Religion in Kansas During the Era of the Civil War—Concluded

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THE slavery issue, matters of doctrine, policy relative to missions, and conflicts between frontier groups and parent missionary boards produced wedges of separation in Protestantism in Kansas. Some of these issues reflected national situations; others were due to the Kansas scene. It took years and sometimes decades before the wounds of division were healed.

The Methodists of Kansas were destined to share fully in the split that occurred in 1844 which resulted in the creation of the Methodist Episcopal Church South in 1845. At the General Conference of Methodism in 1844, the Indian Mission Conference was established which included the Kansas territory. This conference voted overwhelmingly to adhere to the Church South. In May, 1854, the Kansas Mission Conference was created at the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South at its meeting at Columbus, Ga. It was organized by the St. Louis Conference at Springfield on October 24, 1855. Kickapoo was the setting for the first regular session of the Kansas Mission Conference on September 12, 1856.71 Presiding at the Kickapoo conference was Bishop George Foster Pierce of Georgia. He found that "the Conference met at the appointed hour—every preacher at his place save one or two, whose location in the midst of the depredators compelled them to remain at home, for the protection of their families and their property." 72

The future of the M. E. Church South was inextricably associated with the development of the controversy over slavery and the future of Kansas as a free or slave state. The feeling became more intense with the passing of the years. In 1860 the Rev. Joab Spencer was informed by his parishioners: "You are regarded as a

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‘secesh,’ and your visits will only bring trouble to those who enter-
tain you. They will be accused of harboring a rebel.” Spencer
was told that a sermon which he had preached at Marysville over
the text Matthew 22:21 had been characterized as a “secesh” ser-
mon. The pressure mounted so that Spencer abandoned tempo-
rarily his circuit and went to Missouri. He had also suffered personal
losses of clothing and his saddle horse when, according to his ac-
count, some soldiers had invaded his property. 73 Other ministers
of the Church South had problems of a similar character. 74

The last session of the Kansas Mission Conference until after the
end of the Civil War was held at Atchison, September 5, 1861.
The feeling toward the members of the conference increased as the
group assembled. Spencer reported that “on account of unusual
commotion in the community, we were notified that but two hours
would be given us to transact business and leave the city.” The
meeting was then transferred to Grasshopper schoolhouse 15 miles
west of Atchison, where they conducted their business “without
molestation though under surveillance.” Twenty-three ministers
received appointment, but only six were known definitely to have
continued work at their assigned places. The nature of the prob-
lems confronting the members of the conference is found in the
memorial addressed to the General Conference scheduled to meet
at New Orleans in May, 1862, which was adopted with one dis-
senting vote: “Resolved, that the General Conference be and is
hereby requested to change the name of our church from ‘The
Methodist Episcopal Church South’ to ‘The Episcopal Methodist
Church.’” Since the General Conference did not meet, the me-
memorial remains only as an expression of feeling by the Kansas
group. 75

All ministers of the M. E. Church South were forced to quit their
ministry in Kansas except Spencer, who continued to serve at Coun-
cil Grove. Two of the group, the Rev. J. E. Bryan and the Rev.
Cyrus R. Rice joined the Methodist Church. Rice became a leader
in that group. The Rev. D. C. O’Howell joined the Cumberland
Presbyterians, the Rev. J. O. Foresman went to California, and the

73. Spencer, loc. cit., pp. 147, 148.
74. The home of the Rev. L. B. Stateler at Tecumseh was destroyed by an incendiary
torch.—Rev. E. J. Stanley, Life of Rev. L. B. Stateler: A Story of Life on the Old Frontier
were the three original judges in the violent election at Tecumseh on March 30, 1855.—
Report of the Special Committee Appointed to Investigate the Troubles in Kansas, 84th
Sara Robinson found that Burgess was one of those men who “have girded on another
sword than that of the spirit.”—Mrs. Sara T. D. Robinson, “The Wakarusa War,” The
Kansas Historical Collections, v. 10 (1907-1908), p. 463.
Rev. L. B. Stateler to Colorado. Three of the group in addition to Spencer remained in Kansas. They conducted unofficial services and cottage meetings from time to time. The work of the M. E. Church South was resumed in Kansas in 1866. 76

The members of the ministerium of the M. E. Church South contended that they were never guilty of disloyalty. The Rev. E. J. Stanley described the pattern as follows:

There was not a man in the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Kansas that was guilty of a disloyal act or who ever said or did anything inconsistent with his duties as a true citizen or a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, yet because the word "South" happened to be on the name of their Church, or for some other indefinable cause, they were looked upon with suspicion, harassed by squads of armed men who would hoist flags over them while preaching, require them to frame their prayers after a particular fashion, and otherwise disturb their assemblies. In some cases they suffered personal violence for no apparent cause but that of preaching the pure gospel and for keeping clear of political issues.77

The Methodist Episcopal Church entered into the work in Kansas in 1848 when the Rev. Abraham Still preached to the Wyandotte Indians. This was in opposition to the agreement of 1844. Other representatives, including the Rev. L. B. Dennis, came to serve in the area. On July 9, 1854, the Rev. William H. Goode in the company of Still and others preached a sermon on the text Matthew 24:14 at Kibbe’s cabin at Hickory Point. This was supposedly the first sermon preached under terms of a regular appointment to white settlers in Kansas. 78 On November 26, 1854, Goode discovered when he came to a cabin on the Marais des Cygnes that a man had recently declared himself to be a Methodist preacher “without adding the peculiar cognomen assumed to indicate his ‘distinct ecclesiastical connection,’” and had secured permission to hold a quarterly meeting there at a date designated a few weeks in advance. This development greatly disturbed Goode who with the co-operation of the man of the family, who had been absent when the other plans were made, assembled some people and held a quarterly meeting. Goode never learned what happened to the Methodist South brother who had preceded him in the area; he had the satisfaction of beating him for the honor of holding the first quarterly meeting.79 Goode also found that the Rev. Thomas

Johnson of Shawnee Mission was not responsive when he saw him occasionally in 1854 and 1855 although he had enjoyed his hospitality while in Kansas on a previous occasion. He declared that "I never met an act of recognition from its clerical conductor. And my experience was, so far as I learned, identical in this particular with that of all others who remained firm in their adherence to the Methodist Episcopal Church."  

The Methodist Episcopal Church South and the Methodist Episcopal Church each held their first Kansas Conference meeting in 1856. The conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South met at Kickapoo on September 12 and showed a membership of 13 traveling preachers, 12 local preachers, 672 members including 462 whites, two colored, and 176 Indians. The conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church met at Lawrence October 23-25, and reported 17 preachers and 661 members. When the last conference of the M. E. Church South prior to the end of the Civil War met in 1861 there were 23 preachers and a membership of 1,621, including 1,400 whites, five colored, and 216 Indians. The Methodist Episcopal Church reported that year a membership of 3,020 and a ministerium of 46 preachers. In addition, the German Methodist District joined the conference which added nine more ministers and 316 members.

A sequel to the rivalry between the two Methodist groups was finally settled in 1865 in favor of the M. E. Church South. It was agreed in the Articles of Separation of 1844 that "all the property of the Methodist Episcopal Church in meeting houses, parsonages, colleges, schools, conference funds, cemeteries, and of every kind, within the limits of the Southern organization, shall be forever free from any claim set up on the part of the Methodist Episcopal Church." By a treaty of 1854, three sections of land including the improvements at the Shawnee Mission School were assigned to the missionary society of the M. E. Church South or to persons designated by it. The arrangements were designed to make this land the property of the Rev. Thomas Johnson, who had been identified with the school almost continuously since 1830. A new treaty was proposed in March, 1864, declaring that the contract of March,

80. Ibid., pp. 249, 250.
1855, between the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, null and void on the ground that the M. E. Church South was disloyal. William L. Harris pushed the claim for the Methodist Episcopal Missionary Society. However, after much controversy, J. P. Usher, Secretary of the Interior, approved the claim of the heirs of Thomas Johnson. The patent was delivered to them on May 26, 1865.82

The national division among the Baptists in 1845 with the organization of the Southern Baptist Convention also was associated with developments in Kansas. One of the factors in the situation was the formation of the American Indian Mission Association at Cincinnati, Ohio, in October, 1842. The leader in this movement was Isaac McCoy, who had long been identified with events in the future state of Kansas. This movement was enthusiastically supported by Johnston Lykins and Robert Simerwell, well-known Kansas Baptist missionaries. McCoy and his associates felt that the Boston board was not showing enough concern for Indian missions. However, John G. Pratt, Ira D. Blanchard, and Jotham Meeker, other well-known Kansas missionaries, did not favor the new group. The Southern Baptist churches supported the American Indian Mission Association and in 1855 an official relationship was established between the association and the Southern Baptist Convention.

A leader in Baptist circles in Kansas was the Rev. W. Thomas of Delaware City, a missionary in Kansas under the auspices of the Board of Domestic Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention. He was elected temporary chairman at the meeting of the East Kansas Association of Baptists, at Atchison, in October, 1858, the first Baptist Association to be formed in Kansas. He then was elected moderator. Thomas left Kansas before or early in 1859 because of the severity of the climate. The Baptist work was not progressing well in Kansas as indicated in the report of the committee on "Home Destitution" of the East Kansas Association of Baptists in 1858. The political situation had been a factor.

In 1857 the Rev. J. H. Luther found at Kansas City that the conflict over slavery was so great that he decided not to enter the Kansas territory. Southern Baptist work in Kansas was discontinued in 1861. It was not re-established until 1910. In 1867 a treaty conveyed the title to the 320 acres and the Pottawatomie Manual Labor School to the American Baptist Home Mission So-

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ciety rather than to the Board of Domestic Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention.\textsuperscript{83}

The division between the Old School and the New School Presbyterians in Kansas was not sharply marked on the issue of slavery. The New School representatives were generally stronger in their antislavery feeling than the Old School on a national basis.\textsuperscript{84} The Rev. R. D. Parker wrote in 1860 that “the pro-slavery feeling is kept up by the M. E. Ch. South and the Old School Pres. Ch. It requires no little wisdom to do ones duty and yet avoid strife.”\textsuperscript{85} The controversy did not attain serious proportions in Kansas.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kansas owed much to Wm. S. Yok of South Carolina, a slave owner and a man of considerable wealth, who was responsible for founding the Christian church at Leavenworth in 1855. Yok was the first elder and minister of the church. He also helped to organize other churches in Kansas. However, the majority of the Disciples were antislavery although they sought a moderate course. The state convention of Disciples at Big Springs in 1860 wanted assurance that Pardee Butler would “preach the Gospel and keep out of politics.” However, Butler had friends among both Northern and Southern sympathizers. There was no congregational division in Kansas Christian Churches over the slavery issue. Moreover, there was no national division between North and South over this problem.\textsuperscript{86} The Episcopalians and Lutherans, among the major groups, held an antislavery position in Kansas.

The Rev. Thomas Johnson of the M. E. Church South as a slave owner was a rather unusual exception among Protestant missionaries. Included among Johnson’s transactions was his purchase of a Negro girl named Harriet from B. M. Lynch for $700 on June 7, 1855, and the acquisition of another Negro girl, Martha, from David Burge for $800 on May 24, 1856.\textsuperscript{87} However, when it came to the basic issues associated with the preservation of the Union, Johnson was in direct opposition to the secessionists. On July 4, 1861, when the Union Club held a celebration near Turner in Wyandotte county,
Johnson made his position clear. He condemned the secession movement as "unjustifiable, and stated in unequivocal terms that he should adhere to the flag of his country, that he had been indirectly for years in official relation with the government, enjoying its protection, and he owed to it fealty, love and support." 88

Various church conferences and conventions passed resolutions on the subject of slavery. In April, 1857, when the Congregationalists met at Topeka the following resolutions were passed:

Resolved 1. That the system of American Chattel Slavery is a high crime against God and humanity, and, as such, is prima facie evidence against the Christian character of those implicated in it.

2. That this Association will in no manner fellowship any other ecclesiastical body which willfully sustains, directly or indirectly, that system. 89

In the first meeting of the association following the outbreak of the Civil War, the Congregationalists passed a resolution in which they declared that "in obedience to the injunction of our Divine Master, we, as his disciples, are bound always to take special notice of the 'Signs of the Times,' in order that we may so shape our course as fully to co-operate with Him in carrying forward His providential plans, consummating the subjection of all His enemies and removing every obstacle that hinders the final and speedy triumph of His cause." They continued by expressing their belief that "the President should not only repel aggressions but prosecute the conflict with vigor, and at all hazards, until all government property is regained, and its authority and supremacy fully re-established." 90

The Baptist convention in 1862 recognized the "chastening hand of God, pledged the people to humble themselves in the midst of the awful disaster, earnestly supplicated the Divine favor and resolved to pray for the 'speedy triumph of freedom.'" 91 The Methodists reiterated their devotion to the Union cause at their annual conference meeting at Leavenworth in March, 1864, when they took the following action: "Resolved, that we are immovably devoted to the Union, and are pledged to the maintenance of the authority of the Government of the United States over every inch of its territory; and we will unalteringly support the Administra-

88. Ibid., p. 108.
90. The Congregational Record, Lawrence, v. 3 (July, 1861), pp. 46, 47. The meeting was held at Leavenworth on May 24, 1861.
91. W. A. Elliott, Historical Address, Kansas Baptist Convention, Fiftieth Anniversary, October 10-13, 1910, p. [4].
tion in all its measures to put down rebellion and crush out treason, come from what source they may." 92

Individuals shared in a variety of experiences because of their attitude on slavery. The best known are the two experiences of Rev. Pardee Butler of the Christian church. On August 17, 1855, a demand was made upon Butler at Atchison by a committee under the leadership of Robert S. Kelly, editor of the *Squatter Sovereign*, that he subscribe to a set of resolutions including one "that other emissaries of this Aid Society who are now in our midst tampering with our slaves are warned to leave, else they too will meet the reward which their nefarious designs justly merit—hemp." Butler refused to subscribe to the resolutions. He was then placed on a raft made of two cottonwood logs and set afloat in the river. A flag was placed on it with these words inscribed: "Eastern Emigrant Express. The Rev. Mr. Butler, agent for the underground railroad. The way they are served in Kansas. . . ." 93 On April 30, 1856, Butler was charged with being an active abolitionist and was tarred and feathered at Atchison. 94

Josiah B. McAfee, a Lutheran minister, arrived at Leavenworth on April 15, 1855. He was soon contacted by a committee which insisted that he preach a sermon on the subject, "slavery is a divine institution and ordained of God." McAfee refused the request and declared that "he would as soon undertake to prove that his satanic majesty was still an angel of light as to prove that slavery was a divine institution." He was notified that he should "leave or hang." The threat was not carried out and McAfee later established a Lutheran church at Leavenworth. 95 Other ministers had problems associated with slavery issues. However, as indicated above, missionaries of the M. E. Church South suffered persecution at the hands of antislavery supporters. 96

92. Minutes of the Ninth Session of the Kansas Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Leavenworth, March, 1864 (Leavenworth), p. 36. Twelve Kansas ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church served as chaplains with the Union army.—*The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Civil War*, p. 191. Information is not available as to chaplaincy service by Kansas ministers of the M. E. Church South with the Confederate army.—Ibid., p. 222.

93. Report of the Special Committee Appointed to Investigate the Troubles in Kansas, pp. 960-963.


While the majority sentiment in Kansas was overwhelmingly in favor of the abolition of slavery, there were definite limits to the extent that this articulate group would go in regard to the civil rights of Negroes. This attitude was a matter of genuine concern to many missionaries. The Rev. Lewis Bodwell, Topeka, wrote with great anxiety to Milton Badger of the American Home Missionary Society in March, 1858, asking for Badger's advice and help:

When men around me and among them members of my own church attach their names to documents which in my mind throw away all of vital principle connected with the Kansas struggle & declare themselves "in favor of a free white state to the exclusion of bound or free blacks," I begin to tremble for our cause in Kansas. These signs of selfish ambitions & deep moral corruption already plain & abundant, disgusts me most completely. Who would think of a man with the name & fame which Gov. Charles Robinson has won declaring (as I heard him) in a public meeting at Lawrence "the talk about consistency in a struggle like this is an absurdity." 97

Bodwell's fears as to the status of the Negro were not unfounded, because when the Wyandotte constitution was adopted on July 29, 1859, "Article V—Suffrage" limited the franchise to "white male" persons. 98 Moreover, when "Article VI—Education" came up for discussion, a militant minority maneuvered strenuously, but unsuccessfully, to exclude Negroes and mulattos from participating in the publicly supported schools. 99 In 1867, when a constitutional amendment was submitted proposing to eliminate the word "white" in the section in suffrage, it was defeated at the polls by a vote of 19,421 to 10,483. The word "white" remained in the Kansas constitution until the 14th amendment was added to the constitution of the United States. 100

The Civil War brought to Kansas a sizeable number of Negroes, refugees from their former owners, who became known as "contrabands." The missionaries and churches recognized their responsibility to these individuals. The year 1862 witnessed the arrival of a substantial group in various Kansas communities. In March, 1862, the Rev. R. D. Parker reported that his church at Wyandotte was working with the "contrabands" there. Instruction in reading was provided for them in their Sabbath school. He expressed a real

97. Rev. Lewis Bodwell to the A. H. M. S., Topeka, March 18, 1858.
98. Proceedings and Debates of the Kansas Constitutional Convention (Wyandot, 1859), p. 582.
interest in them but declared that “this hunted people must leave; for the Kidnapper has already begun his work, and they will not be safe a day after the troops are ordered away.”

The Rev. Richard Cordley reported from Lawrence on March 15, 1862, that there were two or three hundred “contrabands” in that community. A Congregational church had been organized among them with eight charter members and others expected to join in the near future. This was the Second Congregational church of Lawrence. Cordley reported that they were “fine specimens of freedom.” Only one of the eight charter members had a letter of transfer; the others were admitted on profession. The individual, who had presented a letter of transfer, had one also for his wife but said with tears, “they sold my wife and children down south before I got away.” In a letter from Cordley to the American Home Missionary Society on June 17, 1862, was enclosed a clipping from The Congregational Record dealing with the “contraband” congregation at Lawrence, which declared that “this is the only Church in Kansas that has a ‘value in markets.’ The five men are fine looking fellows, and in good times would probably have sold for $1,500 apiece. For piety has commercial value in the slave market. ‘The Second Congregational Church in Lawrence,’ therefore has a market value of from ten to twelve thousand dollars.”

On July 4, 1862, an interdenominational Sabbath school celebration was held at Topeka in which the Congregationalists, Methodists, and Episcopalians participated. The “contrabands” shared in the parade, bringing up the rear of the procession, as they carried the Stars and Stripes, and their motto: “Hail Liberty.” The Rev. Peter McVicar was pleased to report that at the picnic following the parade, the “contrabands” had a table by themselves so that they did not need to wait on the white people. The Rev. R. D. Parker at Wyandotte was concerned about the welfare of these Negroes in Kansas and in December, 1863, urged the American Home Missionary Society to do something in their behalf. He was certain that “they are a religious people and will have churches of some kind, but they are at a loss what to do in a free state and surrounded by strange churches.”

103. Ibid., June 17, 1862. The clipping states that the Second Congregational church at Lawrence was organized on “Sabbath evening,” March 16, 1862.—The Congregational Record, Lawrence, v. 4 (April, 1862), pp. 47, 48.
The impact of sectarian influences was also felt in the religious activities of the “contrabands.” The Rev. Richard Cordley reported that “they seemed to be of one mind, and no sectarian name was mentioned. They had been members of different churches, but all seemed to go together. . . . Before the year had passed several of their own ministers appeared, and they divided into various ecclesiastical camps. Most of their preachers were very ignorant, some of them not able to read.” 106

The Episcopalians in Kansas reflected national issues within their denomination although the controversy over slavery was not a factor. On December 10, 1856, the Rev. Hiram Stone organized St. Paul’s church at Leavenworth. Stone soon found himself in conflict with the Philadelphia association of the church, which was generally identified as a “low church” group. Stone declared that “party spirit had developed in the church at large” and it had become “the settled purpose of this society to organize Kansas into a diocese and to supply it with clergy suited to its own stripe of churchmanship.” The Philadelphia association sent out several missionaries to Kansas and started parishes in Wyandotte, Lawrence, Topeka, and Atchison.

The mission at Leavenworth founded by Stone was supported by the Domestic committee of the General Board. At a meeting at Wyandotte on August 11, 1859, it was proposed that the group consider the possibility of organizing a diocese. Bishop Kemper was in attendance. The decision was in the affirmative and while Stone opposed the action, it was decided to hold a convention in Topeka on April 11, 1860, to elect a bishop. The opposition party argued that a general convention of the church was to meet at Richmond, Va., two months following the Wyandotte assembly, when a missionary bishop was to be provided for Kansas. Stone characterized the proceedings of organizing the diocese and electing a bishop as “thoroughly partisan in its character besides being irregular, uncanonical, and unnecessary.” Stone further pointed out that there were only seven Episcopalian clergy in Kansas at the time and that three of them had never taken demissory letters from the diocese which they had served formerly. 107 The convention at Topeka elected the Rev. Francis M. Whittle of Louisville, Ky., as bishop. However, when it became known that Whittle

was inclined toward the Proslavery position, the laity rejected him by a vote of four to two. Dr. Dyer of New York City was then elected. Dyer declined to serve, and the Rt. Rev. Henry W. Lee, bishop of Iowa, served the Kansas diocese. There were only 147 communicants in Kansas when the Rev. Thomas Hubbard Vail, Muscatine, Iowa, was elected bishop of Kansas in 1864.108

The desire to bring the Christian message to Kansas resulted occasionally in duplication of efforts and sometimes in attendant rivalry. In December, 1854, the Rev. S. Y. Lum reported at Lawrence that “there is already a liberal supply of missionaries from the various societies at this point.” He identified ministers from the Baptist, United Brethren, Methodist, Christian (Disciples of Christ), and Congregational churches, and one representing the Swedenborgians.109 The scarcity of facilities provided the background for friction. In October, 1856, the Rev. Lewis Bodwell complained that Constitution Hall, the only adequate building in Topeka, had been usurped by the Methodists morning, afternoon, and evening for their quarterly meeting although that day belonged to the Congregationalists by mutual agreement.110 Rev. E. W. Whitney, a Congregationalist at Troy, found in February, 1861, that the Methodists interfered with his meetings by getting possession of the courthouse, the only suitable place in the community for public gatherings. He contended that “the course they pursue in Kansas looks very much as if they thought they had a divine right to crowd out every other denomination.” However, Whitney rejoiced over the fact that prospects were brighter for the Congregationalists in the future because the individuals who would have control of the courthouse were more sympathetic to them.111

The pattern of diversity in Kansas religion was emphasized in a report by the Rev. J. D. Liggett to the American Home Missionary Society in December, 1861, dealing with Leavenworth. Fifteen congregations were reported functioning with various degrees of success. The groups and the estimated attendance were listed as follows: Irish Roman Catholic, 500; German Roman Catholic, 50;

108. Ibid., pp. 363, 364, 377. *Journals of the Primary Convention... in A. D. 1859 and of the Annual Conventions...* Following, in A. D. 1860, 1861, 1863, 1865, and 1864 and of the Special Convention in April, 1869, Protestant Episcopal Church, Kansas Diocese (Lawrence, 1885), pp. 24-26.


110. Rev. Lewis Bodwell to the A. H. M. S., Topeka, October 21, 1856.

Campbellite, 150; German Lutheran, no regular preaching; German Evangelical, 50; Protestant Episcopal, 50; Baptist, no regular preaching; Methodist Episcopal, 200; German Methodist, 50; Old School Presbyterian, no regular preaching; Presbyterian (Westminster), 50; United Presbyterian, 25; Congregational, 150. Liggett estimated the population of Leavenworth at about 10,000. In December of the following year Liggett reported that there had been a split in the Baptist church which had 30 members. The division occurred when a new pastor was to be called. The congregation divided, two men were called, and both came to Leavenworth thus forming two Baptist churches. He concluded his report by stating that "almost all denominations are now struggling for a foothold here, while all are weak." 

While there were many occasions for misunderstanding of a general nature, the issue became more specific for the Rev. S. Y. Lum in January, 1857, when he attributed to the Unitarians the greatest responsibility. In writing to Milton Badger of the American Home Missionary Society, he stated that "we have no doctrines taught, but those of the truth as it is in Jesus, there would be strong hope then of overcoming these influences but when the truth—as it is called—is so presented as to fall in with all the natural inclinations of the sinful heart, it fortifies the way against that which is distasteful. Thus I find that Unitarianism is more in the way of the progress of the saving truth than any or all other influences combined."

The contemporary records show no great evidence that the religious scene in Kansas was seriously disrupted in this era by bitter hostility between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Ray A. Billington has written that "the desire to save the West from Catholicism" had been an important motive for home mission activity on a national basis. He pointed out that between 1834 and 1856 The Home Missionary, official publication of the American Home Missionary Society, was "an outspoken organ of propaganda." The fear generated by the declarations of Samuel F. B. Morse and the Rev. Lyman Beecher did not make a decisive impact upon devel-


113. Rev. J. D. Liggett to the A. H. M. S., Leavenworth, December 1, 1862.

114. Rev. S. Y. Lum to the A. H. M. S., Lawrence, January 15, 1857, in The Kansas Historical Quarterly, v. 25 (Summer, 1959), p. 186. On May 27, 1855, Mrs. Sara Robinson wrote with enthusiasm about the arrival in Lawrence of Mr. Nute, a clergyman sent by the Unitarian Association: "We are glad he has come among us with his genial sympathies, his heart warmth, his earnest ways, his outspoken words for truth, and his abiding love for freedom and the right."—Sara T. L. Robinson, Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life (Boston, 1857), pp. 59, 60.
opments in Kansas.  

There were undoubtedly some individuals and groups who were concerned about the expansion of Catholicism in the frontier area. In October, 1858, at the first annual meeting of the East Kansas Association of Baptists, Elder W. Thomas as chairman of the committee to report on “Home Destitution” lamented the prevalence of “Infidelity, Universalism, and Romanism.” However, the report also emphasized that “a wide spread destitution of Baptist preaching prevails in Kansas” so that the sectarian concern included Protestants as well as Roman Catholics.

An interesting aspect of Protestantism in Kansas during the era of the Civil War was the controversy, and at times conflict, between the home or parent missionary society or church, and their Kansas representatives. One manifestation of this rivalry occurred within the framework of the American Home Missionary Society. In October, 1858, when the General Association of Congregational Ministers and Churches met at Manhattan, a committee on home evangelization was appointed. The committee should “act as a committee on missions, church extension and colportage, and should have general oversight of the religious interests of the Territory.”

This decision was a type of declaration for independent action by the missionaries on the Kansas frontier. It seemed as if this “native” authority would be a threat to the hegemony of the Eastern society. The criticism of the action by Milton Badger and other officials of the society was met by Bodwell in a communication to the society on January 16, 1859, in which he urged the society to send a representative to Kansas. He argued that “we are confident that it would facilitate your labors for the cause among us by giving you a knowledge which you can hardly acquire anywhere but here.” He contended that at least six of the brethren, especially the committee on missions, supported his position.

Bodwell, as chairman of the committee, urged greater adaptation of missionary methods to frontier conditions in Kansas where there were widely scattered settlements. The Methodist circuit riders were admirably suited to the Kansas scene. The society was committed to a policy of supporting pastors for settled congregations.

The controversy between the society and Bodwell and his group


118. Rev. Lewis Bodwell to the A. H. M. S., Topeka, January 16, 1859.

119. Goodykoontz, op. cit., pp. 181, 182. This authoritative study on home missions describes effectively the policies and practices of the American Home Missionary Society.
developed further on the basis of charges that had been reported from Kansas about sectarianism. The Congregationalists and Presbyterians were still associated in the work of the society. A Presbyterian had accused the Bodwell group of sectarian practices. On February 8, 1860, Bodwell declared as to the charges about sectarianism: “Evangelical Kansas is in main the foster child of New England and it is not strange that we should adopt our mother’s views.” Bodwell was losing patience by this time. He emphasized that Lum, Blood, Jones, Copeland, Adair, Byrd, and he came to Kansas because they chose to do so and not because the society had selected them. On February 28, 1860, Bodwell countered with a charge of sectarianism. He reported soberly to the society that “I need not state at length how sectarian selfishness sought to forestall action; withdrew from co-operation, wouldn’t work with Brother B; secured the use of the only capacious Hall (by right ours 4 to 1); began a series of meetings which by shouting, screaming, and dancing! were under the point of attraction to scores who went for fun.”

Badger and the officials of the American Home Missionary Society were apparently planning to send an agent to Kansas and had provided a description of the qualities which he should possess. This action irritated Cordley who wrote on March 29, 1860, as follows:

The man whose pattern you give is not on the ground. I have never seen him, but it would do my eyes good to look on his like. The unanimous opinion of the brethren here is that Bro. Bodwell can do more for us and you in the present state of things than any other man. . . . He is faithful. We will always be sure that he is doing the best he can. We cannot feel so in regard to Bro. Lum. Then Bro. B. is always willing to receive aid and advice from brethren. . . . He is a worker. He is earnest. Then again he is thoroughly acquainted with the country & the people. It would take two years for a new man to gain the knowledge of the land & the people which Bro. B. possesses to begin with.

This phase of the controversy was settled in favor of the Kansas group in April, 1860, when the society appointed Bodwell to succeed Lum as Kansas agent.

There were occasional conflicts between the American Home

120. Rev. Lewis Bodwell to the A. H. M. S., Topeka, February 8, 1860. The New School Presbyterians withdrew from the American Home Missionary Society in 1861. However, the change of name to the Congregational Home Missionary Society was not made until 1893. Goodykoontz, op. cit., p. 301.
Missionary Society and individuals who allegedly or actually were violating the policy of the society. It was the established policy of the organization to discourage its missionaries from engaging in other activities than those associated directly with their pastoral work. This policy was unrealistic in many situations because of the modest grant from the society and the inability of congregations to render adequate support. In the summer of 1861, the Rev. R. Paine, Burlington, was admonished by Badger that the commission "requires you to be wholly devoted to the preaching of the Gospel and pastoral duties." A portion of Paine's eight page letter is cited as an indication of the varied life of the missionary on the Kansas frontier:

I begin by saying that I am in the habit of working with my hands. I have gone to the woods alone with four yoke of oxen and taken thence huge logs five miles and a half to the mill. Have often sat upon the load with my heart lifted to God in the fever of praise and prayer. I have plowed, planted, hoed, chopped, split posts, built fence, mowed, pitched hay, drawn grass, and stone and wood and lime and sand. . . . I have as the reward of my labour in part, a very great increase in physical vigour.

Besides, I have a family to support and some debts to pay. . . . I cannot regret that I have plowed and laboured in the main as I have. If I had left the word to serve tables: if I had not loved the souls of my people, and had not borne them up in strong intercession at the throne of grace: if I had not visited them and not come before them on the Sabbath with the well beaten oil of the sanctuary, then I might be troubled, if my heart was calloused, with the stings of conscience.

Certainly I hope to be able to do more in the vineyard in the future than I ever have done. I look forward with joyful hopes of erelong of obtaining another horse, that I may ride over my field oftener.124

At the annual conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church meeting at Atchison in March, 1861, a further demonstration was provided by Bishop Morris as to the status of the frontier church. The Rev. H. D. Fisher, the secretary, presented the nominees for the standing committees. Fisher named the presiding elder and one man from each district as the committee on missions. The Rev. James Shaw, who was present at these deliberations described the scene as follows:

After he [Fisher] had read his report the Bishop remarked, "It seems to me you have got a new fangled arrangement in your nominations. It is customary to appoint the Presiding Elders alone as the Mission Committee. They

124. Rev. R. Paine to the A. H. M. S., Burlington, August 15, 1861. In December, 1861, when the Plymouth Congregational church at Lawrence petitioned the American Home Missionary Society for $300 to support the Rev. Richard Cordley the following statement was made: "He is one of very few ministers in Kansas who devote themselves entirely to the ministry and who have eschewed farming and real estate speculation."—Plymouth Congregational church, Lawrence, to the A. H. M. S., December 1, 1861.
only are competent, from their knowledge of the work, to make a just distribution of the money.

Brother Fisher replied, "This is a Kansas arrangement." But said the Bishop, "Kansas is Methodist soil, and I am here to maintain Methodist usages."

Brother Mahan at once moved to strike out all but the Presiding Elders, which motion prevailed. 125

There was considerable tension at times between the older conferences and the frontier missionaries. The Rev. William H. Goode who began an important career in Kansas in 1854 has indicated the nature of the tension. He found that generally the men who came to Kansas were "men of the right stamp, volunteers, men of energy, willing to 'endure hardness as good soldiers.'" However, "attempts were made to foist upon us, from the older Conferences, men who were either too indolent or incompetent to labor acceptably where they were; but who, in the judgment of the good brethren, 'would do for the frontier.'" Goode believed that such efforts were generally detected. 126 He, however, had some unpleasant experiences with older conferences. He sought a certain man for an assignment in Kansas, but was told he could not be spared from his present church. Goode identified the nature of the problem by pointing out that "another was kindly offered as 'suitable for our work,' whom, on my declining, they found reason to honor with a location, unsought. Such is the dependent condition of frontier work; and such it must remain, while a mere appendage of other Conferences. Their 'tender mercies are cruel.'" 127

The Kansas Congregationalists also lamented at times the attitude of Eastern ministers and members. In July, 1859, when a clergyman from West Brookfield, Mass., declined a call to serve the church at Wyandotte, the editor of The Congregational Record observed that "our Eastern brethren seem to have a mortal dread of Kansas. We wish something could be done to inspire them with a little more pluck." 128 The attitude of the East toward the West was again a matter of concern in a leading article in The Congregational Record for January, 1861, entitled "The West Needs Peculiar Men." The writer argued that Easterners thought that "the West needs peculiar men." He declared that "we need the same peculiarity of which the Apostle speaks; 'A peculiar people, zealous of good works.' We want the same peculiarity that is needed in the gospel ministry everywhere, and no more. Any man, who has the

127. Ibid., pp. 351, 352.
love of Christ and of souls in his heart can succeed here. . . . Of course, talent and scholarship are an advantage here, as everywhere; but no man who has no other aim than the good of souls, need fear that he is not adapted to the West.” 129

There was considerable personal feeling on the part of the frontier missionary and his family toward the older churches and their members. Mrs. Julia Louisa Lovejoy, the wife of the Rev. Charles Lovejoy, Methodist missionary, was particularly articulate on this point. In great detail she outlined life on the Kansas prairies “for the gratification of the Methodist preachers in New Hampshire, who are disposed to complain of ‘hard fare,’ in their comfortable parsonages. . . .” After chronicling the hardship, famine, and loneliness she exclaimed: “O’, that some of the ‘broken fragments’ of the well-filled tables, might roll in this direction and feed some of these hungry Missionaries and their families.” 130 Mrs. Lovejoy was also a strident combatant in her attack upon a Kansas minister who in an article “Kansas Preachers” in the Christian Advocate and Journal had been exceedingly critical in 1858 of the political activities of the missionaries. While denying these charges, she pointed out that the author was generally hostile to and unacquainted with the New England Methodism which the group attacked represented in Kansas. 131

The Kansas scene also reflected the issues within Protestantism relative to the role of an educated ministry as against the preachers who supposedly were native to the West and possessed a “call” that qualified them to bring the Gospel message. As early as 1847 Horace Bushnell expressed genuine alarm over the degradation of religion and education as a result of emigration. He described the situation: “Still we are rolling on from east to west, plunging into the wilderness, scouring across the great inland deserts and mountains, to plant our habitations on the western ocean. Here again the natural tendency of emigration towards barbarism, or social decline are displayed, in signs that cannot be mistaken.” 132

While Bushnell was lamenting the consequences of emigration, the process was going on with accelerated tempo. A great question confronted Protestantism: Should the Gospel be withheld until a fully trained ministry could provide for the spiritual needs of the

129. Ibid., v. 3 (January, 1861), pp. 8-10.
131. Ibid., p. 363.
132. Horace Bushnell, Barbarism the First Danger; A Discourse on Home Missions (New York, 1847), p. 16.
people? The answer was in the negative with some major denominations. A dynamic rationale for this position was found in the strong feelings of some individuals who were represented by the Rev. Peter Cartwright, the distinguished Methodist pioneer missionary. Writing in 1856 he declared that “the great mass of our Western people wanted a preacher that could mount a stump, a block, or old log, or stand in the bed of a wagon and without note or manuscript, quote, expound and apply the word of God to the hearts and consciences of the people.”  

He thought how kind fate had really been when he exclaimed: “Suppose the thousands of early settlers and scores of early Methodist preachers, by some Providential intervention had blundered on a Biblical Institute, or a theological factory, where they dress up little pedantic things they call preachers; suppose ye would have known them from a rams horn? Surely not.”

The course of events and the scarcity of ministers did not permit Cartwright’s fears to become a reality. There was a wide variety in education among the Kansas missionaries. They ranged from the well-educated Andover Band of Congregationalists, who came directly to Kansas from Andover Theological Seminary, to the rather crude but devoted preacher who felt that he had a direct “call” to preach the Word of God. The educated ministers in Kansas often lamented the activities of the uneducated brethren. The Rev. Richard Knight, an Englishman, described the situation at Hampden, K. T., in August, 1855, as follows: “Our Sabbath meetings are attended by many for a distance of 6 or 8 miles who would otherwise have nothing but the teaching of ignorant men from some of the Western States who have come in as Emigrants and who have already held meetings advancing some of the crudest and strangest notions conceivable. . . .”

The Rev. William H. Ward at Oskaloosa found many of the same problems that Knight described. He believed that the lack of religious interest was

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134. Wallis, op. cit., p. 316.


“increased by the fact that there was a year ago this winter a religious excitement under the auspices of the Methodists and most of their converts have relapsed. Their manners here, so noisy and ignorant, quite disgust the more educated part of the community.” Ward was requested by the Lyceum of the community to deliver a lecture on geology, “taking the ordinary views in reference to the age of the world.” He learned, however, that on “the next Sabbath the Methodist clergyman preached against Geology as a humbug and its defenders as pantheistical, a word which I have no idea he knew the meaning of.” 137 The Rev. E. Whitney found at Palermo that “no less than 3 uneducated ministers from Missouri have commenced preaching there. They manifest a great deal of zeal speak very loud.” 138

While there were many occasions for conflicts and tensions among and between groups and denominations there were also situations in which the frontier produced co-operative efforts. In December, 1855, the Rev. Charles Blood and the Congregationalists at Manhattan described co-operative relationships with the Methodists and Baptists in the area, although it was reported with regret that the representatives of the M. E. Church South would not share in these plans. 139 This ecumenical pattern was continued in the Manhattan community. In December, 1856, it was reported that the Baptist, Methodist, and Congregational ministers rotated their services so that the people could have weekly services, but they heard each preacher only once in every three Sundays. 140 On the first Sunday in November, 1856, the Rev. Lewis Bodwell, a Congregationalist, held what was possibly the first communion service at Topeka. Individuals from other denominations participated in this service for administering the sacrament. It appeared that sectarian lines at that occasion were broken down. 141

In 1860 Bodwell reported an impressive revival in which the Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists participated. 142 In January, 1861, The Congregational Record told its readers that “a powerful revival is in progress in connection with the New School Presbyterian Church at Auburn. . . . The whole community seems stirred for miles around. . . .” 143 There are also evidences

142. Ibid., pp. 294, 295.
143. The Congregational Record, Lawrence, v. 3 (January, 1861), p. 17.
of a broad tolerance that went beyond the boundaries of both Protestantism and Christianity. In 1863, when the United Brethren Church at Mound City found it financially impossible to complete its church building, the project was taken over and completed by the Ladies’ Enterprise Association. On June 3, 1864, the president and secretary of the association published in the Mound City Border Sentinel a communication indicating that the structure was a “Free Meeting House,” available not only to all Christian groups but to “spiritualists, infidels, atheists, or any other of the numerous ‘ists’ or ‘isms!’ . . .” and that it should be open “for all public meetings and for all innocent amusements.”

While there were differences of opinion on matters of doctrine and order of worship among denominations, there was unanimity of belief relative to the right of worship according to the dictates of conscience. Freedom of religion was fully guaranteed in the Topeka, Lecompton, Leavenworth, and Wyandotte constitutions. The section on this phase of the Bill of Rights is similar in intent and spirit in each document. When the Wyandotte constitution was adopted on July 29, 1859, section seven of the 20 sections which constituted the Bill of Rights read as follows:

The right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience shall never be infringed; nor shall any person be compelled to attend or support any form of worship; nor shall any control of, or interference with the rights of conscience be permitted, nor any preference be given by law, to any religious establishment or mode of worship. No religious test or property qualification shall be required for any office of public trust, nor for any vote at any election, nor shall any person be incompetent to testify on account of religious belief.

While the Kansas scene provided many problems which made church work exceedingly difficult, steady, if not spectacular, progress was recorded by the pioneer missionaries and congregations. It soon became apparent that except for times of revival and the special emphasis of camp meetings, the ministers could not measure achievement primarily by numbers in attendance at religious meetings. The fluidity of movement on the frontier, emergency demands upon the people, and the general lack of stability created a pattern quite different from that of an older civilization.

The role of the prayer meeting loomed very large in the life of the church. In July, 1856, Charles B. Lines reported from Wa-

145. Proceedings and Debates of the Kansas Constitutional Convention (Wyandotte, 1859), p. 575. There was little debate on this section. The word “man” in the original version was changed to “person” since it was argued that “there is a principle granted to men to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience, while women are left out of the question.”—ibid., p. 287.
baunsee about a regular prayer meeting, which brought 20 persons together in a small tent. He observed that “an expression in one of the prayers, offered by an old settler would have sounded strange in the ears of a New Haven audience. He prayed that God would take care of the interests of our Territory, that He would overturn the existing corrupt government, and especially supply the place of our debased Governor with a better man, and in all this, he spoke right out into the ear of God, what he felt in his soul. . . .”

In January, 1857, the Rev. Lewis Bodwell reported from Topeka that a prayer meeting was held every Sunday evening “which is usually largely attended by persons old and young both prosperous & non-prosperous, a goodly number taking a part & making the meeting lively, interesting & we hope, very profitable.”

Another point of strength in the frontier church was the Bible classes. Although the attendance was not generally large, the emphasis in these smaller groups stimulated the life of the congregation and encouraged the pastor. In March, 1860, the Rev. Richard Cordley at Lawrence felt real encouragement because of the activities of five Bible classes in his Congregational church, two for ladies and three for gentlemen. Moreover, a union concert at the church had attracted 300 people. The denominations generally gave great emphasis to the program of Sunday schools. For instance, at the annual meeting of the Kansas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1865 the report showed 110 Sunday Schools with 4,372 scholars. The Congregational Record carried lengthy articles regularly about children’s work and the need for emphasis upon it.

Revivals and camp meetings were typical of the frontier witness of certain Protestant denominations. Camp meetings were held early in the history of Kansas territory. In August, 1855, Mrs. Sara Robinson described the departure of two large carriage loads from the Robinson home in Lawrence for a camp meeting on the Wakarusa. A large number of people participated in the event.

146. Alberta Pance, “The Connecticut Kansas Colony; Letters of Charles B. Lines to the New Haven Daily Palladium,” The Kansas Historical Quarterly, v. 22 (Summer, 1956), p. 175. Lines wrote a series of interesting letters about the “Beecher Bible and Rifle Colony.” These letters were especially interesting to New Haven readers since the colonization movement had its origin in their community. The reference in the prayer to “our debased governor” was to Wilson Shannon who was territorial governor from September 7, 1855, to August 18, 1856.

147. Rev. Lewis Bodwell, first quarterly report to the A. H. M. S., Topeka, January 10, 1857.


149. Minutes of the Tenth Session of the Kansas Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Topeka, March 15, 1863 (Leavenworth), p. 25.
Mrs. Robinson believed that the services would have been impressive if there had not been continual "'Amens,' in shrill as well as deep guttural tones, which the zealous worshippers are sounding in one's ears from all quarters." 150 Mrs. Julia Louisa Lovejoy, the wife of the Rev. Charles Lovejoy, a Methodist minister, described in detail a camp meeting in 1858. She observed that for 30 years she had attended camp meetings in New England, "but seldom have we heard better preaching, or 'seen more religious interest manifested' than at our late meeting. There were about thirty preachers present, and at one time, around the 'sacramental board' on the Sabbath, twenty-six 'heralds of the cross' bowed together as members of one common brotherhood. Ah! sir, you (Mr. Editor, I mean) would not wonder at our emotions, as we stood at that rustic altar, and gazed at the scene!" 151 Mrs. Lovejoy reported that approximately one thousand persons were in attendance at this camp meeting. Her description of the response of these Kansans to the meeting included the following:

We think there is far greater excitability among our Western brethren than New Engander who are bred in a clime near the frigid zone. For instance, when the Holy Ghost came down upon our tent's company, and rested upon each "like a tongue of fire," some of the Western brethren and sisters were pressing through the crowd, shaking hands with each other; (as preachers and people almost invariably do when God blesses them) others were prostrate, slapping their hands and shouting in ecstasies, whilst we Yankees could only weep and adore the great mercy of Christ risen and exalted. At another time, when a sister was telling the assembly of the wonderful love of Jesus to the fallen race, one who has been an official member in the West, strided back and forth in front of the altar, shouting every breath, and finally ended this singular exercise by jumping up and down, and shouting till the exhortation concluded. Now we do not mention these matters in a condemnatory spirit by any means, but as being somewhat new to us, having never seen things on this wise in New England. The good effects of this meeting we fully believe will be seen and felt for years to come in Kansas. . . ." 152

In 1862 Mrs. Lovejoy again reported a great camp meeting at Centropolis in Franklin county. The meeting was scheduled to end after one week, but "such was the wonderful display of the power of God that it commenced again." Mrs. Lovejoy estimated that "from fifty to seventy found peace in believing." 153 While Mrs. Lovejoy reported on large camp meetings, these gatherings were often of more modest proportions. In September, 1861, the

150. Robinson, Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life, pp. 85, 86.
152. Ibid., pp. 398, 399.
153. Ibid., v. 16 (May, 1948), pp. 185, 186.
Rev. M. J. Miller, Leavenworth, reported on two camp meetings at Holton and Lawrence Mission. Each meeting had four tents, 30 members, five preachers with an average attendance of 100. The meeting at Holton had included a subscription for missions which produced $65.00, a steer, and half a cow. 154

The Rev. James Shaw, a presiding elder in the Methodist church, stated that in 1861 he was criticized as “a little cold hearted, and formal,” and it was “feared that [he] was attempting to ‘steady the ark.’” He has described his attempt to promote moderation at a camp meeting when he stated that “The next day I talked with some of them about properly directing our efforts; that while we labored to get our own souls filled with love, joy and fire, we should not hoist the safety valve and let off steam in the open air, but with warm hearts, and burning zeal, we should work for the Master, and devote our renewed energies, lovingly, to bring sinners to the Saviour.” 155

The camp meeting served many purposes on the frontier. Prof. C. B. Goodykoontz has pointed out that “among a people forced to live in more or less isolation these were important social as well as religious gatherings.” 156 These occasions afforded opportunities for meeting old friends and making new ones. A sense of group solidarity among Christians was promoted, and this in turn produced real encouragement. In an era before convents, the camp meeting afforded many of the resources usually associated with such activity. However, the motivation was definitely a religious one; the camp meetings furnished significant support for frontier Christianity.

While there were many obstacles to effective church work in Kansas, they were matched by the enthusiasm and dedication of the pioneer missionary. Adaptation to frontier conditions was essential for survival, but there was no hesitancy in making the adjustments. The ministers from established churches found many great contrasts. Instead of a well-furnished church building, the Kansas scene provided facilities which only by imaginative thought could be transformed into places of worship. In October, 1856, the Rev. Lewis Bodwell described his first service at Topeka: “The place of meeting, Constitution Hall (from which, last July, Col. Sumner, by government order and with U. S. troops, ejected the ‘free state legislature’), a rough, unplastered room, board and slab

154. Rev. M. J. Miller to Christliche Botschafter, September 21, 1861, quoted in Flatz, op. cit., p. 36.
155. Shaw, op. cit., p. 119.
156. Goodykoontz, op. cit., p. 32.
seats, a shaky cottonwood table, and an audience of about twenty-five. The Master present to help, his friends to hear and afterward warmhearted greetings and what would I more?” 157 In December, 1857, Bodwell wrote that “we are obliged to preach in the open air, in ball-rooms & bar rooms & kitchens, as we may and where we may. Nor would we by any means neglect such places & opportunities; but you can well understand why we cannot do all our work thus and hope to do it well.” 158

In the winter of 1857 the Rev. Richard Cordley reported from Lawrence that the building of a church was well under way. The project had to be interrupted for lack of funds, but again it was resumed. The windows had no casings, no plaster was upon the walls or ceilings, the only entrance being a board left so that it would swing. Cordley pointed out that “the winter winds used to laugh at these loose boards, and run in through the cracks, and cool the ardor of the congregation. The roof was said to be a good one, but in spite of this the snow would sift through and powder our heads as we worshiped. The seats were rough benches, and along the sides by the wall a row of seats had been made by placing boards on nail kegs and boxes.” The room was heated by two big stoves which were unable to accomplish the objective on winter days. When it was especially cold, the congregation huddled around the stoves, and the pulpit was moved to them. 159

However, there were to be other days when modest, but comfortable houses of worship dotted the Kansas landscape as faithful groups of worshippers came to hear the Gospel message, share in the sacraments, witness happy marriage ceremonies, and say farewell to those near and dear in sad funeral services. The frontier church was a place of consolation and hope in a drab and difficult world. The church was planted, a symbol of growing stability on a fluid frontier. 160

157. Rev. Lewis Bodwell, “Sixty Days Home Missionary Work,” The Kansas Telephone, Manhattan, v. 2 (August, 1881), p. 1. Bodwell referred to the dispersal of the Topeka legislature by Col. Edwin V. Sumner. It was on that occasion that William A. Phillips is reported to have greeted Sumner with these words: “Colonel, you have robbed Oliver Cromwell of his laurels.”—Abby Huntington Ware, “Dispersion of the Territorial Legislature of 1856,” The Kansas Historical Collections, v. 9 (1905-1906), p. 545.


159. Cordley, Pioneer Days in Kansas, pp. 74, 75. It took several years before the Kansas church buildings could meet the specifications as outlined in 1852 on various points including the following: “Pews.—The convenience and comfort, and therefore the real usefulness of a house of worship, are dependent, in no small degree, upon the arrangement of the pews. Much attention is necessary in order to secure, for instance, such a slope for the backs of the pews as will make them consistent with the proper ease of the sitter.”—Central committee appointed by the Annual Congregational Convention, October, 1852, A Book of Plans for Churches and Parsonages (New York, 1853), p. 25.

160. A fine study of early Kansas churches is found in E. R. Decurio, “Early Kansas Churches,” Kansas State College Bulletin, Manhattan, v. 33 (April, 1949). This publication includes reproductions of photographs and prints, floor plans, and other illustrative material. There are striking resemblances between these early churches and the volume, A Book of Plans for Churches and Parsonages, referred to in Footnote 159.
The contemporary sources indicate that various denominations were determined to remain on the Kansas frontier even if progress was slow. In 1858 the East Kansas Association of Baptists reported conditions "showing great destitution, but yet great encouragement to put in the sickle and reap an abundant harvest." There was a disposition to hear the Gospel, and in some places there were evident tokens of the awakening and converting power of the Holy Spirit. In 1860 the association reported that at Atchison there was fine progress, with "her number more than doubled"; at Wathena, "a season of spiritual refreshing"; at Troy, "an abundant outpouring of the spirit"; at Mount Pleasant, "an extensive revival of religion"; at Leavenworth, "clouds of discouragement have been dissipated and the clear sunlight of God's presence has been renewed to them." However, the reports were not so favorable during the sessions of the Baptists at Atchison in September, 1863. The church at Atchison was "in need of the reviving influence of God's spirit." The spiritual apathy was a part of the pattern of those times. Wathena reported no special gains but they had "reason to believe that God's spirit had been with them." The Tabernacle church had "nothing especially cheering to report, but rejoice that they are still a branch of the living vine and have communion with their spiritual fountain."

In November, 1862, after five years in Kansas, the Rev. R. D. Parker reported from Wyandotte that "they have been years of some trial and labor; but as I look back upon them I see that they have been filled with blessing." Parker felt that he "should shrink from exchanging my field with any of my classmates in the East, although some of them have attained high positions. My hands and my heart are full of labor and what more can I ask." The Rev. Richard Cordley described his response to developments in December, 1862, after completing five years in Kansas when he wrote that "there have been many things discouraging, but more to cheer. The country has not developed as rapidly as we expected then. 'War, pestilence, and famine' have reduced the expectations of former years, but on the whole I cannot but feel grateful for the progress we have made." He continued by pointing out that when he arrived in Lawrence, the membership of the First

161. Minutes of the First Meeting of the East Kansas Association of Baptists, October 1, 1858, p. 5.
163. Minutes of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the East Kansas Baptist Association, Atchison, September 29, 30, 1863, p. 5.
164. Rev. R. D. Parker to the A. H. M. S., Wyandotte, November 10, 1862.
Congregational church in Lawrence was 27; in 1862, it was 88. His first service had included 60 persons, now there were five times that many at the services.165

A variety of motives fashioned the pattern of missionary activity in Kansas. One dominant motive in the history of American home missions has been described as “the natural desire of the religious men to perpetuate in the West the ideals, traditions, and civilization of the East.” 166 This desire is reflected clearly in the Kansas scene. In October, 1854, Thomas H. Webb, secretary of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, described this motive vividly in the context of his recommendation as to the nature of the proposed settlement of Kansas:

My idea has always been, that it was not well to concentrate our people in one locality. It is desirable that New England principles and New England influences should pervade the whole Territory; this can only be effected by wise foresight and judicious management. Dot Kansas with New England settlements, and no matter how heterogeneous the great living mass which flows into the Territory may be, it will all eventually be moulded into a symmetrical form, and the benefits resulting therefrom will be such that generations yet to come will bless the memory of those thro' whose efforts the boon of freedom, knowledge and pure & undefiled religion were secured for them and their posterity.167

When Congregational ministers and delegates assembled at Topeka on April 25, 1857, to promote the activity of the General Association of Congregational Ministers and Churches in Kansas organized in August, 1855, the group declared in their address to other Congregational bodies that “it shall be our aim . . . to transplant the principles and institutions of the Puritans to these fertile plains, and to lay foundations which shall be an honor to us, when in the grave, and a blessing to all coming generations.” 168 One way of seeking to transmit the principles of New England was through education. The same conference which affirmed the desire “to transplant the principles and institutions of the Puritans” to Kansas also resolved “that a Committee of five be raised to obtain information in regard to the location of a College, under the patron-

165. Rev. Richard Cordley to the A. H. M. S., Lawrence, December 16, 1862.
age of this body, and, if they deem it expedient, to secure such a location.” A committee was appointed and the movement launched which resulted in the establishment of Lincoln College, which furnished the origin for present Washburn University of Topeka, a municipal institution. The Puritan tradition was undoubtedly a valuable point of reference and a strong source of support for the New England Congregationalists who were settling in a wilderness amidst great privation to bring the Christian gospel. While the motivation had deep historic roots, the task of planting a Puritan civilization in the Plains area was a herculean one which was not literally possible, although the vestiges of the attempt have furnished enough evidence in some quarters to create the tradition that the task was in large measure accomplished.

The census of 1860 showed that Kansas had a population of 107,206 and that only 4,208 were born in the New England states. The neighboring state of Missouri, with its earlier origin and longer history, had 8,013 natives of New England in the same census. While many residents of Kansas territory were from Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, a sizeable number of whom had antecedents in New England, the sheer force of numbers as well as frontier conditions made the odds too heavy for the achievement of the objective as declared by the General Association of Congregational Ministers and Churches. During the period 1854 to 1865, 51 Congregational ministers came to serve in Kansas, 36 arriving before the end of 1860. The number in the ministerium of the Congregational church in Kansas was 30 in 1865. Forty-one congregations were established between 1854 and 1865. While this number represents a substantial effort at missionary enterprise, it was scarcely adequate for the achievement of establishing New England Congregationalism in the large expanse of Kansas territory. However,


172. Samuel A. Johnson states that while it is difficult to know how many people came to Kansas under the auspices of the Emigrant Aid Company, he believes that it was less than 2,000 and a third of them may have returned home. The parties were small and infrequent after June, 1855. He contends that “one must agree with those who have published independent studies of the subject that, numerically speaking, the emigrant aid movement was at best a minor factor in the peopling of Kansas.”—Johnson, “The Emigrant Aid Company,” loc. cit., pp. 431, 438.

the idealism of these individuals should not be discounted; their influence was greater than the numbers indicate.174

The Congregationalists were not unique among Kansas Protestant groups in recognizing the role of education in promoting the Christian witness and in improving the cultural level of the people. When the delegates to the first Kansas and Nebraska Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church met in Lawrence on October 23, 1856, the committee on education presented a report which resulted in action to take steps to secure "such lands for sites of seminaries or universities, and their building and endowment by legislative action and otherwise." On February 9, 1859, the Kansas territorial legislature granted a charter for Baker University, which has had a continuous history since its founding.175 The Methodists in 1858 received a charter for Bluemont Central College, Manhattan, the forerunner of Kansas State University.176 On December 19, 1857, the Presbyterians organized Highland University at Highland, which has a continuous history in present Highland College. Faith in the venture was expressed in the resolution that "a thorough and Christian education is second only to a preached gospel in the world's redemption. . . ."177

In October, 1858, the East Kansas Association of Baptists resolved "that we cheerfully unite with our Brethren in the Territory in building up a College, in some central locality." Roger Williams University, which became Ottawa University and has a continuous history to the present day, received its charter on February 27, 1860.178

When the Primary Convention of the Protestant Episcopalian churches met at Wyandotte August 11-12, 1859, it was observed that "our brethren of other denominations, in Kansas, are fully awake to the state of things, and have already taken advantage of it in a manner creditable to themselves and worthy of imitation."

174. The late Carl Becker in his famous essay on Kansas written in 1910 stated that "ideas, sometimes, as well as the star of empire, move westward, and so it happens that Kansas is more Puritan than New England today."—Becker, op. cit., p. 87.

175. Minutes of the First Session of the Kansas & Nebraska Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Lawrence, K. T., October 23-25. A. D., 1856 (Omaha City, N. T., 1856), p. 6; Private Laws of the Territory of Kansas, . . . : 1858 (Lecompton, 1858), pp. 71-74. The background factors in the founding and development of Baker University are presented in Homer Kingsley Ebright, The History of Baker University (Baldwin, 1951).


177. The Home and Foreign Record, v. 9 (March, 1858), p. 74.

178. Minutes of the First Meeting of the East Kansas Association of Baptists, 1858, p. 5; Private Laws of the Territory of Kansas, 1860, pp. 446-449. The background of these events and later developments are portrayed in B. Smith Haworth, Ottawa University: Its History and Spirit (Ottawa, 1957).
The convention endorsed the plans to erect a female seminary at Tecumseh. The Big Springs convention of the Disciples of Christ considered "the propriety of establishing a literary institution for the Christian brotherhood in Kansas." It was resolved to take "initiatory steps" to found a university. Western Christian University was established at Ottumwa, Kan., in the Spring, 1863.

In the four years of Kansas territorial history between 1857 and 1860, 35 acts were passed by the legislature to authorize colleges, universities, and educational associations.

While many motives stimulated missionary activity, the responsibility of Christianizing Kansas territory was the decisive consideration for committed ministers who left the comforts and security of established communities and congregations to suffer the privations of frontier life. It would be unrealistic and inaccurate to minimize this aspect of the situation. In July, 1855, the Rev. Timothy Hill, a well-known Presbyterian minister, declared that "if Christians neglect that Territory, the emissaries of Satan will not; and amidst all the tumult, Othl that the authoritative voice of God's Law may be heard, commanding men to love one another, and to remember that He will soon call them to give account to Him for their conduct." In August, 1858, the Rev. M. J. Miller identified the role of the church by declaring that "Kansas needs not only a free constitution to liberate her slaves but a free gospel to liberate her sinners." This imperative was taken seriously by many men. Kansas was a great mission field and in the course of events, political factors and the human emotions associated with slavery made the sense of mission increasingly articulate.

A minister's wife, Mrs. Charles Lovejoy, expressed multiple motives in a letter in 1858. She contended that "no temptation would induce Mr. L. to leave Kansas, for this is the spot for him, in preference to all others. Now is a chance for preachers with families to secure to themselves homes in the finest country that lies beneath the sun." After recounting a series of great hardship and deep tragedy, including the fact that "we have seen our heart's idol laid

179. Journals of the Primary Convention of the Diocese of Kansas in A. D. 1859 and of the Annual Conventions Following in A. D. 1860, 1861, 1862, 1863, and 1864 and of the Special Convention in April, 1860, Protestant Episcopal Church, Kansas Diocese (Lawrence, 1885), pp. 8, 9.


182. Letter of the Rev. Timothy Hill, July, 1855, in John B. Hill, "Timothy Hill and Western Presbyterianism; A Review of the Life and Letters of a Superintendent of Missions," p. 242. This interesting manuscript is in the Presbyterian Historical Library, Philadelphia, and a copy is in the Kansas State Historical Society library. Hill wished to go to Kansas but his Missouri Presbytery voted against it.

in her cold, damp grave in Kansas,” Mrs. Lovejoy concluded by declaring that “we are glad we came to Kansas, to labor for truth, and justice, and we shall triumph.”

This was a sincere expression that could be multiplied by many “soldiers of the cross” on the Kansas frontier.

In October, 1856, Bishop George F. Pierce came to Kickapoo to preside at the first assembly of the Kansas Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. His experiences had deepened his appreciation of the frontier preacher and enabled him to recognize the type of individual who should seek to serve there. He asked the important question, “Who will go to Kansas?” and answered it as follows: “We want no steel-clad warriors, but men with ‘tongues of fire.’ We want no land-hunters, but strangers and pilgrims, who declare plainly that they seek a country, even a heavenly.” He declared that the church would seek to provide the necessities of life, but “other expenses may be charged to Him who pledges ‘everlasting life’ in the world to come.” The bishop was certain that “it is a little nearer to heaven from the field of self-denying labor than from the home of self-indulgent rest. And sure I am, the prairie grass will weave sweeter memorials over your lonely grave, than all the monuments art can fashion, or affection buy. In the city cemetery or the country churchyard, human friends may come to weep, but above the tombs of the pioneer preacher, the angels of God will encamp.”
