Kansas Philosophers, 1871—
T. B. Taylor, Joel Moody, and Edward Schiller

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I. SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY, AND THEOLOGY: FORT SCOTT AS A PHILOSOPHICAL CENTER

The material interests of Fort Scott were intimately involved in the successful exploitation of the mineral resources of the area and in relations with neighboring communities. This meant the discovery and development of deposits of coal, oil, gas, hydraulic cement, paint, lead, and zinc. The press gave attention to such subjects as news. The state geological surveys of Mudge and Swallow were studied and private surveys were always a source of interest for what promise they would turn up. Thus an amateur interest in the sciences of geology and paleontology was widespread, and some acquired a certain competence in that field. When the Rev. Jacob B. Saxe preached on “Geology and Revelation,” some, at least, in his audience, and among the readers of the Monitor, which reported the discourse, possessed some scientific background for an appreciation of the issues. It was a subject that came up frequently, because the controversies precipitated by geological and biological science over evolution of the human species were known and discussed.

Neither Kansas as a state nor Fort Scott, one of the lesser cities of the state, is usually considered a philosophical or theological center. Yet, after their peculiar fashion, both gave a rather courageous account of themselves during the decade of the 1870’s. On July 22, 1871, D. W. Wilder wrote an editorial “Who Reads a Kansas Book?” of which this is the final paragraph:

Within five months, four citizens of Kansas have published books—Joel Moody, the “Science of Evil,” Edward Schiller, “Progressive Philosophy,” C. C. Hutchinson, “Resources of Kansas,” and T. B. Taylor, “Old Theology.” Mr. Schiller’s book was printed in New York, the others in this State. It is not a little singular that three of these books are on religious topics, and that they all agree in rejecting the common theological notions. Is Kansas to be as radical on religions as she has been on political questions?

The only feature of this paragraph that was strange was the failure to point out that two of the three books on “religious topics”

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were written by Fort Scott men—Schiller and Taylor—that Moody was a close neighbor and had been intimately identified with Fort Scott, and that Taylor’s book had been printed by the Monitor company. One objection might have been raised by a purist whether or not these books were on religious topics; possibly “philosophical” would have been a more accurate term, at least for two of the three.

In these several works and commentary upon them science occupied a conspicuous role. As the word was used it was too inclusive except as the concept of science was associated with an emphasis upon the inductive method—conclusions drawn from an array of established facts. The new disciplines of psychology, archeology, anthropology, geology, and biology, along with a new critical spirit in history derived especially from the German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), provided new intellectual tools that were being brought to bear upon all areas of knowledge, and especially as they related to the role of man on the earth. That they should be applied also to religion was only normal procedure. But like all new instruments they might be subject to misuse. Also, legitimate applications might be misunderstood and arouse hostility when they ran counter to established tradition.

The English historian, Henry T. Buckle (1821-1862), in his book *A History of Civilization in England* (1857-1861), had viewed history as determined by natural phenomena; physical agencies such as climate, soil, food, etc. David Friederich Strauss (1808-1874), a German theologian and philosopher, wrote *Das Leben Jesu* (1835), translated into English and published in the United States as *The Life of Jesus*, in 1855. Ernest Renan (1823-1892), a French philologist and historian, published *Vie de Jésus* (1863), translated and issued in the United States as *The Life of Jesus*, in 1864. These books and other publications in the same vein as these authors represented Jesus as a mortal man, a historical character as other men, stripped of the supernatural. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), English sociologist, published *Social Statics*, in 1851, an essay on the development hypothesis in 1852, in which organic evolution was stated seven years prior to Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, and several other works on science and psychology. Charles Darwin’s (1809-1882) *Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) formulated the doctrine of evolution of man from lower forms of life. Thomas H. Huxley (1825-1895), also an English biologist, did not accept fully the Darwinian doctrine, but wrote that: “of moral purpose I see no trace in nature. This is an article of exclusive human manufacture.” His early books which were widely read
by the public included Zoological Evidences as to Man's Place in Nature (1863), and On the Physical Bases of Life (1868). He gave currency to the term “agnostic” that “the existence of anything beyond and behind material phenomena is unknown and (so far as can be judged) unknowable. . . .” 1

All these names appeared repeatedly in the news articles printed in the Fort Scott Daily Monitor during the year 1871, and reappeared from time to time during the next five years. How accurately the issues raised by these men were understood by Kansans is another question. Nevertheless, the pros and cons were discussed in Fort Scott, sometimes intellectually in good temper, and sometimes emotionally in anger. And the Daily Monitor reported them, but not always sympathetically or accurately.

II. THE REV. MR. T. B. TAYLOR

The book by the Rev. T. B. Taylor, carried a long descriptive title: “Old Theology Turned Upside Down or Right Side Up; by a Methodist Preacher; or Eight Lectures—Six on the Resurrection of the Dead, One on the Second Coming of Christ, and One on the Last Judgment—showing From the Standpoint of Common Sense, Reason, Science, Philosophy, and the Bible, the Utter Folly There Is in the Doctrine of the Literal Resurrection of the Body, a Literal Coming of Christ at the End of the World, and a Literal Judgment to Follow. By Rev. T. B. Taylor, A.M., author of 'The Inebriate,' 'Death on the Plains,' and one anonymous work.” 2 The author’s advertisement appeared in the Daily Monitor, July 14, 1871, and a young woman was to start canvassing the city for sales.

In his introduction Taylor explained the origin of the book, a series of lectures delivered at the Methodist church in Fort Scott during the previous winter “to crowded audiences, such as had not been witnessed in that city, on ordinary occasions of religious worship at any previous time; thereby evincing the interest the people were taking in the subject. . . .” The publication of the lectures was alleged to have been undertaken at the instance of S. T. Armstrong and others who heard them, the letter of request and Taylor’s reply, both dated February, 1871, being reproduced in full. The critical resurrection question was discussed briefly, calling upon St. Paul (I Corinthians 15:44) for support: “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body”—the resurrection was of the latter. This introduction was dated May 4, 1871. Then, prior to going to press

1. The Oxford English Dictionary (1933), under “agnostic.”
2. The present writer has not found copies of either of the Taylor books, The Inebriate, or Death on the Plains.
a note, or postscript, was added below the date: “The lectures were given while yet the author was a member of the Methodist ministry: hence the title of the book.”

A brief examination of the contents of Taylor’s book is in order. He insisted that “the fog, rubbish, nonsense, absurdity” which dogmatisists “during the past days of ignorance and creed worship, gathered around this profoundly interesting subject” must be cleared. Taylor insisted that he had believed for years, “that Religion and Science were twin sisters, and ought to stand up proudly, side by side,” but he suggested to religious teachers that “when a well established fact of science comes in contact with a theory of religion, let the theory in religion, quietly, but as speedily as possible, be remodeled. . . .” He concluded the admonition by asserting “that the facts of science, when once established, are . . . unalterable; and as quiet as the goddess of science seems to stand, when she does strike at false theories, it is with a most crushing power.”

Taylor’s argument is a reminder of a dictum that once upon a time religion was the chief source of error, but in recent times science has assumed that unenviable role. He did not differentiate facts, theories, and philosophical speculation, and did not explain how affection could survive between the loving “twin sisters” if religion must always submit abjectly to science. Taylor did not explain who was to act as umpire in disputes about whether facts, theories, and philosophical speculations of either religion or science were “well established.” He did raise the question in his first lecture, however, about the status of difference of opinion in religion: “Are opinions, when honestly entertained, either criminal or virtuous? If so, what, or who, is to be the umpire?” His answer was that among Roman Catholics the church decided, and among Protestants, the Bible was the arbiter: “But [unfortunately for certainty] the believers in the Bible have as many phases of belief as Proteus had shapes.” And then he admonished his Methodist brethren to have “patience with, and charity for those who differ with us in matters of opinion, insomuch as there is and can be no absolute standard of human opinions.” Taylor’s confusion about absolutes and relativism was not new in his time and has not been resolved since.

In Taylor’s eight lectures dealing directly with the resurrection theme he recognized three main views: (1) outright denial; (2) a general literal resurrection of the physical body, judgment, and reward and punishment, followed by destruction of the world; (3)
immediate resurrection of everyone who dies. Taylor defended a version of the third view in which he held that the resurrection was of the spiritual body, and not of the natural or physical body "which we wear as we do our clothes, and which we lay off in death as we do our clothes when we retire."

On the subject of the judgment, Taylor argued that it began as soon as man was created and became a responsible moral agent, and would continue until men and angels cease to be created. The umpire in this judgment was not God or Christ in person, but "the word of eternal truth, addressed to man's intelligent understanding, whether written in a book with pen and ink, or upon the never-ending pages of man's own conscience by the spirit of God, or upon the ever-unfolding pages of nature. . . ." In another place the working was somewhat different—each was judged "according to the principles of progress and development," and that "judgment commences in their state of probation, and ends in eternity."

In a final lecture, "The Magnetic Forces of the Universe," not numbered into the series of lectures, Taylor elaborated more fully upon the points suggested in the final numbered lecture. Of all the natural forces, he asserted that "electricity, or the Magnetic Forces of the Universe is the most wonderful. . . ." This he associated with man's mind and nervous system. After referring to strange religious experiences, observed during his 23 years as an ordained minister, and his service during 1868-1869 on a committee of scientific men who investigated spiritualist phenomena that excited Ohio and Indiana about that period, Taylor concluded that all such phenomena could be explained upon purely natural and scientific principles—electricity and magnetic force—and the more "the occult and hidden forces of nature" were understood, the less the occasion "to look to the supernatural for a solution. . . ."

These preliminaries prepared the way for an application to "the domain of futurity, of spirituality and religion." Taking the principle of action and reaction from natural science as his point of departure Taylor suggested that every act of man had its repercussions, not only throughout the world, but throughout the universe, and, for better or worse, these constituted the irrevocable record of every man's life; and conscious beings in other worlds might possess perceptions so acute that they could read the records of men on earth; and furthermore, after this life of men on earth was over each might read the other's history. Thus, every man was his own recording angel, and "every man must see in eternity . . . his
own most truthful record written, signed and sealed with his own hand, not on paper or parchment, but upon the more durable materials of the material, though spiritualized universe."

Strictly speaking, all this was not new. In the course of the discussion Taylor quoted from a Dr. Hitchcock as an authority but without citation of the full name of the author, or of the title of the work in question. The reference was, however, to Dr. Edward Hitchcock, president of Amherst College, and professor of natural theology and geology, and to his book of lectures *The Religion of Geology and Its Connected Sciences* (Boston, 1852). In Hitchcock's preface, besides pleading for theologians trained in the sciences and in natural theology, he recounted that these lectures had first been written eight to ten years earlier, or about 1842-1844, and had been delivered before many audiences prior to publication. The one from which Taylor quoted was the 12th: "The telegraphic system of the universe." A comparison of the Hitchcock and Taylor printed lectures reveals the fact that Taylor, except for his own autobiographical introduction, had not only quoted from Hitchcock, but had done little more than condense, at times in close paraphrase, the Hitchcock lecture. In this perspective, the question occurs; why all the controversy about Taylor's ministry in Fort Scott? The ideas were not new in fact, but were new only to the local audience.

The crisis which terminated Taylor's ministerial career occurred between the time of his commitment to the *Monitor* company for printing the book of lectures and the actual presswork. The foreshadowing of it can be seen in an exchange of letters in the *Daily Monitor*, February 25 and 26, 1871. A letter to the editor signed "Chairman" called attention to Taylor's sermon scheduled the coming Sunday evening on the "Effects of Anger," and recounted the advance notice by Taylor the previous Sunday intended to arouse the interest of his listeners. A hypothetical case was described: if Taylor was unexpectedly struck by one person, arousing anger, and at the same instant, he was killed by an accidental shot of another person, "where would I go?" "Chairman" insisted that the answer was simple—under such circumstances anger was an instinctive reaction associated with self defense, and "the conscience would go free," even if a blow was instantly struck in return before reason acted. "Chairman" continued by asserting that this simple case in Taylor's opinion involved such metaphysics and theology that he would devote a whole evening to it, and what he would make of it "Chairman" did not know, but as he had upon other occasions
shown himself “wiser than the Scriptures,” on this “he may be able to give it a Spiritual meaning. But we are weary of Spiritualism, Swedenborgianism and skepticism from a Methodist pulpit.”

Taylor replied “in anger” in the Sunday morning Monitor denouncing the anonymous attack, which he compared with a snake in the grass, or a skunk behind a stump, and yet “Chairman” claimed to be a Christian. Taylor insisted that “Chairman” had not learned the first law of Heaven: “Harmony is Heaven; discord is Hell”—a soul in anger was not in harmony with the element that is heaven. At the Methodist church, that evening, Taylor insisted he would “put a little common sense, reason and Scripture into the discussion of this subject . . . .”

The meeting of the Methodist conference at Paola which dismissed Taylor had occurred shortly thereafter. On Sunday, March 26, Taylor spoke at McDonald Hall on the subject of “Intolerance,” even standing room being occupied. The writer of the Monitor article, probably Wilder himself, admitted he had not heard Taylor before, and went in a frame of mind not favorably disposed toward him. But Taylor’s conduct made a favorable impression, the sermon being such as might have been heard elsewhere: “but very little was said about his own case. He did not charge the Methodist Church with intolerance in expelling him.” His one witticism, which brought laughter and applause, was that “he had lately attended a diet of the worms at Paola, and been consumed by the worms. Perhaps the laughter aroused by this was heightened by the fact that Mr. Taylor was so lately a ‘worm’ himself, and that he may want to consume other worms—which would be intolerance again."

At the close of the meeting a subscription was raised to employ Taylor as pastor of

The Independent Congregation of Fort Scott. The man and his friends are plain in earnest, and the movement will succeed. Fort Scott is large enough and liberal enough to sustain an independent church, and we hope there are very few here who are not willing to let the worship of God be free—republican and democratic in the highest sense of those words. The world is large enough for us all, but life is too short to be spent in abusing all who differ from us in opinion.

The temper of the times was such, however, that some took offense at the Monitor’s comment, and the next day an explanation appeared:

We did not say yesterday, and no one ought to infer from what we said, that the Methodists had persecuted Mr. Taylor. . . . Republicans cease to elect men to office who do not stand on the party platform, and that is
precisely what the Methodists have done. . . . Our remarks were on the
general question of toleration.3

On April 1, at Institute Hall, "The First Independent Society of
Fort Scott" was organized, and the necessary machinery of operation
set up. Each Wednesday evening, a sociable of the society was to
be held. On Sundays, morning and evening sermons were sched-
uled, and on Sunday afternoons a service for the children. Meeting
places caused some trouble, but when summer came the sociables
were held at the residences of the pastor and members.4 Theological
conflict was not at an end, however, one instance being an invita-
tion extended to the Rev. Mr. Saxe, Universalist minister, to occupy
the pulpit on Sunday evening, April 22, on the subject "Resurrection
of the Dead," intended as a reply to the sermons of the Rev.
A. Beatty, rector at St. Andrew's Episcopal church.5

The Methodists were very much embarrassed by the turn of
events, the number of prominent men involved, and the apparent
strength of the Independent society. In order to present their case
to the public, an extract was published from the report of the com-
mittee to whom the charges against Taylor had been referred—
three charges, each supported by specifications. The first charge
was doctrinal and dealt with his view of resurrection, conversion,
inpiration of parts of the Bible, miracles and "Stating that human
probation does not terminate with the present life, and teaching
the doctrine of purgatory." The second charge was personal:
slang, vulgar witticisms, irreverence, violent language, and threats
to split the congregation because some complained of his preach-
ing. The third charge was falsehood; that in seeking the Fort Scott
assignment the preceding year, he had lied to the presiding bishop
and to the presiding elder of the district in saying
that he had no sympathy with the views of Modern Spiritualism and after-
wards publicly and privately disseminating such views.

On the last charge the committee were divided in opinion and the charge
was not sustained, but the specification under this charge was sustained
unanimously.

Taylor replied vigorously, alleging: (1) that the accusation of
falsehood had not been made in the copy of the charges sent to him
through the post office, and he learned of it only when it was read
before the committee; (2) that he had been denied a hearing by
the "Paola inquisition"; (3) that the printed extract relating to the
third charge had been falsified—that the original document merely

4. Ibid., April 4, 11, 12, 15, 22, 27, 1871.
5. Ibid., April 22, 1871.
stated: “Not sustained.” Taylor had appealed his case to the general conference of May, 1872, filing seven exceptions to the rulings of the court, and five to the finding of the jury as not being in accord with the evidence.6

By going back into the record of the circumstances of Taylor’s coming to Fort Scott, his version appears to have had substantial support. The manner of his first contact with the congregation has not been determined, but on February 20, 1870, Prof. F. B. Taylor was advertised to preach at both the morning and evening services, and was represented as “one of the leading Methodist divines. . . .” The report on his appearance made no reference to his sermon subjects or the substance of his remarks, merely that he “drew a full house,” and that “the audience were well repaid for the coming.” Several weeks later his assignment to the Fort Scott charge was announced thus: “Mr. Taylor comes among us at the urgent solicitations of a large number of the members of the congregation. . . .” Also the explanation was made that he had been associated with the Northwestern Farmer, Indianapolis, selling out his interest in the paper to return to the ministerial profession, and to accept the appointment to Fort Scott. The implication of the data points to the conclusion that his visit of February 20 had been a tryout and that he had made so favorable an impression as to give rise to the remark about the solicitation from the members of the congregation.7

Shortly after arrival, and on Easter Sunday, Taylor had preached upon the subject “Evidence of Immortality.” He explained that he did so on request:

A subject of such profound importance cannot but be of interest to every human being, and we question if there is a person in existence who does not anxiously incline to hear everything that may be advanced in proof of the gravest and most momentous question that can agitate the human mind. Once convinced of immortality, men cannot but embrace such religious belief as he feels convinced will secure him happiness in the eternal hereafter. There is little doubt that the great neglect manifested toward Christianity, and the apathy prevailing in regard to what is claimed as “revealed religion,” arises more from want of actual evidence of the immortality of the human soul than from any other cause.

Taylor immediately found himself, not between two fires, but in the midst of several. One letter to the editor signed “X” related that Taylor’s morning sermon was only an introduction to his evening discourse so he had heard both. Among many other things

6. Ibid., April 8, 9, 1871.
7. Ibid., February 20, 22, March 31, April 1, 6, 1870. The Monitor, February 20, had given his initials F. B. instead of T. B.
“X” declared that in repudiating modern spiritualism, Taylor had exhibited “narrow-minded bigotry.” Taylor replied through the Monitor declaring that criticism was both legitimate and desirable, but that the “X” letter was mere faultfinding and misrepresentation. Thus for the guidance of those who were not present, but who read the paper, Taylor outlined his main arguments under four heads:

1. **Reason** says, “If man is not immortal, then his creation was a grand mistake.”

2. The Bible, which no where argues the immortality of the soul, nevertheless lays down this doctrine as the great substratum on which true religion is based. If man be not immortal then the whole Bible story is a farce.

3. The **Voice of the Nations Proclaim This Truth**, and the argument [of the original] was based upon the probable truth of the Platonic philosophy—that “the voice of the people is the voice of God.” Here I cited the ancient Egyptians, Persians, Babylonians, Scythians, Grecians, etc., quoting from Zoroaster the Second, Socrates, Plato, and Homer.

4. **Ancient and Modern facts come to the defence of these three presumptions**, and demonstrate the truth of human immortality. . . .

On June 1, 1870, the Ministerial Association of the Fort Scott District of the Methodist Church met in the city. The presiding elder of the district, the Rev. J. Paulson, formerly minister at Fort Scott, was chosen chairman, and the Rev. T. B. Taylor, secretary. One item of the proceedings as reported in the Daily Monitor, June 2, is pertinent to the present narrative:

Rev. Mr. Taylor of the church of this city made a report of his charge, which though in the main satisfactory and encouraging, still showed some slight indications that the congregation were not staying up the hands of their pastor in the good work he has auspiciously commenced.

Further evidence in the negative direction was not long in being presented. Near the end of July, Taylor apologized publicly through the press for his illness and the resulting impairment of his ability to perform his pastoral duties. He considered illness a sin, but placed the blame upon climate—he found it necessary to keep out of the sun until he became acclimated. A physician, writing over the name “Nux Vomica,” accused him of bad taste and with being a publicity seeker. Taylor admitted that friends advised him to ignore the attack, but he denounced “Nux Vomica” on two counts: (1) a personal attack under an assumed name; (2) he was a slanderer. If he would only sign his name, Taylor would fill out the details, but “otherwise I shall treat you as I would a ‘barking fiste.’” Others then joined in the controversy, but added nothing pertinent to the present story.

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8. Ibid., April 16, 17, 20, 21, 1870.
9. Ibid., July 30, 31, August 5, 6, 1870.
Of a positive nature was a letter to the editor in September written by a man who admitted not being a habitual church goer. The announced subject of Taylor's sermon, telegraphy and its relation to religion, aroused his curiosity because he could not see the connection. The letter was by way of report and an appreciation of Taylor's sermon:

Here, however, was something new. His text I have heard quoted an hundred times. "They have sought out many inventions," but always heretofore, in opposition to science, to progress and all discovery.

The Rev. gentleman proceeded to address his very large and intelligent audience upon the very great importance and intimate relation of those forces in the universe around us, to our moral as well as physical being.

He quoted passages of scripture, which, if they do not support this theory, do not have any meaning at all. The theory is, that sound, light, and even thought, make an indelible impression upon the material universe around us. How grand and overwhelming is the very idea indeed, which the book of life will one day open to our view; the bare possibility of its truth should make men and women ponder well their conduct.

I must confess that in all my long and eventful life, I have never yet heard so good an argument in favor of a virtuous life as this theory affords.

We are made our own recording angels, and as we surely can never get away from ourselves, our every sin and short-coming must be known; and when we add to this that other important fact that we can never forget anything, that some time or other our memory will picture to us our whole past life; how very appalling does sin seem to be!

His assertions were Bible extracts and were well supported by quotations from those who are at the lead of all science, such as Hitchcock and Babbage, and the eminent Professor of chemistry, Prof. Hare.

We were well entertained, much instructed and benefitted, and notwithstanding the assaults of men who have "finished their education" upon Rev. Taylor, we earnestly hope he will feel called upon to give us more such sermons, and thus help on the reformation of

AN OLD FRIEND.¹⁰

This leads the story full circle to the point of beginning, the sermons of midwinter, and the announcement in the Daily Monitor, February 9, 1871, that Taylor had responded to the urgent request of hearers of his lectures on the “Resurrection of the Dead,” and would publish them in a few weeks in book form, printed by the Monitor press. But the crises these lectures precipitated brought his loyal admirers face to face with a social reality. After the capacity for heroic action in the face of emergency had been demonstrated by the organization, April 1, 1871, of the First Independent Society of Fort Scott, what of the capacity to demonstrate the continuity of interest and performance necessary to insure lasting success?

¹⁰. Ibid., September 13, 1870. Evidently this discourse was the one that was printed as the final chapter of Taylor's book.
In due course, April, May, and June passed, and on July 1, Saturday, the Monitor announced that T. B. Taylor would take a July vacation: Accordingly, after Sunday, July 2, services at Institute Hall would be closed: “In the meantime the Society will make a vigorous effort, as tight as money matters are, to bring up all arrearages.” The sermon subjects for Sunday were to be: “The Reform Essential to the Perpetuity of National Life,” and “The Coming Fate of the Physical World.” Applicable to the latter title, the remark was added that the philosophers had speculated on it for ages. Also, a 25 cent admission charge would be asked for the benefit of Mr. Taylor. The next day the Sunday Monitor announced a change; that as the Rev. S. S. Hunting, Western secretary of the American Unitarian Association, was in town, Taylor had yielded the pulpit to him for the morning service, but Taylor would speak in the evening as announced, when a good attendance was solicited for his benefit as the salary arrearages amounted to $300. The amount of salary promised him had not been announced, but had it been $100 per month, probably thus far he had not been paid anything. Apparently, services were not resumed.

Still maintaining residence in Fort Scott, and still with loyal friends, Taylor in late December, again found himself in difficulty. Upon the death of Phineas Clough, a former member of his congregation, Taylor had been asked to officiate at the funeral. The Methodist minister, the Rev. M. A. Buckner, had permitted the use of the church. In reporting the funeral service, the Monitor had inadvertently linked the names of Taylor and Buckner. The latter published a card in which he explained that “so far as Mr. Taylor is concerned, he is an expelled member and minister of the M. E. Church, and has no right to partake of its sacraments . . . . [But out of consideration of the family and friends] we thought it would be very unkind to object to a funeral service being held in the church.” The Pleasanton Observer made a bitter attack upon Buckner, but later apologized after a conversation with the latter in which it was learned that the use of the church was requested by Mrs. Clough. But the Observer added a gloss of its own, which Buckner corrected in a second card, explaining that his first card had not been published, as alleged by the Observer “. . . . to satisfy a gossipping, croaking public. . . . . I did it from a sense of duty and for no other reason.” 11

Approximately three months later, Taylor was reported to be lecturing at Topeka for the spiritualists society where he was assaulted

11. Ibid., December 29, 1871, January 9, 10, 1872.
by R. N. Collingsworth, a revivalist, recently converted from spiritualism, who beat him with a cane. The background of the incident was that Collingsworth had attacked spiritualism and spiritualists in his sermons and a group of men approved a written reply prepared by Taylor, which he published in the Commonwealth. After the beating of Taylor they published over their own names a statement of the circumstances. All were men of distinction in Topeka, and particularly well known were F. P. Baker, G. S. and E. Chase, and George W. and F. L. Crane, and they jointly took responsibility for Taylor's article.12

Nearly a year later, Taylor was reported lecturing on spiritualism in Manhattan, where the Nationalist said that "the Doctor unquestionably proved that the Bible refers to the return of departed spirits to this earth. . . ."13 Toward the end of the same year, Taylor was reported to be lecturing in Chicago where he was more heterodox than when in Fort Scott.14 By using the terminology of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and harping upon doctrinal conflicts, the main issue was confused. Science had led many to reject immortality, and many more were harassed with doubt. The central concern of the spiritualist emphasis, whether within the Christian denominations as Taylor had pursued the quest, or within the ranks of modern spiritualism as a movement opposed to Christianity, was a renewed certainty about immortality that would insure meaning to life on this earth. The prevailing faith in science and reason was being turned to account in trying to prove immortality.

The excesses of modern spiritualism disturbed many people during the decades of the 1860's and the 1870's, and for different reasons. That topic is dealt with more appropriately elsewhere, but one aspect applicable here was focused as follows:

While these people [scientific spiritualists] are active and zealous trying to demonstrate the immortality of the soul, we learn that the big gun of the Materialists, B. F. Underwood, of Boston, designs invading us with two lectures next week at McDonald Hall. Mr. Underwood will try to prove that we have no soul, or at least that we have no existence after death. He is the extreme opposite of Spiritualism.15

Here was indeed the crux of the matter—the search for certainty about immortality which had been under attack by many scientists and others using science. By employing the method of science—experiment and demonstration—the sincere spiritualist hoped to

12. Ibid., March 29, 30, 1872, reprinted from the Topeka Daily Commonwealth.
13. Daily Monitor, January 28, 1873, the wording is the Monitor's summary.
14. Ibid., November 29, 1873, commenting upon a Chicago Tribune report of his lectures.
15. Ibid., January 4, 5, 8, 1873.
provide conclusive proof of immortality, which, thus far in the history of the culture of man, had been based upon faith alone. If the sceptic argued that even this resort to scientific method and to science was nothing more than an exercise in faith, then a sufficient reply was that scientific spiritualism and scientific materialism were both based upon the same faith. Of course, such a formula would be two-edged, but that was proper, because scientific method and science were often abused by both materialists and spiritualists. The truth is that all was not “sweetness and light” within the ranks of either spiritualism or scientism.

III. JOEL MOODY

Joel Moody’s *The Science of Evil; or First Principles of Human Action: Together With Three Lectures; Salvation and Damnation Before Birth, or the Scientific and Theological Methods of Salvation Compared.—Sunday;—Its History, Uses and Abuses.—Prayer; —the True and False Methods Compared*, was claimed by its publishers, Crane & Byron, Topeka, to be “the first literary work published in Kansas.” Wilder challenged that claim, but what was more important was the content of the book which he condemned unmercifully: “The book does not seem to us to be wise or profound, and critics will deny that it is literature. The reading of it would not make us wiser or better, and we prefer to read authors who either instruct or amuse.”

Unfortunately, Wilder was too conservative, too prejudiced because of matters on which they were at odds, or simply too obtuse in matters of philosophy and theology to state accurately for the information of his readers the trend of Moody’s argument. Agreement is not necessary for a reviewer to discuss a book at an intellectual level.

Joel Moody was born at or near Lake George, New Brunswick, October 28, 1833, and died at Topeka, February 18, 1914. His family moved to St. Charles, Ill., in 1834, so Joel’s early years were spent in that state. As his parents died in 1846 he shifted for himself, graduated from Oberlin College, received a degree, in 1855, from the University of Michigan, and was admitted to the bar at Columbus, Ohio, the same year. On January 1, 1859, he was married to Elizabeth King and came to Kansas. The young couple lived at Leavenworth from February to October, 1859, at Belmont, Woodson County, from October, 1859, to 1866, when they moved

18. *Ibid.,* January 28, 1871. In his *Annals of Kansas* (1886) p. 546, Wilder gave the date of publication of Moody’s book as February 14, 1871, but Wilder’s review appeared in the *Monitor* January 28, with the announcement that the book was then for sale by Dyer Smith at the post office news depot.
to Linn county which continued to be the Moody home until August, 1892, Elizabeth having died during the 1880’s. He served in the house of representatives from Woodson county in 1865 and from Linn county in 1881, and in the state senate 1889 and 1891 where, as chairman of the committee on education, he sponsored a bill “to place the University of Kansas on a plane above the preparatory school, and to take rank among the higher universities of the country.” As a member of the board of regents he had a hand “in its management as well as in its new birth.”

Also, Moody achieved some local distinction as a poet: *The Song of Kansas, and Other Poems* (Topeka, 1890).

In 1881, when a reporter was refused biographical data by Moody, he wrote to Mrs. Moody to supply them. Her reply is precious and opened thus:

In answer to your conundrums about my husband, I will say: Mr. Moody has been quite a study to me. I have lived with him a long time, and the longer I live with him the more I find out and the less I know really about him.

When and where he was born are questions I know nothing about, but that he was born I have very little doubt, and really on the whole do not regret it.

By the time Mrs. Moody had finished her letter the reporter was none the wiser about the biographical facts he needed. But, surely he had received a memorable document that suggests that life with Joel, Elizabeth, and their three boys at Mound City must have been anything but dull.

When Moody began lecturing on the subjects that found their way into his book *The Science of Evil* . . . is not yet clear, but he delivered several series of such lectures during the years 1868-1870 at Mound City, Topeka, Leavenworth, Lawrence, Fort Scott and other places in Kansas, and in Eastern cities, and apparently with some success. At that time he was referred to as the “Rev. Joel Moody, Minister of the Free Religious Society at Mound City,” or “Professor” Moody.

No record has been found of the factors which induced the Moody family to throw in its lot with the Mound City community. The unorthodoxy of both may suggest more than the facts warranted, but from the major beginnings of 1857 onward, radicalism was conspicuous at Mound City in the form of Quaker abolitionism,

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17. Kansas State Historical Society, “Biographical Circulars”*; Collections, K. S. H. S., v. 14 (1915-1918), p. 208 note, portrait p. 211; Admire’s *Political and Legislative Handbook for Kansas*, 1861, p. 405, is the authority for the credit attributed to him for the University bill. See, also, his annual opening address delivered September 13, 1889, at Lawrence on “The University and the Student.”
woman's rights, and prohibition. In 1864 the Ladies Enterprise Society, one of the earliest woman's clubs in the United States, built the Free Meeting House "for religious worship, educational purposes, scientific, literary and political lectures or meetings. . . ." In 1869 the building was donated to the county and became the Linn county courthouse, and the Ladies Enterprise Society came to an end. 18

In October, 1868, the Linn County Spiritualist Association was organized. 19 Another group fostered in Mound City in the community tradition was the Free Religious Society with which Joel Moody was conspicuously associated.

At Fort Scott, beginning December 14, 1868, Moody delivered at the City Hall a series of five free lectures on "The History and Philosophy of Evil." Concerning these a sympathetic correspondent furnished an extended report saying that: "For Sermons they are out of the track of popular preaching, being not only scientific and historic, but philosophic in the highest sense of that term. . . ." Because these are the first series on which reports have been found, the brief references to their content are important to indicate something of the intellectual path he was to follow until his ideas were printed formally in the book. The first sermon was introductory to the whole series and

contained a historic and philosophic account of the Devil.—His second . . . treated . . . the popular and false theory of Evil . . . a stunner to Orthodoxy.—The third . . . was "God's providence in man and nature," showed a knowledge of the Physical Sciences inostentatiously wrought into a "Sermon" which seemed to fall upon the ear like manna into the wilderness, of popular preaching.

He argued from the perfection of God, that if He ever created a Devil, He must have meant the very best to the life of the Devil; that he created no evil as evil, He meant no evil as evil; and that there could be no absolute evil in the Universe. Sins there are many, but no sin absolute and generic tainting the whole race.

Extracts from the manuscript of the fourth lecture were printed, one of which may fairly indicate the trend of his argument:

No vicarious atonements can prevent the effects of our sins or errors on the coming generations of man. No blood of Christ can wash away the diseases of the flesh transmitted to children. . . . Ministers urge men and women to prepare for the next world. Would to God they would spend their feeble

19. The Border Sentinel, Mound City, November 13, 1868, printed the text of the constitution.
talents and earnest breath in teaching fathers and mothers to prepare themselves and their children for this world. . . . It is not the soul of man that must be saved so much after death, it must be saved before birth. It is not death, it is life which is a fearful thing.

The fifth sermon was not summarized, but the account closed: "Suffice it to say, the course was the word fitly spoken—broadly and well, at the right time, and in the right place. In the language of one of our best citizens, 'Thank God there is one man who has the courage to speak the truth.' Mr. Moody is a graduate of the University of Michigan, an accomplished and finished scholar, but his best recommendation is the Sermons he preaches." The writer announced the "intention to have him preach to us once a month." The phrasing of this last remark implied that a sponsoring organization was involved, but none was named.20 In a card printed in the Monitor, Moody thanked the people for the donation of $50 for the lectures: "It pleases me to find the most influential, intelligent and business part of the people, wherever I go, so interested in the cause of Man and True Religion in the world."

The plan for monthly lectures by Moody did materialize, the announcement saying he would "preach to the liberal religious element of Fort Scott," February 7, 1869, in McDonald Hall, 4 P.M.; again March 7, subject—"Immortal Life"; April 4, subject not announced; and May 1, "Education." 21

His sermon of June 6, at Mound City, inspired a signed request that the Border Sentinel print it in full: "Use and Philosophy of the Sunday." He stripped Sunday of what he called "the black pall of Superstitition," and proposed that it be made a day of rest, recreation, rejoicing, social enjoyment, instruction, "or labor suited to the condition of each human being. . . . Labor must be reclaimed from the curse of the Bible, the curse of the law, and the curse of avarice. . . . The Scientific lecture might profitably be made to take the place of the popular sermon. . . . The world demands a new religion. . . . That it will come and that right soon, is inevitable."22 When preparations were announced for the Fourth of July celebration of July 5 (Monday), July 4 falling on a Sunday, with Moody scheduled for a public role, his principles were put to a test. He published a card, a defiance, he

20. Weekly Monitor, December 9, 23, 1868; Border Sentinel, Mound City, January 1, 1869. The issue of the Monitor for December 16 is missing from the file and it may have supplied more specific information.
22. The Border Sentinel, Mound City, June 18, 1869. The text of the sermon was Romans 14:5.
would not “burlesque” the Fourth of July, the National holiday in that fashion.23

By July, 1869, but the date of organization has not yet been determined, Fort Scott had a society to sponsor Moody’s lectures. Wiley Britton, its secretary, wrote to an editor under the date line of July 25: “We have organized a Free Religious Society here, called ‘The Fort Scott Institute’ and from its constitution and bylaws he reprinted sufficient to set forth its objects. They recognized “the great principle of the unity and harmony of Nature,” and the conviction “that a religion to be strictly true, must be strictly scientific; and that any system of religious belief which has its claims upon authority instead of science—the hand-maiden of God—must necessarily be false. . . .” They proposed:

The establishment and maintenance of a library of useful books and periodicals, in a place accessible to members, and the procuring of, from time to time, lecturers on scientific and religious subjects; for furnishing rational and healthful amusements; and for the purpose of better enabling us to discharge all other acts of charity and benevolence, and whatever else tends to elevating and benefiting mankind.

Britton concluded his communication by reporting that:

The Society is flourishing, and our reading room is well attended every Sunday morning at nine o’clock. Mr. Joel Moody, of Mound City, gives us a lecture about once a month, and his high literary attainments can hardly be equalled in the West, and doubtless [are] not far behind Prof. Denton. Kansas has done much in liberating and unfastening the shackles of the slave, and I think will be equally as active in liberating and relieving the mind from superstition and bigotry.24

By order of the Fort Scott Institute a communication was published in the Weekly Monitor, September 1, 1869, under the title: “A Prophet Not Without Honor Save in His Own Country”:

The truth of the above saying was never better exemplified than in the reception the Rev. Joel Moody has met with in this place, contrasted with his reception in Lawrence, Chicago, and other Eastern cities. Here perhaps not over forty or fifty persons at a time have listened to his teachings. There overflowing houses have greeted him, have published his lectures, and have besought him to come again. And well they might, for a gentleman so perfectly conversant with the writings of Parker, Buckle, Herbert Spencer, Huxley, and other great modern philosophers and thinkers, must needs interest and delight an audience with living, vital truths; truths that men know and feel accord with the great laws of life. And yet what shall we say of a people that, neglecting such teachings, will waste one-seventh part of their time listening to the crude and superstitious dogmas of the dark ages; and strangest

23. *Ibid.,* June 18, 25, 1869; his card was reprinted in the Monitor, June 30, 1869.

of all, though these orthodox doctrines do not accord with a single law of nature, but come in direct conflict with nearly all. Though the modern discoveries of science proclaim the system a lie, and though the whole world practically disbelieves it, yet for no other reason than that which actuates a majority of people when they abstain from commencing an undertaking on Friday, or from changing a garment after being put on wrong side out,—they still persist in paying the superstition a lip homage. But is that right? If the laws which control the great questions of Intemperance, Poverty, Crime, and Prosecution, can be found in any other system of philosophy—if we can by any stretch of courtesy call this superstition a system of philosophy—it is our duty to study that system. As well might we insist that our scholars should found a system of astronomy on the principle that the earth is the center of the solar system, as to try and base the laws of life upon this huge superstition.

Mr. Moody will deliver one of his great sermons next Sunday, at City Hall, at 7½ o’clock. P. M. Subject—Who Makes Our Idiots and Villains? Turn out and hear him.

Proudly the Mound City Border Sentinel, September 10, reprinted praise of its fellow-citizen from Lawrence, Chicago, and Fort Scott papers and commented favorably upon the Fort Scott Institute: “A society of men and women who fearlessly discuss all questions of theology and human nature, and are organized for the good of man not to teach theological dogma.”

Beginning December 20, 1869, Moody announced a series of five lectures at the court house in Mound City, which still served as a community forum as it had while maintained as the Free Meeting House. The theme was “Progress of Thought”:

While they are philosophic, the philosophy is NEW, and the result of the scientific requirements of the world, and peculiarly of this age. It may be expressed in a sentence—evolution instead of manufacture. This age is peculiar. It may be called the Individualizing age. . . . But what the people learn is particular. . . . It has been my object to generalize and give a more comprehensive view than people have usually been in the habit of taking. . . .

After trying out the new series on his neighbors, Moody again made a tour of Eastern cities during January and the larger cities of Kansas in February, 1870.25

In the Moody “Scrapbook,” the clipping from the Topeka Daily Commonwealth was marked in pencil—“Orthodox Paper,” and in that light its contents was more illuminating than the comments which had nothing but praise for the lecture “Progress of Thought.” He drew his illustrations from “the different historic ages, the nebular hypothesis, the development theory, the development of science and religion, and the growth of law. The lecturer did not

25. Border Sentinel, December 10, 1869, January 6, 1870; Daily Kansas State Record, Topeka, February 2, 3, 1870; Topeka Daily Commonwealth, February 1, 1870.
find special creative acts, such as miracles, and derived all things by evolution. All religious faiths were developed one from another, and put on the same level as brother and sister.”

The editor thought Moody’s weakest point was inaccuracies of statement and generalization: “Another mind might perhaps take the same facts and arrive at an opposite result.” Among other things Moody held that the world’s greatest intellectual achievements were found along an isothermal zone of 40°. In closing the editor expressed the hope that Moody would “follow his law of progress until he shall have eliminated all error from his system and shall take his stand on the everlasting platform of truth.”

Returning the story to home ground, that multiple purpose organization, the Fort Scott Institute, requires attention again. Having been launched during 1869, it had been called a free religious society in which capacity it had sponsored Moody’s lectures, it had promoted a library, and in December, 1869, it had launched weekly Wednesday evening sociables, held often in the new Monitor reading room, which sometimes, at least, included lectures as well as dancing. Because Moody’s relations with Fort Scott were so closely allied with the activities of the Fort Scott Institute it seems justified to present briefly in continuity some of the highlights of both themes at this point, extending through the period 1870-1871.

On February 15, 1870, the institute sponsored a lecture “Life Without and Life Within,” by the Rev. J. C. Post, the Baptist minister. The next night they spent dancing, and to their music in the Monitor reading room, the composers set the type for the Monitor issued the morning of March 17. On a Sunday, March 27, Moody lectured, both morning and evening in the same place. The following month, the institute provided a lecture by one of its members, D. A. Millington, on “Speculative Astronomy.” By mid-June Moody’s book The Science of Evil . . . had been written, at least in a trial draft. He gave a series of five readings from the book in Fort Scott and again in Mound City. The Monitor commented facetiously that: “He will find no lack of material on which to work in reducing the subject to a science.”

In July Susan B. Anthony was visiting her brother, and while in Fort Scott, the institute engaged her to lecture, July 14, on “Work and Wages,” admission charge 50 cents. A small but select audience was said to have been present to hear her insist that women could free themselves only through the ballot. On Saturday evening, July

26. Daily Monitor, February 15, 17, March 29, April 24, May 9, June 19, 1870; Border Sentinel, April 1, June 17, 1870.
16, she spoke again; "Why not?" in the Methodist church, answering objections to woman's suffrage. For full measure, Taylor asked her to share the Methodist pulpit with him the next evening on the subject of temperance. The Monitor congratulated Taylor on being a consistent advocate of woman's rights, and suggested that Susan "has a somewhat new theory on the temperance problem."

"An astonishing crowd congregated at the Methodist Church on Sunday evening," the Monitor reported—in spite of the almost unbearable heat, and many were turned away. After being introduced by the minister, Miss Anthony spoke for nearly two hours: "She contends that man, in the management of society, is a grand failure, . . . . but she does not omit occasionally to upbraid her strong-minded sisters—but this for their mild submission to the tyranny of the male portion of the species." The editor then concluded: "We cannot help thinking that if Miss Anthony had ever married it would have improved her opinion of the male sex."27

As this lecture was delivered at the evening, or young people's service, a constructive suggestion offered by Miss Anthony, other than her hobby, was quite in order; the development of an institute to serve generally the needs of young people in the community. The local implications of that suggestion through the intervention of interested local elements led into the problem of the Y. M. C. A. and must be summarized in another context. In conclusion of this particular Susan B. Anthony episode, however, attention should be called explicitly to what had happened. The Fort Scott Institute had been her original sponsor, and admission had been charged, resulting in a small audience. The Anthony following "snowballed" in spite of the heat when transferred to the Methodist church, the second, and particularly the third night, as a part of the regular Sunday evening service. The original sponsors were forgotten and such stimulus as Miss Anthony may have given to doing something more for young people was capitalized upon by the more conservative Y. M. C. A. group at the expense of the institute, the much more radical "free religious society." Of course, nothing of this sort had been "planned" by anybody. On the other hand, but quite unrelated to the foregoing, the position of the institute was strengthened by the American Unitarian Association of Boston which sent a gift of 41 volumes of its publications including "the works of Channing, Norton, Stanley, Wilson, Ware, Clarke, Bellows, Morrison, Sears, and others."28

27. Daily Monitor, July 12-17, 19, 1870.
28. Ibid., August 17, 1870, the text of resolution of thanks dated August 14, 1870.
At Mound City, Moody had used the Congregational church for the five evenings beginning June 20, 1870, upon which he had read installments from his Science of Evil. . . . Publicly, the Border Sentinel and its readers registered no expression about the incongruity of this procedure. A similar tolerance was in evidence when Moody endorsed a spiritualist lecturer, scheduled to speak in the Mound City courthouse, September 20, 21: “He is one of the champions of Spiritualism, and has long been doing gallant and honorable service in the cause of Reform. Turn out and hear the friend of man.”

For the winter lecture season of 1870-1871, Moody prepared a lecture “The Reformer,” which was presented first at the Mound City courthouse, November 29:

Prof. Moody’s lecture . . . was characteristic of the man who delivered it: bold and fearless. Announcing truths which popular opinion is not prepared to endorse, yet which are incontrovertible, and will shine with brighter lustre as science and philosophy advance. . . .

Prof. Moody is too conversant with the history of the world to have his zeal dampened by a small audience in Mound City. As an offering of consolation, we beg to quote the old adage: “A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country.”

The editor explained further in the Moody vein, that current accepted ideas were once heresies.59

“The Reformer” was next delivered by Moody before the Fort Scott Institute in the Monitor reading room December 1. In announcing Moody, the Monitor volunteered the comment that: “He gained the name of a talented lecturer last winter in the northern cities, and is recognized among the best thinkers and philosophers in this country, as Huxley and Spencer are in Europe.” Public co-operation with the institute was asked in encouragement of first class lectures for the coming winter. Apparently this kind thought was wasted upon Fort Scott, because: “Mr. Moody’s lecture last night was not as well attended as it should have been. It was a most beautiful and instructive lecture . . . Aside from the merits of the discourse, Mr. Moody had a pleasing and elegant delivery which is the soul of a lecture.” Next, Moody took his “Reformer” to Topeka.31

Tangible results of prolonged efforts came to both Moody and the institute early in 1871. The publication of The Science of Evil

29. Border Sentinel, September 16, 1870.
30. Ibid., November 25, December 2, 1870.
31. Daily Monitor, November 29, December 1, 2, 16, 1870; Border Sentinel, December 16, 1870.
has been recorded already. In March, 1871, "The Fort Scott Institute" was incorporated, without capital stock, for the purpose of "the advancement of Science, the diffusion of knowledge and the maintenance of a library." The charter was notarized before E. F. Ware, March 4, and filed March 7, 1871. The five incorporators, who were also its directors were O. A. Millington, J. R. Morley, Wiley Britton, V. W. Sunderlin, and John Farnsworth. The "Society" of March 29 was held at the residence of Farnsworth. All members were invited to be present and to bring their friends: "Joel Moody will be present and 'dish up' the 'Darwinian theory' to the lovers of scientific knowledge." Sometime during the ensuing months, after depending so long upon the Monitor reading room, the institute acquired a meeting place of its own. For some reason not now apparent, no historical account of the organization has been found and the reports of its activities in the Monitor were so irregular that a continuity cannot be satisfactorily established. But, in concluding this sketch it should be said, that before its passing from the scene Institute Hall provided another meeting place for various community gatherings.

IV. The Science of Evil

In his book, The Science of Evil, Moody’s inquiry into the origin of evil started with the questions and answers of primitive man: "Since the dawn of history a theological notion has embraced a scientific fact. . . . The early mind struggling for truth, seized a fact of Nature, and dressing it in a mythical garb, passed it down in song to the world. . . . Yet every explanation has some truth in it. Myths are by no means devoid of truth. They are the harbingers of Science; the nursery songs of the world’s infancy."

The introduction to the book continued by declaring that most controversies turned, not on substance, but on a question of definition: "This is the whole story of the controversy between the Idealist and Materialist; the whole story about Fate and Freedom. There is truth in both; and the one is dependent upon the other." He warned of misconceptions about natural law, insisting that it was not a cause, but an effect, and that the characteristics of a law could only be inferred from the effects: "a law is only an effect of the action of [Infinite] Force on matter. Strictly speaking then, a law of Nature cannot be violated,"—we cannot violate an eclipse

32. "Corporation Charters (official copybooks from office of secretary of state, now in archives division, Kansas State Historical Society)," v. 5, p. 192.
33. Daily Monitor, March 29, 1871.
—and violations of a law of nature as popularly misunderstood could not affect human welfare. Thus scientific predictability was an effect, or an evidence of law.

With these premises held firmly in mind, Moody sought to describe a subjective relativism of knowledge and ethics and reconcile them with the unique but finite individual and with infinite force and universal matter:

That the world is in a continual transition, that it is forever “a becoming,” and never reaches any special goal, which can be clearly defined; that Theology must precede Science and is typical of it; and in fact that the whole religious history of the world is only typical of Science, and all god-names are only symbols of Force, he [Moody] has endeavored to make quite plain. Force personified in the god; is only Force made real in Science. The tyranny of a monotheistic worship, and the comparative freedom of a polytheistic one, is strikingly manifested throughout the world. The latter is conducive to the advancement of Science; the former is inimical thereto. . . . Science must be strangled by the hand of the ancient Jew and Catholic, while it is nourished by the Greek and Protestant. . . . That the freedom of Science will one day take the place of a theologic tyranny, and that the scientific lecture will take the place of the Sunday sermon, is a fact shortly to be realized. It is a fact already knocking at the door of the Church.

Having challenged his readers’ attention by a provocative introduction Moody proceeded to execute, in eight chapters, his plan of presentation of the science of evil. He concluded that evil had always existed and was necessary to a consciousness of good, and to a freedom of choice from alternatives in conduct. To Moody, man was the product of development, of a dualism: a finite manifestation of infinite force and universal matter. Man is no different from other animals except that he achieved an intelligence that set him apart from those animals that did not have it; and in consequence Moody found religion and morals the product of development also, but insisted that no necessary relation existed between them. As indicated in his introduction, science was evolved out of religion—the question “What?” was religious; the question “How?” was moral; and the question “Why?” was science.

Moody cited two illustrations to serve as concrete examples of relativism. First, the wolf-lamb-grass chain of subsistence in which the wolf and the lamb differed in what was considered good and evil—lamb ate grass, and wolf ate lamb. The second was an imaginary conversation about ethics among eight participants representing different time periods and cultures; Jesus, Moses, David, Luther, a Protestant Christian, a Universalist, Whittier, and a Spiritualist. Each defined ethical values differently, yet documented his view by
a suitable citation to the Bible. Moody concluded: "how useless it is for one amidst such a complexity of opinions to define morality." For him, wisdom and ignorance were absolutes, but there existed also, all gradations between: "It is just the same with morality. It is a variable quantity, and passes onward from imperfection, as the starting point, towards absolute perfection. The standards of individuals and the ages are all different, and must necessarily be so, else there would be no varying conditions."

The several individuals or branches of the human race did not advance equally, according to Moody's system, and he compared the relations of human cultures with those of geological structures:

This age is not superimposed upon the past, burying it entirely . . .; but, like the geological strata, all the formations of past ages crop out on the surface of this age somewhere, showing us the changes which time has brought about. We study the past in its fossil remains, both in earth and man . . . so there are living representatives of moral doctrines which predominated in past ages, but which are now looked upon as barbarous and out of place.

This law of varying conditions is organic, and perhaps inheres in the ultimate atom. Some generalizations upon this fact may not be out of place.

The first great law we find in the world is, Nature, distributively, never repeats herself. No two men, no two women, no two children, can be found exactly alike . . .; no two animals . . . no two plants alike . . . and we presume no two ultimate atoms of matter alike . . .

We are now able to see the immediate cause of so many conflicting opinions, and why people are engaged in an endless discussion of rights, privileges and duties. The true cause of an opinion lies further remote, and depends on the degree of knowledge.

It is not safe to jump at conclusions about the consequences of Moody's reasoning. His chapter two was headed: "Perfection in Man Forever Impossible." He insisted upon "man's unlimited imperfection" in contrast with the traditional 18th century doctrine of the unlimited perfectibility of man. A person started from absolute ignorance, "having inherited . . . at most only a certain tendency or capacity to know, and perhaps certain instincts that are irrational," but finite man could never reach absolute perfection. Misconception on that score, Moody concluded, had "always led to failure in ethical teachings" and to an erroneous concept of "the perfect law," also impossible. The admonition of Jesus: "Be ye therefore perfect," according to this logic was impossible, the practical alternative being merely to "aim at perfection" leaving the course "open for each fallible person to aim as he sees fit. . . ."

The task which Moody imposed upon himself was formidable—the reconciliatiom of the apparent complete relativism of knowledge
and of morals with his concept of the absolute ethical principle. Immediately there was no certainty, all was relative—but the eventual goal of human striving was the reconciliation of the finite with the infinite force through the instrumentality of science. Whether or not his attempt was successful as a philosophical system may be open to question, but in any case, Moody was not alone in challenging the still unsolved relativist dilemma. At any rate, he did not accept the defeatist position of the prevailing 20th century relativism.

V. Edward Schiller

The third of the Kansas authored books of 1871 was Edward Schiller's *Hand-Book of Progressive Philosophy* (New York: J. S. Redfield). This was the same Schiller who had established the Fort Scott *Evening Post* in 1869. The United States census of 1870 listed him as a Saxon, and 42 years of age. His wife was born in New York, and his two children in Louisiana in 1862 and 1864, indicating that he had been within the Southern Confederacy during the American Civil War. He dedicated his book to Wiley Britton, later to be widely known as the historian of the Civil War on the Kansas-Missouri border. He explained in the preface that the book was designed for the general reader, and there was no pretense of originality. "Living remote from the great centres of thought, I have not recently had access to extensive libraries, and some of my quotations have been made from memory:"

After commenting on the general uselessness of encyclopedias for philosophy, he explained further that many of his notes had been made years earlier, and might be rusty. In chapter 11 he explained that an innate impulsion within man for self-expression was his reason for writing this book. It was made up of 39 short chapters divided into three groups. In part one, he laid his philosophical ground work about the nature of the individual man. Two properties of the soul were thought and love the soul's sojourn on earth was preparatory, any return to earth was improbable, and a day of judgment was repudiated. "Truth was born with us," and was lost, he said, by contact with the world: "Children will naturally speak the truth," and "The aim of science . . . is the discovery of truth." Furthermore: "virtue cannot exist without truth." The powers of the soul were dormant until developed by the mutual influence of others in society, and as authority for this view, he cited Aristotle. Although man was created in God's image, Schiller in-

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sisted that he was not a mere instrument, but possessed reason and choice, doubt preceding knowledge.

In part two, Schiller described his theories of religious belief and a cyclical pattern of development of theological thought in all religions: monotheism to polytheism, and return to monotheism. As applied to Christianity, he saw the universal principle illustrated in the monotheism of Jesus, then the introduction of polytheism step by step with the victory of trinitarianism over unitarianism, and the introduction of the virgin, the apostles, and saints as intermediaries who must be venerated. He insisted, as against August Comte, the French sociologist, that Protestantism, however deficient in some respects, nevertheless made a positive contribution toward separation of philosophy from religion. But Schiller dated this separation as an explicit issue as stemming from G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) through David Friederich Strauss (1808-1874), and Joseph Ernest Renan (1823-1892), especially the latter.34

Both Strauss and Renan had been orthodox Christians, in one Protestant and in the other Catholic, and both reluctantly arrived at substantially the same conclusions: Jesus was a mortal man only; the Christian religion contained things that Jesus did not teach; and the tendency of the age was toward monotheism—religion reconstructed through the aid of philosophy. Schiller insisted that Strauss and Renan did not wish to destroy the church, but to save it—reconstructed. He refused to condemn ceremonies outright, because “they have been of vast benefit to humanity itself.” For him, prayer and worship were a human necessity, because through these rites men turned aside “to ponder on the great source of all existence—the Creator. They inculcated love, not of God alone, but of their fellow-men.” For Schiller: “Philosophy . . . has simplified religion.” In the United States he pointed to Unitarianism as the American manifestation of the return to monotheism; but he warned that the achievement of that ideal of pure monotheistic religion as a general condition was slow and would not occur in his or even the next generation.

In reviewing Schiller’s Hand-Book of Progressive Philosophy, editor Wilder, evidently not prepared to endorse the contents personally, wrote:

If this book finds many readers, it will find many haters, for it arrays itself against the whole theological world. The author does not believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures or the Divinity of Christ, and is one of the

34 Schiller dismissed Hegel’s philosophical system as such as “comparatively un-noticed at present.”
coolest iconoclasts we have ever read. . . . But it lacks the eloquence, the rhetoric, the enthusiasm, the wit, and the imagination which have given to the books of Buckle, Renan and Theodore Parker, advocating the same theories, so much of their popularity.”

Although living in the same town nearly five months, Wilder confessed that he had not talked to Schiller. 35 But about the same time, Wilder called the attention of his readers to Charles Darwin’s new book, The Descent of Man, in which the conclusion was made explicit that man had evolved from a lower form of life: “The present work of Darwin, like his ‘Origin of Species,’ is attracting wide notice and extensive and varied comment.” 36

The Topeka Kansas State Record looked upon Schiller’s book with favor, approved its “plain English” and commended it to the clergy and to all interested in philosophy: “It bears evidence of being the work of a thoughtful and intelligent person, who undoubtedly knows more than he gets credit for among his neighbors.” The Buffalo (N. Y.) Courier said that he “rambles throughout history to find support for his preconceived theories,” but had no system of his own. The Philadelphia Argus said: “This book is full of modesty and mistakes. As to modesty, it is founded on truth, and we admire its candor.” The term “Progressive” was thought to be unwarranted because men rate progress differently, and the readers were warned about the blind leading the blind. 37

At home Wilder was giving the book some second thoughts, partly stimulated by the report of the local book dealer:

The Fort Scott Philosophy, Mr. Grossman informs us, has met with a good sale in this city, and the demand continues. It is evident that Fort Scott is determined to know what kind of a philosopher she has living with her, and what his philosophy is. The book has been generally and favorably noticed by the press—more attention having been given to it than we supposed it would receive. The author was unwise in frankly saying that he lived in Kansas, and could not consult great libraries. Some of the reviewers mention this fact, and say no more. Of course no man in Kansas can think or write! Kansas has done something, in days gone by, towards setting other men thinking.

Schiller next turned his attention to historical work, dealing with aspects of European history. Delivered first as lectures, five essays were printed in the Kansas Magazine during 1872. As were many Fort Scott men, Schiller was interested in promoting the interests of the city and the area it served and tied its future to its mineral resources. From political history he turned to geological history.

35. Daily Monitor, March 3, April 14, 1871.
36. Ibid., April 28, 1871.
37. Ibid., April 16, May 4, 1871.
and made a geological survey of the country to the south of Fort Scott. Communications, that is railroads, were essential to the exploitation of this potential wealth, especially a rail connection through the mineral region to Memphis. In 1873 Schiller moved to Memphis where he joined the editorial staff of the Avalanche,38 and in 1877 was reported as still with the same newspaper. Schiller died, September 9, 1881, at San Antonio, Tex. Alone in the world, and his background unknown, his fellow printers on the Daily Express at that city buried him. From his private belongings the fact of his former residence at Fort Scott was learned—also that he was the author of a book. A letter of inquiry to the Monitor sought news of surviving relatives, but an eight-year absence from Fort Scott (1873-1881) and its shifting population had erased virtually all specific memories about its once distinguished citizen. One contribution was alleged, but cannot yet be verified, that, besides the book on philosophy, he had written a book on law. But about all this, the editor of the Monitor was quite vague.39

Before leaving the subject of Moody and Schiller a few observations are in order. Both emphasized that they were proceeding scientifically in their philosophies, and that their findings were the product of science. Evidently both relied for the most part upon the same 19th century writers, but they differed somewhat in sources and emphasis. Schiller depended more upon the European continental, and especially the German philosophical tradition, while Moody reflected more of English thought. They were diametrically opposed, however, on the role of monotheism and polytheism in relation to freedom. Not only did the relativism of evolution put them in opposite camps in these matters (pluralism v. monism), but it deprived both of them of philosophical and moral certainty as an immediate goal. Both were compelled to rely upon an existentialist if not a stoical endurance of an imperfect finite world, but both still clung to the concept of absolutes in an infinite universe toward which man might strive through science.

The three men considered in this essay do not exhaust the budget of philosophers for the 1870's in Kansas or even in Fort Scott. Several others will be noticed in due course. These three were iconoclastic in several senses. The more obvious aspect is their challenge of orthodox religion. A notable point implicit in the foregoing review is the minor role of the so-called enlightenment of the 18th century as traditionally focused upon France and Paris.

38. Ibid., May 11, September 1, 1872; October 26, 1873; April 12, 1877.
39. Ibid., September 17, 1881. The editor was in error about dates.
Finally, two related Kansas myths, that Kansas is the child of New England, and that Kansas is Puritan, are challenged indirectly by the evidence that the inspiration for most of the philosophical and theological dissent stemmed from elsewhere—particularly, direct from 19th century Great Britain and Germany.

A final point of emphasis is appropriate as a closing thought. Local history is the foundation of all history. The locality is the special scene where occurs the intermingling with the primary folk heritage of ideas from the outside. This hybridization, or cross-fertilization of different strains of thought, as in the biological organism, produces new virility and originality. This folk process, as seen here at work, is more, much more, than the mere incorporation of the great thought of the 19th century into the local levels of culture. Out of this local space called Kansas and other comparable localities emerge creative minds and original ideas to compete at several larger levels of partitioned space. The great personalities and great ideas of every culture originated in some local space. The history of the United States, or of any other nation, cannot be written adequately or be understood in all its uniqueness except it is written from the bottom up, from the foundations of its multiple localities.