



Telling Our Stories

250 Years of United Methodism
in the New York Area

1766-2016

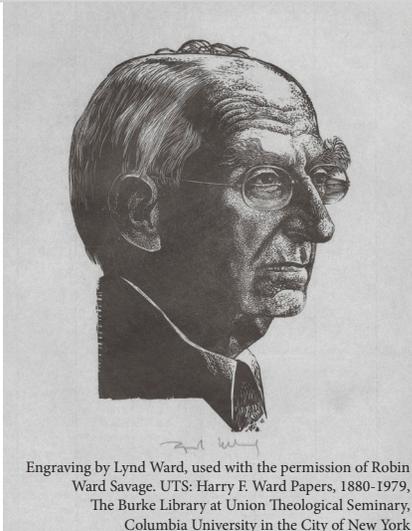
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Harry F. Ward

*Methodist Preacher
and Social Activist*

1873-1966



Engraving by Lynd Ward, used with the permission of Robin Ward Savage. UTS: Harry F. Ward Papers, 1880-1979, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York

Rev. Harry F. Ward, Jr., was a British immigrant to America who became a Methodist preacher and is best known as the first national chairman of the American Civil Liberties Union, from which he resigned in 1940 to protest their decision to bar communists.

A lifelong pragmatist, Ward decided not to attend seminary. He was ordained in 1900 based on his lay preaching and a few classes. He pastored several churches in Chicago, during which time he also read the works of socialist theoretician Karl Marx. Already a proponent of the Social Gospel, Ward incorporated many of Marx's teachings about economic justice into his theology. Ward's leftist leanings attracted the attention of the notorious House Un-American Activities Committee.

Ward is most remembered among Methodists for being one of the founding members of the Methodist Federation for Social Service in 1907. He was based in New York,

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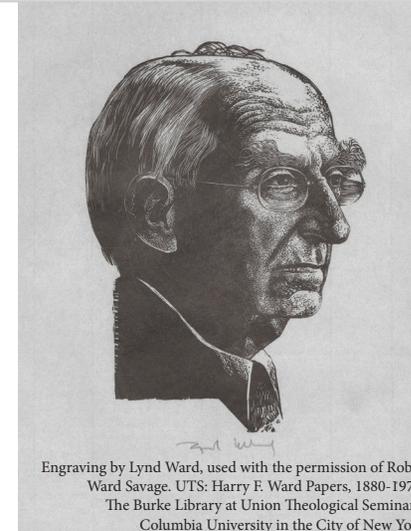
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(Harry Ward, cont.)

teaching ethics at Union Theological Seminary, from 1918 until 1941.

Ward, who believed that the gospel should be applied to society and not just individuals, never saw a contradiction between Christianity and idealistic communism. In his eyes, both sought social justice for all.

For Discussion

- Ward came to ordination through lay preaching. As the modern church changes, what role will lay preachers and licensed local pastors play?
- Ward believed that the gospel should be applied to society, not only to individuals. How would you connect this idea to issues that challenge society today, such as health-care?
- Ward played an instrumental role in the passage of the Social Creed, considered radical by many at the time, by the MEC General Conference in 1908. Read it along with a more current version at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Creed_\(Methodist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Creed_(Methodist)). How radical do you think the Social Creed is today?



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