The loss of the Hopedale properties to the Drapers destroyed the economic basis of Practical Christianity, reducing it to little more than a small sect of diminishing importance even in the world it had originally created. At Hopedale, though, the full impact of the change was drawn out over a long period. On the surface, much continued as before. Morally, the village remained free from the blight of saloons and crime, an island of peace where persons could find, promised Morgan L. Bloom in 1857, refuge from “the tumult of the world, untrammeled by the artificial restraints of fashion.” In this peaceful atmosphere, the village continued to develop slowly as a place of pleasant homes on tree-lined streets.¹

Some of the essential social elements of the old community also remained. As in the past, it was ethnically homogeneous, more than three-quarters of its population claiming birth in New England, the majority in Massachusetts, while less than 10 percent were foreign born. And occupationally, it continued to be a society of skills. Of some eighty-six villagers whose occupations were reported in the national census of 1860, at least forty-two were machinists, molders, carpenters, and other skilled workers, while another dozen were businessmen, professionals, and clerks. Educationally, Hopedale could boast that it had only one illiterate in its adult population.

Although many of the inhabitants in 1860 were newcomers, there also remained numerous residents from 1850, the year of the previous census. For these individuals, the imperfect information provided by the two censuses indicates various and generally modest changes during the 1850s. Stephen Albee, whom Ballou described as being a skillful painter and glazer, had doubled his reported property
to $1,600 and increased his family from two to three children; living with him as a housekeeper was Charlotte Gay, a single woman who had frequently served the community as a nurse and seamstress. William Henry Humphrey, a carpenter and window maker, had increased his holdings from $1,600 to $4,500; and Fenner Inman, who had risen from laborer to lumber dealer, had acquired $2,000 in property. On the other hand, Joseph Bailey, one of the stalwarts of Ballou’s Inductive Communion, reported no property in either census but had made other gains, rising from laborer to cabinetmaker while marrying and having two children. There were various other changes in job status: Delano Patrick had moved from carpenter to farmer, Henry Lillie (one of the few remaining original members of 1842) from machinist to carpenter, and Alonzo Cook from carpenter to painter (Cook was later to become a paint dealer in Milford Center); while Daniel H. Carter went from carpenter to day laborer, William Heywood rose from carpenter to cleric schoolmaster.

By 1860 there was some evident economic inequality, especially given that 40 percent of the recorded $50,000 in property owned by villagers belonged to the two Draper brothers. Ebenezer Draper had increased his holdings from $1,200 to $11,600, while George (not a resident in 1850) reported $8,500, along with a wife, five children, and Jane Johnson, a black servant. In contrast, there was one small boardinghouse crowded with fourteen adults, mostly laborers without property. On the other hand, the Draper properties, at least in their reported value, were not so much more than the $3,000 reported for Ballou or the $6,500 owned by his son-in-law, school proprietor William Heywood, or the $3,500 held by Heywood’s brother, John. Among the twenty-eight people listed as family heads, seventeen owned at least $1,000 in property, while many of the others had lesser amounts. On the surface at least, differences in wealth remained within tolerable limits.

And there was no dearth of either opportunity or energy. George Draper’s Hopedale Machine Company and the Dutcher Temple Company had begun to outgrow their beginnings, while numerous small businesses continued: Ballou struggled to sell his improved version of the Whipple tackle block in order at least to pay off the debts acquired to produce it; William Walker Cook, one of the original Uxbridge members and a horticulturist, advertised his nursery
stock and locally produced flower seeds for sale through a mail-order catalog; Samuel S. Brown, who had made himself something of an expert on strawberries, offered strawberry plants at two dollars per hundred; Dudley Chapman claimed that he had “the woman’s friend” for sale in the form of a newly concocted soap suited to hard water; and Emily Gay, Hopedale’s self-taught “intuitive physician,” announced that she had ink and, later, homeopathic medicines for sale. And there was Richard Walker, an ardent spiritualist and “heavy thinker on important subjects,” who was becoming locally well known as an inventor of improvements in textile machinery; before he joined the community in 1853, Walker had patented the first power loom for knitting underwear. The Practical Christian probably understated the situation when in 1857 it said of the villagers that “in respect to business enterprise, and the laudable ambition to acquire property for good use, they have their full share.”

Ebenezer Draper added a new note of enterprise when he tried to dispose of the lands he had acquired from the dissolution of the joint stock. Dividing up the old domain into tracts of from two to twenty acres, he advertised them for sale in the Liberator and similar papers to “persons of liberal and reformatory ideas and tendencies” sympathetic to the fundamental principles of the community. Besides the land itself, he emphasized that Hopedale’s manufacturing facilities and waterpower made it a favorable location for skilled workers “either to commence or continue business,” and he used the presence of the Home School to appeal to persons of “literary inclinations.” His sale was endorsed by Ballou, who declared in the Practical Christian that since the original hopes for “unitary social arrangements” had been disappointed, “the next best thing is to see so good a neighborhood built up as circumstances will allow.” Few if any of the reform-minded seem to have bought Draper’s lands, but his boosterism made some contribution to village development. By 1861 Hopedale was large enough to warrant a federal post office to replace its defunct penny post.

If the new times perhaps brought too much attention to business at Hopedale, there also remained much of reform culture and progressive religion. As in the past, the village made 1 August, the anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies, a day for a major celebration of freedom. In 1856 over a thousand people
from the vicinity gathered at a “sweet pine grove” south of the vil­lage to listen to speeches by Ballou and various other local abolitionists, including George Stacy, and to sing “stirring Anti-Slavery songs.” The gathering also approved thirteen antislavery resolutions that concluded with a renewal of dedication to the great goal: “Slavery nowhere but Liberty everywhere, throughout our nation and throughout the world.” In 1857 another large crowd, which included William Lloyd Garrison, again gathered at Hopedale to cele­brate the cause of freedom, in part with songs composed for the oc­casion by members of the community. That the commitment to freedom was more than mere theory is indicated by the census of 1860, where one of Hopedale's two black residents, Henry Johnson, was boldly identified as an “Alabama fugitive.”

The year 1857 saw two other meetings that expressed the concerns of the community. The first involved the Inductive Commu­nion, Ballou's informal educational gatherings for young people. Soon after the dissolution of the community, Ballou had withdrawn as the teacher of the Communion with the expressed hope that it would be continued by its members, but it seems to have quickly lost momentum; its last recorded meeting was in July 1856. Nearly a year later, in June 1857, Hopedale gave a festival in its honor. Be­ginning in the afternoon with the playing of Harrison's Grand March by the village band, the affair featured an address by Ballou, the singing of songs, and the reading of various compositions by mem­bers of the Communion; after a picnic in the pine grove, the cele­brants gathered for an evening session in the chapel, where they lis­tened to several skits that “excited much laughter.” At another gathering later in the year, the villagers crowded into the chapel to attend “a fest of spiritual elements,” listening to communications from the spirit world spoken by a young medium from Michigan. Al­though some listeners were skeptical, one of Hopedale’s numerous spiritualists saw in the gathering another sign that mankind was beginning to recognize the “superior mission of the New Spiritual Philosophy.”

Events like these helped preserve Hopedale's sense of uniqueness in the world. One member of the old community, Harriet N. Greene, declared that the people of the village were indeed a rather peculiar people, peculiar in that they disavowed violence in any form and
opened their doors to the fugitive slave; peculiar too in that there was no poverty, unemployment, drunkenness, or wasted lives in their midst. For Greene and probably for most members, Ballou remained the undisputed inspiration in their world: "To us, Hopedale is dearer than any other spot, and we would ever be worthy of a place in the memory of one who, years ago, laid his reputation, talents, and entire labors, upon the unpopular altar of the social emancipation and regeneration of mankind." 

Hopedale also continued to be a local moral and cultural center. It remained the headquarters for the quarterly conference of Practical Christians in the Mill River Valley and elsewhere. As the home of the Hopedale press, it also retained some local publishing importance. In 1857 the press issued William Henry Fish's *Orthodoxy versus Spiritualism and Liberalism* (an attack on conventional religion and "the conservative and stationary money power of the land") with the observation that it was "a racy, suggestive, well written publication" that would likely sell more than the three hundred copies requested by its author. Also, the quarterly conference continued to handle the sale of other works previously published by the press, basically three of Ballou's books, the Hopedale collection of hymns, Fish's *Memoir of Butler Wilmarth*, and nine tracts by Ballou on various subjects, the last at prices ranging from two to six cents a copy.

Above all, the village remained the home of the *Practical Christian*, which in May 1857 celebrated the completion of its seventeenth year of continuous publication. Shortly before, Ballou had again taken over all the editorial and publishing responsibilities. In the hope of attracting new subscribers, he added a MONITORIAL COMPENDIUM, "a microcosmical review of what is going on in the various spheres of human interests," but he could not make the paper self-sustaining: "Even reformers and progressives in many cases give it the cold shoulder; because it is too fast or too slow, or too homely for them. It is too much tinctured with the radical, sober, calm, undashing, practical Christianity of the Sermon on the Mount." Nor did his subscribers provide reliable support; in 1858 he was forced to publish a list of 341 people who owed him between $1 and $5.68 on their $1-a-year subscriptions with the threat that if this did not work, he might give up the paper. With the help of annual
subsidies from the shrinking old community, however, he struggled on, and the *Practical Christian* remained his most influential podium for the various causes to which he had committed himself over the previous decades. So long as the *Practical Christian* stayed alive, so long would there be hope for the eventual triumph of radical religion and moral reform.

In the late 1850s that hope found a fresh though not always reliable voice in Bryan J. Butts, who spoke for the new age of spiritual ferment. A native New Yorker, Butts joined the community in 1852 when he was twenty-six and soon became a leading figure in the Inductive Communion, where he was remembered for his spindly body, long hair, deep voice, and very solemn face. However complete his devotion to Ballou's ideals, it was a devotion shaped by the romanticism and spiritualism of his times. Butts later described himself as "a Socialist and Progressivist of the most unfettered individualistic type." Although he had been trained for the ministry, there seems to have been less of Christianity and more of spiritualism in his religion. In a long and ornate lecture that he gave before the Hopedale lyceum in 1853, for instance, he declared that a new and promising element was entering civilization:

> Spiritual light has been hastening long, very long, to reach the dull cold air of our planet. A few hearts to-day are throbbing with its divine heat. . . . The naturalist has found that the waters of the sea are moved by the moon's attractions; but for the spiritualist there awaited a sublimer discovery—that the sea of humanity is moved by the attraction of Spiritual Spheres.9

Butts's radical individualism left him even more completely apolitical than Ballou, isolating him from any responsible role in the community or any other organization. He was remote from movements, a solitary spokesman who placed his faith in the power of rhetoric and ideas. In 1856 he composed a long, turgid drama, "The Medley of Reform," involving a convention of reformers who debate the merits of socialism, spiritualism, and especially nonresistance; the climax of the play is a successful nonresistance defense of a fugitive slave from would-be captors followed by much singing about the triumph of freedom. Butts was soon advertising that he would read his play "to such Lyceums, or Societies as may wish to hear."
He also offered to recite two of his poems, “The Angel and the Bigot” and “The Angel and the Slaver,” but there seem to have been few if any engagements. As late as November 1858, though, he continued to advertise that he would recite revised and improved versions of the poems to interested groups in New England “FREE TO ALL—after the gospel method—‘without money and without price.’”

Butts’s resort to the stage ended in late 1858 when he married another member of the community, Harriet Greene, with whom he had been boarding. Greene, one of whose aunts was a Quaker preacher and another a writer, had come to Hopedale in 1852. When they were married by Ballou, Butts and the feminist Greene, who was six years his senior, issued a “protest” against existing forms of marriage, particularly the expectation that the woman adopt the surname of her husband: “We protest against any such annihilation of her personality, and request that the public and all private friends call us by our original names.” Less than four months later Butts and Greene announced that they were about to issue a new monthly, the Radical Spiritualist, in which they intended “to apply the principles of Spiritualism to the great moral and political questions of the times.” As a token of their determination to labor especially for the forgotten ones in society, they announced that their journal would be given free to the “Outcast, Oppressed, and Unfortunate,” everyone else paying fifty cents a year.

The couple succeeded in sustaining their periodical over the next six years under four different titles: the Radical Spiritualist and then the Spiritual Reformer until 1862, after which it was first the Progressive Age and then the Modern Age. Whatever the title, it was an eclectic journal expressive of Butts’s creed as he summed it up in 1860:


Although Ballou and other older members probably had their doubts about this creed, the new monthly did at least help sustain Hopedale’s image of itself as a lighthouse of progressive ideas and liberal
religion. Its presence kept alive the hope that the village might still ignite some great spiritual revolution that would eventually transform the world. Even before the monthly was renamed the Progressive Age, however, the world had taken a very different turn.

Ballou had long expected that the spiritual revolution that had begun in the 1830s would eventually move society in Hopedale’s direction, but by the mid 1850s the moral world was developing a tendency that threatened the very essence of Practical Christianity. Although abolitionism, temperance, and the other moral concerns of progressive religion were important to Ballou, Christian nonresistance was the bedrock of his faith and of the Hopedale experiment. His entire dream of the millennium, of a time when sin had disappeared, depended on humanity’s acceptance of the divine principle that only good was to be returned for evil. By the mid 1850s, however, mounting moral concerns over slavery were becoming ever more entangled with the temptation to use force in some form.

Part of that temptation involved the resort to politics and government against the apparent political aggressions of the slaveholding South. The Fugitive Slave Act and especially the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 convinced many northerners of the need for some kind of political defense, opening the way for the dramatic rise of the Republican party as a major political force by 1856. The appearance of this antislavery organization presented a dilemma for abolitionists in general and for nonresistants in particular. On the one hand, it threatened to entangle these moral reformers in the corrupting world of politics against which they had rebelled. On the other hand, the new party was potentially a powerful moral force for the elimination of slavery and other sins from American society.

Even Ballou was occasionally tempted by political thoughts, and he respected a few political figures, notably Charles Sumner, who as a senator paid some attention to Hopedale, sending it government documents and “a specimen of Russia wheat” to plant on an experimental basis; Ballou praised the senator for his “faithful testimony against injustice, oppression and wrong.” Sumner was the exception, however, and in the end Ballou dismissed politics as no more than “a worldly game of chance, full of trick and uncertainty, suited to cunning minds rather than wise and good ones.” He said that under existing governmental arrangements, no nonresistant should
vote, even for building a schoolhouse, since some form of legal coercion would be used to accomplish the goal. Before the presidential election of 1856, he urged his followers to avoid any association with the Republican party on the grounds that a vote for "Freedom and Fremont" would actually be a commitment to a system of government that sanctioned slavery: "The Constitution acknowledges slavery and gives it sanction and power. To support the Constitution is to support Slavery. Political action implies fealty to the Constitution without doubt."¹⁵

Ballou grew even more concerned about the tendency toward violence, which grew ever stronger during the late 1850s, most disturbingly even among some of his fellow progressive reformers, a tendency driven especially by the conflict that had broken out over slavery in Kansas. At a convention of "The Friends of Peace and Universal Brotherhood" held at nearby Worcester in 1858, for instance, Thomas Wentworth Higginson expressed his general faith in the principle of returning good for evil, only to argue that in exceptional cases it was a right and a duty "to take the sword and the rifle, and march to the battle-field." Even among Garrisonian abolitionists, the idea of a righteous war to destroy the wickedness of slavery was growing. Ballou urged his readers to consider history—in which every war had been a righteous one to at least one side: war had produced "the destruction of at least 14,000,000,000 of the human race; enough to people eighteen such planets as the Earth," and yet wickedness and violence remained as strong as ever.¹⁶ Only devotion to the principles of nonresistance could break the bloody cycle while also eliminating slavery.

Over the next years Ballou became increasingly alienated from abolitionism because of the growth of the "war principle." In September 1859 he declared that while the Practical Christians had aligned themselves with Garrisonian abolitionists in the past, the cause of nonresistance was superior to the cause of antislavery. Once the two had been in harmony, but now, under the motto "peacefully if we can, forcibly if we must," abolitionists were accepting an evil even worse than slavery: to use force to eliminate slavery was "like attempting to cast out Satan with Satan." Ballou wondered whether he could continue to stand on the antislavery platform "because of the increasing egotism, extremism, exaggera-
tionism, antagonism, and contemptuous personality, which we are obliged to witness.” In contrast to this, he proclaimed himself to be a “Practical Christian Anti-Slavery man—loving all, hating none.”

The prospect of a loving world vanished the next month, however, when John Brown launched his raid on Harpers Ferry. For Ballou, Brown was a natural product of the rising war spirit: “We have no faith in the utility of murder, and least of all when resorted to in the name of philanthropy.” When the abolitionists of southern Worcester County met after the raid, Ballou tried to win support for his position only to have the meeting pass, by a nearly unanimous vote, resolutions praising Brown as a hero who had chosen “to break the rod of the oppressor by the same means by which our revolutionary fathers secured our national independence.” There was to be no millennium of peace and brotherhood.

Less than three weeks after this defeat, Ballou announced that he planned to give up his long struggle as editor of the Practical Christian at the close of the present volume in April 1860. In his “editorial farewell” published in the last issue, he adopted a generally positive tone, condemning no one and expressing satisfaction with his paper: “Its work was to sow seed for the coming age—to generate a higher public sentiment—to prepare the way for a wiser, holier and better condition for mankind.” Although not much had been accomplished, he continued to believe that the seeds he had planted would ultimately bear fruit, taking some comfort in the thought that he had formed “a small nucleus of minds” committed to Practical Christianity.

The termination of the Practical Christian was a painful closing of Ballou’s pulpit to the world, but he found at least a little hope in the new preparations that were being made in Hopedale. He sold his press and printing equipment to Bryan Butts and Harriet Greene for use in publishing their monthly, assuring some future for the cause of radical religion. More significant was a reorganization of Practical Christianity itself. In January 1860 he and his dwindling band of followers established the Practical Christian Church of Hopedale with the avowed intention of promoting “our own progress in Christian life as well as the extension of Practical Christianity.” The new church soon formed a promulgation society headed by Ballou for the
dissemination of its beliefs. And in November it was able to move into a new two-story meetinghouse capable of seating five hundred people built on the village square with money contributed by the Drapers and others.²⁰

None of this could conceal the fact that the Hopedale Community was a diminishing entity even in its own village. Although the old community organization was retained, this was done largely to maintain the cemetery and streets and to uphold the provisions prohibiting the un-Christian use of village property.²¹ In January 1861 Ballou urged the continuation of the community not only for these reasons but also as a form of defiance to a changing world. Termination would proclaim that the social principles of Practical Christianity no longer had any meaning, and it would weaken the ability of its members to protect themselves against “the influx of strangers” who might in the future turn Hopedale “against the original Community faith and morals.” Even in the village, “we may yet be pointed at with the finger of scorn as fogies and fossils, clinging tenaciously to a superannuated Christ and a dead past.” Should that day ever come, “then, with our organization remaining still intact, we may purchase us a new location, pack up our archives, take our sacred fire, and bid adieu to this valley—carrying with us all of Hopedale, that represented its primal past.”²² So much for the local future.

More generally, by early 1861 the Hopedale Community had become a tiny island of peace about to be swallowed up in a raging storm. In December 1860 Ballou had deciphered the times when in a discourse on Christian nonresistance given at Hopedale he took note of the secession of South Carolina. More than three months before the attack on Fort Sumter, he predicted a civil war. Since South Carolina and other seceded states could be expected to demand possession of the forts and other property of the nation, he thought that a “sanguinary contest between North and South” was inevitable. He also considered the possibility that a general war would “necessitate the abolition of slavery by the process of arms,” but even then he wanted none of it, since the result might not be the abolition of which he dreamed: “There is uncertainty and crooked purpose in war.”²³ A war even in the cause of freedom could not but further corrupt the soul of Man.
The outbreak of the war confronted the Hopedale Community with the choice of abandoning its nonresistant soul or of standing ineffectually against the tide. The majority of the members of the community—although not all—chose to stand by its principles. In July 1861 they passed a series of resolves establishing their old principles as a creed to which each person had to subscribe to remain a member; of fifty responses, eleven chose to purge themselves from the membership rolls by refusing to sign the pledge. Two months later the remaining members proclaimed their loyalty to both the Union and the cause of antislavery but pronounced themselves nonparticipants dedicated to a higher power and greater cause:

We deem it our mission under Jesus Christ to bear such testimonies and to lead such lives as will tend to regenerate mankind, elevate them to the true Christian plane of personal and national righteousness, conform all human governments to the divine, abolish all dernier resorts to carnal weapons, supersede all deadly forces by beneficent ones, and thus consummate the reign of universal love and peace.²⁴

As a testimonial to their faith, the community voted not only to send the declaration to the outside press but to print a thousand copies of it for distribution. They recognized, though, that it was a mere straw against the wind, and nothing in the next few years eased their sense of isolation from the times. In 1862 three members of the community volunteered to work with the freed slaves in the Union-conquered areas around Port Royal, South Carolina, only to be rejected on the grounds that their nonresistance principles would antagonize the soldiers and take from the ex-slaves what “little manhood” they had. And when several members had earlier signed a petition calling for the use of the war power to emancipate the slaves, only to be rebuked by their brethren for turning to the god of war, the community resolved by a unanimous vote to be in the future on guard “against all solicitations” of that sort, thereby denying itself any connection with the Emancipation Proclamation.²⁵

While their beliefs excluded them from the nobler side of the war, their young men might still be drafted into its bloody side. During the summer of 1862 Ballou and William Heywood were appointed to petition the government for an exemption of members “from all en-
rollments and service, placing them in the same footing as the Quakers and the Shakers.” They were not successful. In the summer of 1863 John Heywood received notice that he was drafted into the Union army, a threat that divided the community. Should Heywood defy the order and go to jail, a martyr to a just cause, or should he pay the three-hundred-dollar commutation money allowed under the conscription law? It was finally decided to pay the money under protest.26

Throughout, the loyal band was forced to see the erosion of the remaining commitment to nonresistance. Outside Hopedale the drama of the conflict had raised an enthusiasm for war even among moral reformers. In 1863, for instance, Emerson wrote in his journal that “war, I know is not an unmitigated evil; it is a potent alternative, tonic, magnetiser, reinforces manly power a hundred & a thousand times.” Earlier, this sensitive barometer of his times had favored the nonresistance cause. Closer to home, George Thompson Garrison, the oldest son of William Lloyd Garrison, enlisted in the Union army; a decade earlier, he had been educated at Hopedale and had helped edit its youth newspaper, the Diamond.

Even in the village itself, the war god appeared. Less than two months after Fort Sumter, George Draper resigned his membership in the community on the grounds that nonresistance was impractical under existing circumstances; with him went several other members, a disheartening loss to the already depleted community. Over the next years several young men from the village fought in the war, including Draper’s son William, whose education in the Hopedale school did nothing to dissuade him from volunteering in September 1861; William rose rapidly in the ranks, retiring as a brevet brigadier general in October 1864 after being wounded in the Battle of the Wilderness—a military hero returned to the village of peace.27

Economically, too, the war was eventually good for the Draper family and bad for the old community. During the first year of the conflict, local business suffered, especially because of disruptions in the New England textile industry; in August 1862 one of Hopedale’s two machine shops was almost without work, and the next month was even worse. By 1864, though, government orders for military clothing had helped revive the textile mills, which in turn stimulated local business. “Wealth rolled in upon its leading citizens,”
Ballou later recalled. "Money-making, political engineering and advancement and martial patriotism absorbed the thought and energy of the populace," while the old community "grew weaker in membership and in moral power from year to year." The war also deprived the Hopedale Home School of most of its students, forcing it to close in 1863, permanently ending what little remained of Ballou's hope of making Hopedale a center of Practical Christian education; the Heywoods, his helpful daughter and son-in-law, soon left the village for other places and employments. By 1865 Hopedale had become the province of George Draper rather than Adin Ballou. In the early months of the war, Ballou had prophesied better days to come for nonresistance, but by now little remained of the old spirit, in the village or anywhere else.

Late in 1865 Ballou joined with a few other radical advocates of peace in a call to all those who believed in universal brotherhood to meet in Boston to "organize a new, uncompromising, vigorous, and well-ordered Movement against the War System on the basis of Total Abstinence from all resorts to Deadly Force among mankind." A feeble convention was held in Boston in March 1866 to organize the Universal Peace Union, but nothing even like the small Non-Resistant Society of prewar years developed to carry on the radical peace tradition. Five years later, Ballou noted sadly that in the world "at this moment they have more brain, muscle, science, destructive enginery, [and] pecuniary capital invested in the war system than ever before." Perhaps it was fortunate that he was not permitted to see the next century.