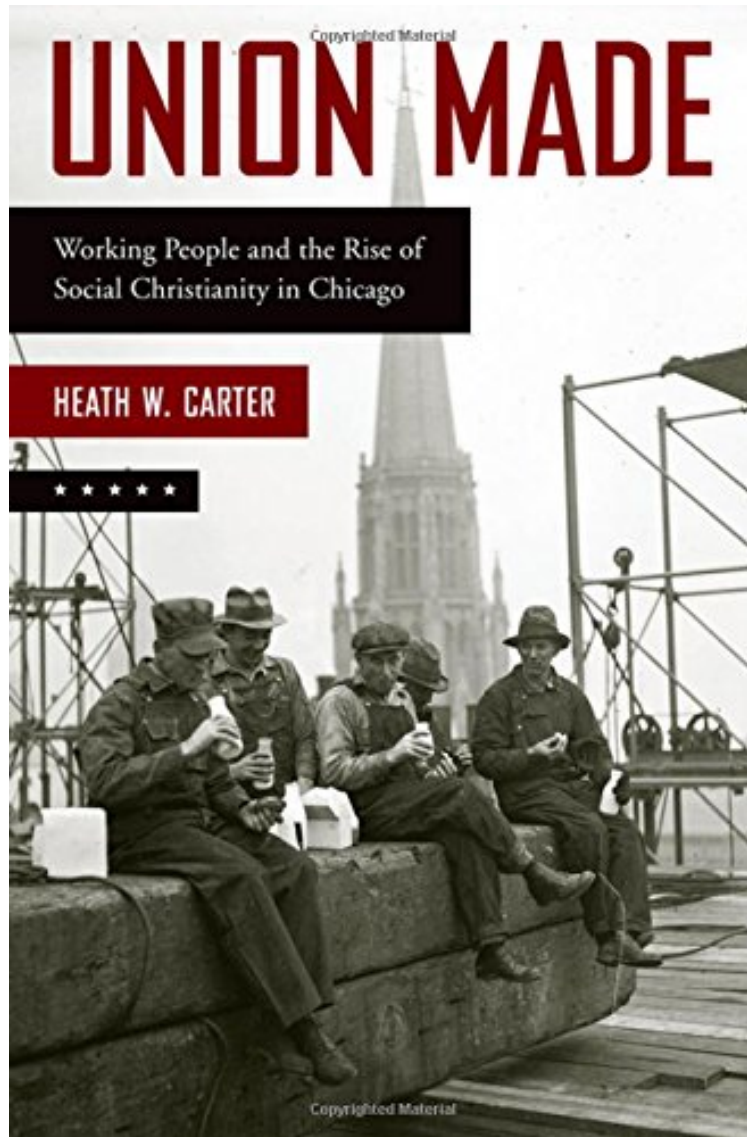


Union Made: Working People and the Rise of Social Christianity in Chicago

Heath W. Carter

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Heath W. Carter : Union Made: Working People and the Rise of Social Christianity in Chicago before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Union Made: Working People and the Rise of Social Christianity in Chicago:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. One of the most important books on the social gospel in a long

whileBy PaulSocial gospel historiography has a long trail, dating all the way back to the 1940s. That makes it all the more impressive that Heath Carter's book is one of the most important on the subject to come out in a long while. In arguing that working-class Christians and labor leaders were instrumental in the rise of the social gospel (that is, the idea that salvation was not just individual but also social, and that Christian principles needed to be used to make the industrial economic order more just), Carter not only expands the cast of characters involved in the story, he also expands the timeline. In his telling, social Christianities were being articulated in Chicago in the 1860s, well before Washington Gladden and other pastors typically associated with the social gospel took up the cause. Those working-class social Christianities eventually helped prod Protestant and Catholic church leaders to embrace the ideas and strategies associated with the social gospel. Carter's book, focused on Chicago, is also rich with details about the Gilded Age city. Preachers, labor leaders, and churches are not simply disembodied concepts in Carter's narrative. Rather, he places them within neighborhoods and in relation to fellow congregants. The reader thus gets an intimate sense of the religious landscape of late-nineteenth-century Chicago. I highly recommend this book. Compellingly written, well argued, thoroughly researched, it's on the short list of my favorite books in American religious history so far this year. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Short, clear, enjoyable to read and informative. By S. Barton. It is quite rare to find academic history that is so clear and enjoyable to read. Carter's overall argument is that the Social Gospel arose from the working class, whose role in developing progressive religious interpretations has been largely ignored by previous historians. Carter gives us a close study of working class influence on the churches of Chicago in the late 19th and early 20th Century and brings it alive with many vignettes of fascinating people who have, until now, been long-forgotten. There is a long history of working people giving a social interpretation to the life of Jesus and this social Christianity gained influence within churches of different denominations during the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the late 19th Century. Carter demonstrates that the churches felt pressure from working-class members of congregations and from the conspicuous absence of many other workers who were estranged from the church because of its failure to consider social conditions such as depressions and mass unemployment as well as individual moral failings. Proponents of the social gospel used that working class absence to justify and defend their outreach to workers and support for unions, translating it all into intellectually respectable theology. This later part has received most of the attention, in work like Hopkins Rise of the Social Gospel, to the exclusion of the role of the workers and their organizations. The AFL under Gompers provided a non-socialist labor organization that churches could more comfortably support and created a space within the churches for a pro-labor social gospel that was clearly not socialist, often anti-socialist. Without this space, the church hierarchies would have marginalized socially concerned pro-labor ministers. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great book. By land lover. Well written history of the social justice movement in Chicago. Provides new information and insights.

In Gilded Age America, rampant inequality gave rise to a new form of Christianity, one that sought to ease the sufferings of the poor not simply by saving their souls, but by transforming society. In *Union Made*, Heath W. Carter advances a bold new interpretation of the origins of American Social Christianity. While historians have often attributed the rise of the Social Gospel to middle-class ministers, seminary professors, and social reformers, this book places working people at the very center of the story. The major characters--blacksmiths, glove makers, teamsters, printers, and the like--have been mostly forgotten, but as Carter convincingly argues, their collective contribution to American Social Christianity was no less significant than that of Walter Rauschenbusch or Jane Addams. Leading readers into the thick of late-19th-century Chicago's tumultuous history, Carter shows that countless working-class believers participated in the heated debates over the implications of Christianity for industrializing society, often with as much fervor as they did in other contests over wages and the length of the workday. The city's trade unionists, socialists, and anarchists advanced theological critiques of laissez faire capitalism and protested "scab ministers" who cozied up to the business elite. Their criticisms compounded church leaders' anxieties about losing the poor, such that by the turn-of-the-century many leading Christians were arguing that the only way to salvage hopes of a Christian America was for the churches to soften their position on "the labor question." As denomination after denomination did just that, it became apparent that the Social Gospel was, indeed, ascendant--from below. At a time when the fate of the labor movement and rising economic inequality are once more pressing social concerns, *Union Made* opens the door for a new way forward--by changing the way we think about the past.

"Pathbreaking is an overused word in book notices, but in this case hardly any other one will do."--Joshua Jipp, *Christian Century* "Animated with moral energy, *Union Made* is engagingly written and passionately argued."--*Sociology of Religion* "The author's respect for those 'prophets' is patent throughout the book, and he demonstrates why they deserve such respect."--*Journal of Ecclesiastical History* "[A] highly readable narrative...The book's strengths lie in clear, narrative prose that belies the enormous primary and secondary research the book required...Recommended."--CHOICE "Carter's strong, clear argument is based on his extensive and creative research, as well as a highly readable narrative...His narrative skillfully interweaves biographical information on key actors and situates the story in concrete places...[F]orcefully crafted and ambitiously conceived...[T]he author deserves much

praise for crafting a long overdue and engaging study that interrelates working people's mobilization at the job and in union halls with their stands in the pews, and for relating those activities with some of the great challenges faced by Gilded Age America."--American Nineteenth Century History"[M]eticulously researched and stimulating...[Carter] argues convincingly that working people were 'at the very center of fierce fights to reconcile democracy and capitalism in the industrializing world'...His use of many interesting vignettes makes his account very lively."--Journal of Illinois History"A common critique in this subfield is the privileged focus it often places on mainline Protestants and on the voices of religious and labor leaders. Carter, in contrast, furthers our understanding of the complexities of the working-class religious experiences by including the detailed ideas of Catholics, women, black workers, and other non-native-born rank and file workers. By taking into account such diversity, Carter's narrative makes a tremendous contribution to the on-going scholarship in this area."--American Historical "Ambitious...Carter persuasively illustrates the existence of a working-class Christian discourse that predates the work of Social Gospel proponents such as Walter Rauschenbusch...[H]is book will prompt thinking about the place of working-class religion in nineteenth-century culture."--Journal of American History"[L]ucid and extensively documented Union Made is a wonderful resource for those interested in the progressive movement and the social gospel. Readers will find the extensive research to be clear and well-written. Yet this book's greatest achievement is not merely its expansive expos of social Christianity in Chicago, but how closely it mirrors current movements for economic justice."--Speaking of God"[A] careful exploration Carter has a knack for placing his big argument--recasting the history of social Christianity--at the intersection of a variety of subdisciplines."--Books Culture"In contemporary America, where the gulf between the rich and poor threatens to yawn that wide again, Christianity and conservative politics have become so intertwined that many American believers are convinced that their faith mandates small government...Carter, however, shows us a different route."--Church History"A fascinating historical journey."--America Magazine"A huge accomplishment a gift to everyone interested in American history, and a huge gift to those with a keen interest in the role that Christianity played in American-North American, even-social and economic history."--Comment"Gracefully written and richly illustrated, Union Made is an eminently accessible text. It is also of pressing relevance in our present age of staggering prosperity and shameful poverty."--Christian Century"Required reading for all who are studying the Social Gospel."--and Expositor"In Union Made: Working People and the Rise of Social Christianity in Chicago, Carter recovers what has been lost to the rhetoric of the Christian right, namely that Christianity (even its evangelical iterations) aligns very well with the goals of organizers fighting for justice and dignity in their work."--Dissent Magazine"At the height of the industrial age, working-class Chicago buzzed with talk and action about a progressive Christianity based on the Golden Rule. Heath Carter's Union Made is a brilliantly researched, vividly written, and unfailingly wise work of history that transforms our conception of the Social Gospel."--Michael Kazin, author of American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation "No mere opiate or tool of oppression, working-class faith emerges from the pages of this extraordinary book as the generative force that made the nineteenth-century social gospel viable. Social Christianity made resistance against industrial capitalism and its barons a possible and necessary thing. Combining the finest qualities of classic social, urban, and labor histories with the curiosities of our scholarly (and political) moment, Union Made is a sharp, much-needed reminder that American Christianity has not always been free-market in persuasion or comfortable on the corporate side. Beautifully crafted, it is also a stirring must-read." --Darren Dochuk, author of From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism "Heath Carter's Union Made is a powerful and important book. It persuasively documents the working class origins of Social Christianity among Protestant and Catholics alike. It also makes clear that the decline of this Social Gospel tradition has left us increasingly vulnerable to the conscienceless capitalism of our own time. Reading it reminds us of what we have lost." --Jackson Lears, author of Rebirth of a Nation: the Making of Modern America, 1877-1920 "Union Made provides an amazing history of the battle between elite religious leaders and workers and their pastors to define the meaning of Christianity in society. Set in Chicago... Carter's deep research allows the words from pastors and labor leaders from across the city to come alive. If you care about the intersection of faith and labor, the development of the social gospel, or labor history in Chicago, this is a must read." --Kim Bobo, Founding Director, Interfaith Worker Justice "In recovering these working-class voices, Carter makes a significant scholarly contribution to the field of American religious history while also deepening our understanding of the labor movement during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. More than just recasting the origins of Social Christianity, he reminds us of the profound moral debates that surrounded the rise of industrial capitalism and reveals how workers campaigned for justice as forcefully and ardently within the religious sphere as they did in the political and economic arenas." -- Thomas Rzeknik, The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era "Carter makes a signal contribution to the history of the social gospel by excavating its working-class roots."-- s in American History"Carter's claims are interesting and provocative. Union Made provides crucial insights into how many skilled workers rejected socialism or secularism in favor of a reformist Christianity that conceived of a new and more equitable cooperation between laborers and the church. As historians search for the grassroots origins of the religious right and its support of laissez-faire corporate power, it is interesting to note the existence of an earlier counternarrative that pushed urban Protestants toward liberalism and the New Deal state."--Journal of the Illinois State Historical SocietyAbout the AuthorHeath W. Carter is an associate professor at

Valparaiso University, where he teaches a variety of courses on the history of the modern United States. He is co-editor of both *The Pew* and *The Picket Line: Christianity and the American Working Class* and *Turning Points in the History of American Evangelicalism*.