The 1930s Origins of California's Farmworker-Church Alliance

Kathryn S. Olmsted

ABSTRACT In the 1930s, Social Gospel ministers in the Los Angeles area organized to help farm workers in Southern California. The reformist pastors worked across class, denominational, and racial lines and transcended language barriers as they built urban, coastal support for immigrant farm workers in interior valleys. In the end, they failed, largely because employers were able to use the Communist affiliations of the farm worker union leaders to Red-bait and intimidate the ministers. Only when a later generation of labor leaders distanced their movement from Communism and grounded it in Christian rhetoric and imagery would this religious-labor alliance achieve victory. KEYWORDS social gospel, farm workers, Southern California

The hundreds of striking Mexican vegetable pickers who crowded into the cavernous garage in Brawley on a hot spring day in 1934 were curious about the men and women who stood on a platform to address them. The speakers, mostly lawyers and ministers, did not know Spanish, and not one of them hailed from Brawley or indeed from anywhere in Imperial Valley. But they had traveled more than a hundred miles across the desert from Los Angeles and San Diego to encourage the workers to continue their months-long strike for better wages and recognition of their union.

The growers and their allies in the press had nothing but contempt for the attorneys, whom the local paper called "invading speakers," "do gooders," and "parlor pinks."[1] Even worse, in the view of the large growers and shippers of Imperial Valley, were the "half-baked preachers" who tried to use their moral authority as Protestant ministers to support the strikers. The

preachers supporting the strikers that day included Edwin P. Ryland, known as the “social evangelist” of the Southern California Methodist Conference, and Frank Toothaker, the outspoken pastor of the Euclid Heights Methodist Church in Los Angeles.[2] Also in attendance was the primary “trouble maker,” in the view of the local reporter: A.A. Heist, the minister of Woodcrest Community Methodist Church in Los Angeles. Heist assured the workers that Christians throughout the United States would support their decision to join a Communist-led union, the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU). “Organize your own union,” he told them. “Stand like men and the intelligent churchmen of America will stand with you.”[3]

After the mass meeting, the coastal visitors got into their cars and started to drive back to the coast. Suddenly, law enforcement vehicles surrounded the caravan. Reverend Toothaker, peering out of his window, noted with alarm that the men inside the marked police cars were not wearing police or sheriff’s uniforms. Instead, they sported silver shirts, the uniform of William Pelley’s American fascist organization. The driver of Toothaker’s car floored the accelerator and streaked out of the Valley, outracing the posse. Nevertheless, the armed fascists in police cars harassed and followed the other reformers until they reached the county line. Subsequent delegations of ministers and attorneys to Imperial Valley were threatened and terrorized.[4]

This foray into Imperial Valley during the vegetable strikes of 1934 was just one example of Protestant ministers’ involvement in Southern California struggles for labor rights in the 1930s. Many of these clergymen supported workers by walking picket lines, organizing public forums and protest

meetings, and preaching about the need for labor rights. They sought to minister to the poor and help workers discover the power of collective action. By doing so, the pastors provoked a powerful backlash. Business leaders and conservative laypeople denounced and intimidated these ministers—and, in some cases, mobilized vigilantes to threaten them physically.

Though historians have extensively documented the pivotal role played by the Catholic Church in encouraging unionization in the 1930s, scholars have only recently begun to recognize the ways in which Protestant clergy lent moral authority to campaigns for workers' rights in that decade.[5] In the last several years, scholars have published important studies of the relationship between evangelical Protestantism and political radicalism.[6] Still, the number of scholarly works on ecumenical Protestant involvement in the labor movement of the Great Depression remains small.[7]

In this article, I seek to document and understand the role of mainstream, white Protestant clergymen in the strikes of mostly Latino farmworkers in Southern California in the 1930s. These ministers and workers formed a labor-church coalition that tried to unite urban Social Gospelers with rural, mostly Catholic laborers. The leftist pastors worked across class, denominational, and racial lines and transcended language barriers as they sought to build coastal support for immigrant farm workers in interior valleys. In the end, they failed, largely because employers were able to use the Communist affiliations of the farm worker union leaders to Red-bait and intimidate the ministers. Only when a later generation of labor leaders distanced their movement from Communism and grounded it in Christian rhetoric and imagery would this religious-labor alliance succeed.

The Social Gospel Revival

The American Social Gospel movement, after fading during the mostly prosperous and conservative 1920s, began to revive during the Great Depression. As factories closed, banks failed, and millions of Americans lost their jobs, many Christians on the left began to consider radical solutions for reforming the political and economic system. Several Protestant denominations declared their support at national conferences in the early 1930s for collective solutions to individual suffering. Northern Baptists condemned the unequal distribution of wealth in America; Episcopalians endorsed union rights and a stronger social safety net. The Congregational Church denounced the profit motive and created the Council for Social Action, a left-leaning lobbying group.[8]

Of all the ecumenical denominations, the Methodist Episcopal Church, or the Northern Methodist Church, had the longest history of leading social justice movements.[9] In 1907, Harry F. Ward, a Chicago minister and settlement house worker who later became a professor at Union Theological Seminary, wrote the Methodist Social Creed, which called for “equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life.”[10] The Federal Council of Churches, an ecumenical organization, adopted the creed as its own the following year. To help achieve the goals of the creed, Ward organized an advocacy group called the Methodist Federation for Social Service.[11] In 1932, at Ward’s urging, the Methodist church’s leaders revised their social creed to endorse a policy program—collective bargaining, monetary reform, and agricultural subsidies—that would be realized by the New Deal.[12]

The ecumenical Protestant commitment to social reform extended to support for labor rights. The Federal Council of Churches hired Congregationalist minister James Myers to serve as its industrial secretary in the 1920s. Myers investigated and tried to mediate major strikes across the country over the next two decades, striving to use the moral authority of the church to win collective bargaining rights for workers. He raised funds for strikers, documented employers' brutality against them, marched with the unemployed, and testified before government panels.[13] Other Protestant ministers braved vigilante assaults to help organize workers. In Arkansas and Tennessee, several pastors, including Claude Williams, Ward Rodgers, and Howard Kester, blended Christianity with socialism as they joined local workers in creating the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU).[14]

Unlike the STFU organizers, who worked in a relatively homogenous religious environment of Protestant evangelicals, the Social Gospel ministers in Southern California encountered a wide variety of denominations as well as races and ethnicities. Protestants comprised about half of Los Angeles County church members in 1936, when the U.S. census made its decennial survey of "religious bodies," and the vast majority of these were ecumenical Protestants, not evangelicals. The census found 694,500 church members in Los Angeles County, including about 254,000 Catholics, 69,000 Jews, 12,000 Mormons, 4,000 Buddhists, and 65,000 "others." Mainline Protestant denominations counted 194,000 members, while Pentecostal and evangelical churches reported 69,000 members. Orange and San Diego Counties—much smaller and less diverse than Los Angeles—were home to roughly five times as many mainline Protestants as evangelicals.[15] In part, this dominance of the

mainline churches was due to the agreement by Southern Baptists to leave California to their northern brethren. Later in the 1930s, the continued Okie migration would shift this balance when Southern Baptists and Southern Methodists flooded into the region, as James Gregory and Darren Dochuk have shown. The Southern Baptists soon broke their agreement and began to aggressively organize congregations in California.[16] Moreover, by the late 1930s, libertarian ministers like James Fifield of the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles would begin to use their pulpits to denounce the "totalitarian trends of the New Deal," as Fifield said.[17] However, these developments were yet to occur: in the early years of the New Deal, moderate and liberal Protestants dominated the Southern California religious landscape.

With close to 50,000 church members, the Northern Methodists were the largest mainline denomination in Los Angeles, and the most active in the region's social reform movement. One Methodist minister, G. Bromley Oxnam, cemented the church's reputation for political activism in the 1910s when he built a multiethnic downtown congregation, the Church of All Nations, and encouraged the political mobilization of the poor. Despite attacks on Oxnam by the archconservative Better America Federation and the *Los Angeles Times*, many Southern California Methodist pastors revered him and continued his tradition of social activism after he left the area in 1927 to become an academic and then a bishop.[18] At least twenty-five Los Angeles-area Methodist ministers preached regularly about social justice issues in the early years of the Great Depression. One layman, C.C. Jenkins of Long Beach, wrote the West Coast Methodist newspaper to express his

gratitude to the church's leaders for sensing "the tremendous changes now taking place in our social and economic, and even the political order." Jenkins continued: "I feel we should thank God that they are not in a retreat, but with faces forward, are trying to lead us on to a better way of life."[19]

The reformist ministers admired by Jenkins used camps, conferences, seminars, and fellowship groups to educate themselves and their flock about social injustice in their neighborhoods. The most committed clergymen formed the Methodist Social Service Breakfast Club and met once a month at the downtown Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). About 50 to 75 clergy and laypeople regularly attended the gatherings, where they would discuss social problems in their region and how they could fix them. After their breakfast seminar, they would rush to the Southern California Methodist Preachers Meeting to hear speakers like author Upton Sinclair or socialist leader Norman Thomas. Many of these preachers belonged to the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a Christian organization committed to peace and civil rights.[20] Most were also members of the Social Service Commission, a chapter of Harry Ward's Methodist Federation for Social Service, a group that was on the far left of the vibrant Christian Socialist movement in the 1930s, and of the Southern California Annual Conference's Committee on Social Problems. These groups succeeded in persuading the conference in 1932 and 1933 to pass resolutions denouncing capitalism.[21]

The Social Gospel ministers engaged in traditional religious charity work such as bake sales, rummage sales, soup kitchens, and settlement houses. But they also moved beyond palliative work to mobilize for political education and action. Los Angeles ministers set up forums and classes on

economic and labor history. Many youth groups and Methodist women's societies put on programs advocating for reforms like higher taxes on the rich or the government takeover of some private businesses.[22]

The preachers also challenged right-wing groups in their area. As early as 1933, the Methodist Conference accused the Better America Federation of "intimidation, domination, and repression of labor," and further demanded that the Los Angeles Police Chief disband his "un-American, unpatriotic, so-called Red Squad."[23] When the head of the Red Squad, Captain Hynes, visited the Methodist preachers' meeting, some of the ministers expressed disgust. "I would by far rather open my pulpit to one of the so-called 'reds' to air his grievances, even though I might not agree with him, than ever to listen again to the insipid defense of Hynes or any of his cohorts, ministers or otherwise," complained Rev. Wendell Miller of Florence Avenue Methodist Church.[24]

Some Southern California clergymen even walked the picket lines with striking workers. Section 7a of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 declared that workers had the right to join unions, but many employers did not respect this right. Workers throughout the country walked out to demand that their employers recognize their unions. In Los Angeles, the biggest labor actions took place in some of Southern California's most important industries: food processing, farming, maritime commerce, and clothes production.[25]

When Southern California strikers encountered massive employer resistance, Social Gospel ministers came to their aid. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union, which had mostly Latina members in Los Angeles, called two simultaneous strikes in the fall of 1933. Soon an interdenominational group of preachers, led by Allan Hunter of Mt. Hollywood

Congregational Church, joined strikers on the picket lines.[26] Inspired by their experience, a group of Methodist clergy asked other area ministers to join them so that they could see with their own eyes how the police officers broke the law by arresting and even assaulting the strikers.[27]

In addition to the industrial workers, tens of thousands of agricultural laborers went on strike to demand higher wages. The Social Gospel ministers perceived farm workers as “the least of these”—the very sort of people whom Jesus had urged his followers to help. Among the most desperately poor people in America, farm workers often earned just enough money to pay for food and gas to get to the next picking job. To help feed their families, children as young as seven worked twelve-hour days. Yet the New Deal’s labor laws did not protect these workers. The Roosevelt administration, bowing to the wishes of Southern Democrats who did not want to see their maids or sharecroppers unionize, had deliberately excluded farm and domestic workers from Section 7a. However, these laborers did not understand that they had been omitted from the law.

In 1933, as industrial workers around the country began to join unions, farm laborers in California called for higher wages. When the growers refused, tens of thousands of pickers walked out of the fields. The largest agricultural strike in the nation’s history hit the state’s cotton farms in October 1933 when employers rejected the workers’ demand for 25 cents an hour, the national minimum wage. After a short walkout, eighteen thousand cotton pickers in the San Joaquin Valley won a raise with the help of federal and state mediators. Inspired by this victory, thousands of other California agricultural workers resolved to continue fighting for their right to organize.

Imperial Valley Strikes

Some of the most violent clashes occurred in the winter of 1934 in the far southeastern corner of the state, on the border with Mexico. For centuries, Imperial Valley had been parched and unpopulated, but in the early twentieth century, deep-pocketed investors had diverted the waters of the Colorado River and reclaimed the desert.[28] Irrigation canals are expensive to build and maintain; as a result, corporate farmers owned much of the Valley. According to a government report, "the entire farming area is controlled by a relatively small number of growers," including the Southern Pacific Railroad, the Times-Mirror Corporation, and various banks, oil companies, and insurance conglomerates.[29] Mexican immigrants did most of the picking; wealthy, corporate owners controlled much of the land; and the local officials were determined to protect the existing balance of power. There were many reasons for Imperial residents to feel anxious as the Depression deepened, including restive workers, plummeting crop prices, racial tensions, and an enthusiasm for vigilantism among the locals. "Violence," wrote journalist Carey McWilliams in 1934, "is what one somehow expects from the place."[30]

Imperial farm workers struck in 1928 and again in 1930, but both times the growers quickly broke the strikes. Then, in 1934, as workers faced yet more pay cuts, a group of workers asked a communist union, the CAWIU, for help. At the time, the CAWIU was the leading union for California farm workers, who were difficult to organize because they were migratory, extremely poor, and divided by ethnicity and language. The CAWIU leadership sent two organizers from Los Angeles to the Valley. In early

January, they led five thousand workers out of the fields to demand more pay.[31]

Historically, church leaders had not encouraged workers' activism in Imperial Valley. The Catholic church, which was active in collective bargaining efforts in urban industrial areas in the Midwest and East, consistently avoided taking any stand on unionization in California, with a few, isolated exceptions.[32] Protestant reformers had been more supportive of workers in the valley, but only briefly. Earlier, in the 1920s, a national, ecumenical charity group, the Migrant Ministry of the Council of Women for Home Missions, had established community centers in Imperial County that offered health clinics, food, clothing, and Bible study. Nevertheless, local leaders had told the missionaries that they did "not want the workers stirred up to different ways of living."[33] The Migrant Ministry seems to have withdrawn from Imperial in 1930.[34]

The local Imperial churches were even less inclined than national Christian organizations to sympathize with the vegetable pickers. In the 1934 strike, the Protestant churches of the Valley emphatically supported the growers against the union organizers. Much like the ministers studied by theologian Liston Pope in his classic work on Gastonia, North Carolina, the local pastors in Imperial Valley sided with their wealthier parishioners.[35]

Still, the workers received help from two outside sources: first, from the CAWIU; and second, from radical lawyers and pastors in coastal cities. It was not unusual for lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and pastors from the Methodist Federation for Social Service to work together. Ward, the founder of the Methodist Federation, was the chairman of

the ACLU board from 1920 to 1940. Ward and other radical Methodists also frequently cooperated with American Communists, even though the Communist Party was still in its highly sectarian “Third Period” in 1934 and officially uninterested in forming alliances with other leftists.[36] There were pockets of Methodism that were extremely radical during the Depression; the Methodist Federation *Bulletin*, for example, in fall 1934 inserted a sentence under its masthead declaring itself “an organization which seeks to abolish the profit system and to develop the classless society based upon the obligation of mutual service.”[37]

In January 1934, two weeks after the start of the vegetable pickers’ strike, the ACLU worked with ministers from San Diego and Los Angeles to call a meeting to inform the workers of their constitutional rights.[38] They planned to gather in downtown Brawley, in the heart of Imperial Valley. After local officials refused to grant a permit for the meeting, the ACLU persuaded a federal judge in San Diego to issue an injunction declaring that it could proceed. City and county officials, outraged at what they saw as federal interference with local affairs, threatened that Imperial Valley citizens would defy the ruling. “I do not believe the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars are going to stand by and see the valley torn to pieces by communistic or subversive elements,” warned one county supervisor.[39]

Several pastors from coastal cities soon discovered that the Imperial officials meant what they said. When a small group of ministers arrived at the meeting place, they sat alongside about six hundred Mexican pickers and waited for the ACLU lawyer, Abraham Wirin, who was scheduled to speak to them on their Constitutional rights. Wirin never showed up. Three ministers

and other supporters of the workers began to address the crowd. Suddenly, a woman rushed into the hall to tell the leaders that Wirin had been kidnapped by a mob. As Wirin was eating supper that evening in a Brawley hotel, vigilantes grabbed him, shoved him into a car, beat him repeatedly, and then drove him to a deserted area, miles from the nearest town, where they beat him some more. They crashed his car, stole his wallet and shoes, and then abandoned him. He stumbled back through the desert until he found some teenagers who helped him to town. He was able to call his friends from a doctor's office in Calipatria. They arranged to meet at a hotel in a neighboring town.[40]

The visiting lawyers and ministers arrived at the hotel to discover the nearby streets filled with armed men. Two of the visitors, including Congregationalist minister Beverly Oaten, became separated from the others. Just outside the hotel, they found themselves surrounded by men with drawn guns. Some were drunk, and one took pleasure in stroking the buttons on Oaten's vest with his revolver. The reverend counted twenty-seven pistols aimed at him. When the sheriff arrived on the scene, he grabbed some YMCA and YWCA pamphlets from Oaten and proclaimed them Communist propaganda. The crowd grew unruly. Oaten and his friend felt sure they would be lynched. Just then, a local Congregationalist minister arrived and took them to safety at the jail. There, the visitors accepted a police escort out of the county. Local leaders were jubilant. Their resistance gave the intruders a message: "Stay out!"[41]

Oaten wrote about the near-lynching in the pages of the West Coast Methodist newspaper, the *Christian Advocate*. He pointedly asked his readers

which side they were on. “As we stood there facing the mob,” he asked, “were we standing alone, or were we representing something for which the Christian church is quietly standing?”[42]

Back in Los Angeles, other clergymen vowed to support the reformers who had been threatened in Imperial. A group of Methodist ministers and their wives wrote to Wirin to commend him for his bravery. “In common vernacular ‘more power to you’,” the letter concluded.[43] The next month, several Los Angeles ministers, including Toothaker and Heist, made the trip to Brawley described at the beginning of this article where the Silver Shirts threatened them. In May, vigilantes surrounded and chased another delegation of ACLU lawyers and Social Gospelers from Imperial Valley.[44]

The efforts of their coastal brethren did not please the ministers who lived and worked in Imperial. The Valley’s pastors believed that outsiders—the Communist union organizers, the ACLU lawyers, and the Los Angeles ministers alike—were stirring up trouble in their backyards by supporting aliens and agitators. Gerald Harvey, pastor of Brawley Methodist Church, wrote in a letter to a Methodist newspaper that “not one person in the church outside of Imperial Valley has expressed enough *honest* interest in the situation here to enquire of any one of the six Methodist preachers who are working here as to the background of the trouble.” Many of the visiting ministers were condescending and arrogant, he maintained. He and his fellow Valley preachers were not “social reactionaries”; they were just “more hesitant about making fine, noble sounding statements” than those who had “only a passing knowledge” of the labor disturbances.[45]

A month after the publication of his letter to the editor, Harvey found himself torn between his loyalty to his farm-owning parishioners and his desire to prevent vigilante violence. Right outside of Harvey's house, a mob confronted ACLU attorney Wilmer Breeden, dragged him from his car, and began to beat him. Harvey ran out to stop the assault, helped Breeden with his wounds, and then went to the local police department to swear out a criminal complaint against one of the assailants. Soon, though, a group of parishioners convinced him to drop the charges. After another ACLU attorney was brutally beaten, a federal mediator in the Valley, General Pelham Glassford, persuaded Harvey to file the complaint again. Again, his parishioners convinced him to withdraw it.[46] Harvey's reasons for his actions are not recorded, but one can imagine the physical threats and financial pressures he faced.

A Specter Haunting Methodism

In addition to their work in Imperial Valley, the urban Social Gospel ministers also protested violations of labor rights closer to home. In the spring of 1934, thirty-two ministers from Orange County supported local citrus workers who had gone out on strike. The pastors issued a public "warning against hysteria," cautioning their parishioners against the growers' hyperbolic charges of Communism among the strikers. They argued that farm owners were using the Red bogeyman to frighten the uninformed. Anticommunism, they said, was "in many cases a mere camouflage for an attack on social justice." The ministers maintained that "the best safeguard against Communism is the removal of the injustices upon which it thrives."

The signatories included Northern Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Disciples of Christ, and Methodist ministers.[47]

Some of these pastors paid a price for their decision to speak out. The minister of Fullerton Christian Church lost his pulpit. Conservatives at the First Methodist Church in Santa Ana tried to remove Reverend George A. Warmer Sr., but a local newspaper publisher interceded with the bishop to save Warmer's job. Another paper denounced both Warmer and the publisher as "boudoir pinks."[48] The efforts to fire Reverend Warmer signaled the beginning of a concerted campaign by business leaders to intimidate clergymen and prevent them from supporting labor rights. These conservatives made it clear to crusading ministers that they risked losing their pulpits if they continued to support striking workers.

The first murmurs of discontent came from the lay delegates to the 1932 and 1933 annual meetings of Southern California Methodists. Some of the laypeople believed that leftist ministers had manipulated them when they agreed to support anti-capitalist resolutions that, as one layman said, "caused considerable embarrassment to the laymen throughout the church, not only in Southern California, but throughout the State."[49] At the 1934 conference, the lay delegates insisted on seeing some key documents—the reports of the Social Problems Committee, which had been created by the Methodist Federation for Social Service—in advance of the meeting so that they could study them. The laymen spent a few hours discussing the reports but still did not publicly dissent.[50]

At 1935 conference, though, the simmering tensions came to a boil. Before the conference, Adna Leonard, Jr., an insurance executive and the son

of an ultraconservative bishop, mailed a letter to Methodist laypeople and clergy throughout Southern California that accused a group of Social Gospel preachers of “attempting to run the entire Southern California Conference through a political machine.”[51] These men, he said, were “known for their extreme ideas on social and economic theories,” and had become “so extremely active and outspoken in their activities that they are being called generally, Radicals.” He claimed that the members of this machine, which included two of the men who had gone to Imperial Valley in 1934, Heist and Toothaker, tried to get like-minded preachers elected to the national Methodist conference so that they could impose their views on the church as a whole.[52] Some reform-minded ministers dismissed the letter as the work of a crank, but others believed that Leonard’s efforts portended something more ominous.[53]

Indeed, the letter revealed sharp divisions within the Southern California Methodist church. At the annual conference of 1935, the Social Problems committee for the first time issued two different reports. The majority report reflected the more radical sentiments of the men Leonard had called “the machine” and repeated the Federal Council of Churches’ dedication to a “wider and fairer distribution of wealth” and the creation of “co-operative world order.” However, three laymen dissented in a minority report, saying they disagreed that capitalism was “un-Christian and anti-social and should be overturned.” They asserted that they felt a responsibility to challenge the radical preachers’ views and stop the church from joining the “general stampede” toward Moscow.[54] The dissenting laypeople objected to what they viewed as their church’s slanders against businessmen. “The

Methodist Church certainly makes no contribution toward the relief of distress in any community by sneeringly hurling the term ‘Profiteer’ at such men,” they concluded.[55] Though the conference as a whole overwhelmingly rejected this view and adopted the majority report, conference organizers agreed that both reports should be printed as leaflets and distributed widely.[56]

After his defeat at the annual meeting, the primary author of the minority report, C.I.D. Moore, an executive with Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company, took his disagreements with the Social Gospel ministers to the pages of the West Coast Methodist newspaper. Moore articulated the conservative, evangelical Christian view of the church’s role in society. “Clearly it is the great task of the church not to change systems,” he wrote, “but to change the hearts of men by bringing them into a vital relation to Jesus Christ.”[57]

Moore and his fellow business leaders were part of a national conservative reaction against social activism within the Methodist church. During the summer of 1935, some three dozen laymen from Midwestern states met in Chicago to decry “the growing radical propaganda and hostile attitude toward business and the established social order which are being disseminated and proclaimed in the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church.” The leaders of the laymen’s movement argued that the church should return to what they regarded as its true purpose: bringing the individual to Christ. They wanted, as one layman explained, “a pulpit which selects its texts from the New Testament, not *Das Kapital* and the daily papers.”[58]

Throughout the nation, anticommunists began to "out" those ministers they considered Reds and put their names on comprehensive blacklists. In 1934, Elizabeth Dilling, a fervid anticommunist activist in Chicago, self-published *The Red Network: A 'Who's Who' and Handbook of Radicalism for Patriots*, which branded more than a thousand Americans as Communist dupes, including dozens of clergymen and three of the Southern California Social Gospel ministers (Toothaker, Heist, and Miller).[59] In December 1936, Methodist minister Rembert Gilman Smith published an exposé called "Methodist Reds" in a Tulsa newspaper. He received such an enthusiastic response that he expanded it into a pamphlet and then a book called *Moscow over Methodism*.[60] The Hearst press launched a crusade against the "Red incubus" that the editors claimed was assaulting the Methodist church.[61] Alarmed, the Methodist Federation for Social Service warned its members that "interlocking reactionary groups" had launched a coordinated offensive against them and other Americans who sought to challenge wealthy property owners. These conservatives tried to "lump together indiscriminately Communists, Socialists, pacifists, Christian pacifists, liberals, even the New Deal administration," the Federation newsletter editors explained. The purpose of the Red-baiting campaign was to control the speech and actions of the radical clergy.[62]

Inspired by the national movement against left-leaning ministers, insurance executive and lay leader Moore began to organize dozens of leading Southern California businessmen into an anti-Social Gospel group, the Methodist Laymen's Committee of the Southern California Conference. The letterhead of the group listed seventy-four laymen and women who were

leaders in Southern California business, including oil tycoons, investment bankers, the president of the University of Southern California (a Methodist university), and several other officers of Moore's insurance company, Pacific Mutual.[63]

In early 1936, the laymen's group sent a letter attacking the Social Gospel ministers to all Southern California Methodists. The business leaders complained that the delegates to the annual conference the prior year had dismissed the pro-business minority report without much thought and instead adopted the radical agenda of the reformers. In return, the laymen's group proposed to revolt against "the stigma of such a subversive and radical pronouncement." The church should be a place for individuals to find Christ, they continued, not the site for "the delivery of politico-economic sermons by those not specially trained in economic thinking."[64]

As the 1936 annual meeting approached—and with it the opportunity for the church to denounce the cruelties of capitalism once again—the powerful laymen's group put the leftist preachers on notice that they would not tolerate any new moves to "over-emphasize" the Social Gospel. In a letter sent to leaders of the General Conference, the national Methodist governing body, the Los Angeles laymen's group accused preachers of focusing on "the social aspects of the gospel to the neglect of its more personal and spiritual aspects" and "violating the sanctity of the house of God" with their politicized preaching. The Social Gospel Christians were giving aid and comfort to the "enemy within our gates" who sought to destroy America. The laypeople requested that church leaders declare their loyalty to the Constitution, their

opposition to Communism and fascism, and their commitment to save souls, not reform society.[65]

The conservative laypeople argued that the pro-labor stance taken by the Methodist leaders had cost the church money and members. They attributed a recent decline in membership to the church's adoption of "social and economic principles repugnant to a large part of its lay membership and contrary to the judgment of a majority of its ministers."[66] It was true that the mainline churches had lost members during the Depression, but it was not clear that this decline was linked to the churches' positions on social reform. For the next several decades, liberal and moderate Protestant churches declined or stayed relatively steady in their numbers while the membership of conservative Protestant churches grew sharply.[67]

The conservatives were especially angry with the adult leaders of the Methodist youth organization. As heads of the Youth Department of the national Methodist church, the Reverends Blaine Kirkpatrick and Owen Geer had encouraged young Christians to oppose compulsory military training and support the national Student Strike for Peace. Under their leadership, the National Conference of Methodist Youth had adopted a resolution denouncing the capitalist system.[68] The Methodist conservatives in Southern California asked their regional leaders to condemn youth leaders who sympathized with "disloyal organizations" and oust them from office.[69]

Other powerful Methodists in Los Angeles joined in the attack on the reformers. In 1936, Los Angeles Police Chief James Davis reportedly told business leaders that he had withdrawn his children from Methodist Sunday School because of the church's "communistic" beliefs, and he recommended

that other conservatives do the same. He also urged local newspapers to print an editorial on “Communism in the Churches.”[70] After a protest by church leaders, however, Davis announced that he had been “grossly misquoted” and issued a statement commending Methodists and other Christians for “maintaining patriotic security for the citizens of this country.”[71]

Davis conceded the battle because he had won the war. The conservative revolt succeeded. The leftist youth leaders, Kirkpatrick and Geer, lost their positions, as part of a move to “relieve tension and promote greater harmony and efficiency.”[72] The governing body of the national church, the General Conference, decided not to pass any more resolutions against capitalism. Instead of condemning economic inequality, as they had done at the last several meetings, the Conference leaders simply adopted a report stating that “there is a wide divergence of opinion among us as to the meaning of a Christian society as well as to the means of its realization.”[73] In Southern California, the regional Methodist group abandoned its annual meeting tradition of boldly calling for Christian socialism and instead endorsed the bland language of their national group. The Methodist Social Service Breakfast Club—which for two years had served ministers eager to organize for labor rights and social justice—invited the representatives of the dissenting laymen to share their views and pledged to cooperate with them in the future.[74]

In the coming years, a few ministers continued to speak out against employers who tried to break strikes. Orange County Methodist pastor James Dunning castigated growers for their violations of strikers’ civil liberties in the citrus strike of 1936—and found himself branded a Red in a local newspaper

for his pains.[75] In 1938, Toothaker sent postcards to thousands of Methodists publicly stating his support for the workers on strike against the May Company department store. Like Dunning, he was publicly denounced for his trouble. A retired Methodist bishop, Charles Locke, issued a testy public statement saying that Toothaker did not represent the church; indeed, he said, most Methodists were "in deep sympathy with the merchants who are being embarrassed and crippled in their holiday business by the altogether fiendish machinations of vicious enemies."[76]

One Methodist friend of labor, Rodgers, suffered worse than a public denunciation. Rodgers, a Methodist minister, Socialist, and veteran of the STFU organizing drive, tried to help striking vegetable pickers near Venice in the spring of 1936. One day, after Rodgers left the strike area, Carl Abbott, a member of the Los Angeles Red Squad, followed him to an isolated area in Sawtelle. Abbott forced Rodgers out of his car and beat him.[77]

Foreshadowing Victory

In the end, the conservative counterattack succeeded in intimidating the Social Gospelers of Depression-Era Los Angeles into silence. Most pro-labor Protestant ministers in Southern California moderated their protests in the late 1930s and early 1940s.[78] With the war and the return to prosperity, the urban allies of the Imperial Valley unions retreated to their comparatively uncontroversial settlement houses and charity work in downtown Los Angeles.[79]

Nevertheless, the next generation realized their vision of an urban, religious support network for Latino farm workers. Three decades later, with

the formation of the United Farm Workers (UFW), Cesar Chavez once again sought to create an alliance between the churches and the farm workers.

Chavez presented his union as more than a labor organization: it was simultaneously a civil rights movement and a religious crusade. In contrast to the atheist leaders of the CAWIU, Chavez portrayed *La Causa* as an intensely spiritual, Christian campaign to help the downtrodden. To be sure, Chavez's movement was Catholic, not ecumenical Protestant. On the UFW's famous march from Delano to Sacramento in 1966, he started each day with mass, and he ended the pilgrimage with a communion ceremony on the steps of the state capitol on Easter Sunday. He understood that using the rituals and symbolism of Catholicism in his organizing effort could both motivate participants and appeal to potential allies in the cities.

Chavez's most significant supporters included Protestant ministers, especially the leaders of the California Migrant Ministry—the same group that had withdrawn from Imperial Valley during the labor struggles of 1930. These liberal allies joined Chavez's grape boycott; they also gave money and walked the picket lines at key moments in the farm workers' battle for union recognition.[80] With help from Catholic and Protestant supporters, agricultural laborers in California won collective bargaining rights at last. Major Central Valley growers recognized the UFW, and in 1975, the state of California passed a law giving government protection to farm labor unions.

The story of the radical preachers who organized farm workers in Southern California helps us recover the history of the progressive church in the region. Historians have rightly called attention to the power and influence of the conservative evangelical pastors of the area. But we should also

remember that for a time during the Depression, some young Protestant ministers faced financial pressure and physical danger as a result of their dedication to what they saw as important Christian principles, economic equality, and social justice. Chavez's urban, mainline Protestant supporters were the heirs of the clergy and laypeople who left their comfortable homes in Los Angeles and San Diego in 1934 to venture to inland valleys to support immigrant laborers. They failed to help the workers organize, but they succeeded in pointing the way to a movement that would one day realize the power of a church-union coalition.

Kathryn S. Olmsted is a professor of history at the University of California, Davis. The research for this article was made possible by a grant from the UC Davis Committee on Research.

[1] "'Red' Meeting in Brawley Held 'Flop,'" March 19, 1934, *Brawley (Calif.) News*. See also "The Week-end Radical Meetings," March 19, 1934, *Brawley News*.

[2] Ernest W. Thacker, "The Methodist Church in Southern California in Relation to the 'Social Gospel,' 1928 Through 1941," (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1952), 67, 206; "Imperial Valley's Answer to 'Reds,'" March 20, 1934, *Brawley News*.

[3] "'Red' Meeting in Brawley Held 'Flop,'"; Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," 206.

[4] For an account based on Toothaker's oral history, see Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," 206. For a grower's account, see Clyde Jack, "Another View of Imperial Valley Conditions," *Christian Advocate*, April 5, 1934, 10. See also "The Week-end Radical Meetings."

[5] On Catholicism's relationship to the labor movement, see Mel Piehl, *Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982); Douglas Seaton, *Catholics and Radicals: The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists and the American Labor Movement from Depression to Cold War* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1981); Neil Betten, *Catholic Activism and the Industrial Worker* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1976); and Steve Rosswurm, "The Catholic Church and the Left-Led Unions," in *The CIO's Left-Led Unions*, ed. Steve Rosswurm (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 119 - 37.

[6] See, for example, Richard J. Callahan, Jr., *Work and Faith in the Kentucky Coal Fields: Subject to Dust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Knopf, 2006); Matthew Pehl, "'Apostles of Fascism,' 'Communist Clergy,' and the UAW: Political Ideology and Working-Class Religion in Detroit, 1919 - 1945," *Journal*

of American History 99, no. 2 (September 2012): 440 - 65; and Wayne Flynt, "Religion for the Blues: Evangelicalism, Poor Whites, and the Great Depression," *Journal of Southern History* 71, no. 1 (February 2005): 3 - 38. See also the essays in Christopher D. Cantwell, Heath W. Carter, and Janine Giordano Drake eds., *The Pew and the Picket Line: Christianity and the Working Classes in Industrial America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016). Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Ken Fones-Wolf have urged scholars to integrate labor with religious history. See Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Ken Fones-Wolf, *Struggle for the Soul of the Postwar South: White Evangelical Protestants and Operation Dixie* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015); and Ken Fones-Wolf, "Embedding Class Among the Troops Who Study Southern Religion," *Journal of Southern Religion* 13 (2011), available at http://jsr.fsu.edu/issues/vol13/fones-wolf.html.

[7] For overviews of Social Gospel-labor alliances in the Depression, see Robert Moats Miller*, American Protestantism and Social Issues, 1919 - 1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958), 275 - 87; and Donald B. Meyer, *The Protestant Search for Political Realism, 1919 - 1941* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1988, first published 1960), 76 - 106. For an extensively researched account of one reformist minister's work with laborers, see Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Ken Fones-Wolf, "Lending a Hand to Labor: James Myers and the Federal Council of Churches, 1926 - 1947," *Church History* 68, no. 1 (March 1999): 62 - 86. For ecumenical Protestants' reform efforts after the Depression, see Gene Zubovich, "The Global Gospel: Protestant Internationalism and American Liberalism, 1940 - 1960" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2015).

[8] On ecumenical Protestant churches' move to the left during the Depression, see Miller, *American Protestantism and Social Issues*, chapter 5; Paul A. Carter, *The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel: Social and Political Liberalism in American Protestant Churches, 1920-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954), 141 - 62; and Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," 400 - 402.

[9] For clarity, I will use "Northern Methodist" to refer to the Methodist Episcopal Church. The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church split in 1844 into two conferences: the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The two groups merged in 1939 to form the Methodist Church.

[10] Eugene P. Link, *Labor-Religion Prophet: The Times and Life of Harry F. Ward* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984), 47.

[11] Ibid., 39 - 40. On the Federation, see Milton John Huber, Jr., "A History of the Methodist Federation for Social Action" (PhD diss., Boston University, 1949).

[12] Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt, *American Methodism: A Compact History* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 152.

[13] Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Ken Fones-Wolf, "Lending a Hand to Labor."

[14] On religion and radicalism in the South in the 1930s, see Robert F. Martin, *Howard Kester and the Struggle for Social Justice in the South, 1904 - 77* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991); Erik S. Gellman and Jarod Roll, *The Gospel of the Working Class: Labor's Southern Prophets in New Deal America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011); and Robert H. Craig, *Religion and Radical Politics: An Alternative Christian Tradition in the United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 130 - 63.

[15] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies: 1936, Volume I, Summary and Detailed Tables* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941) 725 - 27. Evangelical Protestants are probably undercounted here, as some individual mainline Protestant congregations became conservative and evangelical. Even so, ecumenical Protestant church members clearly outnumbered evangelicals. Mainline Protestants include: Northern Baptists, Congregational and Christian Churches, Disciples of Christ, United Lutherans, Northern Methodists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians. Evangelicals include: Seventh Day Adventists, Assemblies of God, Christian Scientists, Missouri Synod Lutherans, Church of the Nazarene, and Southern Methodists.

[16] Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grass-Roots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: Norton, 2011), especially chapter 2; James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); and Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). On p. 219 of *American Exodus*, Gregory presents a table showing mainline Protestant domination of Kern County in 1936, similar to the numbers in Los Angeles. For the Southern Baptists' fight to organize churches in California, see Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt,* 39 - 43.

[17] Quoted in Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic, 2015), 12.

[18] Oxnam became a Methodist bishop in 1936 and the president of the National Council of Churches in the 1950s. The House Un-American Activities Committee called him to testify about his supposed Communist affiliations in 1953. See

Robert Moats Miller, *Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam: Paladin of Liberal Protestantism* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1990). On the Church of All Nations, see Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), chapter 3.

[19] "A Layman's Impression of Long Beach," *Christian Advocate*, August 10, 1933, 8.

[20] On the Fellowship of Reconciliation, see Joseph Kip Kosek, *Acts of Conscience: Christian Nonviolence and Modern American Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

[21] Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," 56 - 58, 84.

[22] The many Methodist programs to promote social reforms are discussed in Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," chapter 2.

[23] *Journal of the Southern California Annual Conference*, Methodist Episcopal Church, Fifty-eighth annual session, June 28 - July 3, 1933, 117, Archives of the California-Pacific Conference of the United Methodist Church, Special Collections Library, Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, Calif.; "Methodism and the Social Crisis," *Christian Advocate*, August 3, 1933, 8.

[24] Quoted in Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," 364. On the Los Angeles Red Squad, see Scott Allen McClellan, "Policing the Red Scare: The Los Angeles Police Department's Red Squad and the Repression of Labor Activism in Los Angeles, 1900–1940" (PhD diss., UC Irvine, 2011).

[25] On strikes in Los Angeles during the early New Deal years, see John H. M. Laslett, *Sunshine Was Never Enough: Los Angeles Workers, 1880 - 2010* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 132 - 43.

[26] “LA PASTORS ON PICKET LINE OF GARMENT STRIKE,” *Los Angeles Evening Herald Express*, October 18, 1933.

[27] “Among the Churches,” *Christian Advocate*, November 9, 1933, 15.

[28] Because the valley is not named after a river, it is “Imperial Valley,” not “the Imperial Valley.”

[29] National Labor Board report, reprinted in *Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor,* U.S. Senate, 76th Cong., 3d sess. (Washington, D.C., 1940), part 54, 20051. See also Exhibit 8903 in the same hearings, part 55, 20288–89.

[30] McWilliams, “The Farmers Get Tough,” *American Mercury*, October 1934, 241.

[31] On the strikes, see Cletus Daniel, *Bitter Harvest: A History of California Farmworkers, 1870–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 222–57; Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, first published 1939), 224 - 26; Stuart Jamieson, *Labor Unionism in American Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1945), 107 - 110; Irving Bernstein, *The Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker, 1933–1941* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 160 - 68; Kevin Starr, *Endangered Dreams: The Great Depression in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 157 - 60; Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Corridors of Migration: The Odyssey of Mexican Laborers, 1600–1933* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 215–85; Kathryn S. Olmsted, *Right Out of California: The 1930s and the Big Business Roots of Modern Conservatism* (New Press, 2015); and Gilbert González, *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing: Imperial Politics in the American Southwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 159 - 96.

[32] Alan J. Watt, *Farm Workers and the Churches: The Movement in California and Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2010), 26, 39. See also Acuña, *Corridors of Migration*, 281.

[33] A.J. Ballard, “Report of Western Supervisor,” January 1930, folder 28, box 15, Home Missions Council of North America records, National Council of Churches, Record Group 26, National Archive of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

[34] Watt, *Farm Workers and the Churches*, 42. The Migrant Ministry’s western supervisor stopped sending reports on Imperial in 1930, suggesting a withdrawal. The supervisor’s reports from 1926 to 1933 are filed in folder 28, box 15, Home Missions Council of North America records, National Council of Churches, Record Group 26, National Archive of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. **[Author: Please add city and state for this repository. –Editor]**

[35] Liston Pope, *Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942). A decade later, researcher James Bright Wilson discovered that the ministers of established churches in the Central Valley also failed to serve migrant pickers, even when those pickers were white. James Bright Wilson, “Religious Leaders, Institutions and Organizations Among Certain Agricultural Workers in the Central Valley of California” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1944), 174 - 75.

[36] Harry F. Ward eventually became an apologist for Soviet crimes in the 1930s. For a discussion of Ward’s radicalization, see Gary Dorrien, *Social Ethics in the Making: Interpreting an American Tradition* (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 109 - 130; Miller, *American Protestantism and Social Issues*, 70 - 71; and David Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx: Harry F. Ward and the*

Struggle for Social Justice (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003).

[37] Huber, “History of the Methodist Federation for Social Action,” 202 - 3.

[38] On the American Civil Liberties Union’s role in the Imperial Valley strikes, see Judy Kutulas, *The American Civil Liberties Union and the Making of Modern Liberalism, 1930 - 1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 49 - 53.

[39] “Board Hears Complaints on Attitude of J.R. Lester,” *Brawley News*, January 23, 1934.

[40] “Valley Quiet Today After Hectic Night During Which Brawley Stages Abduction,” *Imperial Valley Press*, January 24, 1934; Porter M. Chaffee, “A History of the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union” (Oakland, Calif.: Federal Writers Project, date unknown but probably 1939), 2:10.

[41] Beverly Oaten, “Imperial Valley, 1934,” March 1, 1934, *Christian Advocate*, 10; “Not Mob Violence but Valley Spirit,” *Brawley News*, January 26, 1934.

[42] Oaten, “Imperial Valley, 1934,” 10.

[43] Thacker, “Methodist Church in Southern California,” 200.

[44] Daniel, *Bitter Harvest*, 246; “We Don’t Need Them, We Don’t Want Them,” *Imperial Valley Press*, April 30, 1934; “Unwelcome Excursion Proves Flop” and “Motorcade of Coast People Turns Out to be Real Flop,” both May 7, 1934, *Brawley News*.

[45] Gerald Harvey letter, *Christian Advocate*, April 5, 1934, 11.

[46] Pelham Glassford to Charles Wyzanski, June 13, 1934, folder 2, box 26, Pelham Glassford Papers, Special Collections, Charles Young Library, University of California, Los Angeles; Glassford to Heald, June 12, 1934, folder P-91, carton 34, Federal Writers Project Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; Statement by General P. D. Glassford, undated, folder P-91, carton

34, ibid. See also U.S. Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor, *Violations of Free Speech and Rights of Labor*, 76th Cong., 3d sess. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940), part 55, 30146, 20307.

[47] "Ministers in Warning Against Hysteria," *Santa Ana Register*, April 25, 1934.

[48] Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," 217, 219.

[49] Adna W. Leonard, Jr., "The Laymen of Long Beach," *Christian Advocate*, August 9, 1934, 2.

[50] Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," 93.

[51] Ibid, 96.

[52] Besides Heist and Toothaker, Leonard named C.V. Gustafson, George A. Warmer Sr., James E. Dunning, and Russell E. Clay as members of the machine.

[53] Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," 95 - 97.

[54] "Economic Report Chief Issue as Methodists Gather at Long Beach," *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 1935.

[55] Quoted in Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," 99.

[56] "Economic System Assailed by Methodist Conference at Long Beach," June 27, 1935, *Los Angeles Times*; Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," 98.

[57] C.I.D. Moore, "The Profit Motive," *Christian Advocate*, August 29, 1935, 2.

[58] "Methodist Moderation Speaks," *Christian Advocate*, April 23, 1936, 6.

[59] Elizabeth Dilling, *The Red Network: A 'Who's Who' and Handbook of Radicalism for Patriots* (Kenilworth, Ill.: Published by the author, 1934), 136.

[60] Rembert Smith, *Moscow over Methodism* (Houston, Tex.: University Press, 1950, first published 1936).

[61] Ralph Lord Roy, *Communism and the Churches* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1960), 295, 291 - 324. For discussions of the conservative

laymen's attacks on Social Gospel ministers, see Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion, vol. 2: The Noise of Conflict, 1919 - 1941* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 300, and Miller, *American Protestantism and Social Issues*, 124 - 25.

[62] "The Red-Baiters and the Methodists," *Social Questions Bulletin*, May 1936.

[63] The appendix in Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," has a complete list of the signatories, many of whom are identified by their business.

[64] Letter printed in *Christian Advocate*, February 6, 1936, 12.

[65] "Southern California Laymen to the General Conference," *Christian Advocate*, April 23, 1936, 12 - 13.

[66] Henry S. Henschen, "Methodist Moderation Speaks," *Christian Advocate*, April 23, 1936, 6.

[67] See figure 5-1 in Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 150.

[68] Thomas E. Bergler, *The Juvenilization of American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 26.

[69] Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," 115. See also "The Board of Education Acts," *Christian Advocate*, July 23, 1936, 3.

[70] "The Perversion of Police Power," *Christian Advocate*, May 7, 1936, 3 - 4.

[71] "Chief Davis's Statement," *Christian Advocate*, April 30, 1936, 4 - 5.

[72] Huber, "History of the Methodist Federation for Social Action," 222.

[73] A writer for the *Christian Century*, a liberal Protestant newsletter, deplored the report's "weakness and evasiveness." See "Adopt Neutral Social Report," *Christian Century*, May 27, 1936, 776.

[74] Thacker, "Methodist Church in Southern California," 116.

[75] Ibid., 229.

[76] “The Angeles Observer,” *Christian Advocate*, January 6, 1938, 22.

[77] Thacker, “Methodist Church in Southern California,” 237.

[78] Ibid., 227.

[79] The Home Missions Council, which later became the California Migrant Ministry, remained active in the Central Valley, though it focused most of its efforts on charity work, not labor organizing. A Protestant minister who supported the Madera cotton strike of 1939 found himself blacklisted, just like the Southern California Social Gospelers earlier in the decade. See Wilson, “Religious Leaders, Institutions and Organizations,” 197.

[80] Matt Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Workers Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 68 - 69; Ronald A. Wells, “Cesar Chavez’s Protestant Allies: The California Migrant Ministry and the Farm Workers,” *Journal of Presbyterian Hist*ory, Spring/Summer 2009, 5 - 16; Watt, *Farm Workers and the Churches*, 72 - 106.