In 1985, Arthur Landwehr, senior pastor of First United Methodist Church, Evanston, Illinois preached a sermon commemorating what would have been the 100th birthday of that church’s famed minister, Dr. Ernest Fremont Tittle. Landwehr used the following story to illustrate Tittle’s impact upon his parishioners:

The wife of a man in this congregation had died. The man was obviously embittered by this experience. Dr. Tittle, it is said, went to his front door and offered assistance, and the man wanted nothing to do with anybody at this point. So Dr. Tittle walked just to the end of the block and waited and watched. . . . Soon the man came out of his front door and made his way along the shoreline, walking nearly three hours with Dr. Tittle 30, 40, 50 paces behind him, never saying a word. They walked north on the shoreline and then came back to his house. Not intruding on the man’s privacy, Dr. Tittle stood a good distance from the man as he made his way to his front door. But before that door was opened, the man turned and said to Dr. Tittle: “Thank you for being with me.”

On the surface, this story is a wonderful account of a minister’s love for a parishioner. However, it also provides church historians with a window to better understand how a genre of social gospel liberalism was lived out through pastoral ministry.

Scholars who have examined the Methodist contribution to the social gospel have chiefly focused on the Methodist Federation for Social Service (MFSS). Numerous studies credit the MFSS with causing a heightened hostility toward capitalism within American Protestantism in the 1920s and 1930s.2 William McGuire King suggests that MFSS leaders like Harry Ward

1 Arthur J. Landwehr, “The First Church Pulpit and Dr. Tittle’s 100th Birthday,” The First Church Pulpit 43 (20 October 1985): 10–11.
and Francis McConnell paved the way for the rise of "social gospel radicalism."³

King shows how certain Methodist leaders after World War I developed a more incisive critique of earlier social reform initiatives.⁴ However, the relationship of representative MFSS leaders to specific audiences remains unclear. In particular, many influential MFSS leaders, like Ernest Fremont Tittle, were also pastors of prosperous upper and middle class parishes.

Along with Ralph Sockman, Lynn Harold Hough, Henry Hitt Crane, Albert Day, Harold Bosley, and Harry Emerson Fosdick, Tittle helped define a paradigm of liberal preaching in American Protestantism before 1950.⁵ Between 1918 and 1949, he was one of Methodism’s most outspoken leaders on issues related to economic justice, civil rights, and world peace, based on a strong pacifist commitment. Paradoxically, his career centered within a parish nationally associated with upper class affluence and political conservatism. Even as Tittle was hounded throughout his 31 years at First Church by local and national conservative coalitions, the congregation enjoyed substantial numerical growth during his ministry.⁶

What was the relationship between Tittle’s social gospel liberalism and his success as a parish minister? In order to answer this question, one needs to look at how Tittle’s liberal theology was expressed through pastoral ministry. For Tittle, pastoral ministry was more than providing for the spiritual and temporal needs of his parishioners. It was a means to gain the loyalty of his congregation and propagate his liberal theology.

Tittle’s use of pastoral ministry, centered upon pastoral nurture and worship, sheds light on how a component of the social gospel was manifested

⁴King traces the roots of social gospel radicalism to a paradigm of “social reconstructionism” that emerged within the social gospel movement around 1912. This paradigm, exhibited in the theology of Methodist liberals such as George Albert Coe, Harry F. Ward, and Francis J. McConnell, signaled a shift to a more critical posture toward middle-class culture. In juxtaposition to pre-World War I social gospel liberals who did not see the need for drastic social-economic changes (who King identifies as “social evangelists” and “social engineers”), the reconstructionists were skeptical that existing social structures could respond to liberal reform initiatives. This paradigm produced the “radical idealism” that characterized the theology of many post World War I church leaders like Tittle, Halford Luccock and G. Bromley Oxnam (see King, “Social Gospel Radicalism,” 336 ff; and King, “Methodist Case,” 442-449).
⁵All within this group, except Fosdick, were Methodists. See also Edgar DeWitt Jones, American Preachers Today (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1933); and Edwin S. Gaustad, “The Pulpit and the Pews,” in Between The Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960, ed. William Hutchison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 21-47.
⁶First Church’s membership grew from 1,215 in 1918 to 3,325 at the time of Tittle’s death in 1949. See Robert Moats Miller, How Shall They Hear Without a Preacher? The Life of Ernest Fremont Tittle (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 250.
within an elite parish community. A more detailed analysis of how other liberal Methodist preachers, like Tittle, used pastoral ministry to legitimize their prophetic role may provide a more nuanced portrait of how the social gospel evolved after World War I.

I

Tittle began his pastoral ministry in 1908, after receiving degrees from Ohio Wesleyan University and Drew Theological Seminary. His first appointment was as pastor of four rural Ohio parishes. Fueled by the theology of Walter Rauschenbusch, Tittle struggled to relate the impulses of the social gospel to these parishes. He later joked about an encounter with a layman from one of his churches who admonished Tittle about his lack of spirituality. “He thought I did not know very much, and he was right. He thought my preaching was pretty thin, and he was right.” When the parishioner said a prayer on Tittle’s behalf, the man concluded by saying, “O God, in Thy mercy save our young brother from the fate of the rich man in the parable who went to hell—why, O Lord, the Good Book does not say!”

Following his first pastorate, Tittle rapidly ascended the appointment hierarchy of the Cincinnati Annual Conference, marked by successful pastorates in Dayton and Delaware, Ohio. In 1916, only eight years after graduating from seminary, he was appointed pastor of the prestigious Broad Street Methodist Episcopal Church, Columbus, Ohio. Less than two years later, and after a stint as a YMCA chaplain in western Europe at the close of World War I, Tittle was “called” to the pulpit of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, Evanston.

Tittle’s role as a national church leader and as a local church pastor cannot be fully understood without examining the cultural legacy of First Church, Evanston. When Tittle originally visited the parish in 1917, First Church had a reputation as one of the most elite congregations in American Protestantism. Known in Tittle’s era as “the Cathedral of American Methodism,” First Church was founded in 1854 by a cadre of Chicago civic and business leaders. Over the years, the church was anchored in a constituency made up of some of the most affluent and powerful figures in the Midwest. Among its members were politicians, business tycoons, academicians (from Garrett Biblical Institute and Northwestern University), and national social reformers (including, before her death in 1898, Frances E. Willard).8

8 James Alton James, From Log Schoolhouse to Church Tower (Evanston: First Methodist Church, 1944); and Eleanor Darnall Wallace, For All the Saints: A History of the First United Methodist Church of Evanston, Illinois (Evanston: Schori, 1978).
Despite First Church’s upper class affluence (including a strictly enforced system of pew renting that was not abolished until the early 1920s), the congregation strongly embraced the postmillennial liberalism that characterized late 19th century Progressive era America. James Wind notes that First Church wanted “to embrace and sanctify much of the worldly, the human-philosophy, science, rhetoric, literature, art, law, and common labor.”9 Tittle himself observed that the congregation’s heritage was represented by “men and women who wrought righteousness, obtained promises, promoted good causes, influenced for good the culture of their day and the course of history.”10

Tittle’s pulpit attacks against Western militarism, and his pleas for racial and economic justice, appeared to put him at odds with his congregation. Picking up on Rauschenbusch’s theology, he often castigated his parishioners for losing touch with Jesus’ “radical” message to Western culture. He once complained that “Christianity, which began as a revolution, has become as conventional as an afternoon tea.”11

However, Tittle also possessed a binding affinity for the liberal cultural and theological legacy of First Church. He challenged his parishioners with a prophetic vision of the church’s role in transforming America. He also appealed to their hearts and minds, by attempting to make them see how First Church’s progressive heritage could lead other Americans closer to the Kingdom of God.

During his 31 years at First Church, Tittle sought to connect individual nurture to his vision of the kingdom of God, based on racial justice, social equality, and world peace. Contrary to seeing these two ends in conflict, Tittle believed both were interdependent components of the Christian gospel. The manner in which he demonstrated this connection was in his pastoral ministry—notably through pastoral care and worship.

II

Tittle did not primarily define his ministry around pastoral counseling (especially in regard to how this role designated a professional category of ordained ministry after World War II). His schedule, filled with meetings,

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10 Tittle, “Not Apart From Us,” in James, 39.
The Social Gospel as Pastoral Ministry

administrative responsibilities, weddings, funerals, local and national speaking engagements, and sermon preparation, left him little time to provide parishioners with intensive pastoral counseling. However, Tittle’s ministry at First Church centered on his role as a caring pastor.

At its core, Tittle’s theology of pastoral care was grounded in his belief that the pastor needed to model behavior that testified to the truth of his “public” theology. As a former parishioner put it, Tittle could afford to be outspoken on social issues because his congregation “knew he was earnest.” He frequently castigated preachers whose actions seemed to contradict the theology of their sermons. He noted in 1930 that “preaching becomes a power only when it is practiced.” While Tittle conceded that a preacher’s rhetoric may bring people to church Sunday morning, elocution alone would not lead the spiritual seeker to the Kingdom of God. “People must not only hear a man say that they ought to love their enemies, they must actually see this man loving his enemies.”

Like an earlier generation of social gospel pioneers, Tittle believed that a just society would only emerge in America if enough individuals manifested God’s love for humanity in word and deed. “If all that was needed was to pack a church, it might be enough to preach Christianity in a brilliant fashion. But if what is needed is a new birth of faith and hope and love, Christianity will have to be lived by the preacher who proclaims it.” For Tittle, the chief imperative of pastoral ministry was that minister’s model for their parishioners the qualities of a converted life.

Nothing that is profoundly Christian is likely to be acknowledged by a preacher who talks courage and acts cowardice, or who talks forgiveness and acts vindictiveness, or who talks spirituality and consecration and heroic unselfishness and then acts with an eye single to his own interests. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and do not practice what I preach, I am become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal, and this notwithstanding the fact that undiscerning persons may consider me a wonderful preacher.

As was the case with many Methodists of his generation, Tittle was heavily influenced by the theology of personalism. His commitment to personalism was derived from pioneers of that movement, including Borden Parker Bowne, Edgar Brightman, and Tittle’s long time friend and parishioner, Harris Franklin Rall. Like many personalists, Tittle emphasized God’s immanence in history and how God’s love was manifested through Jesus’

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12 The author is grateful to Mary Durham, James Kittleman, Eleanor Wallace, Roland Wolseley, Donald Wood, and Katherine Wood for sharing their personal recollections of Tittle’s pastoral ministry at First Church.
13 Author’s interview with Roland Wolseley, January 10, 1991.
15 Tittle, Foolishness of Preaching, 314.
16 Tittle, Foolishness of Preaching, 313–314.
suffering. For Tittle, Jesus’ death was not an abstract statement about God’s love of humanity; it served as a model for pastoral ministry by illustrating how individuals needed to demonstrate sacrificial love for others, no matter the personal costs.

For Tittle, Jesus’ suffering and death reflected the imperative that pastoral ministry be devoted to serve those in his parish regardless of their political and theological views. As Tittle affirmed in the early 1920s, “the Christian God does not issue orders from a throne. He does something far more effective than that; he sends out an appeal from a cross. He does not break the heads of men. He breaks the hearts of men by revealing to them the social consequences of their sin.” Tittle’s pacifism affirmed that one could never use physical force to produce a just outcome. However, his commitment to nonviolence was also revealed in his belief that an effective minister needed willingly to accept the pains and hurts of his congregation.

Tittle’s faith in redemptive suffering was indicated by how he went to great lengths to be a caring pastor, frequently at the expense of his own personal needs. While limited in time, he regularly visited parishioners who were sick or in need of counsel. He would drop his schedule if he learned of anyone in his congregation who required immediate attention. Tittle’s wife, Glenna, often aided her husband in his pastoral calling, as he regularly visited the homes of his parishioners.

Tittle’s theology of pastoral ministry was largely based upon living out a liberal “golden rule” ethic within his congregation. In modeling this ethic, pastoral ministry served as a crucial strategy that enabled him to be outspoken in his pulpit. Even as he preached countless sermons attacking racism, militarism, and capitalism, Tittle’s actions in the parish made it clear that he was the servant of those who sat in the pews. In a posthumous tribute, the First Church official board commented that loyalty to his congregation was the defining hallmark of Tittle’s ministry. “Dr. Tittle was our pastor and friend. All [his] wide-reaching interests and his work as a preacher did not keep him from the faithful personal service of his own people. . . . He loved people in the spirit of Christ. He always put himself second.”

This affirmation points to the cruel paradox of Tittle’s pastoral success. Although his congregation gave him unequivocal loyalty, personal needs,

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18 Tittle, “Does It Make Any Difference What a Man Believes?” sermon pamphlet, October 9, 1921, the Ernest Fremont Tittle Collection, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill., 9.
19 An excellent summary of Tittle’s mature theology of nonviolence can be found in his essay, “If America is drawn into the war, can you, as a Christian, participate in it, or support it?” The Christian Century 58 (5 February 1941): 178–180.
21 “A Memorial to Ernest Fremont Tittle,” pamphlet, 1949, Tittle Collection, 3.
especially related to health, were sorely neglected. Tittle's theology of pastoral care enabled him to convince parishioners that his motives as a preacher were sincere. But his conviction that he needed to bear the pains of his congregation contributed to a rapid deterioration in his health.

In the late 1920s, Tittle suffered a nervous breakdown followed by a series of heart attacks in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1934, Tittle sought a sabbatical leave from First Church to accept a position as Pastor of the American Church in Shanghai, China. Despite Tittle's desire to assume that post, he felt compelled to stay in Evanston out of loyalty to his congregation. Numerous offers to assume prestigious academic posts were also brushed aside. As Floyd Cunningham notes, Tittle seemed to accept "his own weakened health as his lot for being God's servant."

By the time of his death at the age of sixty-three in 1949, Tittle was a man deeply respected and loved by his congregation. But he was also worn out by the responsibilities of trying to model Christ's love in his daily ministry.

III

Tittle's pastoral ministry was centered upon modeling for his parishioners the ethics of his theology. However, his ability to be a model for his congregation was directly tied to his pastoral role as a worship leader. Through his prayers and sermons, the interconnection between a prophetic pulpit and pastoral care became evident.

As was the case with the era's other prominent liberal preachers, such as Harry Emerson Fosdick, Tittle made the writing of sermons and pastoral prayers into an art form. His prayers and sermons were meticulously written and rewritten, resulting in a clear and concise delivery style. Roland Wolseley, a former journalism professor at Northwestern and a long time First Church parishioner, wrote that Tittle was a painstaking craftsman in both his writing and public speaking. "Though he was a serious thinker, he tried in his sermons and lectures to avoid the church jargon that plagues so many speakers from pulpits and lecterns. No one ever complained that he was obscure, trite or technical in his language."

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22 Miller, How Shall They Hear?, 234–235.
24 The similarities in the preaching styles of liberal ministers such as Tittle and Harry Emerson Fosdick can be ascertained from Miller, How Shall They Hear?, 162–187, and Miller, Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 333–378.
25 Roland Wolseley, Still in Print: Journey of a Writer, Teacher, Journalist (Elgin: David C. Cook Foundation, 1985), 53.
Wolsey's comments indicate the strong appeal that Tittle enjoyed with a broad spectrum of his congregation, ranging from college students to senior First Church pillars. A small minority found his liberalism disconcerting and left the church. However, Tittle solidified a support network in his congregation, that included students, professors, business leaders, politicians, and philanthropists. Tittle took the preparation of his prayers just as seriously as he did his sermons. He argued that the pastoral prayer was the most neglected aspect of morning worship.

Such neglect is something more than a pity; it is a disgrace. When the moment comes to say, 'Let us pray,' the minister has the opportunity of helping the people to 'draw boldly unto the throne of grace, that [they] may receive mercy and find grace to help [them] in time of need.' And what greater opportunity does the minister have during the entire course of the service? It is even arguable that the prayer may be of greater value than the sermon.

Tittle's prayers and sermons stressed the importance of individual conversion as a necessary first step toward social reform. His prayers asserted that the Christian faith needed to speak to the conscience of each parishioner. We cry unto thee, O God, for personal help. We believe; help thou our unbelief. We believe, but we do not always trust. Help us not only with our minds to believe in thee, but with all our hearts to trust thee, and so to obtain deliverance from fears that torment us and worries that sap our strength. Help us as we go forth daily to do battle with temptation, our spirits so willing, our flesh so weak. Help us to keep our minds fixed upon those considerations which ought to influence us, and wilt thou keep steadily before us an inspiring vision of life at its best.

Tittle's prayers not only addressed individual hurts; they exposed his congregation to a vivid portrait of the Kingdom of God. He conceded that the kingdom could never be fully manifested on earth. However, he made it evident that his congregation could strive to achieve signs of the Kingdom's existence in the present.

Grant, O Father, that we may never rest content with any present achievement. May our minds travel beyond all the roads that have ever been trod. May our souls live continually forward in what ought to be. May our imaginations conceive a world in which bitter poverty shall be done away, and preventable disease, and that injustice which destroys men and the faith of men, and that strife which leaves men weak. And in faith and in patience may we labor for its realization.

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26First Church's loyalty toward Tittle was confirmed in 1933 when the congregation passed a "free pulpit" resolution. The resolution resulted as the culmination of a ten year campaign by numerous conservative caucuses to drive Tittle from his pulpit. While defending Tittle's right to a free pulpit, the resolution affirmed that the church in America needed to be "a clear, strong voice rising above all divisions, speaking in the name of God for justice, mutual understanding, and good will" (see Miller, How Shall They Hear?, 210-234).


28Tittle, pastoral prayer dated January 22, 1928, Tittle Collection.

29Tittle, pastoral prayer dated January 22, 1928, Tittle Collection.
Tittle's prayers reveal the roots of his theology in the postmillennial liberalism of the early social gospel. He believed that Americans could never ascertain a vision of the kingdom unless they first underwent a conversion of the heart. As people experienced personal transformation, he hoped they would be able to discern signs of the Kingdom in America.

Bless, we beseech thee, our beloved country. Grant unto its present leaders that prophetic vision and courage which alone can save us from disaster . . . Rebuke the selfishness of those who still have no thought for anything save their own interest. Help them to see how utterly perilous is their present attitude and create in them that spirit of true patriotism which subordinates self to the common good. As we pray for our own nation and its people, so we pray for all other nations, that thy kingdom may more fully come in our time, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Tittle's use of prayer to appeal to the consciences of his parishioners also defined his preaching. While his sermons affirmed the virtues of democratic socialism, racial equality, and nonviolent social action, he ultimately asserted that social positions could never be legislated by the church. By appealing to individual consciences, he hoped that his congregation could discern how the social justice imperatives of the Gospel had a bearing on his parishioners' lives.

Tittle repeatedly warned young ministers of the inherent dangers of preaching on social issues, devoid of a concern for spiritual nurture. He told the graduating class of Garrett Biblical Institute in 1936 to beware of the tendency to turn the pulpit into "something comparable to a political harangue or to the more or less inspired utterances of the soap box."Christian Century editor Paul Hutchinson observed that Tittle's sermons were not primarily centered upon social issues.

The only thing he preached about was theology—God, the Christian God as revealed in Jesus Christ. But in the course of preaching such a God he inevitably ran into such questions as his purposes for man, whether man could discover those purposes and what would happen if he did . . . He began his sermon always with some aspect of the fact of God; he ended always with man at the moment of decision when confronted with the will of God.

Tittle's prayers and sermons indicate how he attempted to appeal to the middle-class cultural ethos of his congregation. He called upon his parishioners to seek out a "higher Christianity," in which reason and intelligence

\[\text{30Tittle, pastoral prayer dated March 12, 1933, Tittle Collection.}\\ \text{31Tittle fits William McGuire King's paradigm of "social evangelism." King observes that many pre World War I social gospel liberals saw social reform primarily as a process of reshaping social attitudes. Social evangelists believed that through proclamation, the church could ultimately make competing social groups accept certain liberal ideals of a cooperative society. This paradigm suited the leadership style of many late 19th century liberal preachers such as Phillips Brooks and Washington Gladden (see King, "Social Gospel Radicalism," 78 ff; King, "Methodist Case," 440–441).}\\ \text{32Tittle, "The Timely and the Timeless," sermon pamphlet, June 7, 1936, Tittle Collection, 16.}\\ \text{33Paul Hutchinson, "A Word about a Friend," The Christian Century 66 (17 August 1949): 959.}\]
would win out over passion and prejudice. His sermons made effective use of what Martin Marty calls a “prophetic civil religion,” in which democratic ideals of freedom, justice and equality became synonymous with God’s will for America. In a widely reprinted 1924 sermon, Tittle defended the rights of conscientious objectors by calling upon his congregation to use their cultural heritage to discern a voice of prophetic reason speaking to America. “Are we going to renounce our political heritage? Are we going to repudiate our political history? . . . May God forbid that now, in days of passion and panic, we should throw away so great and precious and costly a heritage.”

Tittle frequently used the lives of Progressive era heroes such as Abraham Lincoln and Jane Addams to illustrate paradigms of Christian living. These figures not only witnessed to the power of liberal ideals to change America, but also gave validity to his personalist belief that only a rational Christianity could save America. He noted in 1933,

> Wherever in this world I find intelligence trying to overcome ignorance, wherever I find tolerance gallantly resisting and slowly overcoming an awful tide of intolerance, wherever I find love casting out fear and disarming bitterness and prejudice . . . wherever I find such a spirit I find God.

Accenting his theology of pastoral care, Tittle believed that a sacrificial spirit was needed of the middle class, if a new social order was to be born in America. As he acknowledged the reluctance of many Americans to surrender their material possessions, his view of the future, like earlier social gospel liberals, was nevertheless optimistic; “we may presently discover that by consenting to lose some of our material possessions we have gained our souls.”

Tittle’s faith in this progressive ethos did not change, even as his later theology became more critical of his earlier liberalism. In the 1940s, he clung to the ethnocentrism characteristic of the early social gospel, as he saw

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34Dwight Ralph Bastian, “A Homiletical Analysis of Ernest Fremont Tittle’s Sermons on War and Peace From 1918 to 1949” (STD diss., Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 1975).
36Tittle, “Crown Him Lord of All: The Christian’s Attitude Toward War” (Chicago: Young People’s Department of the Board of Sunday Schools of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1924), 10.
38Tittle, “The Discovery of God,” unpublished sermon manuscript dated February 26, 1933, Tittle Collection, 18–19.
39Tittle, Jesus After Nineteen Centuries (New York: Abingdon, 1932), 158.
his congregation's Anglo-Saxon heritage as the standard by which the world could be made Christlike. "Cultural differences are not a matter of race; they are a matter of history, of tradition, of social custom, of economic and educational opportunity. Given adequate economic and educational opportunity, a backward people can catch up with any advanced people on earth."41 Although he expressed hope that a new pluralistic society would one day emerge in America, Tittle saw that new society modeled after the cultural suppositions of his white, upper middle-class congregation.

Tittle hoped that America would one day be a society free of the constraints of race and social class. However, he believed that preaching on the Kingdom of God never meant overturning the traditions of liberal Western society. As his congregation's spokesperson and ethical model, Tittle believed that pastoral ministry could show others signs of the Kingdom of God in America and in the world. Reflecting the moral tone of the early social gospel, Tittle stressed the power of liberal ideals to transform individuals, dehumanizing social structures, and even the wicked intentions of nations. As he summarized in a prayer from the late 1920s.

O Father, grant unto us this hour a glimpse of the men and women we might be. Grant unto us a glimpse of the world that we might have—no festering slums... no preventable poverty, no preventable disease, no selfish industries in which material gain looms larger than the welfare of mankind, no wasting and imbittering [sic] strife—but a world built upon justice, made glad by thy love, and enriched by the contributions of many peoples. Help us, O help us, in spite of every discouragement, to believe in the possibility of this fairer world and to do all that we can to the end that the night of the world's sorrow may be shortened and the glad new morning may dawn for the children of men.42

IV

Ernest Fremont Tittle believed that one day the Kingdom of God could be approximated on earth through a world of justice, mutual understanding, and good will. As he preached a theology that affirmed how his liberal ideals could transform individuals and social systems, he attempted to model a lifestyle that witnessed to that belief.

Tittle's career as a social gospel preacher reveals a paradox. On one hand, he appealed to his parishioners to grapple with the social inequalities and injustices within 20th century America, affirming the radical nature of Jesus' message upon contemporary American culture. On the other hand, Tittle heavily relied upon the white, upper middle-class legacy of his congregation to validate his role as a prophetic preacher. The glue which he used to hold that paradox together was his pastoral ministry.

42 Tittle, pastoral prayer dated April 1, 1928, Tittle Collection.
Tittle's ministry at First Church was anchored in the Victorian suppositions of the pre—World War I social gospel. He stands in the tradition of late 19th century liberal ministers like Phillips Brooks and Washington Gladden, who used their pulpit status to speak as moral voices to the American middle class.\textsuperscript{43} Despite Tittle's reputation as one of the most "radical" Methodist leaders of the 1920s and 1930s, he never wavered in his belief that he had an unequivocal duty to serve the needs of his own parishioners. He raised the imperative that his parishioners search their consciences to discern Christian truth. As one of Tittle's parishioners noted,

\begin{quote}
With much my preacher says I am in disagreement. But I expect him to speak his mind and conscience. He is the only chance God has in that pulpit. If I should attempt to shut his mouth, I run the risk of shutting God's mouth, and that I would not dare to do. It is in the hope of hearing God that I go to Church.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

Like countless social gospel liberals of an earlier era, Tittle saw conversion as each person's encounter with God. If enough individuals had their hearts transformed, then a new social order would emerge in America and in the world. Tittle unequivocally affirmed that Christian faith was anchored in a "profoundly Christian individualism which holds that every human soul, whatever be the color of his skin, has value in the eyes of God."\textsuperscript{45}

While MFSS leaders like Harry Ward grew more sympathetic toward Marxism and spoke of a working class struggle in the 1920s and 1930s, Tittle never lost sight of the cultural worldview of his congregation.\textsuperscript{46} As his preaching in the 1930s and 1940s grew increasingly hostile toward Western culture, he never abandoned his faith in the inherent superiority of that cultural tradition.

Tittle believed that being a caring pastor and a prophetic leader was achieved through legitimating the upper middle-class culture of his congregation. Even when some of his parishioners became involved in a national conservative campaign against perceived Protestant radicalism in the mid and late 1930s, personal loyalty to Tittle from these individuals remained high.\textsuperscript{47}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Tittle's career fits the late 19th century ministerial model of the "pulpiteer." In this paradigm, pastoral authority centered upon the minister's oratorical skills in the pulpit. See Joseph Hough, Jr. and John Cobb, Jr., Christian Identity and Theological Education (Scholars Press, 1985), 9-13.}

\footnote{Miller, How Shall They Hear?, 222-223.}

\footnote{Tittle, "Liberalism Today," unpublished sermon manuscript dated July 16, 1939, Tittle Collection, 12.}

\footnote{Tittle was an active member of the MFSS throughout the 1920s, but became increasingly critical of the Marxism of Harry Ward in the 1930s. Ward on his part castigated Tittle for being part of "the growing aesthetic tendency in Methodism." Although Tittle remained a member of the MFSS in his later ministry, his support for the organization waned by the mid 1930s (Miller, How Shall They Hear?, 390-391).}

\footnote{One of the most powerful conservative caucuses to emerge in the 1930s was the Chicago Conference of Methodist Laymen. Ironically, two of the charter members of his caucus, Wilber Helm and Burt Denman, were members of First Church and signers of First Church's "free pulpit" Resolution. See Miller, American Protestantism and Social Issues, 65 ff, 124-126; and Miller, How Shall They Hear?, 234-239.}
\end{footnotes}
The case of Ernest Fremont Tittle strongly suggests that pastoral ministry played a critical role in sustaining his status as a prophetic social gospel preacher. Fleshing out how other liberal ministers of Tittle’s era used pastoral ministry in their parishes may help historians construct a more comprehensive portrait of how the social gospel developed within American Methodism after World War I.