only described the Christian's character, but also the amicable, reciprocal relations of a church community. To Frank W. Gunsaulus, pastor of Chicago's nondenominational Central Church, "that immortal ideal" of friendship was a congregational goal as much as an individual one. When church members made even slight gestures of kindness to inquire or provide for the wellbeing of their brethren, Gunsaulus argued in a 1909 sermon, they not only provided each other life's perishable necessities but also "that never-dying thought" which had compelled it. Even a "simple act of friendship" like bringing an ill friend a meal did not only foster congregational cordiality, but also profoundly connected the church "to things eternal" as their "souls are bound to man and God in friendship, along whose path the

rituals. See Trumbull, *The Knightly Soldier: A Biography of Henry Ward Camp* (Boston: Nichols and Noyes, 1865); idem, *A Model Superintendent: A Sketch of the Life, Character, and Methods of Work of Henry P. Haven* (Philadelphia: John D. Wattles Publisher, 1880); idem, *Blood Covenant: A Primitive Rite and Its Bearing on Scripture* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1885), "sacred friendship" quote on p. 201; idem, *Studies in Oriental Social Life: And Gleams of the East on the Sacred Page* (Philadelphia: John D. Wattles & Company, 1894); idem, *The Threshold Covenant: The Beginning of Religious Rites* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896); idem, *The Salt Covenant: As Based on the Significance and Symbolism of Salt in Primitive Thought* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899); and Howard, *The Life of Henry Clay Trumbull*, "tent-mate" quote on p. 200.

⁸ Ruth Ogden, *Friendship: The Good and Perfect Gift* (New York: Frederick A. Stockes Company, 1903), 18.

ideal life often travels.”⁹ As the purported kernel for the Christian faith, then, friendship could also transform the church from a gathering of the saints into a fellowship of friends, bonded together with the same sentiments that bound them to the divine.

More practically, friendliness and sociability were also understood to be central to the success of any Sunday school, Bible class or religious society. As president of the Hemenway Bible Class in Evanston, Illinois George F. Zaneis argued in 1906, a Bible class’s vibrant social life did not only turn strangers into visitors, but visitors into active members. “The friendships made between the members at the monthly socials constitute one of the chief sources of strength in any class,” he asserted, “Where you accomplish this you secure members for your class.”¹⁰ And in addition to bolstering membership, friendship also provided sources of inspiration and accountability in adhering to the moral codes of an active, temperate and pious life. “All men and women have social natures,” former secretary of the Cook County Sunday School Association W. C. Pearce maintained. And just as scripture suggested that iron sharpened iron, Pearce demanded churches and Bible classes attend to their student’s social nature so they did not “against their better judgment . . . drift among questionable companions who lead them into a sinful life.”¹¹

⁹ Frank W. Gunsaulus, “Friendship and Religion,” in *The Wealth of Friendship*, Wallace and Francis Rice, eds., (New York: Barse & Hopkins Publishers, 1909), 21.

¹⁰ David C. Cook, *Successful Adult Bible Classes and What They Are Doing Also Reports from Sunday School Superintendents pm Adult Bible Class Work and Needs and Conditions of the Work as Seen by Adult Class Teachers of the Ordinary Sort* (Chicago: David C. Cook Publishing Company, 1906), 46-47. See also “The Obligations of Friendship,” *Adult Bible Class Quarterly* XXVI (Jul. 1927): 20.

¹¹ W. C. Pearce, *The Adult Bible Class: It’s Organization and Work* (Philadelphia: The Westminster, 1908), 57.

Perhaps not surprisingly, these concerns for right relationships gave the evangelical interest in friendship a decidedly exclusivist cast. In highlighting and determining the qualities of friends, one was, in a sense, also defining the conditions of enmity. In an editorial remarkable for its candidness amidst a discourse largely dominated by sentiment and hyperbole, Amos R. Wells, a leader in the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavored, observed in 1922 that "Having friends is more or less accidental." While a Christian could manifest a friendly demeanor through devotion and prayer, the quality of one's friends often "depends on time and place, on mood and fancy, on the chance of birth and breeding."¹² Protestant writings on friendship also had a deeply gendered nature. According to many writers—most of whom were themselves men—friendship was ideally an intimate bond between men. "Few . . . would now question the reality of exalted and abiding friendship between woman and woman," Trumbull conceded, but the "most notable historic and traditional illustrations" and the "dearest of reciprocal ties" existed between men.¹³ In fact, Hugh Black, a Scottish preacher and author of a popular 1898 text entitled, simply, *Friendship*, complained that the increased presence of women in the public sphere had made the sexes "nearer in intellectual pursuits and in common tastes than they have ever been," and had resulted in such a lamentably situation where "marriage, in more cases now than ever before, supplies the need of friendship."¹⁴

Yet even the most insular manifestations of this discourse of friendship could not erase the implicit critique which lay at its core. The very longing for fulfilling, congenial relationships had roots that ran as deep as the harmony said to pervade the Garden of Eden and bespoke

¹² Amos R. Wells, "The Art of Making Friends," *Westminster Adult Bible Class V* (Mar. 1922): 82.

¹³ Trumbull, *Friendship the Master Passion*, 69-70, 106.

¹⁴ Black, *Friendship*, 17.

fundamental human desires for security and acceptance. But this broader interest in friendship also had a peculiarly American inflection. In an increasingly urban and industrial society, it was also a yearning for the peaceful, virtuous—but ultimately mythical—pastoral communities of an earlier era. For many turn-of-the-century lay Protestant women and men, many of whom had migrated from rural areas to America’s cities, their desire for intimate, spiritual friendships also represented a desire for the relationships that purportedly had defined the close-knit, church-centered towns and villages of their youth. As William Pitts, a rural Wisconsin native who migrated to Chicago to attend medical school in the late 1860s, proclaimed in his widely reprinted hymn, “The Little Brown Church in the Wildwood,” “No place is so dear to my childhood.”¹⁵ Of course, this longing was, in part, a desire for the social, cultural and political hegemony white, native-born Protestants exercised over these demographically homogenous communities and was therefore irreducibly conservative and reactionary. But buried in friendship’s longing for these benevolent, harmonious communities was also a concept of mutuality that suggested every member of a community, even its elite, shared some responsibility for the wellbeing and welfare of their less prominent neighbors, fellow citizens and friends. Many lay Protestants increasingly looked upon the unchecked development of industrial capitalism as a threat to these older ideals justice, fairness and religious friendship. Hugh Black, for instance, worried that the “wider and more impersonal” nature of “modern ideals,” the growth of the American state, the cheap “connections and acquaintances” that mark business

¹⁵ The refrain wistfully invited the hymn’s audience to “Oh, come, come, come, come/ Come to the church in the wildwood.” Rodeheaver and Ackley, eds., *Great Revival Hymns*, no. 184. On Pitts and the hymn’s composition see “The Little Brown Church in the Vale,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* II, no. 3 (1919): 340-342; Charlton G. Laird, “The Little Brown Church,” *The Palimpsest* II, no. 3 (Mar. 1921): 72-79.

relations, and the “selfishness which seems to blight all life” threatened to erase “a generous friendship which forgets self.”¹⁶

At the dawn of the twentieth century, however, friendship’s critique of industrial society was largely latent, buried in fragments throughout discussions of empathy and personal benevolence. “The complaint is sometimes heard, ‘Nobody cares what becomes of me,’” the *Westminster Adult Bible Class* editorialized in 1910. “But how much,” the *Westminster* retorted, “does the man who makes the complaint care what becomes of other who may be in need as great or greater than his?”¹⁷ It also was largely subsumed by more insular concerns of finding friends and developing friendships. Yet the evangelical discourse of friendship’s concern for the welfare of others—friends in the broadest sense—was vital and could shape how lay Protestant engaged their world. The Haynes Bible Class at the Belden Avenue Baptist Church in Chicago, for instance, found homeless members shelter, unemployed members work and paid the medical bills of any member in need during the economic downturn in the first years of the twentieth century. Haynes’ class teacher Dr. John Earl insisted, “No member is permitted to lose heart in time of sickness or trouble because there is no one to whom he can go for sympathy and help.”¹⁸

Able both to assuage the traumas of the industrial era and to articulate a profound critique of its inequalities, friendship was ultimately a polysemous idiom in the social and religious worlds of many white, native born Protestants. It remained charged, however, and could convey far more than the quality of relationships between individuals. Friendship pervaded Frank

¹⁶ Black, *Friendship*, 14-18, 40. For other examples see “What Friendship Does,” *Westminster Adult Bible Class Quarterly* IV no. 1 (Jan. 1912): 1; “The Marks of Real Friendship,” *Westminster Adult Bible Class Quarterly* V no. 9 (Sep. 1922): 335-36.

¹⁷ “The Secret of Winning Friends,” *The Westminster Adult Bible Class Quarterly* II no. 3 (Mar. 1910): 82.

¹⁸ Pearce, *The Adult Bible Class*, 17

Wood's devotional world and, in turn, that of the Wesleyan Bible Class. But as Wood's leadership of the class increasingly immersed him in wider social, political and ecclesiastical circles throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, he would be forced to choose between the paradoxically congenial and exclusive nature of that term; to determine what it meant to be a friend and decide who, in fact, were his friends.



Friendship had long been the adhesive that held the Wesleyan Bible Class together. Regular social gatherings and entertaining religious meetings had been a part of the class since its founding and contributed to a sense of fellowship among its members. Like the founders of so many of the earliest Bible classes and young people's societies, Calla Scott Willard and others connected with the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church's Sunday school had attempted to have the class serve as an alternative to the city's many questionable leisure activities only in fits and starts. Frank Wood's appointment as teacher in September of 1896, however, intensified the class's efforts to foster and sustain close personal relationships among members of the class. Under Wood's leadership, the class became less an aspect of its members' recreational lives and more and more the center of their community.

In many respects, the Wesleyan class's meeting place embodied this new emphasis. Upon taking over, Wood secured permission from the Western Avenue church for the class to meet in the church's old chapel. Class members contributed nearly five hundred dollars to renovate the chapel, furnishing and decorating the unused, dilapidated structure that sat on the church's property. It was to be the class's own home. The chapel also happened to be the church's original meetinghouse, built in 1867 when the area was still an unbroken prairie that had yet to be

incorporated by the city of Chicago.¹⁹ Whether intentionally or not, Wood secured as the class's meeting place what had been a one-room country church not unlike the old congregations of Bureau County. Yet the Wesleyan Bible Class's growing centrality to its members' community was far more than an architectural metaphor.

As teacher, Wood ambitiously transfigured the class from a Sunday school gathering into a broader, yet much more separatist, voluntary organization. He removed the requirement that members had to attend the Western Avenue church or even be Methodists and opened the class to anyone. In place of the class's longstanding denominational affiliation, however, Wood made a certain conservative, traditional religious sensibility the criterion for membership. He defined the class as "an organization of young people banded together for the study of the Bible," and reinforced the importance of scriptural devotion in the class's motto to "Search the Scriptures." Far more than religious instruction, Wood envisioned the class as a source of its members' religious identity. The class had its own badge, flag and other regalia as well as a Wesleyan Bible Class Song composed by Wood himself that reinforced the class's traditional theology. "Our motto 'Search the Scriptures,' that we may all clearly see," went the second stanza, "What our loved Redeemer's purpose is, concerning you and me;/ And our object is to glorify the 'Man of Galilee' / As we go marching on."²⁰

Such ceremonial accoutrements, moreover, were far from empty ritual. Rather they conveyed Wood's desire to transform the class into an affable, benevolent community. Wood

¹⁹ "Our Class Home," in *Quarter Century Anniversary: Souvenir Invitation & Program of the Wesleyan Bible Class, The Twenty-Fifth Year Since Its Foundation The Ninth Year Since Its Re-Organization, October Fifteenth to the Twenty-First, 1905*, in Western Avenue Methodist Church Folder, Northern Illinois United Methodist Archive, United Library, Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois [hereafter cited as *Quarter Century Anniversary*]; Mrs. Horace Wright Cook, "Spirit and Method," *Sunday School Times* 8 Oct. 1900.

²⁰ Cook, "Spirit and Method."



Figure 7: The Wesleyan Class in Session, c. 1900s. Chicago Public Library, WBC 1.3



Figure 8: A Wesleyan Class Banquet, c. 1900s. Chicago Public Library, WBC 1.11

reorganized the class into a number of standing committees and official posts to handle every aspect of class business. Though the class only averaged a weekly attendance of forty during the first year of its reorganization, Wood, a consummate business college graduate and former clerk, appointed twenty-two members to serve such posts as class president, treasurer or usher. And in addition to the positions that facilitated the class's Sunday lesson services, Wood also appointed a number of committees intended to promote the class's social life. The social or entertainment committee, for example, swiftly and aggressively revamped the class's social activities. Where the Wesleyan class had sporadically sponsored reunion banquets, debates and other self-improvement activities throughout the 1880s, Wood's social committee methodically fashioned a recreational calendar of multi-day annual banquet celebrations, elaborate quarterly socials, more simpler monthly soirees and weekly social hours for the class. The Wesleyan Bible Class's social schedule for 1908, for instance, included a three-day anniversary banquet, a Peanut Social, which featured only food made from the legume, five holiday parties, two surprise birthday parties, one anniversary party, a farewell party, two receptions for class guests, and a class camping trip. "The social life of the class is one of its most important features," class president Isidore C. Horowitz observed in 1912, "the Bible Class of to-day, if it is to be an all around success, must from time to time provide such social gatherings as will bring its members together, so that they may become better acquainted and acquire that friendship and intimacy which kindred spirits need for efficient team-work. There must be in and around a class enough of social life and the lighter side to make it human and home-like, and thus attract people to it an each other."²¹

²¹ Charles I. Horowitz, *President's Thirty-Second Annual Report and Message: Wesleyan Bible Class, Chicago, October 13th, 1912*, unpaginated, folder 5, box 2, WBCR. On the WBC's social committee and its activities from 1908 see *Wesleyan Advocate* (Dec. 1907) through (Jan. 1909); and "The Wesleyan Class Earnestly Invites You..." WBC anniversary program dated 28 Sep. 1908, WBCR box 2, folder 26; "A Leap Year Party," advertisement dated Mar. 1908, WBCR

To Wood, such entertainments were vital not only to attract young people to the class, but also to ensure their commitment to the church. Because the popular amusements of both Chicago and the world increasingly took place in settings beyond the church's influence, Wood argued that in order to remain relevant churches were obligated to create social worlds of their own. "The day is gone when young people can be driven into Sunday-school, or frightened into belief, when we get them there," Wood surmised at the class's 1905 anniversary banquet. The "high ambition and distinguishing characteristics" of any Bible class, he continued, should be to "arrest" young people on their way, "to suggest to them that eternity, as well as time, deserves some consideration; to show them the beauties of a Christian life; to make attractive the teachings of the Nazarene; to exemplify His life of love; to prove that the Bible is the greatest book of the ages . . ." ²² In such efforts, Wood argued churches were justified in not only providing purely recreational activities, but also sponsoring or organizing forms of amusement once thought to be too worldly or secular. In the first years of its reorganization, for instance, the Wesleyan Bible Class sponsored not only its own baseball team but even a bicycle club to compete in city leagues. Churches and ministers had long looked askance upon countless forms of public amusement, but numerous Bible class leaders like Wood contended that when used as an evangelistic tool amusements attracted members and helped cleanse young people's social lives. "It sanctifies social life," the Reverend Charles H. Lewis of the Nebraska Sunday School Association argued of Bible class social committees in 1908 "A class that does not study the

box 3, folder 13; "Want Column" uncited newspaper clipping dated 1908, WBCR, box 3, folder 9; and, for comparisons, "When the Leaves begin to Turn," WBC Anniversary program dated 1-3 Oct. 1907, box 1, folder 3, WBCR.

²² Wood, "The Last Nine Year," in *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*.

Bible has no right to be called a Bible class. But social occasions may be used to win men, and thus sanctify the social life.”²³

As the Wesleyan class’s many parties and Frisbee’s comments suggest, Bible class social lives continued to attract and retain new members. Yet the organizational creations of Bible class teachers in the first decade of the twentieth century were far more than mere attractions. They also indicated a growing desire among lay, evangelical Protestants to anchor their social worlds exclusively among their religious brethren. With every year of Wood’s tenure, for instance, the Wesleyan class added committees that took on more and more seemingly nonreligious tasks, including the provision of some basic social services. The sick and hospital committees, for instance, visited ill members not only to liven their spirits, but also to publicize their physical, material and spiritual needs in the *Wesleyan Advocate*, the class paper Wood began to publish in 1900, so that members could contribute to their recovery. Similarly, the class’s room-and-board committee helped members find accommodations in the city while the employment committee kept a running list of job opportunities known to members of the Western Avenue church for class members in search of work. For a short time the class even ran a health committee that secured commitments from nurses, physicians and dentists associated with the class to volunteer

²³ *Organized Sunday-School Work in America, 1905-1908: Triennial Survey of Sunday-School Work including the Official report of the Twelfth International Sunday School Convention, Louisville, Kentucky, June 18-23, 1908.* (Chicago: Executive Committee of the International Sunday School Association, 1908), 300-01. On Wesleyan class athletics see Cook, “Spirit and Method”; *Wesleyan Advocate* (Sep. 1909): 5 and (Aug. 1910): 6; *The Bible Class*, newspaper clipping dated 27 May 1906 in WBCR, box 2, folder 6.

²³ On committees see untitled program for WBC twenty-sixth anniversary banquet dated 1906, WBCR; Horowitz, *President’s Thirty-Second Annual Report...October 13th, 1912*, WBCR; and *Home Coming Anniversary, Wesleyan Bible Class*, program dated 3-11 Oct. 1913, WBCR; *Wesleyan Advocate* (Dec. 1908): 7 and (May 1910): 7.

their services for other members.²⁴ To Wood, the extensive committee work demonstrated his commitment to making the Wesleyan Bible Class the center of its members' lives. A list of class advantages he composed, widely circulated in placards hung by the membership committee and in articles composed by the publicity committee, underscored Wood's encompassing vision.

If you are a stranger, we will make you feel at home.
If you are out of work, we will try to get you a place.
If you are sick we will, if necessary, care for you.
If you are in trouble, we will stand by you.
If you move away, we will correspond with you.²⁵

Unfortunately, without complete records, the extent to which these committees actually served the class is impossible to gauge. By 1908 the class's operations had become extensive enough that the financial committee, which had previously relied on voluntary contributions to fund class activities, was forced to implement a pledge drive to cover a thousand dollar annual budget.²⁶ Other than sporadic announcements of committee work, however, a report that the employment committee found work for twenty-three members in 1916 is the only numerical account of its work.²⁷ Nor did everyone in the class benefit from these committees equally. From

²⁴ On committees see untitled program for WBC twenty-sixth anniversary banquet dated 1906; Horowitz, *President's Thirty-Second Annual Report...October 13th, 1912*; and *Home Coming Anniversary, Wesleyan Bible Class*, program dated 3-11 Oct. 1913, all in WBCR; as well as *Wesleyan Advocate*, (Dec. 1908): 7 and (May 1910): 7.

²⁵ "For You About Us," in *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*. The list also appeared in most issues of the *Wesleyan Advocate* as well as several other anniversary programs.

²⁶ *Wesleyan Advocate* (Oct. 1908): 5; Horowitz, *President's Thirty-Second Annual Report...October 13th, 1912*, unpaginated, WBCR.

²⁷ "Autumn Letter: From the Teacher of the Wesleyan Bible Class," dated 1 December 1916, WBCR. In another 1905 notation, Wood put the aggregate weekly salary members who had found work through the committee since it had been organized at \$250. "By Way of Reminiscence," and "Our Class Officers," in *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*. For other

its earliest days, the Wesleyan class, like the majority of Protestant churches across the country, was largely composed of women. As Wood discovered in his 1905 census, over sixty percent of the class was female, many wives who attended without their husbands.²⁸ It was these women who carried out the bulk of the administrative, stenographic, and organizational work of the class, serving on its various social committees and the class's outings, events, and celebrations. Yet Wood largely appointed men to the class's official positions such as president, secretary and treasurer. For all of his concern in reaching the city's wandering women and men, he ultimately looked upon the class as a platform from which to train the church's future male leaders. A similar relationship developed between Frank and Isabelle. Though she too was active in almost every feature of the Bible class's work, she worked largely in the background of Wood's domineering personality, caring for much of their household's domestic and financial responsibilities while Wood jaunted about the city speaking to churches. Frank called her his "Silent Partner," who cooked the meals and kept the house where he would hold numerous gathering and meetings. Towards the end of their lives, Frank would claim she had cooked over eight thousand meals for unexpected guests he brought by.²⁹ There is little evidence, however, to suggest Isabelle fully embraced this silence. But there is also no documentation of her angst, and this arrangement of Isabelle making Frank's public life possible became the defining characteristic of their relationship.

notes on the employment committee see *Wesleyan Advocate* (May 1908): 8 and (Feb. 1911); 6; "Want Column," uncited newspaper clipping in WBCR.

²⁸ "Our Members," *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*.

²⁹ FLW, "The Silent Partner," *Half Century Anniversary of the Wesleyan Bible Class*, program dated 18-21 Oct. 1930, folder 23, box 1.

Yet the importance of the Wesleyan class's bureaucracy goes far beyond their results. As an aspect of the class's daily functioning, these committees were also manifestations of a much more profound sense of community that emerged throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. For every elaborately planned "Chop Suey Social" or tugboat excursion onto Lake Michigan the class organized, there were innumerable informal gatherings. Members who worked in Chicago's downtown "Loop" daily gathered for lunch at the Ouillemette, a restaurant whose proprietors were "Christian men" who refused to serve liquor. Frank Wood also opened his home every Friday evening for the class to socialize.³⁰ To provide even greater outlets for the class to socialize solely amongst themselves, the class even went so far as to purchase an abandoned building in the Methodist Campgrounds outside of Chicago in Des Plaines. The site of annual revival services since the 1860s, the Campgrounds had also become a summer resort along the Des Plaines River for members of the denomination. According to the twelve-member board of the Wesleyan Camp Association, who sold nearly a thousand shares in the building at \$1 a piece, the class's "House in the Woods" was for members "to enjoy short vacations and week-end trips with the assurance that their country villa is always at their disposal and that kindred and congenial spirits will welcome them there."³¹ Such organized, yet informal forms of quotidian intimacy suggests the ways in which Wesleyan class members, like so many other Bible class members at the dawn of the twentieth century, came to look upon the class for a source of companionship as much as religious instruction. As Frank Wood proclaimed at the House in the

³⁰ *Wesleyan Advocate* (Aug. 1910): 6 and (Nov. 1907): 7.

³¹ *Ibid.* (May 1908): 5-6.

Wood's dedication, "May the friendships of all who enter here, be as sweet as the perfume of the flowers."³²

And members of the Wesleyan Bible Class deeply cherished their friendships. Within a decade of Wood's reorganization five hundred women and men had joined the class and weekly attendance reached a hundred. The roster included members from eleven denominations, and some members who now traveled from as far as suburban Evanston or Oak Park to attend. The class continued to attract the kind of young migrants who came to Chicago for the entry-level office jobs a burgeoning industrial metropolis had to offer. Clerks, bookkeepers, stenographers, sales agents and teachers dominated the class's weekly attendance, but alongside clerical workers also sat a handful of machinists, tailors and railroad workers.³³ To these young women and men, however, the Wesleyan class was perhaps the only place in the city where such distinctions did not matter. In 1905, for instance, Wood attempted a systematic survey of the class to determine why so many had joined. Every submitted answer was read at that year's annual banquet, which was the climax of an entire week of socials, prayer meetings, sermons and automobile outings to celebrate the class's twenty-fifth anniversary. Wood considered the anniversary to be of such importance that he invited former postmaster, retail magnate and Sunday school mogul John Wanamaker, *Sunday School Times* editor and Henry Clay Trumbull's

³² "Doves, Flowers and Water Used at Dedication," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 Jul. 1908. On the House in the Woods see Thomas W. Stanek, President of the Board of Directors of the Wesleyan Camp Association, to WBC, 17 Apr. 1908, WBCR; *Wesleyan Advocate* (May 1908): 5-6, (Jun. 1908): 5-6, (Aug. 1908): 7, 11-12, (Jan. 1909): 12, (Feb. 1909): 12, (Sep. 1909): 3-4; (Nov. 1909): 7, (Jun. 1910): 5-6, and (Jul. 1911): 4.

³³ "Our Members," in *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*.

son Charles G. Trumbull, and president Theodore Roosevelt all to attend.³⁴ All three dignitaries declined the invitation, but over two hundred members filled a rented dining hall to celebrate the class's first quarter century of existence. At the conclusion of the evening's catered, five-course meal, Wood, serving, of course, as toastmaster, halted the evening's program and opened the floor for members to stand and read their reasons for joining the class. Over a hundred and fifty current and former Wesleyans stood to recount why they had joined the class. Their answers, however, were remarkably similar.

"I was a stranger in a great city. I was lonesome," F. Arthur Caldwell stood to recall. An early member of the class who had gone on to sell real estate California, Caldwell claimed the Wesleyan class had taught him "the importance of a church home, where there was sociability."

Schoolteacher Isabel M. Crouch stood and similarly remembered she joined the class "To get spiritual help, to gain a larger knowledge of the Bible, and to enjoy the fellowship of earnest Christians."

Elocution teacher Venia Marie Kellar more directly recalled that she had been drawn to "the friendly atmosphere of the class and I wanted my friends to be Christian people."

R. Walter Ludwig, meanwhile, a young salesman who had recently married a class member, candidly confessed he joined simply "Because my friends were connected with it."

"My main reason was the desire to learn more of the teachings of the Holy Book," Lydia A. Wilkinson stood to recall. "Another reason was I preferred the companionship of Christian people."

³⁴ John Wanamaker to FLW, 15 Sept. 1905; C. G. Trumbull to FLW, 21 Sept. 1905; William Loeb, Jr., Secretary to the President, to FLW, 29 Sept. 1905, all reprinted in *Quarter Century Souvenir*.

A young bookkeeper named Harry C. Stayman claimed he found in the Wesleyan class “all that could be desired in a Bible Class: practical teaching of the Bible, sincere Christianity, faithfulness, sociability and loyalty.”

“The cords of friendship and sympathy are irresistibly strong and very manifest in the Wesleyan Bible Class,” George D. Hutchinson rose and proclaimed. A real estate agent who had since moved on to Los Angeles where he had organized his own Bible class, Hutchison recalled before a gathering of his former peers that “After a few visits I found it impossible to stay away.”³⁵

For more than an hour these Wesleyans shared stories of the ways in which personal relationships, or the desire for personal relationships, had bound the class together over the last twenty-five years. Yet these friendships were more than just a consequence of members becoming acquainted with each other over time. Frank Wood intentionally sought to make such mutual affection the lodestone of the Wesleyan Bible Class. Even as members inevitably moved away, Wood continued to view them as “absent members” of the class through what he called an “unwritten law” that “once a member, always a member.” Before they even left, most departing members received from the class an inscribed copy of Hugh Black’s *Friendship* with its reminder that “If there has come to us the miracle of friendship . . . it is surely worthy while being loyal and true.”³⁶ After their departure, however, these absent members also became a part of Wood’s highly organized system of class correspondence. Every week, Wood met with stenographers from the class he had appointed as “corresponding secretaries” to dictate letters to

³⁵ All quotes from and demographic information from “Our Members” and “Why I Joined the Class,” in *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*.

³⁶ Black, *Friendship*, 54. See *Wesleyan Advocate* (Nov. 1909): 7; “Autumn Letter: From the Teacher of the Wesleyan Bible Class,” dated 1 Dec. 1916, and “Anniversary Letter from the Teacher of the Wesleyan Bible Class,” dated 1 Nov. 1920, WBCR.

absent members. Wood claimed these missives “may be but a word of encouragement, or of sympathy, or congratulation,” but he distinguished Wesleyan correspondence by printing them in green ink to remind absent members “the day upon which they receive the letter is a day that means much to them.”³⁷ Every Sunday Wood read excerpts of letters he received from absent members, and at his next meeting with the corresponding secretaries Wood sent the thoughts, prayers and occasionally aid from the Chicago class back to them. Within a decade of the class’s reorganization this postal system was sending out roughly a thousand letters annually, and Wood bragged that after a decade of teaching he had lost track of only five members.³⁸

In part, this epistolary network evinced the growing popularity of Bible classes throughout the country. In his role as a secretary with the International Sunday School association, for instance, W. C. Pearce found Bible class correspondence to encourage members that moved to join classes elsewhere. For his part, Wood oversaw the formation of four other Wesleyan Bible Classes in Illinois, Michigan and California by introducing absent members to each other.³⁹ Yet these missives also convey the deeper sentiments that lay at the core of the Wesleyan Bible Class’s emerging community, and the kinds of relationships forged in Bible classes across the country. As absent Wesleyan Sophia Kolbe claimed in 1905, “To fully appreciate what it means to be a Wesleyan, one must become an absent member.”

For instance, the Wesleyan class’s local and increasingly national sense of community sustained John P. McCrea for almost the whole of his life. The child of Irish immigrants and a

³⁷ Wood, “How I Keep in Touch with the Members of My Class,” in Cook County Sunday School Association, *Forty-Sixth Annual Convention . . . 1905*, quoted in *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*.

³⁸ *Wesleyan Advocate* (Feb.1908): 8-10; Pearce, *The Adult Bible Class*, 55-56.

³⁹ *Ibid.*; “Other Wesleyan Classes,” in *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*.

boyhood friend of Wood, McCrea joined the class soon after Wood became teacher in the late 1890s. When he tried to make a career as a traveling salesman throughout much of the 1900s, McCrea relied upon the Wesleyan network for room, board and occasionally business. But after McCrea's business transferred him to Pittsburgh, Wesleyan class correspondence increasingly sustained his emotional well-being as well. He inaugurated the practice of devoting the class's 2:30 Sunday meeting hour to drafting letters to Wood or other Wesleyans. Alone in a city where he apparently had few other relations, the letter exchange became a kind of virtual community. "How I have longed for years for just such friendship as is given freely to me by the dear people of the Wesleyan Bible Class," McCrea wrote the class in 1910, "There are none others like them. You can trust them, they do not betray the trust. How I do thank God that He directed my steps to the only place I have seen and longed for years where I find peace and rest and comfort." By 1920 dozens of other absent Wesleyans adopted the practice.⁴⁰

As an expression of the personal and collective relationships that constituted the class, Wood's plan to connect intimately even absent members revealed the source of the class's growth and strength and the turn of the twentieth century. To many Wesleyans—and countless other Bible class students, teachers and advocates—these Bible classes provided an existentially meaningful sense of social and spiritual worth in the modern world. The sense of belonging intrinsic to Bible class life counteracted the dislocation these young, mobile women and men experienced as the entry-level workforce of an urban, industrial economy. In part this sentiment lay at the center of Calla Scott Willard's rationale for organizing the class in 1880.

"Estrangement is one of the saddest experience in life," she wrote to Wood from Bethany, Nebraska, in 1905, "To know some true heart cares for you is one of the strongest incentives to

⁴⁰ *Wesleyan Advocate* (Jun. 1910): 4. On McCrea see "The Round Up," WBC anniversary program dated 24-27 Sept. 1921, and *The Vacationite* I (Oct. 1926): 8, in WBCR.

try to be and do.”⁴¹ But the turn of the century’s evangelical discourse of friendship imbued Bible class social with a sacred presence that further marked Christian fellowship as somehow more special, unique and authentic than other forms of worldly association. Otto C. Paul, an auditing clerk who joined the Wesleyan class in the early 1900s before returning home to Sheboygan, Wisconsin, argued his long-distance Christian friendships in the Wesleyan Bible Class were not only socially enjoyable, but also integral to his relationship with God. As he wrote to Wood in 1905, after having waited some three hours on the Sheboygan docks to spend a brief fifteen minutes with some Wesleyan friends,

I am thinking tonight of the many class friendships of my life, that, through a change of environment, have gradually slipped away from me; a loss that I am only just now beginning to realize, and a feeling of sadness comes over me; but in comes the Wesleyan Class and tells me the friendships of this life need not be temporary, should not be so. Tell the class I am learning a great lesson. That plan of keeping in touch with one another has the Christ spirit in it. Surely, even so we retain the friendship of Christ, keeping in touch with Him.⁴²

As the slippage in his language suggests, Paul found that the sentiments he associated with his Wesleyan friendships not only had their origins in their common Christian bond, but were also a manifestation of Christ himself. By keeping in touch with his Christian friends, Paul surmised he was also keeping in touch with Christ. The notion that Christ became present in Christian friendships pervades not just in the Wesleyan Bible Class, but lay at the center of evangelical culture throughout the turn of the century. It suffused the summer picnics of local congregations, informed the construction of church fellowship halls, and saturated the baseball leagues and letter-writing habits of Bible class members across the country. At its core, however, the sacred presence that inhabited the devotional friendships of Bible class life also set these relationships

⁴¹ “What Our Absent Members Think of It,” in *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*.

⁴² “What Our Absent Members Think of It,” in *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*.

apart from other, broader social relations and as more righteous, pure and supreme. As M. Francis Sutton wrote to the class in 1905, “I doubt if all the joys and blessing that may come to me while I live can come up with the inspiration I received form the wonderful Wesleyan Bible Class.”⁴³

Of course, such spiritual friendships were ultimately as exclusive as they were intimate. Their very importance seemed to demand hard and fast boundaries defined who was and was not a friend. For the Wesleyans, the period in which they made their Bible class the center of their community was also a time when the community around them was rapidly changing. By the first decade of the twentieth century, successive waves of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe that had begun in the 1880s had begun to transform Chicago’s West Side. The wards that crowded the Chicago River had become the sites of some of the poorest, densest immigrant slums in the country. Nearly a hundred individuals lived on every acre of the infamous Nineteenth Ward, many of them recent Italian immigrants who lived with as many as three other families in the decrepit housing near the city’s vice district. By 1900 nearly seventy percent of the more distant Thirteenth Ward, home to both Wood and the Wesleyan class, was either foreign born or the children of immigrants. The Wesleyan class, however, counted only fifteen immigrants on its roster of nearly five hundred.⁴⁴

⁴³ “What Our Absent Members Think of It,” in *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*.

⁴⁴ On the Nineteenth Ward see Sophia Breckenridge and Edith Abbott, “Chicago Housing Conditions IV: The West Side Revisted,” *American Journal of Sociology* 17 (Jul. 1911): 2-4; Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913) II: 513; and for the Thirteenth see Bureau of the Census, *Census Reports for the Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903) I: 651; “Nationalities in the City,” *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, 5 Sept. 1896. On the WBC see “Our Members” and “From the Wide, Wide World,” in *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*.

The class's profile and recruitment methods further convey this sense of friendship within the class was becoming the foundation a nascent subculture rooted in the spiritually unique nature of evangelical association. As Wood's 1905 census of the class revealed, the vast majority of the class's members originated from small towns and rural community from throughout the Midwest and Mid Atlantic. Most were already Christians and church members upon their arrival, and the Wesleyan class simply became the outlet through which they were connected with a religious society in the city.⁴⁵ This, then, was not the evangelization of a new community in the city so much as it was a consolidation of evangelicals who had arrived in the city from afar. Wood understood this occurrence in part, seeing it as part of his mission to save city newcomers from falling into questionable associations in the city. As he related to a gathering of Bible class students in Pittsburgh, "young men and young women who come to the city to work are either doomed or saved within ninety days of their arrival, according to whether they fall in with an interesting Bible class or a drinking, gambling class."⁴⁶ This dual usage of the term "class," to indicate both a Sunday school gathering as well as a type of people suggests the class's targeted audience. In their recruitment of new members, the class did not head into the city's seedier areas, but instead posted their fliers and other advertising material at streetcar stops on the West Side and downtown, hoping to save a young women or man before they joined the wrong class.⁴⁷

The class's exclusive profile, however, did not prevent Wood from bragging that the Wesleyan class, in accordance with prophecies from the Book of Revelations, was drawn from

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ *Record* [Shady Avenue Cumberland Presbyterian Church bulletin] (Feb. 1909), FLWSB, I: 44.

⁴⁷ "Wesleyan Bible Class," flier dated 14 Jan. 1906, folder 27, box 2, WBCR; Christian F. Reizner, *Church Publicity: The Modern Way to Compel Them to Come In* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1913), 327-28.

“every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”⁴⁸ Neither Wood nor the Wesleyan class, however, was as cosmopolitan as they would have liked to believe. Entertainments for class socials or banquets often featured blackface actors or monologues done in a “Negro dialect.” At a special Sunday service in 1911, former Illinois Senator and friend of Frank Wood William E. Mason protested to thunderous applause that there were too many foreign “coppers” patrolling Chicago’s streets. A certain nationalism, moreover, suffused the Wesleyan class’s devotional culture. Class banquets featured as many patriotic songs as gospel hymns, and the “Wesleyan Class Song” was even set to the tune of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” This symbolic, yet pervasive nationalism was a kind of implicit barrage upon immigrant members to assimilate. Wood strongly encouraged foreign members to become naturalized, and when they did he feted every new citizen with an oversized American flag and a patriotic social. In a 1910 speech prominently reprinted in the *Wesleyan Advocate* for its apparent relevance to the class’s concerns, the Reverend Dr. Van Allen of Boston’s Church of the Advent declared “America has been and is a haven for the nations of the world, but it was founded as a Christian and a Protestant nation, and those who come here should be made to understand that they simply must accept the fact.”⁴⁹

Yet the narrow membership of neither the Wesleyan nor other Bible classes ultimately did not fully signal the full emergence of some kind separatist evangelical subculture. Wood still found a general theological and political consensus throughout a diversity of religious traditions and socialized with such prominent liberal Protestant theologians such as Frank W. Gunsaulus,

⁴⁸ Ibid. The scripture reference comes from Revelation 5:9, KJV.

⁴⁹ *Wesleyan Advocate* (Oct. 1910): 6. See also “Our Flag,” and “Wesleyan Class Song,” in *Quarter Century Anniversary; Wesleyan Advocate* (Jan. 1911): 3; “Anniversary Letter from the Teacher of the Wesleyan Bible Class,” 29 Nov. 1924, WBCR.

who addressed the class on one occasion, and George Albert Coe. The class even counted a few Catholics and Christian Scientists as members.⁵⁰ But Frank Wood and the Wesleyan Bible Class's deep interest in friendship did powerfully graft a disparate group of religiously likeminded individuals into a network of relationships they increasingly prized and valued over all others. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Wesleyans increasingly turned to other Wesleyans before the outside world for not only companionship but also for assistance. On 29 March 1903, for instance, Nellie E. Goodrich "graduated" from the Wesleyan class when she died of appendicitis at the age of twenty-three. An orphan who had converted and begun attending the Western Avenue church while serving as a servant in a church member's home, Goodrich joined the Wesleyan class in 1897 and was an active member until her death. With no family to provide a burial, the Wesleyan class purchased a plot at the Forest Home Cemetery and lead their own memorial service. "True friendship is color-blind," Wood observed in his eulogy, "it has no criterion of education or position; it knows no aristocracy of birth—only the aristocracy of worth." The headstone the class erected gave no birthday, for the date was not known, and identified her only relatives as the members of the Wesleyan Bible Class.⁵¹ For many at the turn of the century, Bible classes were indeed becoming a kind of close knit family.



In their efforts to promote more vibrant associations through the efficiency of a structured, organized Bible class, Frank Wood and the Wesleyan Bible Class were by no means alone. To many ministers and laypeople connected with the Sunday school movement, "organization" was

⁵⁰ Frank W. Gunsaulus to FLW 30 Jul. 1919, 21 Oct. 1920 and 22 Jan. 1921, FLWLB; *Wesleyan Advocate* (Oct. 1908): 8-10; "Our Members," *Quarter Anniversary Souvenir*.

⁵¹ *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*, unpaginated; Department of Health, City of Chicago, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Report of Death no. 7751, Nellie B. Goodrich, dated 29 Mar. 1903.

the watchword of the age. Reflecting upon the previous decade, Philip E. Howard, chairman of the Committee on Resolutions at the International Sunday School Convention's June, 1908 meeting, declared that the foregoing "period has been characterized by unprecedented extension of organized Sunday-school work; by growth in departmental efficiency, illustrated by the later movements of the adult class and teacher-training work, as well as in other departments."⁵²

Indeed, Howard's understanding of the preceding decade was not far off the mark. Both the Sunday school movement, as well as the historic Protestant denominations generally, witnessed an outburst in interdenominational, organized activity in the first years of the twentieth century. Between 1890 and 1906, the growth in Protestant church membership far outpaced the growth of the general population as denominations poured an unprecedented amount of resources into new church growth. This groundswell in local membership, in turn, fueled an even greater explosion in the formation of a number of ecclesiastical associations. New holiness denominations, missionary movements and even the Federal Council of Churches in 1908 all defined that era's penchant for order and association.⁵³ Yet Howard's understanding of the impulses that coursed through American Protestantism at the turn of the century ultimately reveals only a portion of the concerns that compelled such organizational innovations.

⁵² *Organized Sunday School Work in America, 1905-1908*, 50-51.

⁵³ The U.S. population grew by nearly 34% between 1890 and 1906 while the membership of Protestant societies denominations grew by 45%. The nation's religious growth rate was nearly 60%. On church growth see Kevin J. Christiano, *Religious Diversity and Social Change: American Cities, 1890-1906* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). On the growth of nondenominational organizations throughout this period see Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) I: 13-15; Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Eric Schmidt, *The Religious History of America* (San Francisco: Harpers, 2002), 277-84; and Michael J. Utziner, *Yet Saints Their Watch are Keeping: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and the Development of Evangelical Ecclesiology, 1887-1937* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006).

As much as they promoted unity and efficiency, these new federations and associations also produced separation and difference. Theological conflicts and doctrinal concerns increasingly shaped the institutional affiliations of many denominational leaders, local ministers and even laywomen and men. In particular, the most conservative members of several Protestant bodies began to dissociate themselves from what they described as the humanistic theology and social gospel that had come to emanate from the governing bodies and divinity schools of most denominations. In Boston, Chicago, Toronto, Minneapolis, Los Angeles and elsewhere, for instance, there emerged at the turn of the century a number of Bible institutes and missionary training schools whose faculty, students and financial backers believed the traditional seminaries had abandoned instructing ministers in evangelistic outreach or spiritual formation to emphasize Biblical archaeology or sociological inquiry. More ardent discord even began to emerge within existing denominations as well. Within a year of the organization of the Northern Baptist Convention in 1907, for instance, a sizeable contingent of Illinois Baptist churches left to join the more orthodox Southern Baptist Convention to protest the liberal leanings of the convention's seminaries.⁵⁴ This was far more a decade of coalitions than organizations.

In February of 1903, for instance, over four hundred college presidents and seminary professors from the nation's elite universities and established divinity schools gathered in Chicago to determine how advances in social scientific thought and evolutionary biology could be used to improve the religious education of local churches. To many who would associate with

⁵⁴ Donald George Tinder, "Fundamentalist Baptists in the Northern and Western United States, 1920-1950," (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University Press, 1969), 364, 405; George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 105-08. On Bible and missionary training institutes see Virginia Lifeson Brerton, *Training God's Army: The American Bible School, 1880-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); William Vance Trollinger, Jr., *God's Empire: William Bell Riley and Midwestern Fundamentalism* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 84, 91-103.

the Religious Education Association that resulted from the convention, the ignorance of the nation's Sunday school teachers and other voluntary religious educators about developments in Biblical scholarship or pedagogical theory threatened to hinder the progress of the Christian church. "Many people seem to think and talk as if the Bible were a sort of domestic receipt-book, something that you can consult and find exactly what do in each concrete instance," W. G. Ballantine, an instructor with the YMCA training school in Springfield, Massachusetts and a Vice-President of the Association, fretted. To Ballantine, such simplistic personal applications prevented a more "scientific study" of scripture that relied on modern psychology, archaeology and historical inquiry to determine the "general principle" of a passage of scripture.⁵⁵ Less than three months later, a number of other scholars, ministers and prominent laymen gathered in New York city to form an American Bible League in order to counter "a rationalistic and destructive criticism" that made the Bible "obsolete as a religious authority and indeed worthless save as a historic relic" they believed had taken over the nation's pulpits and seminaries. Through annual conventions and publications, these "friends of the Bible" sought to convince the world that the Bible was the "God-breathed scriptures—the Word of God by which the sinner may be born again, and the disciple may grow in grace. . . ."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ William G. Ballantine, "Religious and Moral Education Through Christian Associations and Young People's Societies," in *The Religious Education Association: Proceedings of the First Annual Convention, Chicago, February 10-12, 1903* (Chicago: Executive Office of the Association, 1903), 152-53. For other examples see *The Religious Education Association: Organized at Chicago by the Convention for Religious Education, February 12, 1903* (Chicago: Executive Office of the Association, 1903).

⁵⁶ "First Annual Report of the American Bible League," *The Bible Student and Teacher* I no. 1 (1 Jan. 1904): 57, 60. See also "The American Bible League," *Bibliotheca Sacra* LXI no. 243 (Jul. 1904) 567-71; and Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 201-03.

Bible classes were no way immune to this organizational zeal, and in many instances their efforts to structure Bible class life were accompanied by even grander efforts to build broad, Bible class associations. Unlike many of the nondenominational associations of the decade, however, a concern about the exodus of young people from the church refracted and initially muted most theological tensions in the earliest Bible class societies. After his first Baraca Bible Class had gained over a hundred members in the summer of 1890, Marshall A. Hudson began to speak to churches and religious societies of every theological inclination around his Syracuse, New York, home to promote the efficacy of Bible classes in retaining young people in the church. In less than two years Hudson had personally organized nearly a hundred new classes and gathered them into the Baraca Union of America to coordinate their growth. The Union sponsored annual conventions, district meetings, baseball leagues and a weekly paper Hudson mailed to Sunday school associations throughout the northeast to share class strategies and generally promote his view that that “Bible classes are an open door to those now indifferent to the church . . .”⁵⁷ By 1904 the Union had grown so large that Hudson sold all of his business interests to oversee the 60,000 members across eleven states he had organized into not only Baraca classes, but also Philathea classes for women as well.⁵⁸ It was a pattern repeated throughout the country at the start of the twentieth century. David C. Cook, the owner of an evangelical Sunday school publishing enterprise outside of Chicago that bore his name, advocated the organization of Delta Alpha Bible Classes for college-age women through his

⁵⁷ Marshall A. Hudson, *Winning Men* (Syracuse, NY: The Baraca Supply Company, n.d.), 3.

⁵⁸ *The Baracan* IV no. 6 (6 Sep. 1904): 4; Hudson, “Autobiography of the Man Who Got His Million,” 29-52, World Wide Baraca-Philathea Union Archives, Goddard Library, Ockenga Institute, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts [hereafter cited as WWBPUA]; Ann Elizabeth Olson, *A Million for Christ: The Story of Baraca Philathea, the Movement that Won More Than a Million Young Hearts for Christ* (South Hamilton, MA: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2004), 11-18.

publications and early involvement with the Religious Education Association. By 1906 Cook had organized over 40,000 women in churches across the Midwest into 1,400 classes.⁵⁹ By the decade's end other Yokefellows', Agoga and Amoma, Drexel-Biddle, Berean, Fidelis, Euzelian, Loyal Sons' and Friendly Bible Class societies also appeared.⁶⁰

Yet with their rapid development, even these lay-led, largely regional Bible class associations soon became subject to the harbingers of conflict then disuniting Protestant bodies throughout the country. To Irving Wood, a Professor of religion at Smith College and active member of the Religious Education Association (and of no relation to Frank Wood), the position of many lay Bible class teachers on modern scholarship was "a little too much like the ostrich with his head in the sand . . ." Protestant youth must be made to consider what the religious theories of the "best scholars," Irving argued in 1903, if these views were ever to become "the common views of the next generation, held with no thought of harm to faith."⁶¹ To the Reverend Albert Sidney Gregg, however, the flourishing of Bible classes across the country provided an unprecedented opportunity to correct those Christian associations he believed had been led

⁵⁹ Cook, *Successful Adult Bible Classes and What They Are Doing*, 64; idem, *Memoirs: David C. Cook, The Friend of the Sunday School* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Company, 1929), 103-05.

⁶⁰ Cook, *Successful Adult Bible Classes and What They Are Doing*, 64-65; Raymond A. Smith, "The Adult Bible Class Movement," (B.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1922), 5-14; John T. McFarland, et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of Sunday Schools and Religious Education: Giving a World-Wide View of the History and Progress of the Sunday School and the Development of Religious Education Complete in Three Royal Octavo Volumes*, 3 vols. (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1915), I: 21, 81-82, 180-86, 356; *ibid.*, II: 644-45, 747-49; Emanuel Burroughs, *The Present-Day Sunday School: Studies in its Organization and Management* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1917), 176-77.

⁶¹ Irving F. Wood, "What Shall the Adult Bible Class Do With Modern Biblical Scholarship," *The Biblical World*, XXI no. 5 (May, 1903): 375-78. For other examples see Shailer Mathews, "The Conduct of the Adult Bible Class," *The Biblical World*, XIV no. 5 (Nov. 1899): 363-66; George M. Forbes, "How Shall We Teach the Life of Christ to Sunday-School Classes?" *The Biblical World* XVI no. 6 (Dec. 1905): 469-71.

Wesleyan Bible Class, Chicago, Ill.

AND
ITS TEACHER



Our Class.
Founded in May, 1880. An organization of young people, banded together for the study of the Bible.

Our Motto.
"Search the Scriptures."

Our Home.
One of the most beautiful class rooms in Chicago, corner Western Ave. and Monroe St.

Our Meeting Time.
Every Sunday afternoon, 2:30 to 4. Hot or cold; rain or shine.

Our Prayer Meeting.
First Sunday each month, 4 to 4:45. For a purpose; without a plan. Helpful; inspiring.

Our Socials.
Frequent socials are held to enable the members to become better acquainted. Unique; original.

Our Membership.
"Once a member, always a member." Representatives of eleven denominations, and many who do not belong to any church.

Invitation.
All young people not members of other classes in our school are heartily invited to join us, irrespective of creed or religious belief.



Figure 10: The Bible Class Teacher. Chicago Public Library, WBC 1.15

astray. Unlike the YMCA and the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, Gregg, a minister outside of Cleveland, Ohio and a Baraca Bible Class organizer, argued in 1906 that Bible classes had yet to be "side tracked" by "giving their thought and energies to humanitarianism, social and educational activities." Rather, by virtue of being classes committed to studying the Bible, Gregg argued Bible classes provided an outlet to keep "Bible study, prayer and evangelism" at the center of the Christian life. "The young people's societies are suffering from a similar dissipation of energies," Gregg concluded, "Whether they can be resurrected or not is a live question for church leaders to settle."⁶²



⁶² *The World-Wide Baraca* 7 no. 5 (Aug. 1906): 4. Gregg's article is a reprint that originally appeared in an issue of the *Evangelist and Religious Review*.

In addition to taking over the Wesleyan Bible Class in the fall of 1896, Frank Wood also entered his final year at the Kent College of Law. After having taken nearly a decade of night classes at Souder's Business College and Kent while working as a clerk in the probate court, Wood not only graduated in the spring of 1897, but did so as president of the citywide Chicago Law Student's Association. The position was a professionally beneficial one. As president, Wood would have corresponded with prominent local lawyers as he organized the Association's annual public lecture series and state politicians as he spearheaded its attempt to secure a free city law library from the state legislature during his final year of law school. Such connections, along with Wood's continued involvement with the Twelfth Ward Republican Club, were vital for a thirty-three-year old about to embark on a new legal career.⁶³ Wood's increasingly intimate involvement with the Wesleyan class, then, corresponded with his growing public prominence. Yet Wood's political and professional life was never more than a relationship or two away from his religious community. After a short-lived partnership with Oliver C. Bronston ended in 1899, Wood organized a legal firm with fellow Wesleyan W. Sherman Maple.⁶⁴ The cornerstone of Wood's public identity, moreover, remained rooted in his efforts to establish the church not just as the center of a community's social life. For Wood, as for countless other lay Protestants like him, the explosion of nondenominational Bible class organizations across the country charged these concerns with a greater sense of crisis and urgency.

⁶³ *American Lawyer* V, no. 1 (Jan. 1897): 33; *The Book of Chicagoans: 1905*, 636; "Much Hinges on Vote," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 Oct. 1898.

⁶⁴ *American Lawyer*, IX no. 5 (May 1902): 215; *Lakeside Annual Directory of the City of Chicago* (1897): 334, 2231; (1898): 1934; (1899): 1873; (1900): 2043; (1901): 2122; (1902): 1303, 2187. On Maple see "World's Model Husband Lives in Chicago," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 Apr. 1907.

The impetus for this growth was, at first, largely theological. As his reputation as a public speaker grew, for instance, Wood increasingly took a more aggressive tone when addressing the changes churches should and could not make to remain a center of a community's social life. At the Third Annual Convention of the Chicago Western District Epworth League on 4 September 1900, Wood propounded to thunderous applause that "the ministers of Chicago do not preach the gospel." Charged with addressing this gathering of young people's society leaders, students and organizers on how to attract and hold young people in the church, Wood initially conceded "The time has come when people do not attend churches as they formerly did . . ." The growing number of young people that Wood believed attended saloons and theatres instead of churches and Sunday schools was a problem rooted in the diversions of urban life. While he argued "some inducement should be offered the people to come into the church," however, Wood excoriated those ministers who failed "to be the chief influence in holding the strangers into the church." Bible classes or young people's societies could offer social entertainments or athletic events to attract young people to church, but only as additions to the strictly spiritual presentation of the Bible behind the pulpit or in the Sunday school. "If the young man wants to see an animal show he goes to the circuses, and if he wants to hear a lecture he pays for it on a week day night," Wood declared, belittling the efforts of many pastors who sought to attract young people by lecturing on current events. When young people came to the church, Wood argued, "80 percent want comfort from the gospel and you cannot blame them for being discouraged and not coming again when instead they hear 'The Boer War,' 'My Trip to Europe,' and 'What I Saw or the Conditions of Our Streets and Alleys.'" "They claim they are treating the problems of the day

from a religious standpoint,” Wood argued, but by displacing the Bible’s spiritual message with social commentary “they are really adjusting the gospel to these problems.”⁶⁵

Wood’s address made the front page of nearly every Chicago paper and set off a flurry of responses. The *Chicago Daily-Tribune* swiftly interviewed a number of pastors throughout the city to report that while “Numerous prominent preachers told that the treatment of all important moral and political questions is in place in the pulpit,” others largely agreed with Wood’s sentiments. For his part, Wood confessed he did not meant such a “sweeping attack” upon all of the city’s clergy that the papers reported. He had been a staple at Epworth League rallies across Chicago’s west side since the early 1890s and had never articulated sentiments as strong as these. By 1900, however, Wood had determined that the dangers facing the gospel were so great that they demanded he speak in such broad strokes so no pastor could claim “that lets me out.” As a layman engaged in the devotional life of local church members, Wood argued his critique was necessary because “It has seemed to me that the ministers do not all know about this desire for the simple gospel.”⁶⁶ As if to prove his concern, the *Free Thought Magazine*, a national skeptic’s periodical based in Chicago, briefly covered the story in order to proclaim “The pious bigots have not learned that ‘the gospel’ that they want preached is ‘played out,’ and any preacher that should confine himself to it would have to preach to empty seats.”⁶⁷ In his pious declaration, however, Wood also found an even larger audience receptive to his message.

⁶⁵ Quotes from “Rebuke for Local Divines,” *Chicago Chronicle* 4 Sept. 1900, FLWSB, I: 44; and “Criticism of Chicago Preachers Applauded by Epworth Leaguers,” *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 4 Sept. 1900.

⁶⁶ “Live Topic as Text,” *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 5 Sept. 1900. See also FLWSB, I: 1-15.

⁶⁷ *Free Thought Magazine* XVIII no. 10 (Oct. 1905): 608.

In the years after his public critique of the city's ecclesiastical elite, churches, young people's societies and Bible classes throughout the Chicago area clamored to have Wood address their organization. Soon Wood was no longer addressing West Side Epworth rallies, ward meetings, neighborhood gatherings, or holiday services at the Western Avenue church but larger regional and, eventually, national religious gatherings. In many respects, Wood's newfound oratorical prominence was the result of his years of practice in public speaking going back to years in Bureau County's Sunday schools. By the time he became the teacher of the Wesleyan Bible Class, Wood's classmates recalled he had already honed his distinctive speaking style. According to one class member, Wood always had a "naturalness and earnestness on the platform" combined with an uncanny "ability to clothe a common theme with a new beauty of language that would have made him a powerful preacher had he chosen the field."⁶⁸ Wood spoke swiftly and fervently, often without notes, his thin figure striking a number of improvisational, but ultimately well-rehearsed poses. More than anything Wood sought to inspire in his teaching and public speaking and his performances were geared toward stirring his audience to commit to whatever scripture passage, temperance lesson or patriotic theme he spoke on. In teaching, Wood tended to end lessons with poems he composed that put Bible stories to verse. Such a fondness for the lyrical, however, largely shaped the rapid cadence of his spoken world. As his own written address for his lesson on Jesus' first miracle at Cana:

Jesus spoiled funerals and made a wedding feast a success.
If you believe in long-faced Christianity, then read the first miracle in Cana of Galilee and get converted.
There is always someone in the community to whom we instinctively turn in time of trouble.
Man's limitations are the beginnings of God's manifestations.
If you would know the secrets of the Kingdom, obey the King.

⁶⁸ *Wesleyan Advocate* (Jun. 1907): 15-16.

When God wants to work a miracle he does not need much to begin with. Does she desire an oak? An acorn will do. Wine? Water will be sufficient. A Saint? He needs only a sinner.⁶⁹

Yet as Wood became increasingly involved in growing network of Bible classes throughout Chicago, his public speaking also became an effort to build a larger religious alliance. Churches that invited Wood to speak initially requested he give some variant of his dramatic Epworth rally address. As he increasingly spoke in a variety of religious contexts throughout the city, however, Wood developed a handful of stock addresses he delivered that, much like his Epworth lecture, left no doubt as to Wood's theological convictions. And throughout the first years of the twentieth century, no address of Wood's was more popular than "I Know Whom I Have Believed."

"I know whom I have believed," Wood proclaimed at the outset of every address, "because of the authenticity of the Scriptures, because of their credibility, because of the genuineness of the miracles of Christ, because of what he has done for others, because of what he had done for me." Such a belief was the "foundation-stone" of the Christian faith and could easily be proved as "any other historical fact." And proving the Bible to be genuine and reliable had become necessary, Wood continued, for scientists and modern skeptics demand, "we must first prove its authenticity and credibility." Such accusations raised a host of theological and historical concerns, from the authorship of scripture to the veracity of its details to the worldviews of premodern writers. And while evangelical and conservative Biblical scholars across the country sought to prove the Bible was, indeed, accurate, coherent and thereby sacred, Wood took a completely different track in addressing audiences of lay women and men. He

⁶⁹ "The Way the Lessons Are Modernized," in *Quarter Century Anniversary Souvenir*. See also "The Way the Lessons Are Sometimes Summed Up" in *ibid.*; Wood, *A Few Chips from a Block of Wood*, GPCC; *Wesleyan Advocate* (Dec. 1907): 6, (Jun. 1907): 15-16, (Mar. 1908): 7-8.

skirted the issue of modern scholarship altogether. To Wood, the question of whether the Bible was authentic and credible was, in fact, two separate questions. “Authenticity refers to author; credibility to the narrative,” Wood maintained, a truth bound up even in fictional works. The works of Tennyson and Jonathan Swift are authentic for their authorship was universally recognized. The tales they told, however, were in no way credible. The same was true with scripture. Even “literary critics,” Wood noted, concurred that the gospels and the Book of Acts were, indeed, composed by the disciples who claimed to write them. Yet unlike other modern works of fiction, Wood argued the authenticity of the gospels was itself the proof of their credibility. No author of a fictional tale, Wood contended, would commit to a life of persecution, torture and eventually martyrdom as the disciples did. No readers of a fictional tale, Wood continued, would commit themselves to a similar persecution as the early Christian church did unless its authors were authentic and thereby reliable. In order to sustain that the Bible was somehow “a fabrication and their authors imposters,” Wood argued that Christians did not have prove the bible was authentic, but the “infidels of the twentieth century” had to sustain “the absurd supposition that the whole New Testament is a laborious fabrication, sustained for many years, concurred in by thousands, sealed by martyrdom, simply that its writers might enjoy the anticipated blunders of men of future times, and he who believes that believes a miracle more difficult to credit than any recorded in the Bible.”⁷⁰

Of course, such a formulation speciously dealt with issues over the dates of the gospels’ composition and too easily attributed the veracity of a few books of scripture to the entire Bible. But this was the popular hermeneutic of lay, self-trained Bible teacher who had understood the Bible less as a text with propositions to be defined or defended and more as a spiritual force that

⁷⁰ *Record* [of Shady Avenue Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, PA] (May 1904): 4-12 in FLWSB, I: 25-26.

animated the history and the miracles of those who structured their lives around it. In concluding his address, Wood claimed the greatest proof of the Bible's authenticity and credibility lay not in the academic disputes over past miracles, but the miracles the Bible continues to produce today. The Bible's truth was found in the friendships of the Wesleyan Bible Class, Wood concluded, and the life of John Gough that inspired Wood to commit to the class, and the miraculous conversion of Jerry McAuley's Water Street Mission, and on back through history to the Great Awakenings that inspired him, and on back to the miracles throughout history. The Bible's greatest truth, in short, was the purported miracle of the West's triumphant history. "With the old book in our hands," Wood ended, "we may journey back upon the stepping stones of the centuries by way of Plymouth Rock, along the line of the English witnesses, past the ancient landmarks of Italy, and the crackling faggots of the martyr's stake, into the presence of the companions of the Lord. And we may hear all along the way the concurrent and convincing testimony of the book and the miracles therein."⁷¹

This desire to promote a sacred, timeless understanding of scripture not only motivated Wood in his public religious engagements but also compelled a growing effort on his part to organize a large coalition Bible class teachers, organizers and advocates who shared this view to build an even broader community for his own personal professional and religious ambitions. Wood's growing lecture circuit throughout the city, for instance, increasingly brought in the Cook County Sunday School Association. Formed in 1861 by Dwight L. Moody and a number of Chicago ministers, the CCSSA had become by the start of the twentieth century the province of some of the city's most prominent, successful laymen. Its membership and executive leadership included alderman, city judges, business owners and a number of aspiring

⁷¹ Ibid., 11.

professionals like Frank Wood active in Sunday schools throughout the county.⁷² At its 1902 annual convention the Association devoted for the first time a session on Bible class work that gathered nearly two hundred representatives from forty adult Bible classes throughout the county. Following the convention a number of Bible class teachers—in all likelihood including Frank Wood—continued to gather to throughout the year to discuss and plan the formation of some kind of permanent Bible class organization. At its 1903 annual convention in March, the CCSSA officially chartered an Adult Bible Class Department with funds for a Bible class superintendent to coordinate the activities and growth of the county’s nearly one thousand Bible classes.⁷³ The following May, fifty delegates from the CCSSA’s Bible class committee, including Wood, attended the annual convention of the Illinois Sunday School Association and created a similar Bible class department for the state association.⁷⁴ Both departments were the first of their kind in the country.

But for Wood, his efforts in helping to organize this rapidly expanding “Adult Bible Class Movement” was also never solely concerned with doctrine. They also connected with his own political and professional ambitions. In addition to counting as members the majority of the city’s evangelical elite, he had also become acquainted with some of the most influential laymen in the city’s political and economic life. Aldermen, judges, capitalists, and railroad executives all took active parts in the Association’s activities and took note of this rising Bible class teacher in the city. Soon after the CCSSA’s organization of the Adult Bible Class Committee in 1903, a

⁷² On the CCSSA’s membership see Andrew H. Mills, *1818-1919: A Hundred Years of Sunday School History in Illinois* (Decatur, IL: The Author, 1918); “To Map Bible Study,” *Chicago Daily-Tribune* 28 Mar. 1898; “Turn Church to Politics,” *Chicago Daily-Tribune* 28 Oct. 1901; “Sermon By Alderman,” *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 2 Dec. 1901.

⁷³ Pearce, *Adult Bible Class*, 10; Pearce, “The Adult Bible Class Movement,” 643.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Twelfth Ward Republican ally nominated Wood to serve as Clerk of Cook County's Probate Court, which Municipal Court Judge and CCSSA member Orrin Carter fully endorsed.⁷⁵ From here, Wood became fully involved in a growing coalition of reform-minded Republicans who sought to mount a unified effort to break William Lorimer's political machine.

Not long after Wood's appoint as Clerk of the Probate Court, he sought to undermine the Blonde Boss' two main strengths, control of the party's mayoral nomination and the distribution of streetcar franchises. Within the span of a few months in early 1903, members of the Municipal Voters' League and the Civic Federation pushed through the Illinois house what was called the "Mueller Law," which would by pass the city's thirty-year old charter and grant the city of Chicago the authority to purchase its streetcar lines.⁷⁶ At the same time, this Republican coalition of reformed-minded politicians like Carter and evangelical activists like Wood looked to nominate Wood's friend and consummate reformer John Maynard Harlan. While the coalition managed to get the Mueller Law on the city ballot in a 1904, they were far less successful with Harlan. With full control of the city's ward clubs, Lorimer was able to engineer the nomination of traction supporter Graeme Stewart.⁷⁷ If the effort to unseat Lorimer was to have any real effect, it would have to take place in the wards, where Wood was growing increasingly active.



⁷⁵ *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, 18 Feb 1903; "Made Assistant in Probate Court," *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 18 Feb. 1903.

⁷⁶ Hugo S. Grosser, "The Movement for Municipal Ownership in Chicago," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* XXVII (Jan. 1906): 72-90; Georg Leidenberger, *Chicago's Progressive Alliance: Labor and the Bid for Public Streetcars* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 80-81, 84.

⁷⁷ Joel Arthur Tarr, *A Study in Boss Politics: William Lorimer of Chicago* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 118-19.

Not long after the Illinois Sunday School Association organized adult Bible class work other states began adopting similar departments or associations. After the New York State Sunday School Association organized its own Adult Bible Class Federation in 1904, the Executive Committee of the International Sunday School Association agreed to devote a session to this explosion in Bible class work at its triennial convention in Toronto the following year. On Tuesday, 27 June 1905, Bible class teachers from throughout North America gathered to promote the formation of an Adult Bible Class Committee in the International Convention. The ISSC's Executive Committee concurred and, that evening, appointed an Adult Bible Class Committee that included Marshall A. Hudson, and a number of Wood's brethren from the Cook County committee, including a Chicago lawyer McKenize Cleland who was equally as active in the city's efforts to unseat Lorimer, and H. A. Hills, a Cook County native who drove much of the CCSSA's Bible class organization. At its first meeting at Winona Lake, Indiana, in January of 1907, the International Bible class committee appointed CCSSA field worker W. C. Pearce, as the committee's superintendent with his own budget and authority to promote the organization of Bible classes across the country.⁷⁸

To many, it appeared as if there was a growing religious movement was just rising to the surface. "For a great many years the adult Bible class has been a part of most Sunday schools in America," Pearce wrote in his first report as superintendent, "but it has been in recent years only that a more general interest has been awakened."⁷⁹ From only a smattering of classes in the

⁷⁸ *Organized Sunday School Work in America, 1905-1908*, quote on p. 287, but see 285-288; and International Sunday School Convention. *The Development of the Sunday School, 1780-1905: The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention, Toronto, Canada, June 23-27, 1905* (Boston: The Executive Committee of the International Sunday School Association, 1905), 405, 632-636.

⁷⁹ Pearce, *Adult Bible Class*, 9.

1890s tens of thousands of classes with hundreds of thousands of members had emerged within the span of a decade. To many local Bible class teachers and advocates, the growing unity of Bible classes in state and national federations represented a constituency that could be tapped for some great work. Beginning with the Cook County Sunday School Association, Bible class members were increasingly encouraged to wear an identifying badge in public so other members could quickly identify a friend or an ally in any setting. H. A. Mills, the teacher of a Bible class in Decatur, Illinois, designed the CCSSA's emblem, which was a white button with red edging, which signified that "There is no purity of life without sacrifice, and no cleansing from sin without the shedding of blood."⁸⁰ When Mills was appointed chairman of the International Adult Bible Class committee, the emblem became the International Bible class symbol as well.

As he continued to speak to congregations across the Chicago area, and increasingly became involved in Chicago's political life, Wood too recognized a movement afoot. As he began his new post as Clerk of the Probate Court, he began to look for new avenues with which harness this new Adult Bible Class Movement for the multiple causes he was a part of. Over the next decade, however, Wood, like so many other Bible class teachers, organizers and advocates, would discover that the many Bible class friendships and associations they made were ultimately as narrow as they were deep.

⁸⁰ *Organized Sunday School Work in America, 1905-1908*, 288.

CHAPTER FOUR: DOERS OF THE WORD

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, . . .

- The Book of James, 1:22

Without action, there can be no real religion.

- Frank L. Wood (1936)¹



Sometime in 1904, Frank, Isabella and Elmer Wood packed their belongings and moved into a new home. The family moved but a hundred feet, from Stanley Terrace to Campbell Avenue the next street over, but traveled a far greater social distance. For the first time, the family could afford to rent their own two-story brick home, which directly reflected Frank's rising prosperity in Chicago's political and religious circles. Forty years old, entering his second year as an assistant in the county probate court, and teacher of what he claimed was the city's largest Bible class, Frank had indeed become something of a local notable. His involvement in various nondenominational Sunday school organizations had made him a sought after speaker at religious meetings throughout the Chicago area, while his longstanding participation in the Thirteenth Ward Republican Club had begun to yield more lucrative opportunities like his current appointment to the county court.²

¹ FLW, "Religion in Action," *The Layman's Galilean* (Chicago: Grant's Printery, 1938), 139.

² John W. Leonard, ed. *Book of Chicagoans: A Biographical Dictionary of Leading Living Men of the City of Chicago* (Chicago: A. N. Marquis & Co., 1905), 626; University of Chicago, *Annual Register: Covering the Academic Year Ending June 30, 1912, with Announcements for the Year 1912-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1912), 562. For a description of the

Of course, Wood's involvement in both the Cook County Sunday School Association and Chicago's Republican Party were never separate, disconnected spheres of his personal and professional life. He shared the bonds of Christian fellowship with many of his fellow Republicans, and worked alongside other Bible class teachers and students in numerous political campaigns. In fact, by the start of the twentieth century Wood increasingly looked upon this coalition of white, native-born professionally successful men as the sole source of his community. In contrast to earlier, more universal visions of social life he had forged in rural Illinois, where it seemed that everyone was both a neighbor and a friend, Wood had come to look upon the city less as an organic, singular community and more as a place where a number of atomistic and conflicting groups vied for social, cultural, and political control. The growing influence of Catholic immigrants in the city's governance, the prominence of questionable commercial entertainments in its recreational life, and the stranglehold utility franchises held over nearly every aspect of daily life, he believed, all directly challenged cherished Protestant principles like propriety and mutuality that had once ordered the world. Beginning with his involvement in the anti-Lorimer faction of the Republican Party and continuing with his efforts to coordinate the efforts of Bible classes throughout the city, Wood conveyed a sense that his political and religious networks were no longer the proprietors of a shared social vision, but an embattled coalition struggling to claim ownership of the community's progress.³

areas surrounding the Wood's two homes see Sanborn Map Company, *Chicago* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1922), VII: 93, 120, 133-34.

³ My thinking on evolving conceptions of community has been shaped by Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1978); Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). In contrast to Ryan, however, who argues that by the twentieth century the cacophonous heterogeneity of America's cities had been silenced by the imposition of a public sphere that divided the elite from the masses, I see the trajectory to be exactly the opposite. In newer, Midwestern cities like Chicago

In many respects, Wood's short residential move reflected this narrowed conception of community. In moving only a block from his former abode, Wood remained, as he had since he first moved to the city, within the confines of the respectable residential district that clung to the east of Garfield Park. The area had long been a neighborhood of churches, small shops, and middle class residences, but by the first decade of the twentieth century the area had also become a kind of enclave of native-born inhabitants in a part of the city that was rapidly becoming known as one of the nation's densest immigrant districts. For instance, by 1910 over half of Chicago's West Side were recently arrived Southern and Eastern European immigrants, whose vibrant, but crowded neighborhoods now stretched west of Ashland Avenue. Nearly a hundred people per acre crowded the wards along the Chicago River, families living two to three, or even four, to a dwelling. The Thirteenth Ward, meanwhile, remained nearly three-fourths native born and had some of the highest home ownership rates in the city. Home to some of the city's most prominent Republican luminaries such as Senator William E. Mason and Orrin Carter, the ward, as well as much of East Garfield Park, remained a bastion of native born professionals who were Republican in politics and Protestant in character.⁴ It was a pattern that was repeated throughout the city, as naturalized old-stock immigrants and moderately successful native-born residents

or St. Paul, elite, old-stock residents who had established these towns in the nineteenth century saw their ability to control the public sphere diminish as more and more cultural voices inhabited the city. See, for example, Mary Lethert Wingerd, *Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

⁴ Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913) II: 512-14; idem, *Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902) II: 614; Sophonsiba P. Breckenridge and Edith Abbot, "Chicago Housing Conditions IV: The West Side Revisited," *American Journal of Sociology* XVII (Jul. 1911): 2; "Thirteenth Ward," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 Jun. 1900; D. Scott Cormode, "Faith and Affiliation: An Urban Religious History of Churches and Secular Voluntarism in Chicago's West Town, 1871-1914," (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1996), 39-54.

clustered in, and vigorously defended, neighborhoods throughout the city's periphery like Ravenswood, Hyde Park, and Edgewater.⁵

For Wood, who had yet to move more than ten blocks from the Western Avenue church, this demographic and residential overlap between his political and religious associations continued to affix a sense of place with his sense of community. He still spoke of himself as a West Side resident, but by 1900 it was clear that term had a much narrower meaning than it had just ten years earlier. More importantly, however, these intersections also continued to suggest that a more profound ideological consensus on the relationship between manhood, Christianity, and citizenship girded this social unity. For Wood, as for so many ordinary Protestants at the turn of the century, religious devotion and civic participation were the symbiotic core of every dutiful citizen. Faith commitments shaped, informed, and animated one's civic engagement in the same way political activity was a vital, but by no means only, outlet to advance religious principles. For example, in addition to his responsibilities as a Sunday school worker, ward club member, and, by 1905, a trustee of the Western Avenue church, Wood also participated in the Methodist Laymen's Association of the Rock River Conference. Composed almost entirely of prosperous businessmen and other professionals, the Association espoused familiar moral dictums that exhorted its members to edify society, care for its less fortunate, and privilege their Christian identity in all matters of public policy. At its gathering in 1903, where some members unsuccessfully nominated Wood to serve as a General Assembly delegate, the Association

⁵ On nativity and the development of Chicago's neighborhoods, particularly on the West Side, see Amanda I. Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 22-25; Homer Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago: The Relationship of the Growth of Chicago to the Rise of its Land Values, 1830-1933* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 202-03, 210, 214-17; Breckenridge and Abbot, "Chicago Housing Conditions IV: The West Side Revisited"; Elizabeth Hoffman Ransford, "Sacred Spaces, Public Places: The Intersection of Religion and Space in Three Chicago Communities, 1869-1932," (Ph.D. diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2010).

directly appealed to “all Christian men to vote only for candidates” who would support prohibition. The Association concluded, as if to head off any backsliders who thought voting was enough, “This, however, we consider only a step in the direction, and shall pray, work and vote for the final overthrow of the license laws in state and nation.”⁶

Given his rising prominence and longstanding participation in city politics, it is no surprise that Wood took a more active political role at the start of the twentieth century. In the same year that he moved into his new home, the city was charged with debates about its future he had long taken interest in. In April Chicago’s voters overwhelmingly approved the Mueller Law by a margin of over one hundred thousand votes, signaling the overwhelming support for the city to acquire and operate all of its traction lines. The city council, however, responded by continuing to negotiate with the railways companies and submitting to voter approval what they called the “Tentative Ordinance” that reduced the ninety-nine year franchise the companies’ claimed to just twenty years, but tabled any discussion of municipal ownership until at least 1920. That summer the Illinois Legislature, at the behest of the Chicago New Charter Convention, amended the state’s constitution to permit the city to craft a new charter that, in addition to restructuring the city’s ability to take on bonded debt, could also allow the city to control its own liquor license fees, Sunday closings, and the municipal ownership of public utilities. By fall, with party primaries in full swing in anticipation the city’s spring elections, it seemed as if the fate of the city’s governance for decades to come would be decided by the next

⁶ *Minutes of the Sixty-Fourth Session of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church Held at the First Church Aurora Illinois October 7, through October 13, 1903* (Dixon: De Witt C. Owen, 1903), 98-103, quotes on 100.

municipal election.⁷ Accordingly, in November of 1904, Wood ran for Secretary of the Thirteenth Ward Republican Club.

As they had since he had first entered the city's public sphere, Wood's personal faith, religious networks, and sense of community were central to his increased political involvement. Though he now understood himself and his peers as occupying an embattled position, Wood's vision of a peaceful, virtuous, and prosperous community framed by high moral standards and a deep camaraderie remained vital to him. But as Wood became more involved in the city's bewildering and contentious political world, he would discover, as would many evangelical Protestants throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, that even amongst his political colleagues and religious brethren there was far less consensus on issues of manhood, morality, and social life than he had previously assumed. There were limits to which many reformers were willing to privilege religious values over civil rights in Chicago's governance. Conversely, it seemed to many lay evangelicals that their ecclesiastical leaders were willing to forgo certain seemingly central theological expectations like conversion in order to bring about civil reform. This realization would drive many lay evangelical Protestants, including Frank Wood, deeper into their religious networks and devotional associations. But it also, for a fleeting moment throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, greatly expanded the opportunities and possibilities of evangelical political action.



⁷ "Ward Contests Left Undecided," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 Nov. 1904, 2; Hugo S. Grosser, "The Movement for Municipal Ownership in Chicago," *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science* XXVII (Jan. 1906): 79. On the state of Chicago in 1904, see Kenneth Feingold, *Experts and Politicians: Reform Challenges to Machine Politics in New York, Cleveland, and Chicago* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 138-41; Maureen A. Flanagan, *Charter Reform in Chicago* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 49-54.

The position as Secretary Wood sought in the Ward Club's fall election was, by most standards, a minor one. Though the post could certainly lead to more prominent opportunities in the future, its duties largely consisted of keeping the Club's minutes and corresponding with party offices throughout the city. But Wood's presence on the ballot was about more than just these routine duties. Ward clubs were central to the party's nomination process for nearly every municipal office. Not only was each responsible for their aldermanic primaries, but they also influenced the selection of mayoral candidates through resolutions of support, and sent delegates to the party's state and county conventions. Much of William Lorimer's authority throughout the West Side had been exercised through such clubs. As recently as the previous year, when Lorimer prevented John Maynard Harlan's nomination for mayor, they had helped the Blonde Boss install politicians who kept saloon licenses low and did not interfere in the outright selling of utility franchises.

It was in this broader context of shaping the city's future that Wood's ward race took place. In the months leading up to the contest, a rift within the party had suddenly appeared in the statewide party after newly-elected Governor Charles S. Deneen openly broke with Lorimer during the gubernatorial race, signaling to the city's reform elements the Blonde Boss no longer had the support of the state party apparatus. In wards throughout the city, and especially on the West Side, opposition tickets emerged to challenge Lorimer's supporters in order to again forward Harlan's nomination for the spring's mayoral election. In a sign of the growing political ferment among the city's white, native-born Protestants, most of these ward races were successful.⁸ But in a sign of the changing demographic on Chicago's West Side, Wood's race

⁸ "Ward Contests Left Undecided," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 Nov. 1904, 2; "More Ward Clubs Indorse Harlan," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 Jan. 1905; "Two More Favor Harlan," *Chicago Daily*

proved far more contentious. The Club's incumbent board, led by longtime Lorimer lieutenant Frank L. Shepard and John V. Kopf, resorted to a number of parliamentary tricks and outright fraudulence in an attempt to keep the opposition ticket from power. Kopf, the son of German immigrants who espoused a familiar ideology of "personal liberty" and had risen to become a Cook County Commissioner within Lorimer's machine, opened the Club's polling place in a hall too small to accommodate the entire club, and then only accepted ballots between four and seven in the evening.⁹ Wood and his partners on the opposition ticket, who were all native-born, educated professionals seeking to bring some sort of civic and moral order to the city, cried foul play. With the aid of Illinois State Senator Frank Farnum, Wood and his supporters rallied more than five hundred supporters to the hall on Van Buren Street to protest the measure. The challenging presidential candidate William J. Jackman, a respected editor with the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, opened his own polling place in the hall's stables. As the evening progressed, skirmishes broke out in the street as the two factions shouted and shunted the Club's members to the opposing polling places. "Never has such a turnout of the republicans has the ward known," the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported.¹⁰ By the evening's end, Jackman, Wood, and their supporters emerged from the stables and claimed to have been elected by a vote of 551 to 38.

Tribune, 11 Jan. 1905, 5. On Lorimer's plight in the early 1900s see Joel Arthur Tarr, *A Study in Boss Politics: William Lorimer of Chicago* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 115-35.

⁹ Year: 1900; Census Place: *Chicago Ward 12, Cook, Illinois*; Roll: T623_260; Page: 15A; Enumeration District: 377; David Ward Wood, *History of the Republican Party and Biographies of Its Supporters: Illinois Volume* (Chicago: Lincoln Engraving and Publishing Company, 1895), 144-45.

¹⁰ "Ward Contests Left Undecided," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 Nov. 1904, 2; entries in 1900 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago for Eugne Mapledoram, Ward 12, enumeration district 348, roll T623_259, p. 3B; C. C. H. Zillman, Ward 24, Enumeration District 715, roll T623_273, p. 15A; William J. Jackman, Ward 12, enumeration district 347, roll T623_259, p. 4A.

Shortly thereafter, Kopf and Shepard declared from the hall they had been reelected by a vote of 872 to 26—a total that Wood’s supporters quickly pointed out exceeded the hall’s occupancy.¹¹

With neither side willing to concede, the party’s county organization committee seized control of the club. In a victory for Wood’s opposition ticket, the committee ordered the election redone in late January. The result, however, prevented the Club from formally announcing their support for municipal candidates in February’s primaries. Wood and his allies attempted to remedy the situation by holding rogue Harlan rallies throughout the ward, but, without formal control of the Club, their meetings remained unofficial and sparsely attended.¹² However, when it became clear that Harlan would receive the Republican nomination even without the Thirteenth Ward club, the county organization committee awarded the race to Wood and his allies, installing him as Secretary of the most powerful ward in the city. The following month, the party nominated Harlan with overwhelming support in what the Municipal Voters’ League’s William Kent called the emergence of “a different sort of political force” in the city’s political structure.¹³ In place of the traction lackeys, career politicians, and immigrant ward bosses that he believed currently ran the city, Kent claimed men of professional competence and high moral character would soon take charge. For evangelical supporters of Harlan like Wood, such sentiments spoke directly to their conviction that the principles of upright, Christian character were a prerequisite to hold any kind of political office. Even John Alexander Dowie, the

¹¹ “Lively Fights in Precinct Clubs,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 16 Nov. 1904, 5. “Contest in Thirteenth Ward,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 Nov. 1904, 4; “Ward Contests Left Undecided,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 Nov. 1904, 2.

¹² “Ward Contests Left Undecided,” 2; “New Elections in Four Wards,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 Dec. 1904, 7

¹³ “Two More Favor Harlan,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 11 Jan. 1905, 5.

Pentecostal faith healer who left the city to build his own utopia, confessed even he would consent to vote for such an upstanding citizen as Harlan.¹⁴

The high expectations reformers held for the 1905 mayoral race, however, were ultimately met with disappointment. Despite the successful efforts of this anti-Lorimer coalition of reform-minded Republicans like Farnum and evangelical reformers like Wood, Harlan handily lost out in April's election to Circuit Court Judge Edward F. Dunne by twenty-five thousand votes of the over two hundred thousand cast. It was one of the most lopsided victories in the city's history. In an important sense, Dunne's election signaled the beginning of the end of Chicago's old-stock, Protestant reign over the city's governance. To date, every Chicago mayor had been third or fourth generation Americans who had attracted immigrant votes only through forced references to their ethnic heritage or opposition to various temperance issues. But Dunne—raised in the city by Irish immigrants and active in nearly every ethnic benevolent society—was the first mayor to be truly “of” Chicago's immigrant community.¹⁵ The results largely confirmed this municipal change. Dunne's plurality among the city's Irish, Italian, Russian and German immigrants was so large that it made the native vote he and Harlan split largely irrelevant. And in a sign of the changing demographics then underway in the city, even the solidly Republican wards on the city's periphery like Wood's Thirteenth suddenly became competitive by this growing ethnic vote.¹⁶

¹⁴ “Harland Issues Final Plea,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 Apr. 1905, 1.

¹⁵ Buenker, “Edward F. Dunne,” 34.

¹⁶ Ibid, 37-39; Finegold, *Experts and Politicians*, 138-41; Hoyt King, “Judge Dunne and the Under World,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 2 Apr. 1905, 2; “Dunne is Mayor,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 Apr. 1905, 1.

For Wood, however, the results were more mixed. Despite his disappointment as a Harlan supporter, Wood could look upon the tumultuous 1905 municipal elections with a measure of satisfaction. His success in taking the Thirteenth Ward Republican Club had ensured the election of anti-Lorimer Alderman John E. Scully, which, in turn, had contributed to a Republican majority on the City Council. Soon after, the council pushed through a plan to organize the new charter convention that, in addition to appointing Orrin Carter chair, also granted evangelical laymen Alexander H. Revell and James M. Kittleman seats. It appeared that the city would retain its adherence to the state's Sunday closing laws.¹⁷ Referenda on the spring ballot also largely aligned with the goals of the old-stock, Protestant coalition of which Wood was a part. The city overwhelmingly voted against ratifying the so-called "Tentative Ordinance," and approved by an equally large margin a measure that allowed the city to take on bonded debt to purchase the railways, providing the legislative and financial tools for the city to acquire its railways.¹⁸ Perhaps most importantly, however, Wood retained his post in the Probate court.

Nevertheless, the spring election did signal to Wood the shift in the city's political structure. With an increasing number of immigrant voters occupying both party structures, it appeared as if in the near future the only option for electoral success would be to look outside traditional party practices in mounting campaigns. Though he at this point by no means considered third parties to be viable options, heading into the summer of 1905 Wood's religious and political life did receive a new emphasis.



¹⁷ *Chicago Charter Convention: Convened December 12, 1905* (Chicago: n.p., 1905); Flanagan, *Charter Reform in Chicago*, 141-44.

¹⁸ Georg Leidenberger, *Chicago's Progressive Alliance: Labor and the Bid for Public Streetcars* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 134-39.

Though his entrance into Chicago politics was contentious, Wood's religious activities remained much the same. Every Sunday he continued to return, as he had for twenty-five years now, to the Western Avenue Church where he taught the Wesleyan Bible Class. And as the clamor of the election subsided Wood even returned to his active speaking schedule, addressing churches and Sunday schools across the city on successful Bible class methods he had devised. In May he spoke to a variety of St. Luke's Methodist Episcopal Church on the importance of mottos, and later addressed Epworth Leagues around Humboldt Park on holding anniversary services. But in addition to expounding upon Sunday school tactics, Wood increasingly discussed with his audiences the importance of crafting close-knit, sustaining relationships both in and between Bible classes. In late April he addressed the Cook County Sunday School Association's annual meeting on his unique correspondence method where he suggested that a Christian's spiritual relationships were everlasting and therefore superior to every other form of social relation. "One of the most inspiring thoughts to me," he told the audience of Sunday school workers from across the county, "is that if we are faithful to the members of this dear class will come up from the east, the west, the north and the south to meet in the place where there shall be no absent members . . ." ¹⁹ Throughout the rest of the summer, he lectured a number of Bible classes and Men's Clubs on "friendship" as an evangelistic instrument, a method of moral accountability, and the cornerstone of Christian community. ²⁰

Such themes had long been important to Wood, dating back to his reorganization of the Wesleyan Bible Class almost ten years earlier. But in the wake of the Protestant, evangelical

¹⁹ Frank L. Wood, "How I Keep in Touch with the Members of My Class," *Quarter Century Anniversary, Souvenir and Program of the Wesleyan Bible Class*, WAMECR.

²⁰ "Forty-Sixth Annual Convention of the Cook County Sunday School Convention," program dated 27-29 Apr. 1905 and Wicker Park Methodist Episcopal Church bulletin dated 14 May 1905, FLWSB, I: 34.

political activism that had accompanied Harlan's failed mayoral bid, they took on functionalist overtones with directly political applications. For example, with the exception of two jaunts to Bible classes in suburban Aurora and Normal Park, Wood centered the whole of his summer speaking not only on Chicago's West Side, but also almost exclusively in the Thirteenth Ward. Here he argued not only that friendship and community were central in spiritual life, but central to the church's civic mission as the community's moral standard-bearer and guardian. In May he spoke to the Men's Bible Class at the Pilgrim Temple Baptist Church titled "Court and Church" on the Christian's role in voting for judges and bringing cases to trial.²¹ And at a number of Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church open-air, patriotic services around the Fourth of July at the, Wood directly appealed to his peers to become politically engaged.

In an address entitled the "Voice of the Flag," Wood connected for his audience the relationships among their civic identity, political responsibility, and Christian faith. From mankind's origins, Wood began, symbols had been important to "the education of the race." Symbols, after all, filled the Bible, pregnant with meaning beyond their explicit definition. The cross was not just the executioner's tool, but through Jesus' death it had become a symbol of redemption. In the same way, Wood argued, the flag was "to the American people . . . a symbol which advanced over all." More than a banner that declared national ownership or affiliation, the flag was a symbol that spoke to basic truths of citizenship. "It is a living flag," Wood proclaimed. "Touch it and you touch the most sensitive chord in our national life." Its stripes were metaphors for the "growth and perpetuation of the republic"; its stars a reminder of "the shackles of the black man" and the war that had set them free; its hues a declaration that the "the American soldier will rally round his colors, even though death rides between." "It is the flag of

²¹ James P Thomas to Frank L. Wood, n.d.; "Rally Day" flier for Grace Congregational Church, dated 11 Jun. 1905, FLWSB, I: 34.

the past with its strife and struggle,” Wood declared. But more than anything, he averred, it was a flag for the present. “Born in revolution, baptized through in blood, nurtured in strife, consecrated by sacrifice,” the flag, Wood continued, called out to all who live underneath it to address the nation’s “great problems pressing for solution.”²²

What those problems were, however, Wood refused to say. To discuss them explicitly would be to introduce politics directly into what was ostensibly a religious service, something Wood found inappropriate. For years he had criticized ministers who gave from their pulpits what he called sociological lectures instead of gospel sermons, and in this address he assiduously avoided offering specific social or political proscriptions as he had done in all of his other addresses. But Wood was unequivocal in demanding his audience allow their religious values to inform and direct that civic participation to which the flag called them. Christians should closely follow current events and be knowledgeable of those issues facing the community in order to vote; and, as Wood explicitly named, to vote “in the primaries of whatever party [they] support to raise the standards of both.” The flag may call them to an engaged citizenship, Wood but their faith demanded they be Christian citizens in waving the flag of the future, with its “stars yet to blaze in thy firmament of blue . . .”²³

It was Wood’s most explicitly political religious address to date. Though it remained grounded in a framework that construed Christianity and citizenship as hierarchically related, but ultimately distinct forms of identity, Wood’s remarks were the closest he had come to collapsing them. In contrast to the standards to which he held ministers, Wood may have felt his status as a

²² “Old Glory Theme in Sunday Sermon,” *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, 3 Jul. 1905; bulletins from the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church dated 25 Jun. 1905 and 2 Jul. 1905, FLWSB, I: 38-39.

²³ Jud B. Lit to Frank L. Wood, 2 Jul. 1905, and A. C. Martin to Frank L. Wood, 3 Jul. 1905, FLWSB, I: 40-41.

layman allowed him to give such explicitly political instructions to a religious gathering. The call to adhere to the gospel when behind the pulpit may not have applied to the unordained. That he gave the address at an open-air meeting in the evening, and not in a sanctuary on a Sunday morning, may have also made such remarks permissible.²⁴ But they also may have been compelled by a pragmatic need. By late summer Wood was gearing up for another Ward Club election and, indeed, looking toward next year's primaries.

Heading into his re-election as Secretary of the Thirteenth Ward Republican Club, two issues had come to dominate Chicago's political scene. First, a certain number of West Side Republicans, including Wood, had begun to organize an assault that sought to cut off Lorimer's power at its source by blocking his re-nomination for the Sixth Congressional District. Though the primaries were fully a year away, the results of the fall's Ward club elections, particularly the Thirteenth, would largely determine who would control the nominating convention.²⁵ Such intensity led to another highly contested November election, but this time farce became tragedy. In the midst of voting, with Kopf running to reclaim his seat as president, one eager club member was caught attempting to stuff a stack of voting tickets so thick it would not fit into the ballot box. By the end of the day, Kopf had been stabbed, multiple polling places had opened, and the election was again thrown to the party's county organization committee.²⁶ Kopf died of his

²⁴ Bulletins from the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church dated 25 Jun. 1905 and 2 Jul. 1905, FLWSB, I: 38-39.

²⁵ "Seek to Retire Lorimer," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 Aug. 1905, 13; Tarr, *A Study in Boss Politics*.

²⁶ "Precincts Vote: 'Ins' Victorious," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 22 Nov. 1905, 5; "George Gill Roberts v. The People of the State of Illinois," *Reports of Cases at Law and in Chancery, Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Illinois* vol. 226 (Bloomington, IL: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary Company, 1907), 299-300; "Political Feud Brings Stabbing," and "Ward Elections Held in Chicago," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 Nov. 1905, 1 and 5.

wounds, resulting in a sensational murder trial that saw a number of ward club members detained by the police. In its wake, the county organization rewarded the contest to the fallen candidate in early February, sounding Wood's defeat.²⁷ But by this time, Wood had already been swept up in an even larger political movement he in part helped foster through his Bible class efforts.

Even as the city's reform-minded Republicans were attempting oust Lorimer from his seat in Congress, evangelical Protestants across the Illinois embarked upon a statewide campaign that began with the the Anti-Saloon League's introduction of a "Local Option Bill" before the Illinois legislature in the fall of 1905. The measure allowed wards, townships, and other municipalities to vote themselves dry through a referendum, and immediately received substantial evangelical support throughout the state. In Chicago, dozens of city churches, including the Western Avenue church, had participated in what was called a "Local Option Sunday" that saw sermons and prayer vigils in support of the bill, while branches of the Women's Christian Temperance Union throughout the state began directly lobbying their state legislatures.²⁸

For Wood, this surge in evangelical political action cast his defeat in the Thirteenth Ward Club in a far greater relief. His defeat in February 1906 not only hampered the movement to challenge Lorimer in the primary, but also now threatened to derail the statewide push for Local Option as well. In an act of revenge in the aftermath of Kopf's posthumous victory, Lorimer's supporters announced that they too would be mounting a summer primary challenge against the

²⁷ "Kopf Wins Fight in Which He Dies," 28 Feb. 1906, 3; "Candidates Fear to Enter Race," 11 Mar. 1906, 5.

²⁸ "Pastors in Hot Debate," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 Sep. 1905, 7; "Is 'Local Option' Day," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 30 Jan. 1905; "Women Fight for 'Right' Aldermen," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 Mar. 1906, 2.; Thomas R. Pegram, "The Dry Machine,: The Formation of the Anti-Saloon League of Illinois," *Journal of the Illinois Historical Society* 83 (1990): 173-86.

incumbent state senator of the Nineteenth Senatorial District, Frank Farnum. Implicated in Kopf's earlier stabbing, Farnum quickly recognized the shifting political landscape and declined to run for reelection.²⁹ Farnum was one of the few Local Option supporters who was not from downstate, and his defeat would deal an especially significant blow to the city's dry crusade. It was in this climate of a collapsing coalition that Frank Wood even more formally stepped into the municipal, state, and federal elections of 1906.

On 3 March, less than a week after central committee decided the Thirteenth Ward Republican Club's election for Kopf, Wood accepted the invitation from just over a dozen citizens of the ward to attend a meeting to discuss the situation in the Nineteenth Senatorial District. Several members had approached Wood in the aftermath of Kopf's stabbing to assess his interest in running, but he had declined to challenge an incumbent unless the ward showed significant support. In the months after Farnum's arrest, however, when it became clear his reputation was too tarnished to run for reelection, Wood consented to consider a run. By the end of the 3 March meeting, the small assembly had unanimously endorsed Wood as a candidate for the state's Nineteenth Senatorial District.³⁰

From its very outset, Wood crafted his campaign around the need for a community of upstanding citizens to elevate the city's moral atmosphere through the election of Christian men who exemplified the character necessary to hold public office. In the acceptance speech he made on the night of his nomination, Wood situated his candidacy squarely in the West Side residential community that he had been committed to for so long. "I see men here who have known me from boyhood, and others who have been associated with me in various ways. Their support, and that

²⁹ "Kopf Wins in Fight in Which He Died," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 Feb. 1906, 5; "Decline to Run Again," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 Mar. 1906, 3.

³⁰ *Frank L. Wood: Candidate*, folder 14, box 3, WBCR.

of all of you, is more deeply appreciated than I can at this time fitly express,” he declared. “To any man with the quality of appreciation at all developed, it means much to know that he has the confidence, the esteem and the friendship of those among whom he lives.” As his campaign materials proclaimed, few in the city “probably has a larger personal acquaintance than any man of his age” on the West Side. From this base of political, social, and even spiritual fellowship, Wood claimed he would “combine high ideals and practical politics,” working for specific programs rather than against advancing some—a coded message of support for the reform measures then before the state senate. Yet above all, Wood claimed that as State Senator he would model and advance those qualities that had initially won him the community’s esteem, and that the community needed to return to celebrating. The only credentials he brandished in campaign literature were his pristine record as a probate court clerk and success as a Bible class teacher. Together, these items conveyed the competency and piety that he believed were the necessary qualities of any public servant. And as he concluded in a rhetorical flourish, he would adhere to these principles no matter what the electoral cost. “I can afford to lose,” he began, but

I cannot afford to be untrue to principle.
I can afford to be defeated.
I cannot afford to compromise my convictions.
I want to represent you in the State Senate.
I do not want it badly enough to get it by questionable methods.
I would rather be decent than be a State Senator.³¹

Wood’s defense of his Christian manhood was not the only hyperbole of his acceptance speech. His claim to be a cog in no one’s political machine obscured his longstanding involvement in various anti-Lorimer factions and was belied by his participation in the ongoing campaign to challenge Lorimer in the August primaries. In June, former aldermen Luther P.

³¹ Ibid.

Friedstedt agreed to run for the party's nomination for the Sixth Congressional District, and Deneen's supporters assembled an anti-Lorimer ticket for all available posts in the district that included Wood and his partner from the Thirteenth Ward Republican Club, C. C. H. Zillman for state assembly. Throughout July, Wood participated in a number of raucous rallies attended by thousands of West Side residents, and frequently interrupted by Lorimer strongmen who hurled rotten food at the speakers and in one instance lit the tent on fire. Amidst the chaos, Wood excoriated Lorimer for his longstanding protection of the city's traction franchises and other business interests in backroom dealings that put his own personal profit before the people's common good. At issue in particular was Lorimer's recent sponsorship of the Federal Meat Inspection Act. Drafted in response to Upton Sinclair's expose of Chicago's meatpacking industry in *The Jungle*, the initial version of the bill forced the packers to fund the stringent oversight of their production process. Before the bill's passage in June, however, Lorimer had intervened on the meatpackers behalf, shifting the financial burden for inspection onto the federal government but allowed the companies to influence the selection of inspectors. To Friedstedt, Wood, and their allies, it was evidence that the Republican Party under Lorimer's control was increasingly protecting industry from the people, as opposed to protecting people from capital. As T. Fred Laramie bluntly declared, Lorimer "never did a thing in congress in which there was not profit for himself . . ."³²

Wood aligned himself with this populist vision that put the people's interest before that of business. Again highlighting his manly independence, Wood declared he would never go "into a back room somewhere with one or two 'bosses' and mortgage my conduct for four years, for

³² "Fight on Lorimer Has Hot Opening," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 10 Jul. 1906, 4; Tarr, *A Study in Boss Politics*, 154-61. See also "Friedstedt Speaks in Tent," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 Jul. 1906, 5; and Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 3 and 98.

their benefit, to obtain their support.” Rather, he was a candidate of “the Sixth Primary District, and that’s good enough for me.”³³ But in addition to his involvement in the city’s Republican machinery, Wood also looked to tap into the grassroots evangelical surge behind the \$1,000 saloon license, which had easily passed the City Council in early March, and turn his religious networks into political capital. He based his personal campaign almost entirely on the local option issue. A week after he officially entered the race, Wood then helped organize the West Side Civic League. A voluntary organization of lay people and local ministers committed to “the betterment of Chicago” organized at the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, the League sought to enact measures that would protect the city’s increasingly isolated enclaves of white, evangelical residence such as granting the mayor discretionary powers to deny saloon licenses based on their proximity to churches or residential districts, and, most importantly for Wood, supporting state legislatures who supported local option.³⁴ In the first leg of his primary campaign, Wood also drew upon the Cook County Sunday School Association’s membership lists to identify support, and spent much of the summer primary focused almost exclusively upon the district’s churches. In late March he shared the stage with Orrin Carter at Ravenswood Congregational Church on the city’s northwest side where he spoke on “Temperance” as part of a lecture series on “Applied Christianity.” Throughout April he addressed several Men’s Leagues and Bible Classes on Abraham Lincoln as an exemplar of Christian manhood, and followed these up with lectures before West Side posts of the Grand Army of the Republic in May and June.³⁵

³³ *Frank L. Wood: Candidate*, folder 14, box 3, WBCR.

³⁴ “Keep up Fight on Crime,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 Mar. 1906, 2.

³⁵ Cook County Sunday School Association, *Forty-Ninth Annual Convention Report and Statistical Director 1908* (Chicago: Executive Committee Cook County Sunday School Association, 1908); *West Side Vindicator*, 13 Apr. and 20 Apr. 1906; Newton Wyeth to FLW, 10 Jan. 1906, Program for Ravenswood Congregational Church 1906 lecture series dated 7 Jan.

The emphasis that lay behind Wood's political engagement, like the reform campaigns of many evangelical Protestants who partook in the saloon license campaign or supported the new charter movement, was an attempt to recreate peaceful, virtuous, and prosperous communities of places like Malden. Through measures like local option, control over the community's social life would again return to those community pillars that had organized the campaign, churches. As one city minister claimed in the throes of the high license campaign, the measure had emerged from a conviction that "Politics today needs to change its headquarters from the saloon to the church, so far as the church represents righteousness, as the saloon represent dissipation and debauchery."³⁶

Unfortunately for Wood, however, the zeal of the evangelical Protestant voters he courted was not enough to secure delegates for the party's August convention. Friedstedt and the other candidates on the anti-Lorimer ticket also lost out, and by large margins. Lorimer successfully defended his manipulation of the Meat Inspection Law, saturating his campaign literature with quotes from President Theodore Roosevelt praising the bill. Chicago's business interests, including meatpackers who were not even in the district, helped Lorimer raise over \$100,000 for the primary, overwhelming the \$7,000 Friedstedt and his allies raised. Lorimer also handily won in the fall elections, carrying almost sixty percent of the Sixth District's precincts.³⁷ But in a sign of both his growing reputation, as well as the influence of local-option evangelical

through 1 Apr. 1906, First Congregational Church of Park Ridge bulletin dated 28 Feb. 1906, Jackson Boulevard Church of Christ bulletin dated 13 Apr. 1906, W. W. Fletcher to FLW 10 May 1906, undated program for GAR Julius White Post No. 740, FLWSB, I: 44-50.

³⁶ "Pastors Appeal for Purer City," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 Feb. 1906, 2.

³⁷ "Friedstedt Still in Race?" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 Aug. 1906, 3; *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, 21 Jul. and 5 Aug. 1906; Tarr, *A Study in Boss Politics*, 162-63.

Frank L. Wood

Candidate

Before
the
Republican
Primaries



For
State
Senator

19th Senatorial District

To the Voters of the 19th Senatorial District:

¶ On March 1st, 1906, seventeen citizens of the 6th Primary District, 13th Ward, issued a call for a meeting to be held March 3, to discuss the Senatorial situation, and to consider the advisability of inviting Frank L. Wood to become a candidate for the office of State Senator. The meeting was largely attended by representative men. The vote was unanimous in favor of Mr. Wood. A committee was sent to his home. He was enthusiastically received, was made acquainted with the result of the meeting and was asked to address it.

¶ This speech appears on the following pages. It has the right ring. It stands for clean politics. We commend it to your careful consideration. We also commend Mr. Wood's candidacy to every voter in the 19th Senatorial District who is for a square deal and against bossism. He is the kind of a candidate hundreds of people have said they would support. Will the people make good?

J. M. BLAZER
A. T. HARDICK
FRANK W. HOYT
THOMAS HURM
D. EDWARD JONES
W. CLAUDE DOYLE

ARTHUR BROOKSBANK
FRANK H. HILLOCK
FRANK SCHREINER
JAS. H. FERGUSON
GEORGE JACKSON
JAMES C. FOUTE

O. BRIGHAM
EMIL MYERSON
U. G. GRIM
HENRY T. ROOP
GEORGE LAING



Figure 11: "Frank L. Wood: Candidate," 1908. Chicago Public Library, WGPC box 3, folder 14.

voters in the election, Wood had lost his primary race by only a mere one hundred and six votes out of over seven thousand cast.³⁸ It was a condition repeated in the Illinois legislature's fall elections as the outpouring of church-led support for the measure reconfigured the Illinois house in its favor and placed increasing pressure to pass the measure upon the senate. As Speaker of the House Republican Edward Shurtleff observed after reviewing the fall 1906 elections, local option had become the party's "bugaboo." The measure was increasingly forcing candidates to choose between catering to the state's conservative Protestants on the smattering of issues they campaigned for, or other less pious constituencies against whom many of those initiatives were directed. As the *Chicago Daily Tribune* observed, the state's Republicans had for long been afraid to pass the measure. Now, however, they "are beginning to be afraid not to."³⁹

Yet despite the victory the statewide results seemed to suggest for Illinois's native-born, evangelical Protestants, the 1906 election cycle proved to be a costly one for Wood. Few of the party's Cook County leaders were receptive to the local option measure, and while Deneen remained in control of the party throughout the state, Lorimer had made significant gains in the county. As the county party handed out patronage positions in early 1907, Wood, who but a year before was implicated in the murder of a party official, lost his post in the Probate court.

Exiled from the party's machinery, Wood was forced to rely on those religious networks that had propelled his political activity in the first place. Soon after leaving the probate court, Wood received an offer to become the Secretary and Treasurer of the Commercial Life Insurance Company. Incorporated only in the last year, the firm had commenced business just after the first

³⁸ "Biography—Wood, Frank L.," 3, folder 15, box 1, EGPCC.

³⁹ "Local Option is Party 'Bugaboo,'" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 11 Nov. 1906, 8; Norman H. Clark, *Deliver Us From Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), 97-103; John D. Buenker, "The Illinois Legislature and Prohibition, 1907-1919," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 62 (1969): 363-384.

of the year. More importantly, however, two out of the three founders of the firm were members of the Wesleyan Bible Class who undoubtedly employed Wood, who had no previous experience in insurance, as a courtesy to their longtime friend.⁴⁰ Over the next years, he would come to rely on these connections more and more.



Frank Wood was not the only Bible class teacher whose attempt to enact evangelical principles through city politics would ultimately force him to rely upon his religious networks to get by in 1907. McKenzie Cleland, Wood's colleague in the Cook County Sunday School Association's Adult Bible Class Committee who also served as judge of the Municipal Court's Maxwell Street Criminal Branch, met a similar fate for his religiously inspired social activities. Located in the middle of the city's poorest immigrant district, the Maxwell Street bench was surrounded by the tenements, saloons, and gambling halls evangelicals like Cleland found so unsettling, and Cleland approached his job very much like a missionary. In the year spent overseeing the district, Cleland attempted to implement what he appropriately called a "New Gospel in Criminology" that elevated the moral redemption of individual lawbreakers above the literal execution of secular law. Through liberal—in fact, illegal—usages of the state's probationary laws, Cleland would vacate the sentences of nonviolent offenders typically convicted of public drunkenness and place their names on what he called his "parole docket." While on parole, convicts could be summoned by the judge at any time or be visited by a number of parole officers Cleland recruited from the community to check on their reformation. Grounded in his belief that "a lack of thrift and economy was responsible for much of the dissipation and

⁴⁰ *Wesleyan Advocate* (Jun. 1908): 15-16; State of Illinois Insurance Superintendent, *Fortieth Annual Insurance Report* (Springfield, IL: Phillips Bros., 1908) Part II, 8-9.

disorder among the foreigners,”⁴¹ Cleland’s experiment was nothing short of an attempt to instill religious principles into the city through extra-legal, community oversight. When Cleland’s judicial adventure began to raise the ire of the district’s ward bosses and was denounced by the immigrant press, however, Illinois Supreme Court Justice Orrin Carter publicly questioned its legality. The Republican-dominated Municipal Court promptly launched an investigation into Cleland’s parole system that found him guilty of breaching multiple statutes and effectively ended his judicial career. Unable to find work upon the expiration of his term, Cleland became director of the Moody Bible Institute.⁴²

However, both Cleland and Wood’s withdraw into their religious networks in the wake of their political demise did not signal a retreat from their efforts to shape the world in which they lived. Far from it. Rather, as Wood and many other lay evangelicals increasingly found traditional electoral work and established political alliances frustrating avenues through which to enact specific moral reforms, they creatively turned to their spiritual networks to fashion alternative organizational venues to advance their many causes. In January, for example, Wood, as a member of the Laymen’s Association of the Rock River Conference, helped coordinate a massive pulpit campaign to publicize the ongoing debate in the state legislature over the local option law. On the Sunday before the house would successfully pass the measure, the Association, in conjunction with the Anti-Saloon League, helped fill over 2,500 pulpits with

⁴¹ Chief Justice Harry Olson to Cleland, 29 Oct. 1907, box 1, folder 6, MCC; Michael Willrich, *City of Courts: Socializing Justice in Progressive Era Chicago* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 67.

⁴² William E. Barton, “Judge Cleland and Chicago’s Four Hundred,” *Independent* LXIV (2 Jan. 1908): 141-47; McKenzie Cleland, “The New Gospel in Criminology,” *McClure’s* XXXI (Jul. 1908): 358-62; Willrich, *City of Courts*, 62-68, 87, 90-91.

laymen who spoke in favor of the measure and instructed congregations on how to lobby their state representatives.⁴³

The city of Chicago would face votes over similarly important measures in the coming year. In March, the Charter Convention sent its draft of the city's new governing document to the state legislature. In a surprise move that angered many of the city's Protestants, the Convention avoided deciding on the city's relation to the state's Sunday closing law by drafting a separate measure that dealt with the issue. The city's new charter would, with the legislature's consent, streamline its governing structures, but the people of Chicago would vote on the liquor question in the fall. Upon reception of the draft, however, the legislature promptly reworked the charter to make the city subject to all state liquor laws, and then placed the charter on the November ballot for public approval. Immediately, the city's ethnic organizations, which had consolidated over the last year in a United Society for Local Self-Government, protested the measure and launched a coordinated campaign to vote against the charter in the fall.⁴⁴

To Wood, such issues were vital. As a longtime supporter of nearly every temperance measure and municipal reform, he, like many of the city's Protestant businessmen, would have undoubtedly supported the new charter. But in the years after his exile from the Republican Party, Wood embarked upon an even more profound agenda to attempt to awaken the social, spiritual, and political consciousness of the city's men to help transform the city into that peaceful, virtuous, and prosperous community he longed for it to become. In June, as the first

⁴³ *Minutes of the Sixty-Eighth Session of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held at the St James Church, Chicago, Illinois, October 2-9, 1907* (Mount Morris IL Kable Brothers Company, 1907) 145-46; "2,500 Pulpits in Anti-Liquor Cry," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 Jan. 1907, 1.

⁴⁴ Flanagan, *Charter Reform in Chicago*, 33-34, 87-88; idem., "The Ethnic Entry into Chicago Politics: the United Societies for Local Self-Government and the Chicago Reform Charter of 1907," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 75 (1982): 2-14.

several United Society anti-charter protests were underway, Wood helped found the Young Men's Methodist Union of Chicago with a number of laymen and ministers from the city. Open to any Methodist Bible class, brotherhood, or social and athletic club, the Union's aims were nothing short of mobilizing the city's Methodist men.

In its recruitment materials, the Union, which elected Wood President after its first meeting, appealed directly to the notion of Christian manhood as the organizational imperative for its existence. "In these days of complex society," the Union proclaimed, "man is learning that he does not stand alone, but that he is a part of the home, the church and the state; that his life touches these, and that he is responsible for their welfare to the extent of his own influence." In the intersection of these spheres of existence, the ability of Christian men to allow their religious values to influence and shape these other spheres constituted a "latent power of unused manhood" that the Union hoped to tap. Men's clubs and Bible classes had been in existence for decades, but they had yet to become a "mighty force for righteousness," and the Union's founders hope the organization would "facilitate concerted action in the great general enterprises of Christian men" throughout the city. Its Department of Organization sought to coordinate the activities of the city's many Methodist clubs; its Department of Bible Study endeavored to promote a more "systematic" study of the book; and its Department of Citizenship sought to "disseminate information as to needed civic reforms and hopes to secure the hearty co-operation of Methodist men in the interest of civic righteousness."⁴⁵

Wood was not alone in his efforts to coordinate the spiritual and civic interests of the city's Protestant men. Lloyd E. Harter, president of the Young Men's Congregational Union, gave the keynote address at an organizational meeting for the Union held at the Western Avenue

⁴⁵ *The Young Men's Methodist Union of Chicago* (Chicago: n.p., 1907).

Church. Harter had also recently organized the Congregational Union, and with Wood of the Methodist Union was part of surge of denominational men's organization that sought to consolidate, coordinate, and advance the evangelistic and civic activities of the local associations across the city. Bible study remained the core of these Unions' work, as they particularly targeted them in their efforts. As one observer remarked, these organizations were principally concerned with establishing "at least one well-conducted adult men's Bible class in every church."⁴⁶ But in the same way Wood had come to realize there was a political utility to Christian community, the leaders of Chicago's denominational unions also increasingly conceived of Bible study as the devotional justification for social action. In a pamphlet tellingly titled *Bible Study: The Means of the Highest Culture*, president of the Young Men's Presbyterian Union and an executive with the Iowa Railroad Louis A. Bowman emphatically claimed through the liberal use of capitals "THE BIBLE IS THE MOST POTENT FORCE THERE IS FOR THE CULTURE OF HUMAN LIFE." Revered in literature, and an exhaustible source of guidance on every ethical issue, the Bible was, to Bowman, that place where "we come into an acquaintance with God and to complete manhood in Christ." Such spiritual help and Biblical guidance, however, was but encouragement for the calling the Bible imparted to all Christian men. "It is given to man through the Bible to overcome evil, to conquer it, and beat it out of life; to resist steadfastly the sorest temptations from within and without; to stand amid the hottest flames of temptation, clad in the steel armor of a pure life. This is the very summit of self-culture," Bowman proclaimed, "it is bringing human life up to its very highest level."⁴⁷ In July, Wood, along with the leaders of several of these denominational Unions and representatives of the

⁴⁶ R. E. Porter, "A Chicago Letter," *Zion's Herald* 13 Nov. 1907, 1453.

⁴⁷ L. A. Bowman, *Bible Study: The Means of Highest Culture* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), 6, found in LABP.

Moody Bible Institute, gathered to bring an even greater efficiency to their evangelistic and reform efforts by organizing the Laymen's Evangelistic Council of Chicago.

Elected as the Council's Recording secretary, the move reflected Wood's full immersion in the city's professional and evangelical elite. Headed by Quaker Oats founder and chair of the Moody Bible Institute's Board of Trustees Henry P. Crowell, the Council was supported and filled by some of Chicago's wealthiest residents and most prominent church members. In addition to a number of ministers, railroad executives, corporate councils, and successful businessmen who all had longstanding ties to the city's economic and municipal structures staffed the Council. With its motto to "Win Men to Christ," the Council was, at its core, an interdenominational fellowship for the purpose of pooling the city's evangelical resources to host as many evangelistic services as possible. With the generous funding of its members at their disposal, the Council coordinate revival services in neighborhoods throughout the city, hiring ministers and erecting tents or other temporary structures for their use.⁴⁸ But in its emphasis on reaching Chicago's men, and in particular its educated, middle class residents, the Council also betrayed its interest in the city's ongoing municipal debates.

Styling itself as a "Business Men's Movement," the Council sought to extend the church's influence throughout Chicago through the sheer, business-like efficiency of its methods. As the fall referendum on the new city charter approached, the Council coordinated the members, resources, and efforts of hundreds of Chicago's churches in a revival campaign that culminated in a number of mass meetings held in a tent in the center of the city's loop by Superintendent of the Moody Bible Institute, Reuben Archer Torrey. Since coming to Moody, Torrey had built a reputation as an avid defender of what he called the "fundamentals" of the

⁴⁸ Porter, "A Chicago Letter"; *The Summer Work of the Laymen's Evangelistic Council of Chicago* (n.p., n.d.).

Christian faith, arguing the theological courses of modern American seminaries came perilously close to heresy. In the last years as well, Torrey had also built an international reputation as an evangelist, having held revivals in every English-speaking part of the globe. As the LECC's general secretary, railroad executive Andrew Stevenson, advertised in the press after having convinced Torrey to lead the meetings, "This promises to be the most stupendous movement along evangelist lines ever launched in this or any other city of the world. It has been organized by a number of Chicago's foremost Christian business men. If present expectations are fully met, this city will be literally 'shaken' by the forces of Christianity from one end to the other . . ." ⁴⁹

But the LECC's grand, widely-advertised tent services were but public spectacles to what was an even more impressive campaign to identify, account for, and coordinate the city's evangelical base in the months leading up to the city-wide referendum upon the new charter and its adherence to the state's Sunday closing laws. As Recording Secretary, Wood was essential to the LECC's efforts to contact and enlist every lay evangelical society in the city. The young men's unions that had folded into the organization provided all of their rosters to the Council, who then supplemented these rosters with lists of every congregation, Sunday school, Bible class, brotherhood, and Protestant club in the city. The council then organized this information to provide easily accessible directories of the Protestant, evangelical presence in many of the city's spheres of influence. Andrew Stevenson, who in addition to heading up the LECC was also the president of the Young Men's Presbyterian Union, culled this data into a special Presbyterian directory, with chapters that listed prominent Presbyterians involved in Chicago law, finance,

⁴⁹ "Tent, Steam Heat, Revival," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14 Sep. 1907, 1.

politics, journalism, and industry. By Stevenson's estimation, Chicago was a "preeminently a Presbyterian history."⁵⁰

Beginning its campaign exactly a month before the city would vote on the charter, the LECC minced no words in making clear its concern was as much for the city's governance as for its soul. In publicizing its events, which the Council strategically placed throughout the city's businesses pages, the LECC declared:

Believing that the solution to the problem of good government and the other great problems vitally the city of Chicago is largely involved in the problem of Evangelizing and Christianizing Chicago, a number of Christian businessmen of our city have inaugurated the above organization which bids fair to be one of the most potent forces for righteousness Chicago has ever had. It is a business men's movement for Christianity in daily life. It has behind it the energy, generosity and financial backing of some of Chicago's most successful and energetic business men who are contributing liberally of their time, money and thought to this cause. . . . As a result, tens of thousands are hearing the gospel preached in love but in uncompromising tones.⁵¹

Over the next month, Torrey held several meetings a day in a tent constructed in the city's loop specifically for this purpose. At the same time, Wood drew upon the Council's thorough directors to coordinate prayer vigils and devotional meetings in neighborhoods and churches throughout the city. The daily messages at these meetings were largely standard evangelical fare. At his daily meetings, Torrey called upon the city to repent, to save itself from the hellfire and brimstone that would follow this life if they did not confess Jesus was savior. But in organizing the campaign's nightly themes, Wood and the other members of the LECC exhibited their concern to save the city government. At the end of the month-long revival campaign—the final week before the city would vote to accept or reject the new charter—the Council held a number

⁵⁰ A. P. Fitt to R. A. Torrey, 31 Aug. 1907 and 5 Sep. 1907, A. P. Fitt 1907 Tent Campaign Collection, MBI.

⁵¹ "All Chicago Interested," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 25 Oct. 1906.

of special night meetings devoted to the city's government. There was alderman's night, municipal night, lawyer's night, judge's night, banker's night, and business men's night where the city's most prominent evangelicals were invited to speak alongside Torrey on whatever subject they chose. "The primary object," Wood told the city's press, "is to show that the leading men in all lines are Christians." But as Stevenson made even clearer on "Municipal Night," held the night before the city would vote on the new charter, "We want the Christians in these callings to assert themselves more vigorously" in the city's affairs.⁵²

Despite the LECC's efforts, however, the city ultimately rejected the new city charter by a two-to-one margin on 4 November 1907. The charter was in many ways doomed from the start. The adjustments the state legislature had made to the charter immediately turned most of the city against it, and in the weeks leading up to the city's vote a number of anti-charter groups like the United Societies for Local Self-Government had held equally as focused, and far larger, meetings that protested the charter's Protestant moralizing, regressive taxation, and exclusion of women's municipal suffrage. By the time the vote came, only the city's evangelicals and business leaders—who stood to benefit from the city's streamlined zoning and taxation procedures—supported the measure. And the vote's total betrayed their increasingly minor position in the city, no matter how many Protestant judges filled the LECC's circus tent for "Bench Night."⁵³

For Wood and the other members of the Council, their mission to "Christianize" Chicago was never solely tied to the passage of the city charter. Immediately after Torrey's campaign, Wood coordinated a full week of noonday meetings in the city's loop, to continue to bring the

⁵² "Torrey to Take Aldermen in Town," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 Oct. 1907, 7.

⁵³ Flanagan, *Charter Reform in Chicago*.

city's Protestant professionals over lunch to discuss the Bible and various civic reform.⁵⁴ But for Wood, the year he had spent as President of the Young Men's Methodist Union and Recording Secretary of the LECC had steadily convinced him these religious networks and associations had an even more profound potential to help re-create the fraternal and harmonious community he believed had once existed in Malden. Bible classes and other congregational religious societies, Wood told the Epworth Class of the Western Avenue church in September, were proving grounds and microcosms of the world Christians should help create. "The Sunday school is always democratic," Wood proclaimed, "Everybody has a chance to ask questions, ask why his teacher takes this or that view of a subject. There is always a chance for free speech." But more importantly, the Sunday school as a "feeder of the church," had an even more profound impact in its ability to shape the world around it. He related the story of a logging town in northern Wisconsin whose only public structure was a saloon. When a minister approached the saloon about closing on Sunday and allowing the church to use its building to instruct the village's youth, the saloon's proprietor broke down in tears remembering his own Sunday school days, and promptly closed the saloon to become the class's teacher full time. Though the instance may be minor and personal, Wood argued these moments would build. "You teachers in the Sunday school do not realize how much good you are doing nor how much you are influencing your scholars. Let us 'Rally Round the Flag' like the Union soldiers did, and march on to a glorious victory."⁵⁵

More importantly, as much as his involvement with the LECC convinced Wood of the power of Bible classes to transform their world, his duties as Recording Secretary conveyed to

⁵⁴ *Wesleyan Advocate* (Nov. 1909): 6; "Great Revival For Chicago," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 Dec. 1907.

⁵⁵ Epworth Bible Class Anniversary banquet program dates 22-24 Sep. 1907, FLWSB, I: 66.

him many churches were similarly interested in such measures but generally ununiformed. In the year following the LECC's first revival campaign, ministers, Sunday school superintendents, Bible class teachers, and anonymous laymen all wrote to Wood, requesting his aid in organizing similar efforts in their congregations. "We are to have at our church on Tuesday evening . . . a Business Men's Banquet," the pastor of Chicago's Waveland Avenue Congregational Church in December, "We want to make this the greatest occasion in the history of our church. We have almost completed the rebuilding of our edifice and the outlook for our work is exceedingly promising." "We need vision, enthusiasm and help in many ways," a layman from the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Morris, Illinois, wrote to Wood requesting he come help organize their work, "Got a fair class, but the great mass of men and women don't know of the real meaning and worth of this movement. Can you give us an evening?"⁵⁶

Accordingly, in the summer of 1908, after the two Wesleyan Bible Class members of the Commercial Life Insurance Company resigned their posts forcing him to do the same, Wood left the business as well. Wood claimed he had other offers after leaving Commercial Life, but he ultimately chose a different path. Having spent the last year finding what was to him far more successful and meaningful work in attempting to bring about the same reforms he had failed to achieve in working through the traditional party structure, Wood opted to give himself full time to the Adult Bible Class Movement. As a member of the Wesleyan class put it, Wood had come to have a "feeling that he ought to give his life to Christian work took possession of him."⁵⁷ Soon after, the CCSSA appointed Wood an official "field worker" for its Adult Bible Class Committee.

⁵⁶ Frank Dyer to FLW, 4 Dec. 1907, John M. Schneider to FLW, n.d., 4 and 24 Mar. 1908, FLWSB, I: 73, 86, 87, and 96.

⁵⁷ *Wesleyan Advocate* (Jun. 1908): 15.



Long active in his personal time in the efforts of Bible classes throughout Chicago, Wood's position with the CCSSA simply expanded and intensified his already impressive labors. He continued to speak to local churches and Sunday schools on the most successful methods in Bible class work, but at an exponentially increasing rate. Over the next year alone, he would travel just under a thousand miles addressing 4,500 Bible class teachers and students. But his work with the Adult Bible Class Committee also increasingly expanded Wood's range and profile in this self-identified Adult Bible Class Movement. Stops in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Indiana were now not uncommon as well.⁵⁸ In June, Secretary of the International Sunday School Association W. C. Pearce, who had preceded Wood as a field worker with the CCSSA, appointed him a delegate to the Adult Department of the ISSA's triennial convention in Louisville.⁵⁹

In existence since 1872, the convention was the twelfth gathering of the International Sunday School Association, and by most accounts the gathering was routine. The weeklong event featured all of the standard keynotes and addresses, with allotted time devoted to the various aspects of Sunday school work including temperance, grading, lessons, and infants. But in the Adult Department's gathering there was a palpable sense of high expectations in the air. As the first triennial gathering since the Adult Department's organization, the gathering was the first thorough survey of Adult Bible Class work to date. And the participants were not disappointed. In less than three years, nearly fifty regional Bible class associations had organized in every state of the union, over 200,000 pieces of literature had been distributed, and over

⁵⁸ Ibid., (Nov. 1909): 6; see also FLWSB, I: 103-112 and II: 1-10.

⁵⁹ W.C. Pearce to FLW, 10 Jun. 1908, FLWSB, I: 103.

sixteen hundred classes had requested certificates from the ISSA—a number that thrilled the Adult Department only inasmuch as it represented but a fraction of the total number of Bible classes nationwide.⁶⁰

Over the course of an afternoon, the Adult Department devoted itself to discussing the nuances of Bible class work. There was talk of teaching methods, social gatherings, fund raising, evangelism, how to counter the higher criticism in classes, and even a live demonstration on conducting a Bible class by a local Louisville gathering. Wood's primary role in the day was an open forum on Bible class methods, where teachers from across the country submitted questions to him, McKenzie Cleland, Charles Hauck and other members of the CCSSA on Bible class practices.⁶¹ But as the reports of the Department's various committees convey, these practical discussions took decidedly second place to the uninhibited excitement the Department's delegates shared over this newfound movement. In addition to providing for the spiritual and devotional needs of the local church, these Bible class advocates from across the country saw in this new gathering an almost revolutionary potential of these organized masses of evangelical women and men. As W. C. Pearce claimed in the Department's report to the ISSA, "A new day has dawned." Through Bible classes the church was now able to tap "the boundless energy of manhood and womanhood" whose lay status "guarantees to them the confidence of the community" in nearly any activity churches chose to undertake.⁶² As one Bible class teacher from Brooklyn expressed it, "The convention seemed a great army . . . organized, enthused for

⁶⁰ *Organized Sunday-School Work in America, 1905-1908: Triennial Survey of Sunday-School Work including the Official report of the Twelfth International Sunday School Convention, Louisville, Kentucky, June 18-23, 1908.* (Chicago: Executive Committee of the International Sunday School Association, 1908), 292-98.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 300-23, *passim*.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 298-99.

thorough and certain conquest for missions, temperance, educational ideals and individual soul-winning.”⁶³

Indeed, as Wood mingled amongst the delegates at the Adult Department’s daylong conference, he would have met a number of Bible class teachers who in the last year had also attempted to translate their Bible class networks into political gains. Adult Department Executive Commiteeman and Baraca-Philathea Bible class founder Marshall A. Hudson, for example, was in the midst of a campaign for New York’s Lieutenant Governor on the Prohibition Ticket, using his Bible classes as campaign stops across the state.⁶⁴ More locally, Lousivlle native Helm Bruce had recently overturned the reelection of a corrupt mayor in 1905 using the Men’s Bible Class of the Second Presbyterian Church he taught as an administrative and financial support network throughout the two-year trial.⁶⁵

These individual efforts, however, were part of an even broader effort among Bible classes throughout the turn of the century to support a variety of reform efforts in cities across the county. According to Bible class teacher Clem V. Wagner, Bible classes were uniquely suited to address the complexity of urban problems. As church-affiliated organizations, Wagner

⁶³ Ibid., 299.

⁶⁴ See “Prohibitionists to Notify Mr. Hudson, Candidate for Lieutenant-Governor,” *Syracuse Herald*, 1 Oct. 1908; “Candidates for Governor,” 2 Sept. 1908; “Candidates on Hand,” *Syracuse Herald*, 28 Aug. 1908; “The Vote of New York,” *Syracuse Herald*, 15 Dec. 1908; “Gov. Hughes Not To Ride Water Wagon,” *Syracuse Herald*, 1 Sep. 1908; “Victim of Crossing,” *Syracuse Herald*, 15 Oct. 1908; George M. Hammell, *The Passing of the Saloon: An Authentic and Official Presentation of the Anti-Liquor Crusade in America* (Cincinnati: The Tower Press, 1908), 264.

⁶⁵ See Henry H. Sweets to Helm Bruce, 6 Jul. 1907, Helm Bruce Papres, 1860-1927, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky. Bruce’s life is recounted in Thomas D. Clark, *Helm Bruce, Public Defender: Breaking Louisville’s Gothic Political Ring, 1905* (Louisville: Filson Club, 1973). On Bruce’s Bible class see Helm Bruce, *The Patriarchs, the Judges, and the Kings: Bible Studies with the Men’s Bible Class of the Second Presbyterian Church* (Louisville: J. P. Morton & Co., 1929).

argued, Bible classes could draw upon the institutional and financial support of churches in their efforts. As “unclerical,” lay-led organization, however, Bible classes were also “calculated to attract those who have no sympathy with the professional religious” to their cause.”⁶⁶ In the first decade of the twentieth century, a number of Bible classes in cities across the country also began to organize Bible class federations in an effort to bring more efficiency to reform campaigns. From Brooklyn to Ashtabula, Ohio, church Bible classes from various denominations gathered at regular intervals to coordinate not only their evangelistic efforts and social activities, but also their political engagements. According to the Reverend Edward Charles Kunkle, city federations of Bible classes could be a vital “force for righteousness.” “Men will stand more firmly for the interests of righteousness when they have the consciousness of the fellowship in the interests of righteousness on the part of their fellows,” he argued, “It will help the weak take position in the ranks of righteousness. It will put a whip of cords into men’s hands. It will bring into expression the note of imperialism in Christianity. It will inspire the forces of righteousness to claim their rights to the right of way in this world. It will make men bold for God and Truth, for justice and purity in politics, business and society.”⁶⁷

But for Wood, however, his growing prominence in the Bible class movement also deeply complicated his understanding of social class and its relation to the community he envisioned. As he moved increasingly outside of the religious networks he had always known, Wood increasingly discovered that unlike Chicago the majority of the Bible class movement’s members were not railroad managers or corporate executives but small business owners and

⁶⁶ Clem V. Wagner, “Awakening Civic Righteousness,” *The Westminster Adult Bible Class XI* (Nov. 1911): 411.

⁶⁷ Rev. Edward Charles Kunkle, “The Advantages of Federation,” *Westminster Adult Bible Class III* (Mar. 1910): 93.

workingmen whose moral and civic needs extended beyond such measures as temperance. While at the International Sunday School Convention's Adult Bible Class conference in Louisville, for instance, Wood met E. C. Edmunds who in addition to serving as Assistant Manager of the Workingmen's Mutual Protective Association of Benton Harbor was also the director of Bible class work with the Van Buren County Sunday School Association in Michigan. The two kept up a correspondence after Edmunds invited Wood to address the county's Sunday school convention later that year. But after Wood became more apprised of the Association's efforts with workers throughout the state beyond providing inexpensive life insurance, Wood was soon adding public addresses in support of anti-crime measures workers in Detroit were currently pressing for.⁶⁸

At an April meeting of the Laymen's Evangelistic Council of Chicago that same year, members of the council discussed "the question of reaching the laboring man . . . at some length," and determined "to plan the wisest possible evangelistic campaign among laboring men" for later in the fall. Staffed with organizing this campaign devised by some of the city's wealthiest business owners and railroad executives, Wood as Recording Secretary invited the Reverend Charles Stelzle to lead the campaign to save Chicago's workers.⁶⁹ In Stelzle, Wood would have found a champion for that sense of community he believed had existed in Malden, and that he longed to create again in Chicago. The director of the Presbyterian Church's Department for Church and Labor, Stelzle was a former machinist who had converted at a revival meeting and devoted his life to simultaneously increasing the church's interest in

⁶⁸ E. C. Edmunds to FLW, 30 Jul. 1908, 10 Aug. 1908, and 17 Sep. 1908, FLWSB, II: 12, 24; *Detroit Free Press*, 12 Nov. 1908, FLWSB, II: 30.

⁶⁹ FLW, "Proceedings of Meeting, Laymen's Evangelistic Council," dated 7 Apr. 1908, A P Fitt 1907 Tent Campaign, MBI.

working men while also increasing workingmen's interest in the church. An advocate for what he called "Christian citizenship" who by 1908 had become acquainted with the Social Gospel movement, Stelzle, like Wood, rooted his understanding of the relationship between faith and citizenship as the preservation of those pre-industrial democratic values that once shaped the nation. This heritage, Stelzle argued, obligated Christians "to safeguard that treasure so that no man may take from us our crown of citizenship." This included ensuring that all citizens "in industrial life are fairly treated, so that the home may be shielded from the curse of greed . . ." ⁷⁰

With Stelzle, Wood helped organize a number of evening revivals and noonday meetings throughout the fall of 1908. But instead of centering these meetings in the loop, they held them in the packinghouses and factories of Chicago's south side. For Wood, the meetings were in all likelihood the first sustained contact he had with what were some of the worst working conditions in the nation. ⁷¹ As he told the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the purpose of the meetings was as much to make the city's ministers aware of the conditions on the south side as it was to convince the south side's workers to go to church. "The purpose of this campaign," he claimed, "is to bring the church and ministers into a permanent connection in the various parts of the city." ⁷² For the next month, over three hundred and fifty ministers and laymen connected with the LECC held over two hundred and fifty noon Bible services on shop floors throughout the city's industrial districts. The LECC then required these participating members to give sermons

⁷⁰ Charles Stelzle, "What is Christian Citizenship?" *Westminster Adult Bible Class* II no. 7 (Jul. 1910): 244-45.

⁷¹ On working conditions in Chicago's packing house districts see Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor: Black and White Workers in Chicago's Packing Houses, 1905-1954* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); James R. Barrett, *Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

⁷² "Plans Missions at Noon Hour," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 Nov. 1908, A3.

on the labor question to their congregations, reporting upon the conditions they witnessed. But this sequel to R. A. Torrey's revival campaign climaxed in a "Labor Mass Meeting" held in a downtown location as opposed to the stockyards, to again attract the city's middle class residents. Here, Stelzle launched into an impassioned call for the church to engage in the city's labor problems, to assist workers in their efforts to be treated as the upstanding Christian citizens that they rightly were. The problem, Stelzle averred, was that workers and their employers had become too concerned with their own avariciousness to see the common fraternal bond that knit them together into community. "The average workman is too close to labor to understand its problems," Stelzle averred, "So also with the employer." But the labor question, he continued, was not simply about unions or employer's associations. Rather, "In the last analysis the labor question is a moral and religious problem and cannot be disassociated from religion." "I believe we can afford to be generous to one another," Stelzle concluded.⁷³

For Wood, these questions of generosity, mutuality, and the church would dominate the next decade of his life. Their political manifestations and theological ramifications would come into sharp relief, and would compel Wood to make a number of precipitous breaks with his political and religious allies.



Throughout the whole of his life, Frank Wood never stopped working as a Bible class organizer. He was always willing to travel anywhere and address any Sunday school class or association interested in growing or organizing a class. But he would get paid to do it for only a year. By 1909, the Wood family found themselves in increasingly difficult financial position. Wood's position as fieldworker did not pay terribly well, and in the year he had spent with the

⁷³ "Calls on Church to Create Unrest," *Chicago Daily Tribune* 23 Nov. 1908, 10.

CCSSA the family's financial needs increased considerably. Early in 1908, Edson had finally succumbed to his war injuries, dying of pneumonia in early February at the age of seventy. Soon after her husband's death, Catherine, who was ill in her own right, moved in with the family, increasing the household's financial needs. And beginning in the fall of 1909, Elmer began his collegiate career at the University of Chicago.⁷⁴

Though his family life necessitated that he find more gainful employment, however, Wood refused to fully give up his Bible class work. He took a position with the *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin*, working as both a court reporter and an editor. The position was in one sense perfect, for its workload was light. In 1909, the *Bulletin* was but a four-page calendar of upcoming city cases, and summaries of important verdicts handed down by the court. Charged with covering the city's criminal court, Wood's basic administrative duties consisted of distilling the previous day's rulings and publishing the date and times of upcoming cases. Beyond this, he could still devote considerable time to Bible class work. But the position did not pay well—or at least did not pay as much as Wood's previous position on the Probate Court—and the responsibility fell to Isabelle, Wood's "silent partner," to make up this lagging income by taking in a boarder.⁷⁵

With this flexible schedule, and a supportive spouse, Wood kept up a busy ecclesiastical schedule in the years after he joined the *Bulletin*. He of course continued a regular spate of local Bible class lectures, and also continued to serve as Secretary for the Laymen's Evangelistic Council, organizing the revival campaigns they now held annually. In 1909 the Council brought

⁷⁴ General Affidavit dated 28 May 1908, CEWWPF; *Alumni Directory: The University of Chicago, 1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1913), 237.

⁷⁵ Irene Macauley, *This I'll Defend: Law Bulletin Macfarlands, 1718-1994* (Chicago: Law Bulletin Publishing Company, 1994), 82, 90; 1910, Thirteenth U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, Chicago, Ward 13, Enumeration District 0632, roll T624_254, page 5B.

evangelist Rodney “Gypsy” Smith to Chicago for over a month in a campaign against the city’s vice districts that actually resulted in the creation of the Chicago Vice Commission. In 1911, the Council brought in evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman to lead a series of services.⁷⁶ But unlike his peers in the LECC, Wood increasingly turned his attention not to spectacular revivals, but to ministering to the city’s working people.

That Wood was already moving in another direction than his LECC brethren was in many ways clear as early as 1908 when he decided, over the council’s indifference, to invite an admitted advocate of the Social Gospel to the city. In his memoirs recounting the activities of the LECC, for instance, Crowell refused to list the Stelzle campaign as one of the council’s activities.⁷⁷ But for Wood it was a watershed. As the decade progressed, both his work with the *Bulletin* as well as his Bible class activity brought him in increasing contact with the city’s working people. Wood’s work for the *Bulletin* took him to courthouses throughout the city where he witnessed, as Cleland had not long ago, the social causes of crime in poorer areas.⁷⁸ At the same time, the Wesleyan Bible Class also embarked on a formal relationship with the Illinois State Penitentiary in Joliet, Illinois. Wood had met the prison’s chaplain, I. A. Villars during his bible class work, and late in 1911 he invited Wood to lead religious services at the penitentiary. At first these followed a familiar pattern, providing the inmates with a series of solos, hymns, and Bible readings, closing with Wood addressing the audience and calling for repentance. But soon the class made these meetings biannual events, and as Wood became more enmeshed in the

⁷⁶ Richard Ellsworth Day, *Breakfast Table Autocrat: The Life Story of Henry Parsons Crowell* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1946), 188; Karen Abbott, *Sin in the Second City: Madams, Ministers, Playboys, and the Battle for America’s Soul* (New York: Random House, 2007), 220-28.

⁷⁷ Day, *Breakfast Table Autocrat*, 188.

⁷⁸ Willrich, *City of Courts*, 75-87, 266-69.

lives of the prisoners he began to utilize the class's business connections to secure some of the inmates work once paroled.⁷⁹

This extended contact with working people of Chicago's courts and jails forced certain clarifications in Wood's conception of community. To date, his political focus had largely been upon enacting varying kinds of temperance legislation and expelling corrupt—and likely immigrant—city politicians from their office. Both of these positions were grounded in that position Wood had forged in Malden that the church should rest at the center of a community's social life, ensuring that upright, Christian character was the center of social life. The extent of Wood's interest in the wellbeing of working people lay only in his support of high tariffs during the Republican's intra-party debates in the 1890s. But now, after Wood had witnessed the oppressive working conditions of the packinghouse floor, and seen working people ensnared by the state, Wood began to turn to the latent emphasis in this concern for Christian character. If the industrious Christian character was a prerequisite for a certain social prominence, then any citizen who embodied this moral character was entitled to have this character rewarded by the community.

This new emphasis emerged in the very language Wood used to discuss his broader religious work. He increasingly spoke of Bible classes as somehow inherently democratic, as the one place in the world where class and status did not matter. Of course, such sentiments were buried in Wood's longstanding concern in building Bible class friendships, but they were now increasingly articulated with an egalitarian bent. To one newspaper reporter in Joliet he bragged of the Wesleyan class's "democratic nature, our members being high in the councils of one of the

⁷⁹ "An Hour in a Penitentiary," *New Adult Bible Class Movement Monthly* VIII (Sep. 1913): 3; John M. Schneider to FLW, 20 Dec. 1911, and *Joliet Herald*, 21 Jan. 1912, FLWSB, III: 59-60; *Report of the Commissioners of the Illinois State Penitentiary at Joliet for the Two Years Ending Sept. 30, 1912* (Springfield: Illinois State Journal Co., 1913), 8-13.

largest corporations and another a prominent labor leader . . .”⁸⁰ Each, no matter their position, sat on an equal plain in the class and studied the same Bible, no one man’s opinions greater than the next, each able to received the friendly aid of the class in times of need.

It was during this shift in his view of the Bible classes that Wood, at some point, enrolled in the Socialist Party. When is not exactly clear. The first public record of Wood’s enrollment in the party came with the announcement that the party had nominated him to run for Chicago’s Sixth Congressional District in 1914. If Wood’s nomination followed the Cook County Socialist Party’s rules for candidates, this means he would have joined the party sometime around 1912, as the county party required all candidates for federal offices be a member in good standing for at least two years before nomination. However, the Cook County Delegate Committee routinely broke such rules in finding candidates to run for office, leaving Wood’s enrollment in the Party unclear until his nomination by the party’s Sixth Congressional Caucus.⁸¹

Wood’s time with the Socialist Party was, though ultimately brief, frenetic. In addition to Wood’s run for Congress in 1914, the party also nominated him to run for a place on the Illinois Supreme Court bench in 1915, and the for Chicago’s Municipal Court, which was popularly elected, the year after that.⁸² In each of these failed campaigns—Wood failed to earn a significant percentage of the vote in any of the contest—he continued to frame his campaign as an effort to restore morality and character to public office. In his 1915 campaign for the Illinois Supreme Court, for example, the *Chicago Daily News* confessed that while they could never

⁸⁰ *Joliet News*, 20 Jan. 1912, *ibid.*

⁸¹ “Socialists are Naming Men,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 May 1914; J. P. Larsen, “Aldermanic Election Information,” undated, folder 2, box 1, CCSSP.

⁸² “Return Four to Supreme Court,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 Jun. 1915; “Minuets of the Executive Committee Meting,” 14 Jul. 1916, folder 12, box 2, CCSSP.

support a Socialist candidate, Wood's "high character" in some ways "proved his fitness for the Supreme bench . . ." ⁸³ But Wood now brought a new inflection to this interest in manliness and character as the cornerstones of public life. Where he had long argued society should be guarded by moral men, he now averred that moral men were entitled to be guarded by society.

More than any other theme, "fairness" became the watchword of Wood's Socialist campaigns. In a critique of Theodore Roosevelt's "square deal" for capital and labor, which enforced arbitration in labor disputes, Wood claimed he sought to make fairness "a part of the ethics of the people," so that some state arbitrator was not deciding what for workers was fair. ⁸⁴ This concern for fairness bred in Wood a doggedly conservative socialism. Throughout his campaigns he never called for a working-class republic or a state run economy, but for a communal ethic to guide the nation's industrial life. Throughout his 1914 campaign for congress, for example, Wood departed from the prerogatives of the national party and did not distribute its massive, thousand plus page *Socialist Campaign Book*. Instead, Wood orchestrated the printing of over two thousand copies of Allan L. Benson's article "The Bombshell That Henry Ford Fired" for supporters to distribute throughout the district. Originally appearing in the leftist, but by no means politically orthodox, *Pearson's Magazine*, the article encapsulated much of Wood's socialist thinking. Writing at length on Henry Ford's decision to pay his workers five dollars a day, Benson wrote not to decry Ford's paternalistic working conditions and wages but to indict the rest of the capitalist world for not following Ford's example. "Every great industry can afford

⁸³ "Merit, Not Party, is the Test for Judges to be Chosen Monday," *Chicago Daily News*, 6 Jun. 1915; James Langland, comp., *The Chicago Daily News Almanac and Year-Book for 1915* (Chicago: Chicago Daily News Company, 1915), 477-78; idem, comp., *The Chicago Daily News Almanac and Year-Book for 1916* (Chicago: Chicago Daily News Company, 1916), 569-570.

⁸⁴ FLW, "Lesson Suggestions for the Teacher" *New Adult Bible Class Movement Monthly* IX (Jul. 1914): 33

to do as Mr. Ford has done,” Benson wrote. Though Benson would conclude by saying that Ford too was robbing his worker by only providing them a portion of the profits they produced, the article as a whole is much more in support of a regulated minimum wage than the worker’s control of production.⁸⁵

As his support for Benson’s article suggests, Wood did not draw his socialist policies from the theoretical philosophies of continental Marxism. Rather, Wood’s affinity with the Socialist party was, much like his religious sensibilities, rooted deep in American soil. They emerged from his days in Bureau County, where Wood believed the community both contributed to and benefited from society’s economic progress. As he would write later, Wood’s “sweetest recollections” in life were when the village of Malden engaged in “sowing and the reaping” and reaping for the year. The contrast between spring’s “bare, brown fields of newly turned earth” in contrast to the “jeweled summer of the harvest” was a potent metaphor that humanity did in fact reap what they sow. But for Wood, it provided an even more compelling picture for it was, to him, those time of the year when the community contributed in fundamental ways to the wellbeing of their peers. In the spring there was a shared burden in assisting in the planting of each other’s fields, while in the spring there was “the joy of the reapers bringing in the sheaves.”⁸⁶ Of course, the vision was a total construction. By the time of Wood’s childhood paid farmhands, not friendly neighbors, did most of Bureau County’s sowing and reaping. But the image nonetheless reveals the source of Wood’s socialist thinking.

⁸⁵ Allan L. Benson, “The Bombshell that Henry Ford Fired,” *Pearson’s Magazine* XXXI (Apr. 1914): 406; *Party Builder*, 16 May 1914 and 23 May 1914.

⁸⁶ FLW, “Whatever a Man Soweth, So Shall He Reap,” *The Laymen’s Galilean* (Chicago: Grant’s Printery, 1938), 167.

In his campaign for Congress, for example, Wood's platform consisted almost entirely of advocating for the municipal ownership of city services, even though he was running for federal office. The previous year, the city's entire railway system had been consolidated into the Chicago Surface Lines Company, effectively putting the cost of municipal ownership beyond the city's reach for it meant the railways could no longer be purchased individually. For Wood, providing the legislative backing for municipal ownership was fundamentally an issue of "fairness." To Wood, municipal ownership was akin to an urban barn raising or harvest, a place where the community could come together and provide an essential service the city as a whole needed.⁸⁷

Given that Wood's political tendencies as a socialist were informed more by his memories of Bureau County than by the writing of Marx or Engles, it is perhaps also not surprising that his socialist vision also had a decidedly religious tone. The thread of fairness and mutuality that ran throughout his Bible class, Republican, and now Socialist activities had decidedly Christian origins. It lay in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, Christ's call for Christians to not "pass by the other side" of the road from someone in distress. To Wood, these words from "the lips of a Galilean peasant" marked "an era in human conduct." It for the first time made sacred such concepts as "self sacrifice" and "the brotherhood of man," revealing that part of humanity's collective responsibility was to care for each other. Wood, in part, understood his political activity to be an extension of this. It was an effort to write this parable upon society's heart either through evangelism or legislation, for if it was, Wood claimed "there would

⁸⁷ Campaign Committee of Cook County Socialist Party, *Issues of 1914* (n.p., 1914), 1-2; Leidenberger, *Chicago's Progressive Alliance*, 137-38.

be no more exploitation of their fellow men” by employers, no more “destruction of property, rioting and bloodshed” by workers.⁸⁸

But Wood’s religiously-inspired commitment to socialist politics did not signal his willingness to draw the church into the socialist struggle. In fact, Wood’s years in the Socialist Party somewhat paradoxically intensified his theological conservatism. Throughout his entire time with the Socialist Party, Wood broached the subject only once in a lecture on “Socialism and the Church” given to the Men’s Bible Class at the Forty-Ninth Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church in Norwood Park when he was running for the Illinois supreme court.⁸⁹ While the text for the address unfortunately does not survive, an address Wood gave before the International Sunday School Association’s triennial gathering in Chicago in the summer of 1914 reveals the relationship he envisioned between his political and religious life. Unlike the more renowned, theologically liberal socialist Christians of the era like George D. Herron, J. Stitt Wilson, and Carl D. Thompson—who was also running for Congress in 1914 in Illinois’ Seventh Congressional District to Wood’s North—Wood refused to put his religious life at the service of a political cause.⁹⁰ One could be a Socialist Christian, Wood argued, but there could never be a Christian Socialism as Herron and others argued, for to do so would tarnish the purely spiritual mission of the Christian Church. As Wood instructed the Adult Department of the Chicago ISSA, but a month after he had been nominated to run for Congress, Bible class teachers should only preach the Bible, “that is what he is there for. If he wants to give an address on art or history

⁸⁸ FLW, “On the Jericho Road,” *The Laymen’s Galilean*, 72, 76.

⁸⁹ Forty-Ninth Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church brochure dated 26 October 1914, FLWSB: III, 36.

⁹⁰ See Jacob H. Dorn, “‘The Oderst and Youngest of the Idealistic Forces at Work in Our Civilization’: Encounters Between Christianity and Socialism,” in *Socialism and Christianity in Early Twentieth-Century America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 1-41.

or deliver a speech on some current topic, let him hire a hall.” But for Wood, the pulpit and the Sunday school room were simply too sacred to bring in discussions of political matters. Bible classes could be utilized for political campaigns, but to Wood they could never become campaign headquarters.

Here is a question of capital and labor, but the teacher is not a sociologist; the question of our foreign relations, but he is not a statesman; the question of needed changes in our local politics, but he is not a reformer. Such matters are of great importance and may come up incidentally, but to make any one of them the chief subject of discussion is get into quicksand; to teach the lesson is to stand on safe ground.⁹¹

Despite such truths, however, Wood declared there were a growing number of “pessimistic” who believed scripture alone could not sustain a Bible class, and that some other issue, text, or campaign was needed. The object of every Sunday school teacher, Wood concluded, was the “creating of a love for the study of the Book, and the wining of his class to Christ.”⁹²



Wood’s tenure with the Socialist Party was ultimately short lived. As was the case with many of his Bible class activities on Chicago’s West Side, the increase in ethnic members, coupled with the Party’s increasingly hard-line stance against the First World War, drove him out. When Wood initially joined the party sometime in 1912, Cook County’s Socialist Party was

⁹¹ FLW, “Teaching the Lesson,” *Organized Sunday School Work in America, 1911-1914: Official Report of the Fourteenth International Sunday School Convention, Chicago, Illinois, 1914, Triennial Survey of Sunday School Work Including the Official Report of the Fourteenth International Sunday School Convention, Chicago, Illinois, June 23-30, 1914.* ed. By J. Clayton Youker (Chicago: The Executive Committee of the International Sunday School Association, 1914), 249.

⁹² *Organized Sunday School Work in America, 1911-1914: Official Report of the Fourteenth International Sunday School Convention, Chicago, Illinois, 1914, Triennial Survey of Sunday School Work Including the Official Report of the Fourteenth International Sunday School Convention, Chicago, Illinois, June 23-30, 1914.* ed. By J. Clayton Youker (Chicago: The Executive Committee of the International Sunday School Association, 1914), 249-50.

then largely made up of white, native-born professionals who, like him, were drawn to the party in the interest of practical “sewer socialism” issues like municipal ownership. The county party’s leadership was made up not of immigrants and workers, but lawyers, teachers, and other professionals. The county organized the party by wards with precinct captains and delegates to the county’s Executive Committee and functioned very much like the city’s other two major parties. But in the years leading up to the First World War, the demographics of the party’s membership changed drastically. In the span of just a few years, independent “foreign branches” based not on the ward system but on ethnic identity flooded the party. While these new voters would bring the party its only success throughout the city, electing Socialist aldermen in those wards with the highest foreign-born population, their presence caused a rift in the party.⁹³ With the outbreak of war in Europe, and the specter of America’s eventual entry into the conflict, these foreign branches pushed through the county party’s Executive Committee increasingly radical declarations against the war, American military preparedness, and global capitalism.⁹⁴

Wood, however, became an early and avid supporter of the war. He openly encouraged Wesleyan class men who were of age to enlist, and became an agent for the West Side’s draft board. In this capacity, he organized over a dozen patriotic services throughout the area, using the Wesleyan Bible Class as an administrative support staff but never holding the services in the class itself.⁹⁵ Soon after, Wood withdrew from the Socialist party. In the summer of 1916, he

⁹³ Laurent Jesan-Marie Pernot, “‘Compelled to Struggle’: The Socialist Party in Chicago, 1900-1920” (M.A. Thesis, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1993), 82.

⁹⁴ See, for example, “Minutes of the Cook County Delegate Committee,” 1 Apr. 1917, CCSPP, folder 6, box 1.

⁹⁵ See unnamed program for thirty-ninth anniversary banquet of the WBC dated 19 Oct. 1919, folder 13, box 1; and the collection of patriotic service flyers in folder 23, box 2, WBCR; “Appeals Agents,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 27 Jan. 1918.

declined the party's nomination to run for the Municipal Court judge. By next summer, the party official held Wood in "abeyance" for his lack of participation, which was but a formality for Wood's expulsion from the party in 1918.⁹⁶

Wood's brief runs for office with the Socialist Party were ultimately costly ones. In his campaigns, Wood openly ran against former allies throughout the city such as Fred E. Coyne, whom Wood had worked with in the Thirteenth Ward Republican Club, and Orrin Carter, to whom Wood was the only challenger in the 1915 Illinois Supreme Court election.⁹⁷ In the aftermath, Wood's public speaking schedule dwindled to only addressing his Bible class networks. The commencement speeches and patriotic addresses, for which he was occasionally paid, all but dried up in the years after his identification as a Socialist. Increasingly, Wood was left only with the tight-knit network of Bible class friends he had built over the last decades.⁹⁸

But what is perhaps most remarkable from our current perspective is that Wood kept all of these Bible class friends both during and after his identification as a Socialist. Though Wood lost many of his Republican friends in the years after his involvement in the Socialist party, he by all accounts lost none his friends in the Wesleyan Bible Class or beyond. Like Wood, many apparently agreed that the church's uniquely spiritual role ultimately allowed for an impressive amount political diversity in seeing those spiritual values spread. But Wood's commitment to social and political diversity would be challenged in the coming years. For in the same way the

⁹⁶ "Minutes of the Executive Committee MEeting," 14 Jul. 1916; "Minuters of the Executive Committee Meeting," 17 Sep. 1917, folder 13, box 2; and "Minutes of the Cook County Executive Committee Meeting," 14 Jun. 1918, folder 14, box 2, CCSPP.

⁹⁷ "Results," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 Nov. 1914; "Return Four to Supreme Court," *Chicaog Daily Tribune*, 8 Jun. 1915.

⁹⁸ See FLWSB, V: 1-39.

Socialist party's ethnic branches eventually drove him from the party, the growth of Chicago's immigrant neighborhoods was about to drive him from the city's West Side.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE WORD MADE FLESH

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, . . .

- The Gospel of John 1: 14

If Jesus is the Word made flesh, the Bible is the Word made book.

- Frank L. Wood (1930)¹



Every weekday morning, before beginning his commute to the *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin's* offices in the Loop, Frank Wood arose and breakfasted with his family. It was a tradition he claimed to have begun early in his marriage, a way to anchor his day in the patriarchal role he aspired to and perhaps offset the many evenings he spent addressing Bible class banquets, chairing ward club meetings, or campaigning for public office.² But by the start of the 1920s, even these morning routines increasingly and the manly yearnings they fulfilled bore the marks of Frank's advancing age, the family's continuing economic difficulties and the ongoing transformation of Chicago's West Side.

To begin with, the Wood family's breakfast tradition more accurately reflected Isabelle's increasing centrality to the household's finances. Frank's decision to join the Socialist Party in 1912 had cost many of his paid speaking engagements at school commencements and annual GAR conventions. Exiled from both the Socialist and Republican parties, Frank now exclusively

¹ FLW, *The Layman's Galilean* (Chicago: Grant's Printery, 1938), 51.

² FLW discusses his morning routines in *ibid*, 148.

spoke in evangelical venues. In November of 1920, he reached perhaps the peak of his oratorical career, sharing the stage with Dr. John Timothy Stone and William Jennings Bryan at the Mid-West Laymen's Conference. But Wood, as he always had done, addressed religious meetings for free and reaped no pecuniary benefits from these labors.³ The responsibility largely fell to Isabelle to pick up the financial slack. After Elmer had relocated to Battle Creek, Isabelle promptly filled the open bed with another boarder to supplement Frank's reduced earnings. The additional income also supplemented the rising costs of caring for Frank's ailing, eighty-four-year-old mother Catherine who continued to live with the couple and for whom Isabelle was solely responsible. By 1920, Catherine's widowed, and equally as aged sister, Anne Skinner had also come under Isabelle's care, stretching the household's already finite resources to the limit. When Catherine passed on 24 July 1921, it set off a yearlong, struggle between Frank and the U.S. Pension Agency as he attempted to obtain all of the funds that had "accrued" to Catherine's widow's pension to cover her burial as well as other personal expenses.⁴ In the midst of this bureaucratic quarrel, Frank himself fell ill to an unknown illness that required an extended period of bed rest, which forced Isabelle to move the family back into the apartment on Stanley Terrace they had occupied once before.⁵

Other aspects of the Woods' morning routine also divulged the family's declining financial condition and rapidly changing circumstances. As Frank departed from his home and

³ "Mid-West Laymen's Conference on Evangelism," pamphlet dated 5-7 Nov. 1920, FLWSCB, IV: 46. See vols. 3-4 for the immediate end to FLW's involvement with the GAR and other civic organizations following his activity in the Socialist Party.

⁴ FLW to Commissioner, 3 Aug. 1921, CEWPF.

⁵ See FLW to Commissioner, 21 Mar. 1922, 15 May 1922, 31 May 1922, 3 Aug. 1922, 28 Nov. 1922, and Commissioner to FLW, 22 Jun. 1922, 10 Oct. 1922, CEWWPF; entry for FLW, 1920 U.S. Federal Census, Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Enumeration District 733, roll T625_321, p. 7B; FLW to WBC, 17 Feb. 1922, and 24 Feb. 1922, folder 5, box 2, WBCR.

pushed north to catch the Madison Avenue streetcar, he passed through a neighborhood in the midst of a transition. As the 1920 census would reveal, the enclaves of Southern and Eastern European immigrants that been remaking the city for decades had finally come to occupy the entire expanse between the Chicago River and Garfield Park. The population of Russian-born immigrants in the Thirteenth Ward alone had increased by a staggering 750% over the last decade to become the ward's largest immigrant community. In conjunction with the similarly high, but far less dramatic, growth rates among Italian, Polish, Austrian, and Czechoslovakia immigrants, foreign-born voters would for the first time outnumber the ward's eight thousand native-born voters by nearly two thousand votes.⁶ Yet the growth of these immigrant communities was in reality an extension of an even more profound demographic and economic reconfiguration of the greater West Side that would see the area's wealthier families of every kind leave for the suburbs or land west of Garfield Park. In their place came not only southern and eastern European immigrants, but also an increasing number of black southerners who were forced by restrictive covenants into neighborhoods just to the north of Wood's home in the Fourteenth Ward. With this demographic watershed came an equally as dramatic decline in living conditions throughout the area as population density, illiteracy rates, and number of families per dwellings all increased. As one resident observed in 1917 with sentiments that Wood may have shared, the "Great West Side" had become more of a "chosen field of the sociologist and the settlement worker" than any kind of respectable neighborhood.⁷

⁶ The ward's Russian population had increased the most, by a staggering 750% to over 6,000 residents. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), III: 275; idem, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913) II: 513.

⁷ H. C. Chatfield-Taylor, *Chicago* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917), 65. On the broader changes in Chicago's West Side see Edith Abbott, *The Tenements of Chicago, 1908-*

Of course, Wood did not need the census to know that he was rapidly becoming a minority in a part of the city he had long claimed as his own. At the same time many of the West Side's new residents were arriving, many of Wood's old friends were leaving. By 1920, membership at the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, which at its peak in the 1890s had claimed over a thousand members, was down to just over two-hundred-and-fifty. Attendance at the Wesleyan Bible Class had similarly dropped over the last several years. Where nearly two hundred Wesleyans had once filled the Western Avenue church's lecture hall to attend Frank's lectures throughout the 1900s, the class's average Sabbath attendance was now down to below eighty.⁸ Why residents and church members were leaving was not difficult to discern as the Wesleyan Class had by 1927 classified nearly two thirds of its membership as either "suburban" or "absent" members. As class president Mary L. Hayford observed, "Owing to the changing condition of the neighborhood in which the class is located, our membership [sic] has become widely scattered."⁹

1935 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1935), 77, 102; Louis Wirth and Margaret Furez, eds. *Local Community Fact Book, 1938* (Chicago: Chicago Recreation Commission, 1938); Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 11-12, 19, and maps 3-4; James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 123-27, 148-49; Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920*, III: 275.

⁸ On the Western Avenue Church membership see *Journal and Year Book of the Eighty-first Session of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Centennial Methodist Episcopal Church Rockford, Illinois September 29 to October 4, 1920* (Chicago: The Conference, 1920), 90-91; *Minutes of the 57th Session of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held in Embury Church, Freeport Illinois, September 30-October 6, 1896*. (Rockford, IL: The Conference, 1896), 106. On the WBC see Mrs. Ernest L. Hayford, "Presidents Address," *Anniversary Letter from the Teacher of the Wesleyan Bible Class*, dated 29 Nov. 1924, oversized folder 2, WBCR.

⁹ *A Presidential Decade: Triple Anniversary of the Wesleyan Bible Class*, WBC forty-seventh anniversary banquet program dated 16-18 Oct. 1927, folder 20, box 1, WBCR.

No matter how acutely aware members of the Wesleyan Bible Class were of the effects the West Side's transformations were having on weekly turnout, however, the decrease in class attendance ultimately signaled even deeper issues within the class. Members, after all, had long moved out of the neighborhood and left the class. This ongoing fact of urban life had originally led Wood to devise the class's detailed system of correspondence. But in the years following the First World War, the class failed to find new members to replace those who left. At its peak in the 1910s, for instance, the class counted over a thousand home, suburban, and absent members on its rolls. By the 1920s, however, with many members like Wood entering their sixties or beyond, the class's list of "graduated" members—those who had passed life's test and gone on toward heaven—steadily increased. Throughout the decade, several of Wood's closest friends and fellow Wesleyans including Frank W. Gunsaulus, president of the Illinois Institute of Technology; John P. McRea, who began the practice of writing fellow Wesleyans during the class hour while away; David C. Cook, the publishing magnate Wood wrote for; and W. Sherman Maple, Wood's first legal partner, all passed in quick succession. But by the 1930s, as the list of graduated members grew to nearly two hundred and fifty, the class's active membership correspondingly dropped to 864.¹⁰ The class simply could not, or would not, envision a place for the West Side's new inhabitants in the class. The decline significantly effected the class's longstanding robust schedule, cutting many social functions and class publications, and led many to wonder if the class had reached the end of its natural life.

¹⁰ *Ahoy! The S. S. Wesleyan of the Olivet Methodist Line Announces Its Next Sailing Dates*, WBC fifty-sixth anniversary banquet program dated 17-20 Oct. 1936, folder 29, box 1, WBCR. On death's in the WBC see "Dr. Gunsaulus's Life: His Eulogy, Friends' Tribute," *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 18 Mar. 1921; "David C. Cook, Publisher, Dies at Elgin Home," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 31 Jul. 1927; "Obituaries," *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 27 Oct. 1929; "John P. McCrea," *Vacationite*, WBC forty-sixth anniversary program dated 4 Oct. 1926, 8, folder 16, box 2; *A Presidential Decade*, dated 16-18 Oct. 1927; and FLW to WBC, 1 Mar. 1930, oversized folder 2, WBCR.

In a remarkable annual address given before the class in the fall of 1924, Mary L. Hayford, the wife of a doctor who had joined the class before 1905 and would serve as its president throughout much of the post-war era, addressed these concerns by sharply diagnosing the cause of the class's decline. True, Hayford conceded, the class's most vibrant days came when the Western Avenue church was counted as "one of the big churches, when this was a region of homes, not boarding houses for transients, when consequently the population was fixed, not floating, and when the colored and foreign element was not taken into account." But to suggest, as many had, that the time had come "for the Wesleyan Bible Class to close its books, declare its work ended, and post on its door the sign 'Gone out of business'" was an affront to the class's origins, history, and purpose. To begin with, Hayford argued, the Wesleyan class was a Bible class, and though it had been in existence for forty-four years, "we know we have not yet begun to plumb the depths nor scale the heights of God's dealings with man, nor man's relation to his Creator and Father, which is God." But even more incisively, Hayford noted that to close the class in light of the West Side's ongoing transformation would be to abandon the class's stated mission to reach those in need. "This organization was founded to study God's word and will," Hayford continued, "to help the discouraged and defeated, to comfort the sorrowing, to lead the blinded into the light, to point out the high way of hope and faith and love, to make the world a better place because we live in it." This, the fifty-eight-year-old, longtime West Sider thundered, included "the colored and foreign element." To close simply because long-term members were leaving was an insult to the Great Commission. "I do not know how we can pray 'Thy kingdom come,' and seriously consider such a step as that."¹¹

¹¹ Hayford, "President's Address."

Neither Wood nor many members of the Wesleyan class's Executive Committee shared Hayford's sentiments, however. To them, the class's decline lay in its lack of commitment and lax theological standards. The class did not need to reach out to or evangelize the neighborhood's more recent inhabitants, but rather reinvigorate the devotional lives of its former residents in the face of what one Wesleyan called "the weakening influence of a changed community."¹² Wood in particular angrily held current members responsible for the class's steady decline. For the first time in his tenure as teacher, he had to plaintively ask members "to be more regular for the sake of attendance."¹³ As the decade progressed, his tone would become increasingly harsh and his spiritual musings more stringent. "Whenever there is humor in a statement or situation, I naturally see it," Wood wrote to the class in one uncharacteristically sarcastic display. "The protestations of class loyalty on the part of a consistently absent home member has appealed to me as a joke."¹⁴ Initially, however, these calls for a revival in Wesleyan class sentiment were couched in much more devotional tones.

In one particularly revealing address given to the class fortieth anniversary banquet in October of 1920, Associate Teacher Harvey W. King encapsulated the sentiment that the Wesleyan class suffered from a lack of faith. In what was almost a counter-argument to Hayford's call for a more inclusive evangelism, King claimed the class had once thrived not because it was recruiting members but because at one time its "eyes were fixed on the cross" Unfortunately, however, the class had become "satisfied with its good work and more or less unconsciously overlooked the best. God saw and was not pleased," King adjudged, "and for a

¹² *Vacationite*, 6.

¹³ FLW to WBC, 7 Feb. 1921, folder 5, box 2, WBCR.

¹⁴ FLW to WBC, c. 1927, folder 21, box 1, WBCR.

number of years the class barely held its own. . . . Something seemed to be missing.” What King, Wood, and others in class found to be “missing” from the class were those emphases on personal devotion and Christian fellowship that they claimed had defined the class in its early years. The class needed more earnest prayer meetings, rigorous Bible studies, and, perhaps most important, a renewed dedication to attending class functions. As King, in paraphrasing James Russell Lowell, concluded,

What wonder if the Wesleyans now
Remember the keeping of their vow
And renew their allegiance on bended knee
With Jesus the Man of Galilee.¹⁵

Wood called King’s address “the most important matter that every claimed your attention in class history,”¹⁶ and reprinted in multiple class publications as a kind of endorsement. In preparing the address, King had originally entitled it “An Ancient Theme with a Modern Application” to signal the timelessness he believed he was to impart. But just before the banquet, King altered his title to “Back to Fundamentals.”¹⁷ It was the first time the word had publicly entered the class’s devotional lexicon.

This overarching concern to recreate a sense of devotion and intimacy in a Wesleyan class that was in a kind of suburban diaspora prompted a subtle changes in Wood’s thinking about the class. He had long portrayed the class as a body of close friends, bound in a spiritual fellowship by their devotion to Christ and to each other. But in the face of what he perceived to be a class-wide dereliction of spiritual duty, Wood began to speak of the class in far more

¹⁵ Harvey W. King, “Back to Fundamentals,” *Anniversary Letter from the Teacher of the Wesleyan Bible Class*, 1 Nov. 1920, oversized folder 2, WBCR.

¹⁶ *Anniversary Service and Banquet of the Wesleyan Bible Class*, fortieth anniversary program dated 3-5 Oct. 1920, folder 14, box 1, WBCR.

¹⁷ King, “Back to Fundamentals.”

hereditary terms, re-imagining it as a family to which members owed their loyalty. By the 1920s, Wood began to refer to himself as “Uncle Frank,” and rechristened the class’s founder Calla Scott Willard—who was still alive, well, and into her eighties—as “Our Class Mother,” to whom every Wesleyan was bound to honor.¹⁸ The most significant alterations, however, came in the familial terms Wood used to discuss the class’s devotional life itself. Prayer meetings were no longer weekly revivals of the spirit, but now “a large family talking on a great and vital theme.” Sunday services became not an explication of the Uniform Lesson Series, but “a large family around the family hearth, talking in hushed voices on a great theme.”¹⁹

The cumulative effect of this rhetorical shift was a reconfiguration of the kinds of activities the class undertook. As the decade progressed, Wood jettisoned from the class any activity that did not contribute to this newfound interest in class intimacy. Gone were the committees on employment, housing, visitation, the sick, and advertising that had once been central in attracting new members. The class even did away with most of its benevolent giving save a few local charities and devoted most of its funds to the now struggling Western Avenue church.²⁰ In their place Wood continued only those activities that contributed to a sense of kinship among the class’s preexisting members. In addition to Sunday services and business meetings, Anniversary banquets, quarterly socials, and holiday services became the mainstay of Wesleyan class’s social and devotional life. To these Wood fashioned other activities that complimented his rhetorical construction of the Wesleyan class family with services that

¹⁸ *Fourth Other Class Sunday*, program dated 9 Feb. 1930, folder 2, box 3, WBCR; and *It’s With Real Pleasure That We Invite You to Attend the Fifty-First Anniversary of the Wesleyan Bible Class*, dated 18-20 Oct. 1931, folder 24, box 1, WBCR.

¹⁹ *A Presidential Decade*; Harold G. Lawrance, “The Class of a Thousand Triumphs,” *New Adult Bible Class Movement Monthly* XXV (Oct.): 15.

²⁰ See *The Round Up*; FLW to WBC, 1 Jul. 1934, folder 5, box 2, WBCR.

involved actual Wesleyan families. Mother's Day celebrations, Father-Son banquets, and Children's Day services—in which the now fully-grown children of Wesleyan class members were charged with conducting a Sunday service as a way to increase their involvement in the class—all rapidly defined the class in the years after the First World War.²¹ However, just beneath the surface of these new, family-themed activities lay an even more profound shift in Wood's thinking about the Wesleyan class's relation to the broader community that would ultimately shape his religious self-understanding.

Stretching back to his earliest days in Bureau County, Wood had always associated his sense of community with a sense of place. In Malden, he believed the village's civic and religious life to be not only symbiotic but comprised of the same social leaders. In Chicago, he similarly understood his early Wesleyan class activity to be not only an essential component to his spiritual development, but also an avenue to attaining public prominence in the city. Even as Wood became involved in the contentious world of Chicago politics first as a reform-minded Republican and then as a municipal Socialist in the 1910s, he understood the political battles he engaged in not as a sign of a community in conflict. Rather, he understood the efforts of he and his compatriots to be campaigns to defend a morally pure social order that the forces of greed, corruption, and licentiousness threatened. In his political activity, as well as continued religious involvement in the Wesleyan class and the Laymen's Evangelistic Council, Wood continued to defend a particular place as much as a legislative or theological ideal. His support for graft

²¹ On WBC Mother's Days see "Mother's Day at the Wesleyan Bible Class," undated pamphlet, c. 1930, as well as the rest of the contents for folder 28, box 2, WBCR. On Children's Days see *Our Church Paper*, Jul. 1932 and n.d., folder 8, box 2; and *A Presidential Decade*. On Father Son Banquets see *The Round Up* program for forty-first anniversary banquet dated 24-27 Sep. 1921, folder 15, box 1, WBCR; unknown to FLW, n.d., c. 1926, FLWSB, VI: 22. On the development of Mother's Day as a national, and peculiarly Protestant holiday see Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 246-56.

reform, local option, and municipal ownership were, he believed, all in the interest of at least the people of Chicago's West Side, if not the entire city itself. With the city's rapid demographic transformation in the years after the First World War, however, Wood significantly narrowed his sense of community in relation to what he had at one time called his evangelistic "field," Chicago's West Side.²² As he slowly replaced many of the class's evangelistic activities with services intended to build a sense of closeness among a scattered Bible class, Wood signaled that he located his social world not in the physical place of Chicago's West Side, but in an abstract, relational space that only existed in his connection with former West Side residents. Where Wood had once looked upon Bible classes everywhere as a platform from which to launch any number of religious and political campaigns for social change, he increasingly looked upon them as havens that provided solace, providing solace from a world he could no longer alter.

This new conception of community was perhaps clearest in Wood's thirtieth anniversary celebration as teacher in the summer of 1926. At its forty-fifth anniversary banquet in October of 1925—Wood's twenty-ninth anniversary as teacher—the Wesleyan class presented Frank and Isabelle with a substantial sum of money and what Wood called "two handsome traveling bags" for the couple to make an extended trip over the next year in celebration of his three decades of service at teacher. In June, 1926, Frank revealed to the class his travel plans in a printed letter thanking them for the gift. He called it a "Wesleyan Itinerary" for when presented with the opportunity to travel he wanted nothing more than to see "as many Absent Wesleyans as possible." To Wood the trip was much more than a vacation. It was a part of the Wesleyan class'

²² I. Charles Horowitz, *President's Thirty-Second Annual Report and Message: Wesleyan Bible Class, Chicago, October 13th, 1912*, folder 5, box 2, WBCR.

longstanding devotions to the tender bonds which knit them together in an intimate community of friends. It was, as he called it, “a pilgrimage to the sacred shrine of friendship.”²³

Over the span of a month, the Woods planned to travel across much of the western US, visiting and staying with as many absent Wesleyans as they possibly could. Every destination was the home of an absent Wesleyan, some of whom Wood had potentially been corresponding with for decades. From Chicago, the couple traveled to St. Paul, Minnesota and on through Canada to Vancouver where one former Wesleyan “asked many questions about the class and told me that he had a box in which he keeps all class literature sent to him.” From here the Woods traveled down to Seattle, where Frank responded to a shopkeeper’s shock that he would not visit Mount Rainer with a retort that he would do “better than that” by seeing former Wesleyan Billy Jeffry. After a dinner party in Tacoma where the conversation consisted of nothing but “Where is . . . ?” “How is . . . ?” “Tell us about . . . ?” and “Do you remember?,” the Woods traveled down the expanse of California, stopping in San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland, Fullerton, and Glendale before stopping for an extended period in Los Angeles where Frank was to address the Wesleyan Bible Class of the First Congregational Church of Santa Monica, the sister Bible class of Chicago which had been founded by former Wesleyans nearly twenty years earlier. At every stop, Frank claimed he and Isabelle were surrounded by “a torrent of friendliness, a tumult of welcome, a riot of love . . .” Each was a “wild, hilarious, and typically Wesleyan welcome by those who long ago were creators of what we call class spirit.”²⁴

Over the course of nearly two months Frank and Isabelle traveled thousands of miles across fifteen states and four Canadian provinces, and saw over a hundred former members of

²³ Frank L. Wood to Wesleyan Bible Class, 1 Jun. 1926, folder 9, box 3, WBCR.

²⁴ Ibid.; “Wesleyans, Westward Wind Their Wonderous [sic] Way,” folder 9, box 3, WBRC.

the Wesleyan Bible Class. Upon returning to Chicago, Frank penned an extensive letter, printed on newsprint with over five columns to a page and five pages in total. More than a reflection, it was an intimately detailed report of every event of the trip, updating the class on the lives of every Wesleyan he visited. But as he neared the end of this enormous missive, Frank suddenly realized he had made no mention of the places, sceneries, and landscapes he had visited. Frank and Isabelle had, after all, traveled under the shadows of the Rockies, over California's verdant hills, and across the west's infinite plains. Wood apologized for the oversight, but confessed he hardly considered the places he had arranged to visit.

. . . I was more interested in men than mountains; in women than in waterfalls; in faces than in flowers.

I would rather see smiles of welcome on Wesleyan faces than the smile of the morning sun on the crest of Mr. Rainer; I would rather see tears of goodbye [sic] in Wesleyan eyes, than the gentle rain on the hills of Seattle; I would rather hear the music of Wesleyan voices than . . . the waters of Lauterelle [Falls].

From the time we said "Hello" in St. Paul to the time we said "Goodby" [sic] in Bloomington, the manifestations of Wesleyan friendship were wonderful. We were simply overwhelmed with kindness. . . .

After the interval of years, I was astonished at the love of the absent members for the old class, its traditions, hopes and plans, and at the voluntary and persistent way in which they revived old memories.

Since coming back we have received many letters in which this sentence occurred: "I am glad to hear that you are safely home." . . .

. . . I have been thinking about that sentence. "I am glad to hear you are safely home," and I have thought of all the Wesleyans; some in radiant health, others laid aside in hospitals and sanitariums, making a brave fight for the things that were; some with dreams come true, others with hopes blasted; some with their faces toward the dawn; others feeling that midnight has fallen upon noon. Yes, I have been thinking of them and their faces have passed before me in the friendship's glorious panorama, and into the soul of me there has come a deathless hope that when they have finished this journey we call life and have seen its sights and known its experiences, all of them without the loss of one, may come at last—safely Home.²⁵

As Wood's sincere letter, sent to nearly a thousand Wesleyan friends, revealed, his conception of home, community, and friendship had been radically altered over the last decade. It had at one

²⁵ Ibid.

point seemed so immediate and real and physical, found in the church sanctuaries, front parlors, and prayer meetings of Chicago's West Side. But now, it receded, became ephemeral, and resided not in a place but in the abstract spaces that existed between friends and brethren who shared a distinct set of spiritual sentiments and had been displaced by seemingly unstoppable social, cultural, and economic transformations.

This newfound conception of community would ultimately guide Wood's theological and political thinking for the rest of his life. He would no longer fish the waters in which he lived in establishing a religious network, but would cast an increasingly wider net in building his devotional coalition. Immediately following his Wesleyan tour, however, he set about fashioning new devotional practices that manifested this newfound sense of community. Wood had actually begun to lay the groundwork for this in his earlier efforts to rekindle class loyalty. Early in 1925 he began a series of "Other Class Sundays," which instructed home Wesleyans who did not attend the Western Avenue church—and by 1925 this was over half the class—to invite members of their home congregations to attend the class.²⁶ The following year Wood also organized a number of "Suburban" or "Chicagoland Sundays" that extended the invitation to other churches without Wesleyan class members.²⁷ But in January of 1927, just five months after Wood had returned from his nationwide Wesleyan tour, he expand his reach even further to include every Bible class within traveling distance who desired to commune with other like-minded believers. Calling it simply "Other Class Sunday," Wood contacted every Bible class and congregation he

²⁶ *Other Church Sunday*, program dated 26 Apr. 1925, folder 27, box 2, WBCR.

²⁷ "Four Sundays in June."

had addressed over the last five years and invited them to gather and discuss evangelistic tactics and devotional plans like the Adult Bible Class committees of decades ago used to do.²⁸

In this first Other Class Sunday, Wood hoped not only to continue to build Wesleyan class loyalty, but also for nothing less than to reinvigorate the whole Adult Bible Class Movement. The idea for the event had originated in conversations between Wood and Harvey W. King after his “Back to Fundamentals” address. Out of these, both men determined that the Wesleyan Bible Class’s decline was but a part of an even greater spiritual deterioration of the American church. And in the same way Wood and King argued that only a rededication to personal piety could revive the Wesleyan class, they also argued that only an earnest return to Christianity’s historic traditions could prevent the church from backsliding into oblivion. Wood set the tone in the invitation itself, informing potential guests in the program that, “We are not inviting you to a musical entertainment, but to a religious service, brimful of melody and music, of friendship and fellowship, and where the Man of Galilee is the unseen Guest of Honor.”²⁹ He continued this air of seriousness into the service itself, taking the heady theme of Christ’s divinity as the topic of his sermon to gathering, “Behold Your King.”

Less than a dozen Bible classes from Chicago and the vicinity actually attended the event, a low figure given the number Wood had invited.³⁰ But Wood did not let the size of the crowd delimit the magnitude of his message. “To question the deity of Jesus is to charge him with falsehood,” Wood claimed at the outset, sketching a dichotomy that would define the entire

²⁸ *Other Class Sunday*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*; *Ahoy!*.

³⁰ *Other Class Sunday*.

address. “He was either God or not good.”³¹ To question the majesty and the miraculous life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, Wood argued, would be to shatter the foundations of the Biblical narrative and expose the pious sincerity of the historic Christian church to be a lineage of devotional delusion. “And yet,” Wood continued incredulously, “today some men who profess to be his ministers are teaching that there is another way.” That Jesus was but a man, even if the best man, and that the miracles that defined his life were, at best, debatable—at their worst, falsehoods. In light of such doubt, skepticism, and criticism, Wood continued, building to his conclusion, he desired to restate publicly amongst a gathering of believers the theological truths that he would never disbelieve. Truths that Wood claimed had animated, and should animate, Bible classes everywhere. “The Wesleyan Bible Class was established upon certain fundamentals of the Christian religion,” he pronounced with a certitude intended to reinforce the timelessness of the doctrines he was about to explicate.³² God’s authority, the Bible’s integrity, and Christ’s redemptive birth, death, and resurrection were tenets that no Bible class should ever debate, “because . . . they are not debatable.” “We do not argue about the virgin birth, the miracles of Jesus, whether he were dead or alive in the tomb, or whether he is coming again,” Wood continued, equating basic theological tenets of the old-line Protestant denominations with common sense, grade-school truths, “any more than we would discuss whether the earth is round, whether two and two make four or whether two objects can occupy the same space [at] the same time. We consider that all these matters are settled.”³³

³¹ Wood, *The Layman’s Galilean*, 11.

³² *Ibid.*, 18.

³³ *Ibid.*, 19.



Figure 12: Frank L. Wood, 1929. West Garfield Park Community Collection, Chicago Public Library. WGP 1.193.

In this first of what would become many Other Class Sundays, Wood outlined the contours of his new understanding of community. Though the event only brought together classes from the Chicago region, Wood did not situate their history and mission in the metropolitan area from which they had emerged. As Wood very well may have but a decade ago, he could have called upon this network of Bible classes to participate in a host of campaigns in which he had long taken interest, such as advocating the vigorous enforcement of Prohibition, continuing to push for the municipal ownership of certain city services, or even engaging in restrictive housing practices in order to preserve the West Side's preexisting demographic profile. Instead, Wood implicated every Bible class in a galactic theological struggle for the doctrinal soul of American Christianity. Not only was Wood's intent in organizing the event largely irrelevant to Chicago's ongoing social, political, and demographic development, but his message was devoid of any sense of place at all. Which side of the ecclesiastical divide one was

on became the foundation of this coalition, a community of belief whose relevance was to an institution that existed only in the discursive world of Protestant theology.

It was a concern that increasingly defined not only Wood's leadership of the Wesleyan class, but also his personal religious identity. Throughout the decade, Wood made the defense of what he considered to be the fundamental, historic doctrines of the Christian church from the skeptical onslaught of modern theologians his central purpose. He increasingly lectured not on those Bible class methods and practices that could increase membership, but on the responsibility Bible class's had to combat the church's spiritual enervation. To the Sunday schools of suburban Austin, Wood spoke on the veracity of Christ's resurrection; to city Bible class of young married couples he spoke on the accuracy of Jesus' many miracles. As one suburban Bible class teacher wrote to Wood reflecting this new persona of orthodoxy's defender, "We need more men like you in this time of worldliness."³⁴ Then, in September 1927, on the occasion of the start of his thirtieth year as teacher of the class, Wood sat down to write his own declaration of his newfound fundamentalist self-identification. In a letter that he sent to every home, suburban, and absent Wesleyan, and that would be reprinted, rewritten, and resent to thousands more, Wood claimed that because of the "materialism of our day" in both personal faith and seminary theology, he desired "again to reaffirm my faith" for the sake of Christians everywhere.

I believe in God. I believe that He is a spirit and that those who worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his Son, our Lord. I believe in His deity. I believe that he was born of the Virgin Mary. I believe in his miracles because I believe that the power that can create, can rule and over-rule. I believe in the story of His life, death, resurrection and ascension as left by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I believe that He returned in the spirit at Pentecost and has been here since that time, for I have felt Him in my heart. I believe that on the cross He tasted death for every man, and that by faith in him we are redeemed from the power of faith in Him we are from the

³⁴ Lillian Knowles to FLW, 5 Dec. 1926, FLWSB, VI: 16. See also the material in FLWSB, VI: 15-37.

power of sin. I believe that what He did here in the flesh, He does now through the spirit, to soul and body.³⁵

Without believing such truths, Wood argued, he “would no more think of being a Bible class teacher and denying them, than of being a navigator and denying the principles of navigation.” To do so, Wood suggested, would be to turn the historic Christian church into a mere community center with no power to save and transform. He simply could not give up Christ’s deity, the Bible’s authority, and the spiritual mission of the church, Wood claimed. “I regard these things as fundamental.”³⁶

Frank Wood remained a Bible class teacher—how could he be anything else? But for the first time he found his historic designation of himself as a Christian no longer accurately reflected neither his sense of himself nor the stakes of modern life. For these reasons, he took on the designation of a fundamentalist.



Frank Wood’s personal identification as a fundamentalist, and his decision to recruit the Bible classes he influenced into a rhetorical war for the fundamentals was in many respects a timely. Concurrent with his efforts to revive the Wesleyan class, ministers and prominent laymen who also identified themselves as fundamentalists had similarly embarked on a number of public, and increasingly controversial religious campaigns to defend the faith in the decade following the First World War. During the war itself, the debate over military preparedness rekindled a longstanding theological debate between premillennialist ministers such as James M. Gray of the Moody Bible Institute, who believed the world was on an irrevocable downward slide toward destruction until Christ’s millennial return, and more liberal theologians particularly associated

³⁵ FLW to WBC, 10 Sep. 1927, reprinted in *A Presidential Decade*.

³⁶ Ibid.

with the University of Chicago Divinity School who argued such a stance embraced war as prophecy and therefore was unpatriotic.³⁷ But these smoldering discursive debates, which largely took place on the pages of theological journals, were but a prelude to far more contentious struggles throughout the 1920s.

In the summer of 1918 William Bell Riley, pastor of the 3,500 member First Baptist Church of Minneapolis in Minnesota, and A. C. Dixon, an editor of *The Fundamentals* and former pastor of Moody Church, met with six other conservative theologians to organize the World's Christian Fundamentals Association. From its first public gathering in Philadelphia in May 1919, the Association declared its mission to be nothing short of the reclamation of American culture against what they called the nation's "Great Apostasy." The preceding global war, the spread of Bolshevism, and the decline in traditional Protestant moralism, the Association argued, were all the result of "Thousands of false teachers, many of them occupying high ecclesiastical positions," who were "bringing in damnable heresies" into devotional life of the Christian church.³⁸ Only an aggressive reinstatement of nine essential, "fundamental" doctrines into every denomination's statement of faith—the verbal inspiration of scripture, the veracity of the Trinity, the salvific power of Christ's virgin birth, deity, substitutionary death, resurrection, and eventual return, and the bodily resurrection of all believers at that time—could return both American and the Christian church to "the faith once delivered."³⁹ With the moral

³⁷ The best coverage of this millennialist struggle remains George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006 [1980]), 142-53. But see also Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 208-12.

³⁸ "Introduction," *God Hath Spoken: Twenty-Five Addresses Delivered at the World Conference of Christian Fundamentals, May 25 to June 1 1919* (Philadelphia: Bible Conference Committee, 1919), 7.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

and institutional support of this national organization behind them, Association members, whom conservative Baptist minister Curtis Lee Laws called “fundamentalists” in the summer of 1920 because of their willingness “to do battle royal for the Fundamentals” against “a widespread and growing worldliness,”⁴⁰ launched ecclesiastical campaigns to make the Association’s platform official church policy. Over the next decade, nearly every Protestant denomination in the north experienced open, acrimonious conflict in its conferences and general assemblies as militant conservative ministers attempted to purge liberal theologians through the passage of tightly-written statements of faith. In the Northern Baptist Convention and the Northern Presbyterian Church, the conflict would even lead to schisms within as fundamentalists who failed in their efforts broke off to form new ecclesiastical bodies in 1922 and 1936, respectively.⁴¹

Wood’s own Methodist Episcopal Church became caught up in the theological controversies of the decade. In 1921, the debates that had long simmered between a number of bishops over the higher criticism came to a head when New Jersey minister Harold Paul Sloan launched a series of scathing articles in the Methodist press that claimed the church’s official Course of Study was heretical and contrary to the historic doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Over a quarter of the forty-odd books the denomination required ministers to read for ordination, Sloan charged, denied Christ’s divinity, taught evolution, and questioned the Bible’s integrity. “If a majority of the preachers of Methodism are taught contrary to the established standards of their church and of historic Christianity while they are taking their theological

⁴⁰ “Convention Side-Light,” *Watchmen-Examiner*, VIII (1 Jul. 1920): 834; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 159.

⁴¹ On the denominational conflicts of this decade, see *ibid.*, 171-75; Norman F. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1963), chaps. 6-12; Stewart G. Cole, *The History of Fundamentalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1931), part II.

training,” Sloan claimed, “It will be a matter of only a few year before the church’s standards will be completely undermined.”⁴² Sloan’s writings became a rallying cry, drawing together a number of conservative Methodist ministers and bishops from conferences largely along the eastern sea board who successfully demanded the General Conference appoint a Commission on Courses of Study to examine the orthodoxy of the denomination’s reading list. When the Commission proclaimed the reading list to be sound, Sloan and his allies decried the entire denomination as apostate and gathering in Wilmington, Delaware in Februar of 1925 to organize the Methodist League for Faith and Life.⁴³

Like fundamentalist activists in the other denominations, the League largely concerned itself with the nuances of Methodist doctrine and polity. In its statement of objectives, the body proclaimed its concerns were, “to declare anew the faith once delivered to the Saints; to reaffirm the vital and essential truths of the Christian religion, . . . to reassert the historic and fundamental doctrines upon which our Methodism was founded; and to bring home to the heart of the church the subtle and harmful effects of modern, destructive criticism of the Bible, in order that we may guard and guide the thought of the church and keep pure, sweet and clean the stream of truth within the church.”⁴⁴ Calling themselves “Essentialists,” in reference to the essential doctrines they sought to reclaim, the League organized branches in Annual Conferences throughout the

⁴² Harold Paul Sloan, *Historic Christianity and the New Theology* (Louisville, KY: Pentacostal Publishing Company, 1922), 19. The text is Sloan’s manifesto, a compendium of the articles he original published on the topic. See also William Bryant Lewis, “The Role of Harold Paul Sloan and the Methodist League for Faith and Life in the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversey of the Methodist Episcopal Church,” (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1963), 92-95.

⁴³ Hobert Charles Calderwood, “The Fundamentalist Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church,” (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago Divinity School, 1927), 14-15; Cole, *The History of Fundamentalism*, 168-70.

⁴⁴ Calderwood, “The Fundamentalist Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church,” 5-6.

country to coordinate the efforts of conservative Methodists everywhere. At the same time Wood was adopting the title of fundamentalist for himself in 1927, the League was at work gathering the signatures of purportedly 10,000 Methodist ministers and laymen to demand the General Conference pass a detailed creedal statement and adopt a new Course of Study in line with Methodism's historic orthodoxy.⁴⁵

Wood frustratingly made no public comment on any of these developments throughout the decade. Neither his first Other Class Sunday nor the declaration of his own fundamentalism bore any foreseeable relation to the activities of League, the World's Christian Fundamentals Association, or any of the other denominational fundamentalists. In fact, the Laymen's Association of the Rock River Conference, with which Wood still occasionally participated in his latter years, publicly avoided any affiliation with Sloan or the League.⁴⁶ But Wood was certainly aware of their existence. By 1925, the nationwide, sensational press coverage the Scopes Monkey Trial received made this theological nomenclature a household term and prompted extensive coverage of denominational squabbles even in the respectable press. Wood, moreover, was an avid and longtime reader of the Methodist *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, where he would have undoubtedly observed the extensive coverage the paper gave the League's activities in the Midwest.⁴⁷ Wood also evinced a certain understanding of the broader activities of the fundamentalist movement in his earliest writings as a fundamentalist. In "reaffirm[ing]" his faith

⁴⁵ Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy*, 153-55; Lewis, "The Role of Harold Paul Sloan and the Methodist League for Faith and Life in the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy of the Methodist Episcopal Church," 194-204.

⁴⁶ *Journal and Year Book of the Eighty-fourth Session of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Chicago, Illinois, October 3 to 9, 1923* (Chicago: Conference, 1923), 17, 71.

⁴⁷ See, for example, *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, 4 Jan. 1924, 21 Jan. 1926, and 21 Apr. 1927; Calderwood, "The Fundamentalist Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church," 55.

to the class in September of 1927, Wood largely paraphrased the Apostles' Creed in declaring what he identified to be "fundamental"—the belief in God, in Christ his son, and in the miraculous and saving nature of his birth, death, and resurrection as taught by the historic Christian church—which was the central platform of the Methodist League for Faith and Life's petition to the General Conference.⁴⁸

However, Wood ultimately did not engage with these manifestations of the fundamentalist movement for his attraction to the term as a meaningful source of religious identity was not found in the Monkey Trials and denominational coups of the era. Rather, it was in many ways rooted in his lived reality as a Bible class teacher concerned with the spiritual vitality of his students and as a resident Chicago's rapidly changing West Side. For instance in the years after the declaration of his fundamentalism, Wood's most identifiably fundamentalist activity was to transform the Wesleyan Bible Class' "Other Class Sunday" into an annual event. In the fourteen classes and roughly one hundred individuals who attended the first service, Wood claimed to have witnessed "the retroactive benefit of this wider ministry" in which Bible classes from across the city could come and be revived their Bible class work. Beginning in February of 1928, Wood opened the event to any interested party and immediately gathered nearly four hundred individuals from nearly thirty classes from throughout the Chicagoland area.⁴⁹

In these annual gatherings, Wood articulated a fundamentalism that differed profoundly from the widely publicized activities of other self-identified fundamentalists like Sloan. For instance, Wood gave little thought to doctrinal orthodoxy or creedal specificity. In fact, beyond

⁴⁸ Compare FLW to WBC, 10 Sep. 1927, reprinted in *A Presidential Decade with the Apostles' Creed* as recorded in the Methodist Book of Discipline, *Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1920* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1920), 72. See also Calderwood, "The Fundamentalist Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church," 18;

⁴⁹ *Second Other Class Sunday*, program dated 9 Feb. 1928, folder 1, box 3, WBCR.

the Apostle's Creed that he considered so fundamental, Wood was quite derisive of any kind of systematic theology. He considered any discussion on a question of formal doctrine a lengthy discourse on a "mooted question" that to him "meant nothing."⁵⁰ As an untrained laymen whose theological training largely consisted of the International Sunday School Association's Uniform Lesson Series and the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, this repudiation of high church thinking may at first glance appear unsurprising. And indeed Wood had evinced a lack of theological sophistication throughout much of his life. But Wood was no anti-intellectual. He had not spent the previous fifty years identifying himself varyingly as a Bible class "teacher" and "scholar" because he was adverse to a well-read life. The countless hours he spent studying and preparing weekly lessons and writing Bible class publications easily belies any such notion. But as a Bible class teacher concerned with the moral and spiritual wellbeing of his students, Wood was a theological pragmatist. He considered any excessive interest in and focus on doctrinal matters to be a distraction from the more important experiential features of a lived religious life. "A doctrine is what we think or believe, but the substance lies back of that," Wood told a gathering of Bible class teachers at the third Other Class Sunday. "Our doctrines are correct only so far as they correspond with the substance."⁵¹ Or, as he would put it more simply later on, "Religion is not a formality but a feeling . . . Not a creed but an experience. Religion is a belief, but it is also a life."⁵²

This overriding concern with the practical informed much of the theological musing Wood engaged in. His concern with defending Christ's divinity from liberal theologians who

⁵⁰ FLW, "The Mariner of Galilee," *Laymen's Galilean*, 25.

⁵¹ FLW, "Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday, and Today, and Forever," *Laymen's Galilean*, 40.

⁵² FLW, "Religion in Action," *ibid*, 135.

viewed Jesus more as a sage than a savior, for example, was never in the interest of preserving a theological truth. Rather it emerged from his concern that a humanized Christ would be unable to sustain the laity's devotion. As Wood claimed before another gathering of Bible class advocates from across the city, "we have so emphasized creeds and denominations that instead of forming a background to throw into stronger relief the majestic figure of Jesus Christ, they often have hidden him from view."⁵³ Indeed, Wood suggested that in addition to opening the gates of heaven, the essential purpose of Christ's divinity was to turn the devotional forms of religious life into transformative experiences of Christ's real presence. It was a position many of Wood's contemporaries shared, for as the Laymen's Association, in their refusal to engage in Sloan's defense of the essentials, they found "the fundamentals of the Christian religion [only] in the things that can be experienced."⁵⁴ This concern with the experiential had long guided Wood's emphasis on friendship, for its ability to manifest in the sentiments of relationship the presence of Christ. Without a divine, supernatural savior, these deep felt emotions born of Bible class life would be mere sentiments, figments of the human experience with no greater purpose. "Take away the divinity of Jesus," Wood claimed, "and the upper room is a social gathering, the sacrament an empty form, Gethsemane loses its meaning, Calvary its atonement, the open tomb its hope and the Spirit his power."⁵⁵ Take away the divinity of Jesus and the annual banquets, social gathering, and letter writing would similar loose its religious meaning.

⁵³ FLW, "Thy Kingdom Come," *A Series of Eight Broadcasts: Over Station WHFC Chicago, "The Friendly Hour"* (Chicago: Grant's Printery, 1939), 57.

⁵⁴ *Journal and Year Book of the Eighty-fourth Session of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Chicago, Illinois, October 3 to 9, 1923*, 71.

⁵⁵ FLW, "A Broken Roof and a Mended Man," *Layman's Galilean*, 59.

This emphasis on the practical also ordered Wood's understanding of the Bible. Perhaps few other doctrines have defined the history of fundamentalism as its Biblicism. Nearly every concern that animated fundamentalists throughout the 1920s found their roots in specific views of scripture as inherently reliable and precise. The belief in Christ's divinity rested in the infallibility of the Gospel accounts, the preservation of the miraculous in everyday life relied upon the wonders of the Old Testament, and, as Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan's famous exchange in a tiny courtroom in Tennessee made clear, the earliest fights against evolution were rooted in the Genesis story.⁵⁶ To be sure, Wood believed the Bible was written with inerrant textual precision. A defense of the Bible's veracity, after all, was one of the first issues that gained him a wider audience in Bible class circle throughout Chicago, and in his lectures at Other Class Sundays and other venues throughout Chicago in the years after he declared himself to be a fundamentalist, Wood continued to maintain the Bible gave "a coherent account, without contradiction" of God's unfolding plan for the world.⁵⁷ But to Wood, the Bible was never so much a factual chronicling of God's miracles so much as it was in itself miraculous.

Wood, for example, by no means felt himself bound to preserving the Bible's textual integrity in his teaching. In fact, he was skilled at manipulating a particular text for full effect. In instructing other Bible class teachers on method, he encouraged them to "Use your imagination

⁵⁶ On the centrality of Biblical views to fundamentalism see David S. Katz, *God's Last Words: Reading the English Bible from the Reformation to Fundamentalism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 312-15; Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Origins of Fundamentalism: Toward a Historical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 12-17; Kathryn Lofton, "Queering Fundamentalism: John Balcom Shaw and the Sexuality of a Protestant Orthodoxy," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17 (2008): 447-48.

⁵⁷ FLW, "A Broken Roof and a Mended Man," *Layman's Galilean*, 49.

and descriptive powers freely.”⁵⁸ In a lesson he gave on Jesus’ healing of a paralytic in a crowded house at the Fourth Other Class Sunday gathering in 1930, Wood opened by inviting the audience—which by this date had grown to over fifty classes with over seven hundred in attendance—to “Let us in imagination enter [the house] and take our places unseen.”⁵⁹ While the Biblical story focuses solely on Jesus’ exchange with the Pharisees on the forgiveness of sins and makes very little mention of the actual environment in which it took place beyond that it was, indeed, a house full of people, such scriptural sparseness did not prevent Wood from setting an impressive scene. In Wood’s rendering, this tiny house in Capernum was surrounded by “colorful bazaars and marts of trade” full of “rapid movement and tense scenes” of exchange. As Jesus enters the home, people fill “every available place, drawn by curiosity, love, and need,” pushing, fighting, scratching to see as their “gaze is drawn to one point and fixed upon one man—the serene and majestic figure of Christ.” And after the paralytic, a “stricken form,” is lowered into the home through the roof by his friends, Wood relished in “the blank astonishment on the faces of the Pharisees” as Jesus heals the cripple and could not help but mention that they had to “brush from their ecclesiastical robes the dirt from the broken roof” as they left.⁶⁰

This, then, was a Bible that was not so much inerrant as it was alive. It was the word made flesh, grounded not in textual veracity but in its ability to miraculously convey the miracles of the past. It was a Bible that smelled of the leper’s sores, tasted of the salty Galilean air, brayed with the sheep in the manger, and revealed stunning vistas of Calvary. Such sensational renderings became a hallmark of Wood’s teaching, used to great effect. He may have read

⁵⁸ FLW, “Lesson Suggestions for the Teacher,” *New Adult Bible Class Movement Monthly* IX no. 6 (Jun. 1914): 37.

⁵⁹ Ibid; *Fourth Other Class Sunday*, program dated 9 Feb. 1930, folder 2, box 3, WBCR.

⁶⁰ FLW, “A Broken Roof and a Mended Man,” *Layman’s Galilean*, 49-50.

certain details into the text, and concocted not a few others, but much like his understanding of the spiritual power of personal relationships, Wood claimed that the Bible's sacredness lay in the emotional responses it universally produced. His audience largely agreed. In teaching on Jesus' healing of the blind man, Wood pretended to be blind and stumbled across the stage as he explicated the contours of the story. As one student recalled, as Wood "grouped [sic] his way across the platform and represented the latter bathing in the pool, I followed the man every step of his way through the streets, forgetting that it was the teacher on the platform, and at last when he stood beside the pool I was out of breath with the intenseness of it."⁶¹ For Wood, soliciting such reactions was vital in conveying the message of the text. As another student described his lesson on the raising of Lazarus, "The picture of the scene at the open tomb, together with the thrice-repeated cry, 'Lazarus, come forth,' I shall never forget, and when the teacher described his coming, it almost seemed that I could see the white-robed figure."⁶²

For Wood, the Bible had a certain power beyond its textual veracity. It not only accurately depicted a miraculous past, but through miraculous means of its own the book was able to make these historic events vibrant, new, and relevant. As a divinely inspired text, Wood argued the Bible could never be fully understood. Its meaning was like a horizon, forever receding further in the distance as a reader moved closer and closer to it. Rather than an endless Sisyphean struggle, however, the Bible's enigmatic character was the source of the Bible's strength. Wood called it the Bible's "ever-newness," its ability to ceaselessly reveal new

⁶¹ Quoted in FLW to WBC, 7 Feb. 1921, folder 5, box 2, WBCR.

⁶² Ibid.

perspectives, new spiritual truths to the devout reader.⁶³ As he remarked of the story of Christ calming the storm,

Read these verses once and you think of Mark with his ability to tell great stories in short sentences.

Read it a second time and you are impressed by a storm and a miracle.

Read it a third time and behold, cowardice and fear and awe and wonder are here.

...

Read it again and you realize that in this scene on a wild night, on a little lake in an out-of-the-way corner of the earth, there are lessons for our inspiration in this modern city standing at the end of more than nineteen centuries.

Of course, in the end this is an argument that could be applied to every text. Every book read a second time tells a different story. But to Wood, it was an eternal newness that applied only to scripture. Harkening back to some of his earliest addresses on the historical relevance of the Bible, Wood argued its influence in history, literature, and art not only signaled its universal appeal, but also its divine origin. Without Christ's life there would be no "The Last Supper"; without the Bible's parables there would be no Milton; without the Psalms, there would be no hymnody.⁶⁴

Though he excluded the whole of the non-western world with such an argument, this emphasis on Christianity's enduring historical relevancy was Wood's most consistent theological perspective and became the grounds upon which he adopted fundamentalism as a meaningful source of religious identity. Indeed, it was the foundation of his fundamentalist critique of the

⁶³ FLW, "The Mariner of Galilee," *Layman's Galilean*, 23. My thinking on the Bible's nature as a "horizon" is drawn from James Simpson, *Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and Its Reformation Opponents* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 6, 85-86.

⁶⁴ FLW, "Behold Your King," *Laymen's Galilean*, 12-14. See also FLW, "I Know in Whom I Believe," *Record* [bulletin of the Shady Avenue Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Pittsburg] (May 1904): 11, in *FLWSB*, I: 25-26.

modern church. In what would become the defining address of Wood's fundamentalist years, repeated before not only the second Other Class Sunday but churches throughout the Midwest, Wood argued that the church had traded this historical permanence for contemporary relevance, and had betrayed its mission in the process. The world, Wood argued, is marked by an endless cycle of changes and transformations. Governments change, politics change, friends change, jobs change, nations change, indeed even cities and neighborhoods change, Wood noted in what was clearly personal reference. But the "heart of humanity," Wood averred, "longs for that which changes not." It yearns for a "fixity of ideals, persistence of purpose, permanence of plans, changelessness of character" that could only be found in the material world. And only Jesus Christ, Wood argued in revealing the title of his address, was "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."⁶⁵ For centuries, Wood continued, the Christian church had championed this unchanged Christ. But now "certain preachers of the gospel and religious educators calmly tell me that they disclaim the miracles of Jesus; that they were hypnotic cures to be explained in some natural way, or are the additions of a subsequent age."⁶⁶ Such a change to that which should be changeless, Wood argued, required his newfound ardent reaffirmation of the fundamentals.

With this overarching concern in locating permanence in a world given to change, it is perhaps not surprising that Wood's devotional musings ultimately circled back to the pressing circumstances of Chicago's West Side toward the end of the 1920s. The city's material conditions had long been the crucible in which Wood's religious positions had been forged, and his identification as a fundamentalist was no different. Just beneath the surface of his interest in

⁶⁵ FLW, "Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday, and Today, and Forever," *Laymen's Galilean*, 37.

⁶⁶ FLW, "A Broken Roof, A Mended Man," *Laymen's Galilean*, 62.

defending and preserving the historical doctrines of the Christian church was an equally as earnest, and much darker, interest in preserving and defending the historic condition of his neighborhood. Before a growing audience of Bible classes from across the city who attended his now annual Other Class Sundays, Wood lamented the “breaking down of morals among young people” he witnessed in the city.⁶⁷ He felt accursed by “The so called popular songs of the day” he now regularly heard “in my neighborhood and in the night.” “Jazz music,” he bitterly declared, “has in it no seed of immortality.”⁶⁸ On top of this, word also began to spread that the city of Chicago planned to tear down the Western Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church as part of a plan to widen the avenue—a move intended to accommodate the increased traffic in automobiles who passed through the neighborhood but no longer stopped there.⁶⁹

As was the purpose in organizing these Other Class Sundays all along, Wood felt that only a revival in the city’s Bible class life could return some semblance of faith, community, and stability to his own life as well as that of the city’s increasingly gathered Bible classes. As an event that grew out his efforts to revive the Wesleyan Bible Class’s flailing sense of community, these other class gatherings increasingly became momentary recreations of the religious networks that once existed throughout the city. In addition to extending invitations to every Bible class nearby, Wood made a half-hearted attempt to reconstitute the Cook County Sunday School Association’s Adult Bible Class Committee in these gatherings. The move failed, despite the attendance of some of the committee’s members, but it was never a serious endeavor on Wood’s

⁶⁷ “Wesleyans Wind their Wonderous [sic] Way,” 5.

⁶⁸ “Behold your King,” *Laymen’s Galilean*, 14.

⁶⁹ *The Occasion*, forty-fifth anniversary banquet program dated 11-13 Oct. 1925, folder 19, box 1, WBCR; “Road Widening is Pushed Over 36 Mile Total,” *Chicago Daily-Tribune*, 11 Jun. 1927.

part. He extended invitations only to the committee's original members when he sat on its board, and there was never a plan to start any kind of new work beyond simply attending the annual meetings for lectures, songs, and discussions.⁷⁰ Never an attempt to actually build a new Adult Bible Class Movement, these Other Class Sundays slowly devolved into commemorative events that only manufactured a sense of the community of older days. As one attendee wrote to Wood of the gathering's benefits, they were now "the only place where Bible class folks get together and feel the thrill of kindred spirits."⁷¹ "The minute you enter the room," wrote another Bible class member, "you feel an atmosphere of friendship, and more than that; O, I can't explain it; it was as if a greater than human Presence was there."⁷²

For all of the great expectations Wood initially associated with the organization of these annual Bible class gatherings, then, they ultimately conveyed the degree to which both Wood as well as a number of Chicago's lay evangelicals felt increasingly isolated, marginalized, and severed from any meaningful sense of connection to the city throughout these later years. Not too long ago, Wood like a number of Bible class activists elsewhere, had enrolled in a number of reform organizations in the face of similar circumstances. Throughout Chicago's most rapid social, economic, and political development, Wood had evinced a remarkable creativity in his religious and political life. Motivated by an interest in seeing the church remain at the center of the city's social life, and that access to life's basic necessities was a hallmark of this church-centered social order, he had helped organize or lead a number of seemingly contradictory associations. As a teacher of the Wesleyan Bible Class and an active member other local,

⁷⁰ *Fifth Other Class Sunday*, program dated 9 Mar. 1932, and *Sixth Other Class Sunday*, program dated 2 Feb. 1932, folder 2, box 3, WBCR.

⁷¹ *Ninth Other Class Sunday*, program dated 24 Mar. 1935, folder 3, box 3, WBCR.

⁷² *Eighth Other Class Sunday*, program dated 4 Mar. 1934, folder 2, box 3, WBCR.

regional, and national Sunday school associations, Wood strove to keep alive the notion that an upright, Christian character was essential to a well-lived life. At the same time, Wood's political campaigns as a reform-minded Republican and, later, as a Socialist, was an effort to ensure that being a morally responsible citizen received a measure of protection from the state, and was rewarded by the larger community.

But now, as he approached his seventies and with death or exodus taking many of his friends, colleagues, and brethren from the city, Wood no longer found in Chicago's West Side a community worth defending or saving. In the place of his former political and religious activism, Wood now only cried that "We must get back to Jesus" in order to revive the city.⁷³ It was a sentiment he had long held, but now came absent of programmatic or organizational engagement. Out of the Other Class Sundays and the Wesleyan Bible Class's other activities in these later years there emerged no new organization, no new reform campaign, no activity beyond the social and devotional practices of an increasingly dwindling number of participants. Now there was only nostalgia, and a wistful longing for the transformation this return to Jesus could bring to the city. If the city would just get back to Jesus, Wood yearned, there would be "no more exploitation," no more "destruction of property," no more "rioting and bloodshed." Indeed if the city but got back to Jesus, there would even be no more "Bohunks, Chinks, Coons, Greasers, Polacks, Sheenies, or Wops," but followers of Christ.⁷⁴



This, then, was the fundamentalism of Frank Wood. It was a faith that emerged not in the dogmatic struggles of denominational polity, but was rooted in the lived realities of everyday

⁷³ FLW, "Thou Shalt Call His Name Jesus," *Laymen's Galilean*, 89.

⁷⁴ FLW, "On the Jericho Road," *Laymen's Galilean*, 76.

religious life. His defense of Jesus' divinity or scripture's integrity emerged not so much out of a concern for the intellectual viability of Christian orthodoxy, but from an interest in preserving the devotional power of these icons for the religious practices of the devout. Without an inspired Bible or a supernatural savior, Christians would have no basis to associate with each at a level deeper than that which they engaged the outside world. And it was very much this outside world that compelled Wood's adoption of a new religious identity. His interest in preserving what he considered to be the fundamentals of the Christian religion was never so much ecclesiastical in origin as it was social. It emerged from his growing concern with the dissolution of the community around him, as formerly devout members of his Bible class not only left the neighborhood, but also the class. His self-identification as a fundamentalist became a platform around which to reconstitute this Bible class community. With geography no longer a functional feature of his social life, Wood looked to construct a new community around a set of devotional ideals.

This interest in fashioning a new fundamentalist community prompted significant changes in Wood's social and political life. So much of his earlier politics had been situated in the defense of what he considered to be his home, Chicago's far West Side. His commitment to such evangelical reforms as Local Option as well as his decision to leave the Republican party to join in the Socialist Party's crusade to gain the municipal ownership of certain city services were, to Wood, both in the interest of the West Side's quality of life. But with this connection to the West Side largely severed by his efforts to fashion a community around certain religious ideals, neither Wood's personal identity nor political commitments were bound to any sense of place. Thus, in the midst of the 1928 presidential election Wood transitioned back into the Republican party. Believing Prohibition was under threat by the Democratic party's nomination of New

York Governor, and devout Catholic, Al Smith, Wood, for the first time since his repudiation of the Socialist Party, reentered politics. Throughout the fall, he addressed a number of churches and Bible classes throughout the city, warning congregations that the Eighteenth Amendment's fate hung in the balance this election season.⁷⁵ Of course, Wood's political defense of prohibition was, in part, a defense of his community. Should the law be repealed, saloons would no doubt populate his neighborhood as well as the nation. But Wood's motivation in defending Prohibition was, in the end, not in the defense of his community for by that time he had severed all connection to the neighborhood he had for so long called home.

By the end of 1928, it had become clear that the city intended to widen Western Avenue and level the Western Avenue church in the process. Traffic upon the road was simply too heavy to keep the avenue a residential street, as cars no longer stopped in the area but passed through. Wood was crushed. "We are creatures of location," he told the class in his letter informing them of the church's closure, and he could not stomach the thought that "Careless feet will tread where prayer was wont to be made. The crowds will hurry over that which to us was a sacred place."⁷⁶ As a trustee of the Western Avenue church, Wood could have mounted a protest over the action, or requested the aid of the Rock River Conference. But by that time, the church had been reduced to a mere 150 members, many of whom did not attend, and the building was in need of

⁷⁵ FLW to R. E. Himbaugh, 14 Oct. 1928 and Martha to FLW, 18 Oct. 1928, FLWSB, 63-64. On the 1928 presidential election see Norman H. Clark, *Deliver Us From Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1976), 189-92; Barry Hankins, *Jesus and Gin: Evangelicalism, the Roaring Twenties and Today's Culture Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 187-211.

⁷⁶ FLW to WBC, reprinted in *Anniversary Wesleyan Bible Class in Celebration of its History, the Forty-Eight Year. With its Present Teacher, the Thirty Second Year*, anniversary program dated 28-30 Oct. 1928, folder 21, box 1, WBCR.

several repairs.⁷⁷ There was some discussion of even closing the Wesleyan Bible Class as well, until in February of 1929 the board of Olivet Methodist Episcopal Church extended an invitation for the class to locate there. Located five blocks beyond Garfield Park at the corner of Adams Street and Keeler Avenue, Olivet was not only not in any danger of being demolished but also was far beyond the rapidly changing area of Chicago's West Side. Many Western Avenue members who had left the church, moreover, had moved to attend Olivet. Accordingly, Wood called an all-class business meeting where it was voted to accept Olivet's invitation and leave the Western Avenue church before its destruction.⁷⁸

One night before the Wesleyan Class' last day in the old church, several members of the class, including Wood, gathered to pack up the class's belongings. Wood planned to create a "Gallery of Memory" in Olivet where photographs and materials from the class's history could be displayed. The material included thirty-four record books and anniversary programs—one for every year Wood had been teacher—four scrapbooks of printed material, three hundred portraits of class members, over four hundred photos of the class, and countless other souvenirs and letters. Before the class met again, the church was robbed and a great deal of this material was either stolen or destroyed.⁷⁹ Then, on the last Sunday in April of 1929, a little over a year shy of its fiftieth anniversary, the class gathered for its final service at the church. In closing out the

⁷⁷ Ibid, *Journal and Year Book of the Ninety-first Session of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Wilmette Parish Methodist Episcopal Church, Wilmette, Illinois, October 1-6, 1930* (Chicago: The Conference, 1930), 116.

⁷⁸ "Raze West Side Church," *West Town News*, 6 Jun. 1930; "Olivet's First Services Held in Store Building in 1889" *The Garfield News* 20 Mar. 1946; *Dedication of New Home of the Wesleyan Bible Class*, pamphlet dated 5 May 1929, folder 29, box 2, WBCR; *60th Anniversary of Olivet Methodist Episcopal Church, 1949-1940 Annual Directory and Telephone Register*, folder 4, box 4, WGPCC.

⁷⁹ *Half Century Anniversary of the Wesleyan Bible Class*, program dated 18-21 Oct. 1930, folder 23, box 1, WBCR.

Wesleyan Bible Class's tenure at the Western Avenue church, Wood opted not to plan any special events. "It will be hard enough as it is," Wood wrote in explaining his decision. The day was to be just like any other Sunday afternoon service, complete with an opening hymn, Wood's lesson on the scripture, and then a social hour—but with one exception. Wood desired that the class for the first time take communion together. "In our various churches in many ways we have observed the Lord's Supper," he noted, "but never have we taken it together." But "church membership or denomination have nothing to do with taking this sacrament," Wood continued. To do so as a class Wood be to follow Christ's simple dictum to "Do this in remembrance of me." And so on 28 April 1929, the class gathered, went through the regular Sunday lesson plans, and then, as if a new congregation unto itself, took communion as a body.⁸⁰

The following Sunday the class opened its services at Olivet. The clean cut, clear nature of its bulletin gives the impression that nothing had changed, that this was another Sunday in the history of the Wesleyan class. But the class' move was a powerful symbol of the evolution of Chicago's West Side, and the desire by many of the neighborhood's white, native-born Protestant residents to have nothing to do with it. Wood would follow the class west soon after its move. After it was announced the city was to destroy the church, he and Isabelle left their home and moved to an apartment on Lawndale Avenue more than two miles away on the western side of Garfield Park. It was the farthest Wood had ever lived from the Western Avenue church, and the first time he had moved outside the stretch of city between Garfield and Union Parks that he had once called "our great West Side."⁸¹ The move marked an epoch in Wood's

⁸⁰ FLW to WBC, 13 Apr. 1929, folder 29, box 2, WBCR.

⁸¹ Horowitz, *President's Thirty-Second Annual Report and Message; The Lakeside Annual Director of the City of Chicago: Embracing a Complete General and Business Director, 1928-29* (Chicago: Williams, Donnelley & Company, 1929), 3262.

relation to the city, and signaled the shift in the sense of community his identification as a fundamentalist had caused.

CONCLUSION:
JEREMIAD

We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies.

- Deuteronomy 32:7

We are confronted then, by two great facts; the changes of the world and the changlessness of Christ.

- Frank L. Wood, 1929¹



Frank Wood never returned to his stomping grounds in the Thirteenth Ward. He lived the rest of his life beyond the confines of Chicago West Side in the comfortable, largely white and native-born neighborhood to the west of Garfield Park. He continued to edit the *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* and remained active in the Wesleyan Bible Class's new home at Olivet Methodist Episcopal Church, but he avoided the city's West Side almost entirely throughout the 1930s. In fact, the only contact Wood had with his former neighborhood was through the West Side Historical Society. Organized in 1930 as one of the city's first local historical associations, the Society was composed of former West Side residents like Wood, who had fled the neighborhood after their neighbors became increasingly black or foreign. But Wood and the Society's other 400 members all yearned to recreate the bonds of this earlier community, and did so through a

¹ FLW, *The Layman's Galilean* (Chicago: Grant's Printery, 1938), 46.

variety of neighborhood reunions, historical exhibits, and other commemorative practices.² It was a relationship rooted solely in networks and memory.

But Wood did have a homecoming of sorts in the summer of 1941. That June, the seventy-seven-year-old newspaper editor made the 110-mile trip with Isabelle from Chicago back to his boyhood home in Malden. The pastor of the village's Community Methodist Church had invited Wood to teach a Bible class in the church where this native son once worshipped, and Wood had readily agreed.³ For his address, Wood turned to what had by 1940 become his most favored address, "Jesus Christ, the Same Yesterday, and Today, and Forever." The theme went to the core Wood's doctrinal identity as a fundamentalist, proclaiming that the parables, stories, and miracles of the Bible remained true regardless of the latest scientific findings or theological innovations. "[P]ermancy is not in people or things," Wood proclaimed, but only in Christ's "fixity of ideals, persistence of purpose, permanence of plans, changelessness of character" as revealed in scripture.⁴

No matter how doctrinal Wood's main point, however, his orthodoxy, his fundamentalism, remained rooted in his memory of earlier ways and traditions as much as earlier theological truths. This was in part revealed by Wood's surroundings. Standing upon the podium of the church where he first took communion, which stood in the middle of the community that Wood had long created sacred and ideal, Wood's appeal to Christ's timelessness was also an appeal to the community he believed evangelical orthodoxy once buttressed. But the overlap

² "Historical News," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 29 (Jul. 1936): 184; "Society News," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 30 (Jul. 1937): 272. On the Garfield Park area in 1930 see Amanda I. Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 22-25.

³ Oliver W. Jones to FLW May 1941, FLWSB, IX: 80-81

⁴ FLW, *The Layman's Galilean*, 37-38.

between Wood's doctrinal orthodoxy and social conservatism that summer in Malden went even deeper. At first, Frank and Isabelle intended to make the trip alone. The service was to be a small affair intended to encourage Malden's church's members to study the Bible. But as word of Wood's return home spread among his Chicago friends, the guest list for the event grew until a thirty-four-car caravan was needed to transport over a hundred and thirty people from the city to see him speak. The entourage practically doubled Malden's population for the afternoon, perhaps frustrating pastor Jones' original intent for the meeting. Wood, however, was thrilled and led his companions on a tour of his childhood throughout the day. Upon arrival, he took the caravan on a brief excursion through the village's handful of streets. During the service, he made sure to note the spot where he had received his first copy of the King James Bible. After the day's events, he led the line of cars out of town by an alternate route so all could pass by his boyhood home. Nearly seventy-five years old, Wood's tour of Malden brought many of his lifelong friendships and personal efforts full circle. For many in the caravan, Malden was the only portion of Wood's life they had not shared with him. But as their interest in attending the event conveyed, this tiny village was the lodestone of Wood's social life. "It is one of the great joys of my life," Wood wrote in the event's program, "that so many of the friends of these later days are going with me to see it [Malden] again."⁵



The parallel evolution of Wood's social and religious identity was by no means unique to him. To many of turn of the century evangelical Protestants, the development of their religious identities lay as much in their mass migration from America's hinterland to the nation's burgeoning metropolises as to changes in the prevailing theological winds. Like Wood, many

⁵ "Wesleyan Bible Class Caravan to Malden"; "Malden Plans Welcome for Returning Son," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1 June 1941.

white, Protestant, lay women and men grew up in peculiar environments where the population was homogenous, strikingly religious, and largely unmarred by the income disparities that typically marked urban communities of any size. Here a great deal their worldview was forged. In the overlap between his church's membership and the community's leaders, laypeople like Wood gathered that the local church not only anchored one's social world, but also helped order the social life of the broader community. As Wood came to understand it, the virtues of evangelical Christian morality were not only essential to the development of one's personal character, but also in the attainment of a greater public acceptance. Only upright, successful, temperate Christian men were qualified to lead society, but the broader appreciation of these principles ensured that even society's less prominent was entitled to the community's respect, acceptance, and, in times of need, aid.

Of course, it was a worldview grounded in the demographic and institutional particularities of the rural Midwest, where there were few social centers beyond the local church and where the collective nature of agricultural work did implicate the broader community in private endeavors. But to Wood they seemed universal truths, and he carried them with him into the city as he and his family moved to Chicago in 1874. In joining the Wesleyan Bible Class as a fifteen-year-old charter member in 1880, Wood, like so many other rural migrants to the nation's burgeoning metropolises who similarly joined young people's societies, looked upon his devotional activity as an avenue through which to attain personal, professional, and political success. His activism in Sunday school gatherings and other evangelical associations became a network for his ingratiation into Chicago's political and economic world in the same way his political activity enhanced his reputation in religious circles.

But as Chicago's stunning diversity continued to evolve, and the acuteness of its class conflict continued to intensify throughout the early twentieth century, Wood slowly determined that the city's traditional civic and political organizations were inadequate to defend those religious and social principles he had learned in Malden. In response, Wood, like a number of Bible class teachers and evangelical laymen nationwide, creatively turned to their religious networks to advance political aims. In many instances, this activism took on predictable valences, with many Bible class teachers and federations supporting such traditional evangelical causes as prohibition. But in contrast to a number of scholars who look upon this early fundamentalist political activity as the origins of the Religious Right, Wood and a number of other urban evangelicals supported a number of Progressive reforms typically associated with more "liberal" Social Gospel Protestants in their effort to recreate their rural hometowns in America's urban centers. Wood, for example, based much of his run for the Illinois State Senate in his Bible class relationships, and partnered with a number of prominent evangelical laymen on the creation of the Laymen's Evangelical Council of Chicago to help support a number of urban reforms. But for Wood, this commitment to preserve and advance those notions of propriety and mutuality that had shaped his life in Malden also led to a stunning political creativity as Wood briefly enrolled in the Socialist party in support of industrial regulation and municipal ownership as a way to ensure America's upright, Christian citizens received the protection their humility and righteousness entitled them too.

Ultimately, however, all of Wood's religious and political campaigns fell before the city's ongoing demographic transformation. By the start of the 1920s, rural, Protestant migrants from Chicago's hinterland were now distinct minorities in Chicago's social, cultural, and economic life. And in the same way the nearly ceaseless arrival of Southern and Eastern

European immigrants had remade much of the city over the last forty years, so too had Wood's own neighborhood been transformed. In the face of these changes, and the failure of his earlier political efforts, Wood increasingly turned to his religious circles in an effort to recreate the community he once had in the city, but could no longer realize. It was more his yearning for community, and not his concern for doctrinal purity, that propelled Wood's identification as a fundamentalist in 1927, and would inform much of his most aggressive, exclusivist writings on religion and social life as he attempted to recreate around a set of theological principles the community he believed he once experienced on Malden's streets.

It was this community that Wood brought with him in his return to Malden in 1941. Religious historians have traditionally ignored the personal relationships and minor revival services like the one held by Wood and the Wesleyan Bible Class because of their inextricably pedestrian character. Throughout the turn of the twentieth century, however, millions of ordinary evangelical Protestants across the country found similarly meaningful social and religious communities in tens of thousands of Bible classes across the country. The collective history of these stories shaped one of America's most prominent religious communities throughout the twentieth century. In the process it transformed America's social, cultural and religious landscape as well.



Wood returned to Malden the following summer with the Wesleyan class to hold yet another revival service. But by the summer of 1942, Wood's health was quickly failing him. He had already been forced to retire from the *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* three years earlier because of his health. And with the nation still mired in a decade-long depression, Wood did so without a pension and for a time got by only on the donations of fellow Wesleyans. But Wood remained active in Chicago's religious circles, continuing to address local meetings, or writing for

religious periodicals that netted him small sums of money. Then on 2 February 1945, while visiting a doctor for an exam, Wood collapsed from a heart attack while waiting in the lobby. He never recovered, but before fell Wood had just finished composing a letter to a fellow Wesleyan wishing his daughter well—a final epistle.⁶

Despite his failing health, Wood continued to teach the Wesleyan Bible Class every Sunday until a month before his death. When he passed, the class had dwindled to buy and dozen or so members and slowly disbanded after his death.⁷ Despite the Wesleyan Bible Class's sudden instability, however, Wood's life and the eulogies that followed testified to the strength and credibility of his religious and political vision. It was vision the next generation of Bible class teachers would largely not share.

⁶ See FLWSB 9, passim; Irene Macauley, *This I'll Defend: Law Bulletin Macfarlands, 1718-1994* (Chicago: Law Bulletin Publishing Company, 1994), 109; FLW Bible Class Teacher for 48 Years; Dies," *Garfield News*, 14 Feb. 1945, folder 15, box 1, WGPCC.

⁷ On the WBC's dissolution see the collection of letters in folders 42-44, box 1, WBCR.

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