

THE ROLE OF THE MISSIONARY
ON THE WISCONSIN FRONTIER
(1825-1840)

BY

LOIS MARIE CRAIG
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INTRODUCTION

In writing the story of the progress of American civilization considerable attention has been given to the part played by the pioneers who, with the axe, have felled the forest; fought the Indians, and braved the dreaded fever. But not until comparatively recent times have the writers of American history given themselves to the study of the pioneers of ideas who helped to change the simple life of the wilderness into civilized society.

The pioneers of this latter type were quite as courageous as the ones who tamed the physical wilderness. They ran the risk that their ideas might not be acceptable on the frontier. They too suffered from fever, loneliness, and privation. It is to a particular class of these pioneers of ideas--the missionaries--that this study is devoted. And it is confined to only one segment of the American frontier--Wisconsin. The years covered are, roughly, from 1825 to 1840. However, it is impossible to understand the missionary enterprise in Wisconsin without knowing something of the background of that movement as a whole. Therefore, it will be necessary at times to deal with events which occurred before 1825.

This study does not contend for any one pet thesis.

But there are several things which have seemed significant as the materials have been investigated. First of all is the part played by the Second Great Awakening and the revivals which followed in its wake in fostering the missionary spirit. The people who came under the influence of these revivals, especially in New England, possessed a feeling of responsibility for the salvation of others, including the ones on the western frontier. As Professor Goodykoontz has pointed out in his book on home missions, the first Great Awakening and the Second one too helped to establish among the Evangelical churches the principle that only the regenerate or the converted should be allowed to be church members. Acting on this principle, they saw the necessity of making converts, and if converts were to be made, then the gospel must be preached. If all the people were to be reached special efforts must be put forth to carry the message of Christianity to the frontier regions.

An attempt will be made in this paper to show the relationship between the revivals in the East during the first quarter of the nineteenth century and the effort to carry religion to the frontier in Wisconsin. Consideration is given here to the missions to the Indians as well as to the immigrant settlers, because, first, it was a part of the general missionary movement, and second, the missionaries who came to

the "benighted sons of the forest" were also attentive to the needs of the permanent white settlers in almost every case.

The sincerity of the missionaries can hardly be questioned. Although the subject of this thesis is not the motives of missions, a discussion of why they came to Wisconsin is pertinent. However mixed may have been the motives of those in the East who sponsored the missionaries, the men who came to Wisconsin in this early period were essentially concerned with carrying the Good News to the Indians and the rising population. The general run of immigrants came for the social and economic opportunities which were here, but in the main the missionaries were willing to suffer hardship and discouragement if only they could see the Gospel taking effect in the lives of the hearers. As Dixon Ryan Fox put it, the civilizers usually thought more of the civilization than of themselves. This fact is borne out by the main body of the thesis.

In the effort to transplant the institutions of religion to Wisconsin, 1830-1840, the influence of the East upon the West is clearly seen. The religious people of New England deliberately planned to mold the western communities after their model. The missionaries carried their ideals with them and felt successful only if they saw their parishioners adopting the New England way of life, or the Gospel

according to Presbyterianism or Congregationalism. Some consideration will be given to the matter of how successful the missionaries were in this. In many cases they met with success largely because a considerable proportion of the settlers were New Englanders themselves. It was a different story with the Indians. In any case, the culture which the missionaries wished to transplant was modified by frontier conditions.

The work of the Baptists, Lutherans and other denominations is not considered here; those bodies entered Wisconsin later than the period covered herein. This paper does not purport to be a religious history of early Wisconsin nor even a history of the work of early Wisconsin missionaries. It is felt that the churches which were most active in this period were the Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopalian and Methodist, so for this reason the subject is confined to them.

The writer is indebted to Professor Vernon Carstensen for encouragement received in the initial stages of this study, and to Professor Merle Curti for his inspiration and kindly suggestions.

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CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE

IN THE WEST

We must evangelize the nation. We must plant the vallies of the West with the seeds of divine truth.¹

I

The Westward Movement in general and its relation to missions.

Missionary endeavors were not new in 1800 nor were they peculiar to America. From the day that Christ commissioned his followers--"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"--Christianity has been a missionary venture. In colonial America Presbyterian synods sent out missionaries to the back country of the Carolinas, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. The Congregationalists sent ministers to the unsettled portions of Vermont, New Hampshire, and New York. The Baptists, and "strolling Methodists" were also active. Furthermore, missions to the Indians had a history previous to 1800. Among others, the Moravians, David Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards, and Eleazar Wheelock had carried the Gospel to the Indians in the eighteenth century.

¹ Professor Bela B. Edwards, in Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Review, II, 630 (Andover, 1845).

As the frontier was pushed farther and farther to the west, corresponding efforts were made to extend to the immigrants and the Indians the civilizing influences of Christianity. The westward movement, then, was inevitably connected with missions. The rich vallies beyond the Allegheny Mountains, with their well-stocked streams, forests and fertile soil beckoned to the restless and energetic people living on the crowded Atlantic seaboard. In the period following the War of 1812 when New England was turning from an economy of commerce to one of manufacturing, thousands of families turned to the West looking for economic opportunity. In 1838 one Wisconsin pioneer preacher wrote of 4000 people a month coming into this state.²

Improved means of transportation were both a cause and an effect of settlement in the West. The system of the Great Lakes made transportation here an easier matter than it was in some other western states. Milwaukee was an important western terminus of a steamship line which ran on the Great Lakes and brought many families from New England and New York. The building of the Erie Canal in 1825 made the first part of

² Gilbert Crawford to the Corresponding Secretary of the American Home Missionary Society, August 20, 1838, American Home Missionary Papers in the Library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Photostat. (Most of the American Home Missionary Society letters used in this thesis, except the Cutting Marsh Papers, are photostatic copies of the originals which are possessed by the Hammond Library of the Chicago Theological Seminary.)

their long journey less tiresome, and was an important factor in facilitating the westward movement in general.

The climate in Wisconsin was generally not unlike that of the country which the settlers had left behind them. Letters of missionaries and reports in the religious periodicals were full of praises for Wisconsin weather. And some went so far as to say it was a very healthy climate, good for the sickly who came here.

With the exception of the French fur traders, Indians, and Cornish of the lead mining district, most of the settlers in Wisconsin of the early nineteenth century were "Americans" with an English, Scotch-Irish, or German background.

II

The Development of the Missionary Spirit in the East, 1800-1830

The Effect of the Peace of 1783 on Missionary Activities

Following the Revolutionary War America experienced a period of religious indifference and moral laxness. The end of the war brought its advantages to the cause of religion, however. With the cessation of hostilities and the establishment of the government, people could now turn their attention from the secular matters which had suppressed the cause of missions. "Religion...was beginning to recover its

former power."³

The Second Great Awakening was getting underway. In 1798 the first state missionary society was formed, that of Connecticut. A new spirit was manifested among many of the religious people of New England, giving rise to Bible, moral and missionary societies. Methodism, which expanded during the conflict, continued to grow. Methodist families who removed to the back country during the war asked for ministers to come to them when peace was declared. "The revolutionary war being now closed, and a general peace established, we could go into all parts of the country without fear; and we soon began to enlarge our borders, and to preach in many places where we had not been before...."⁴ Other denominations also devised methods of meeting the needs of a growing country.

The Influence of Revivals on Missions

The missionary spirit which was engendered by the revivals around the turn of the century affected the religious life of early Wisconsin and of all of the West, and therefore

³ Joseph Tracy, "History of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions", in History of American Missions (Worcester, 1840), 27.

⁴ Jesse Lee, Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America, (Baltimore, 1810), 84, quoted in Colin B. Goodykoontz, Home Missions on the American Frontier, (Caldwell, Idaho, 1939), 106.

should receive considerable attention. A few facts about the intellectual and religious climate in which early Wisconsin missionaries grew up in the East will give a better understanding of the impetus to missions.

The religious awakening which took place in America around 1800 was not merely a series of isolated religious phenomena, but found expression in many ways--the founding of Bible and Missionary Societies, colleges and seminaries, and in a general spirit of humanitarianism. These things in turn gave rise to more revivals.

Distinguished by the way in which the revived religious spirit was translated into varied activities and permanent institutions, the Second Great Awakening marked the beginning of the Protestant missionary movement in the United States....⁵

Whole communities were affected by the revivals. According to one authority, during 1798 and 1799 a hundred and fifty towns in New England experienced religious upheavals.⁶

Samuel J. Mills, who later helped to found the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and exerted great influence in promoting missionary enterprises, became "hopefully pious" during a revival which began in his father's

⁵ Charles R. Keller, The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut (New Haven, 1942), 70.

⁶ Oliver W. Elsbree, The Rise of the Missionary Spirit in America 1790-1815 (Williamsport, 1928), 36.

church at Torrington, Connecticut in 1798.⁷ The activities of the Board of Foreign Missions eventually reached Wisconsin, for it sponsored the Indian missions at La Pointe on Madeline Island and at Statesburg and Stockbridge near Green Bay in the 1830's. In this is seen, though indirectly, the influence of the Second Great Awakening upon missionary activity in Wisconsin.

The spirit of revivals was especially evident in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, and nearly all the orthodox colleges and seminaries were the centers of one awakening after another. Auburn and Andover Theological Seminaries, Williams, Amherst, Yale, and Dartmouth Colleges were all affected. This was at a time when many young men, who later took up the missionary cause as their life work, were receiving training in these institutions.

Professor Heman Humphrey, president of Amherst College from 1823 to 1845, took pride in the many revivals which occurred during his administration, and looked upon them as the most significant feature of his presidency, for he intended to send as many as possible into the ministry.⁸

A revival in 1823 affected nearly every student in

⁷ Elsbree, The Rise of the Missionary Spirit, 36.

⁸ Claude M. Fuess, Amherst, The Story of a New England College (Boston, 1935), 89.

the college.⁹

A few months before he left for La Pointe (1831) in the Wisconsin Territory to establish a mission among the Chippewa Indians, Sherman Hall wrote to his sister from Andover Theological Seminary, "The revival in this town still continues."¹⁰

In the minds of some at least there was a direct relation between revivals and the number of men who entered the ministry. It was a time when young men who sought to enter the ministry were usually seriously impressed by religion. Ordinarily they did not seek the ministry until they had been converted to Christ.

As the hopper is not supplied before the grain is harvested, so our seminaries wait for the spiritual harvest, and the number of candidates for the ministry will vary as this harvest is great or small.¹¹

⁹ Charles F. Richardson and Henry A. Clark, The College Book (Boston, 1878), 257.

¹⁰ Sherman Hall to Lydia Hall, February 7, 1831, in William E. Culkin, ed., Early Protestant Missions in the Lake Superior Country, (3 vols. unpublished, typewritten copies of letters and journals of missionaries at the Head of the Lakes, Superior, 1937, in the library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Originals are at St. Louis County (Minn.) Historical Society in Duluth.) Subsequent citations referred to as Culkin.

¹¹ Samuel H. Gridley, "Historical Discourse" in Auburn Theological Seminary 1830-1870. Semi-Centenary Address and Proceedings (Auburn, 1870), 22.

Dartmouth College experienced a great revival in 1826 when three prospective Wisconsin missionaries were in attendance receiving training for the future--Cutting Marsh, who was missionary to the Stockbridge Indians at Green Bay and later to the white settlers, Sherman Hall, who faithfully served among the Chippewa Indians at La Pointe, and William T. Boutwell who worked at La Pointe, Mackinaw and Leech Lake, Minnesota missions.

The Influence of Hopkinsianism

Along with the influence of many revivals came another factor which helped to prepare the way for greater missionary endeavor--the doctrine of the theologian, Samuel Hopkins, of Newport, Rhode Island. He constructed a philosophy which was a revision of the old strict Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards. In his System of Doctrine Contained in Divine Revelation allowance was made for the exercise of free will in the working out of salvation. What is of greater importance, he said that all sin is selfishness and that before an individual could be assured that he was saved he first had to show what he called "disinterested benevolence" toward everyone, including Negroes and Indians. Furthermore, this principle involved the duty of all the "elect" to use their influence in bringing other souls to salvation.¹² Disinterested benevolence was

¹² Merle E. Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York, 1943), 77; Elsbree, Rise of the Missionary Spirit, 148.

demonstrated in the willingness of young candidates for the missionary field to forsake comfort, position and friends in order to carry the Gospel to the less fortunate people on the western frontier.¹³ Andover men were taught the tenets of the Hopkinsian doctrine.¹⁴

The following quotation from Dr. Griffin, well-known promoter of the cause of missions, illustrates the application of the Hopkinsian doctrine to home missions:

No true religion can exist without charity, liberality, and general beneficence.¹⁵

...If I cannot tell you how much to give, I can, at least, lay down certain principles which may assist your judgment. One is, that every selfish passion should be swallowed up in love to God and man.¹⁶

Seminaries and Colleges, their Nature and Purpose

Many young missionaries who came to Wisconsin, especially those who were Presbyterians or Congregationalists, received training in one or two of New England's several

¹³ Elsbree, Rise of the Missionary Spirit, 150.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Twadell, Religion in Business, the American Tract Society, 1814-1861, 20, unpublished master's thesis, dated 1945, in the Library of the University of Wisconsin.

¹⁵ Dr. Griffin, Address in "Monthly Concert", in Home Missionary, VI, 153 (New York, 1834).

¹⁶ Ibid, 155.

colleges and seminaries. Mention has already been made of the waves of revivals which swept over these institutions during the 1820's and 1830's and of Hopkinsian doctrines which were being taught at that time. An examination of the general purpose of the colleges and seminaries and of the type of men who taught in them and administered their affairs will serve to show other influences which were brought to bear on the lives of serious-minded Christians who were contemplating a life of service on the mission field, whether in America or across the seas.

It is generally known that the colleges and seminaries in early America were dedicated to the cause of preparing young men for the ministry. This purpose persisted down to the beginning of the nineteenth century and was still strong in 1825. Indeed, it was the chief motive for establishing many new colleges and seminaries during the first quarter of the century. Between 1815 and 1825 no less than nine theological seminaries were established in the East, making twelve in all.¹⁷ The American Education Society, organized in 1815, encouraged the building of such schools and extended help to nearly 300 young men in a course of preparation for the ministry.

At a time when Unitarianism was threatening the

¹⁷ The Missionary Herald, XXI, 17-18 (Boston, 1825).

strongholds of Puritanism, such as Harvard, there was a conscious effort put forth to defend Christianity. The main concern at Amherst for many years after its founding was to maintain and perpetuate the Puritan faith.

What was true of Amherst was equally true of Williams and Dartmouth and Middlebury and Wesleyan. For in those colleges one saw the authentic New England of practical-town meetings, hilltop churches, and evangelical colleges.¹⁸

The relationship between the establishment of seminaries and the promotion of missions is born out by a quotation from Mrs. Norris, of Salem, Massachusetts, who said when persuading her husband to give \$10,000 toward the founding of Andover Seminary: "The Theological School and the Missionary enterprise are the same thing. We must raise up ministers if we would have men to go as missionaries."¹⁹

The avowed purpose of erecting the Presbyterian seminary at Auburn, New York was to raise up ministers to supply churches not only in the East but to prepare men "to extend the means of grace to regions beyond."²⁰

The testimony of several students regarding the

¹⁸ Thomas Le Duc, Piety and Intellect at Amherst (New York, 1946), 9.

¹⁹ Dr. Hawes, "Address", in John L. Taylor, A Memorial of the Semi-Centennial Celebration of the Founding of the Theological Seminary at Andover (Andover, 1859), 17.

²⁰ Samuel H. Gridley, "Historical Discourse", 3.

character and influence of Reverend Bennet [sic] Tyler, president of Dartmouth College from 1822 to 1828, served to reveal the kind of atmosphere in which the students lived. The lives of William Boutwell, Cutting Marsh and Sherman Hall--all future Wisconsin missionaries--must have been affected by his forceful personality. President Tyler was not only the dignified head of the college but a pastor who was vitally interested in the individual students, as a father is solicitous for the welfare of his sons. And in this case it was the spiritual welfare of the young men which he sought. He visited them in their rooms, exhorted, instructed, and prayed with them.²¹ Reverend Nathaniel Folsom, professor of Meadville College in Pennsylvania, later recalled that Tyler's greatest power was shown in his preaching in which he aimed to "induce his hearers to be willing, unconditionally, to do and submit to the revealed divine will."²² This earnest divine saw results, for many of the hearers who sat under his preaching were not only hearers of the Word but doers as well, that is, went out to preach the Gospel to the heathen.

Dr. Ashbel Green, in an address to the students of the Theological seminary at Princeton, 1831, urged them to cherish

²¹ Baxter P. Smith, The History of Dartmouth College (Boston, 1878), 137.

²² Ibid, 140.

a missionary spirit. He went even further:

...it seems to me that, unless in some very extraordinary case, a young minister of the gospel, not yet encumbered with a family, nor connected with a stated charge, must be considered as lamentably deficient in the spirit of his office, if he is not willing to go and preach, for one year at least, to the hundreds and thousands in our frontier settlements, who are perishing in ignorance and sin, and some of whom are uttering, in a very affecting manner, the Macedonian cry, 'Come over and help us'.²³

On the whole, there was an intense religious atmosphere in the eastern colleges and seminaries during this period which was conducive to the development of the spirit of missions.

Societies of Inquiry

The interest in missions, foreign and domestic, was expressed in many of the evangelical institutions of higher learning through what were generally known as "Societies of Inquiry". Their object was about the same as that of any present day missionary society, that is, to learn about the conditions in missionary fields and encourage their members to support the cause by contributing money or by forsaking the comforts of home and carrying the gospel to the heathen themselves.

In order to show how these societies operated, the one

²³ Biblical Repertory and Theological Review, III, n.s., 358 (Princeton, 1831).

at Andover will be used as an example; for they were somewhat alike. More significantly, the Andover Society was chosen for study because at least three prominent Wisconsin missionaries attended Andover and were members of the Society there-- William Boutwell, Sherman Hall, and Cutting Marsh.

One evening in January, 1811 a very few students of the Divinity College met together to form a "Society of Inquiry on the subject of Missions" and adopted a constitution. One of the signers, Jacob Ide, wrote that when he entered the Seminary in 1810 the subject of missions

lay, with great weight, upon the minds of a number. They were very anxious to know what was their personal duty. They conversed much on the subject with each other, and... . They appeared to be very anxious, that every one should, as soon as practicable, settle this point of duty for himself.²⁴

The members convened every third Tuesday evening, and the meetings were occupied with the reading of some discourse or review of a publication pertaining to missions. Some of the essays were published in religious periodicals and newspapers.²⁵ Free discussions were also held. It is interesting to note that the first subject considered was, "What are the peculiar signs of the times which call for missionary exertion?"

²⁴ Memoirs of American Missionaries formerly connected with the Society of Inquiry respecting Missions in the Andover Theological Seminary embracing a History of the Society, etc. (Boston, 1833), 15.

²⁵ Ibid, 21.

They voted that each member should spend a half or whole hour every Sunday morning in secret prayer for the spread of the Gospel message among the heathen. To increase their knowledge of missionary operations, a missionary library was set up.²⁶

Although the original intention was to study the needs of foreign fields, the subject of missions within the boundaries of the United States was not neglected. Not until 1825, however, was a definite attempt made to excite an interest in domestic missions. In that year a special meeting was held at which a dissertation was read on the subject of the necessity of increased efforts to carry the gospel to the Western States. After this "it was Resolved 'to appoint a permanent Committee of six, with the addition of the President, on the subject of Domestic Missions;... ."27 Various members were designated to report on the "moral, literary, and religious state of some part of our country." Nearly every state of the Union came under the consideration of the Committee.

A correspondence was carried on by the various committees with those who had left the Seminary and those who were laboring in other parts of the country. A good example of this was the case of Cutting Marsh. After he had been in

²⁶ Memoirs of American Missionaries with the Society of Inquiry in Andover, 15.

²⁷ Ibid, 34.

Wisconsin for about a year, he received a letter from a member of the Society of Inquiry at Andover in which was expressed the hope that the Committee on Foreign Missions and the writer himself could keep up a correspondence with Marsh. He also mentioned the fact that nearly all the students there were giving much attention to the subject of missions.²⁸

Such were some of the measures used to arouse a missionary spirit at Andover. But other colleges were equally active. The Society at Amherst began the same year as the founding of the college (1821) and was known first as the "Theological Society". It met formally on Sunday evenings, "in a quiet way, consulted with each other, compared data which they had acquired, communicated intelligence, and spent a few minutes in prayer."²⁹ Auburn Seminary, Middlebury, Williams, Princeton and Yale Colleges had societies. Of these perhaps the oldest was that at Williams, formed in the spring of 1808 by Samuel J. Mills, Gordon Hall and others.³⁰ These young men--Hall, Mills and others-- became missionaries on

28 John A. Vinton to Cutting Marsh, April 25, 1831. Cutting Marsh Papers. Library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

29 George R. Cutting, Student Life at Amherst College. Its Organizations, Their Membership and History (Amherst, 1871), 60.

30 Joseph Tracy, "History of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions", in History of American Missions, 28-29.

the foreign field eventually but helped to arouse an interest in home missions as well. They republished certain famous sermons on the subject of missions, "talked up" the subject and read important sermons before certain societies and leaders in the churches.³¹

That students in the seminaries and orthodox colleges during the first three decades of the 19th century should have been interested in missions is not surprising. The missionary spirit manifested there was both a cause and an effect of the general movement. A great many of the workers in the vineyard of the Lord were found in those higher institutions of learning and answered there the "Macedonian call" which came from the West.

Tours and Expeditions

One group of men who performed a distinctive service to the cause of home missions were those who toured the West in order to survey the religious and moral needs of the frontier. Professors, heads of colleges and heads of missionary societies went West and returned home with reports. Reverend Bela B. Edwards, professor of Hebrew at the Andover Theological Seminary, "had traveled West, and his reports, together with the pleas of missionaries already in the field, kindled

³¹ Tracy, "History of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions", in History of American Missions, 29.

the imagination."³²

Samuel J. Mills was another of this class. His extensive journeys in 1812-13 and in 1814 were sponsored by the Connecticut and Massachusetts Missionary Societies. Immediately after graduation from Andover Theological Seminary in 1812 Mills and a companion--John F. Schermerhorn--started out for the West and visited Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee and New Orleans. They reported on the strength of the various denominations and offered suggestions upon their return about the conduct of home missions. For one thing, they learned from the Methodists and Baptists that the secret of their success was itineracy, and they urged the establishment of churches in order to maintain a moral and religious influence. The chief purpose of the second tour, made in company with Daniel Smith, was to distribute tracts and Bibles. "These two missionary tours had a great influence upon the missionary activities of the Presbyterians and Congregationalists."³³

The needs of the West had been presented to the churches in the East, and the reports of the tour which were published and widely circulated, gave an impetus to all the

³² Philip Jordan, William Salter (Oxford, Ohio, 1939), 31.

³³ Goodykoontz, Home Missions, 142.

eastern missionary societies which were interested in preventing the West from "growing up" without the benefit of religion. There is perhaps no direct connection between the Mills tours and the establishment of missions in Wisconsin, but they inspired the people of New England to make greater efforts to send the Gospel to the fringes of civilization. One commentator soon after the tours stated that the reports "'had more influence, probably, than any measure of the period, in awakening public attention to the bearing of that valley on the future destinies of our country.'"³⁴ According to Badger, many caught the spirit of Mills and offered themselves up for missionary service.³⁵ The influence of Mills on missions in Wisconsin may be seen, though still indirectly, in the fact that he was instrumental in establishing the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Information about the Lake Superior country came to the East through the reports of the government expedition conducted by Henry Schoolcraft in 1832. He was accompanied by Lieutenant Allen and William T. Boutwell. The latter was a graduate of Dartmouth and Andover, worked with Sherman Hall at

³⁴ Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, 168, quoted in Charles Keller, The Second Great Awakening, 84; Dr. Badger, "Address", in John L. Taylor, Memorial of the founding of Andover, 58.

³⁵ Ibid, 58.

the La Pointe mission and established one of his own at Leech Lake, Minnesota. Although their report was of a scientific nature, it included statements about the opportunity for missionaries among the Indians whom they visited.

Alfred Brunson from Pennsylvania, missionary to the Indians of the Wisconsin area for the Methodists, read Lieutenant Allen's report and was impressed by it.

I am impelled to these measures [his beneficent plans for ministering to the Indians] by feelings of humanity as well as those of religion. These feelings have been kindling for years, but received their greatest impetus from reading Lieutenant Allens [sic] Journal of a tour to the head of the Mississippi in 1832, which fell into my hands within a year past.³⁶

From Allen's report and also Mr. Everett's report of May 20, 1834, containing a map of the western territory, Brunson learned of the needs of the Indians, physical as well as spiritual.

Organizations through which to Work

With the rise of the missionary spirit came a demand for effective organizations through which to work. Samuel J. Mills has already been mentioned in connection with the formation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. It was he, along with a few other Christian students

³⁶ Brunson to Lewis Cass, Secretary of War, August 31, 1835. Brunson Papers, Library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

at Williams College, in 1807, who met by a haystack to pray and talk about missions. Those young men dedicated themselves to the task of carrying the Gospel to foreign lands. After the haystack prayer meeting the men sought for an organization to support them. The Board of Foreign Missions, set up in 1810, was the response by the Congregationalists to the desire of those candidates.³⁷ As the name indicates, the Board sponsored foreign missions, but it also took over the Indian enterprise in America. It sent missionaries to minister to the Stockbridge Indians near Green Bay and to the Chippewa Indians at La Pointe in Wisconsin.

Previous to the formation of the American Home Missionary Society (1826) several states had organizations. Their method of evangelizing the western regions proved inadequate, however, for there was duplication of effort, and some places were entirely neglected. Consequently, a national society was created. The American Home Missionary Society was a response to the needs of the western frontier; it was also the expression of the spirit of nationalism which was prevalent in this period of our history.

³⁷ "The Haystack Prayer-Meeting. An Account of its Origin and Spirit", (1906), 8,9; Leonard Woods, "Semi-Centennial Report of the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society" (Boston, 1849), passim; Joseph Tracy, "History of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions", in History of American Missions, 28-29.

Although the American Home Missionary Society emerged from some societies in New York, the idea of a national society was advanced by a group of young men who belonged to the Society of Inquiry at the Andover Theological Seminary. They believed that a system was needed in which all the resources of philanthropy and "Christian sympathy" should be put into one reservoir with one treasury.³⁸

A group of young men in New York who were interested in missions were dissatisfied with the New York Missionary Society in that it was taken up with ministering to the Indians, to the neglect, they thought, of the "white inhabitants of our frontiers". Their petitions to the directors were disregarded, so they formed a society of their own in 1816 called "The Young Men's Missionary Society of New York". Six years later it united with the "New York Evangelical Missionary Society" to form the "United Domestic Missionary Society". In 1826, after publishing annual reports the United Domestic Missionary Society was merged into the American Home Missionary Society.³⁹

The purpose of the American Home Missionary Society, as stated in the first issue of their organ--The Home

38 Goodykoontz, Home Missions, 176-177.

39 Home Missionary, I, 108-110 (New York, 1829).

Missionary--was: "It will plead the cause of no sect nor party, but offers itself, for the sake of Christ and our country, as the servant of all, who agree in essential doctrines, and who desire to see an able christian ministry established and sustained, and christian temples erected, and christian sacraments enjoyed, in the length and in the breadth of this great republic."⁴⁰ The aim was to establish the institutions of religion "in every town and parish in the nation."⁴¹ The Gospel was to be declared to new communities on the frontier and aid was to be given to congregations which were unable to support a minister.⁴²

The American Home Missionary Society received most of its support from the Presbyterians and Congregationalists. They cooperated to the extent that a congregation which had a Presbyterian form of government was allowed to maintain a Congregational preacher, and vice versa. This union was possible because there was very little difference between them as far as central doctrines were concerned. Both were Calvinistic in origin and belief.

There were three types of missionaries who worked

⁴⁰ Home Missionary, I, 1, (New York, 1829).

⁴¹ Ibid, 26.

⁴² Reverend P. Warrimer of Monroe, Michigan Territory, in Home Missionary, V, 148 (New York, 1833).

under the Home Missionary Society--the men who were settled pastors, those who went West with no particular location in mind, and the agents who were really missionaries at large. The local congregations were supposed to pay their own ministers if they were able, but the Society gave aid, sometimes \$100 of the \$400 which was the usual annual salary paid to a minister. In many cases he had to petition the board for more.

It was in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, then, that organizations were formed through which the missionary spirit expressed itself. Two national societies--the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the American Home Missionary Society--were agencies through which the missionary spirit of America worked. The missionaries whom they sent to the West were instrumental in carrying the civilizing influence of Christianity to a frontier which in a few decades was no longer a frontier, but a settled society.

III

How Missionaries Were Recruited

The means of persuasion used by the ministers and professors in the East to try to enlist young men in the army of missionaries, and their arguments presented to try to gain financial support merit some attention under a separate

heading. The appeals of some of New England's outstanding divines often appeared in the Home Missionary. Leonard Woods, Professor of Theology at Andover Seminary, was eloquent on the subject. Speaking of the sinners in other parts of the country who needed pardon, Woods said,

And it is in the power of your hand to send them this Gospel... . Now what efforts can be too great, and what prayers too fervent for such an object? I appeal to your natural affections. What would be the feelings of your heart, if you had a beloved parent, son, or daughter, in some dark and destitute region? Would it not constantly occupy your thoughts? Would it not lie heavily upon you, every morning and evening? And would you not freely part with your worldly substance, to send that dear parent, or that dear child the means of eternal life? And would you not invite, and even entreat others to join with you in this work of love?⁴³

Reverend Samuel Miller of Princeton Theological Seminary urged his students, as many other professors did, to regard himself as a consecrated agent preparing to act with all his energy.⁴⁴ An unidentified writer in the Home Missionary stated the question definitely:

The question for each minister and each candidate for the ministry to decide is, 'Ought I to devote myself to the work of preaching the gospel in the new States?' With some, the answer is easy.... ..but no minister has done his duty till he has given the inquiry a serious consideration.⁴⁵

⁴³ Leonard Woods, Address in Home Missionary, I, 19 (New York. 1829).

⁴⁴ Ibid, 24.

⁴⁵ Home Missionary, II, 98 (New York, 1830).

The readers of the organ of the Home Missionary Society were encouraged to read in religious publications on the subject of missions. The purpose of the Monthly Concert of Prayer was to pray for missionaries of all denominations and were held in the Presbyterian and Congregational churches of New England. The ministers' sermons on these occasions were designed to try to bring possible candidates to think seriously upon the question.

The officers of the American Home Missionary Society visited the "factories" which produced missionaries--seminaries--and recruited them for service on the field.

A recent visit to the Theological Seminary, Andover, has resulted in the engagement of not less than eleven, who will probably go west and south as missionaries of this Society in October next. We propose, as soon as practicable, to visit Princeton and other Seminaries, which, we hope, will furnish a still greater number of labourers for this blessed service.⁴⁶

IV

Direct Motives for Missions to the Indians and Settlers on the Frontier

Some of the reasons for the rise of the missionary spirit in the East could also be given as motives for missions. But a closer examination of the motives of the Easterners in sending men to evangelize the West and of the missionaries themselves in coming will bring one to a better understanding

⁴⁶ Unsigned article, "Prospect of More Labourers" in Home Missionary, VI, 66 (New York, 1834).

of the movement as a whole and of the religious history of early Wisconsin.

Disinterested Benevolence

One of the theses of this paper is that generally the early missionaries came to Wisconsin with a sincere desire to see the Indians and white settlers saved. One cannot read the diaries, letters and journals of the missionaries without coming to the conclusion that they were deeply and sincerely pious, ready to sacrifice their all for a high and holy cause. Frontier life for anyone called forth the best that was in the pioneers and exacted of them endurance and patience amid the hardships of frontier life. The lot of the missionaries was usually different from the ordinary land-seeking immigrant, however. They were not here for personal gain, and therefore were expected to live on the meager salary which was allotted to them by the missionary board and their sometimes poor congregations. Land speculating by a preacher was frowned upon, especially by the Congregationalists and Presbyterians who controlled the American Home Missionary Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Sherman Hall at the La Pointe mission station incurred criticism from his headquarters in Boston because he engaged in too much manual labor, to the neglect, they thought, of his preaching and teaching the Word to the Indians. Although the young

missionaries who came to Wisconsin were naturally not aware before their coming of some of the problems they would meet, they were conscious of the fact that theirs would not be an easy life, but were willing to take some risks and endure some hardships.

Self-interest

Although all must recognize that the missionaries and their sponsors were motivated by several desires, there are some writers who give the weight to self-interest. It is said that Congregationalists and Presbyterians working under the American Home Missionary Society and American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions were determined that the East should mold the West, else the West would mold the East.⁴⁷ Whether this desire should be labelled "self-interest" is open to question. Granting that motives for missions were mixed and that politics entered into it, still the desire of New England to shape western society after its own model may not be inconsistent with the true spirit of Christian benevolence if one takes into consideration the fact that it was natural for Christians everywhere to want to share with others

⁴⁷ Charles J. Kennedy takes this viewpoint in his thesis, that is, of placing importance on the motive of self-interest, "The Congregationalists and the Presbyterians on the Wisconsin Frontier", 3, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, dated 1940, in the Library of the University of Wisconsin.

what they thought were the benefits of religion.

It is most obviously our wisdom, to unite in the North and East, for planting the gospel in the South and West. The strength of the nation lies beyond the Alleghany. The centre of dominion is fast moving in that direction. The ruler of this country is growing up in the great valley: leave him without the gospel, and he will be a ruffian giant, who will regard neither the decencies of civilization, nor the charities of religion... . It is impossible... to overrate the importance of forming the rising character of our new states on the principles of the gospel!⁴⁸

At an anniversary meeting of the American Home Missionary Society in May, 1829, C. H. Hodge, professor at Princeton, expressed concern over the rapidly growing West. He said they were living at the "forming period" of the nation and that the national character must be formed for God.⁴⁹

Promoters of missionary enterprise in the East and workers on the field in the West mentioned their intention to fashion the frontier settlements after the New England model both in public reports and private correspondence. For instance, Sherman Hall, in writing to his brother, from La Pointe, said that most of the pioneers in the new settlements were more anxious to become rich than to plant the institutions of piety and learning, "such as exist in New England,

⁴⁸ Reverend J. Van Vecten, Pastor of the Reformed Dutch Church, Schenectady, N. Y., in Home Missionary, II, 21 (New York, 1829).

⁴⁹ Hodge in Peter G. Mode, Sourcebook and Bibliographical Guide for American Church History (Menasha, Wisconsin, 1921), 431.

and which make her what she is."⁵⁰ But he concluded that somebody (meaning himself and others like him) had to labour and be self-denying in order to make the West a New England.

Danger of Catholicism
as a Motive for Missions

At a period when the spirit of nationalism was strong, when Protestantism was staging a counter-reformation, and when flood-tides of immigration were bringing to the front the anti-Catholic movement, it is not surprising to find that Catholicism was, to the missionaries and their sponsors in the East, a real obstacle to the accomplishment of their goal. In 1835 Lyman Beecher toured the East and spoke often about the influence of Rome in the West.⁵¹ Furthermore, one of the factors which brought about the formation of the American Home Missionary Society in 1826 was the fear that Roman Catholicism would subdue the Protestant stations in the Mississippi Valley unless people rallied with their support.⁵²

The letters of the missionaries frequently referred to the danger of Catholicism. Green Bay, an old French settlement, was regarded as a strategic point to counteract the

⁵⁰ Hall to Aaron Hall, March 26, 1849, in Culkin, III, 169.

⁵¹ R. A. Billington, The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860 (New York, 1938), 126.

⁵² Ibid, 129.

influences of Romanism. In urging the American Home Missionary Society to send a Presbyterian minister to that town, Chauncey Hall wrote in 1836, "The Catholics are active in propagating their sentiments. Green Bay is a very important situation for a Presbyterian Minister."⁵³ About four years later Daniel Butler wrote to New York on behalf of the Green Bay Church to request a man to fill that place. He used the plea that the Catholic influence was strong.⁵⁴

Sherman Hall wrote in 1834:

If the place [the area between La Pointe and Leech Lake] is not occupied by the Board, it will be open for sectarians, and will be no un-inviting field for Roman Catholics, should they commence operations up the Lake.⁵⁵

When a Roman Catholic priest did come to La Pointe in 1835 Reverend Hall and three other co-workers expressed the belief that it was necessary to prosecute their work with as much vigor as possible. "The Catholics will soon have the ground if they linger in their operations. Their errors are more formidable to the missionary than heathenism itself."⁵⁶

⁵³ Chauncey Hall to A.H.M.S., January 25, 1836, A.H.M.S. Papers, in the Library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (Photostat).

⁵⁴ Butler to A.H.M.S., December 3, 1839, A.H.M.S. Papers.

⁵⁵ Sherman Hall to A.B.C.F.M., October 17, 1834, in Culkin, II, 95.

⁵⁶ Hall, Boutwell, Ayer and Ely to A.B.C.F.M., September 12, 1835, Culkin, III, 235-236.

The fear of the spread of Catholicism preyed upon the minds of the religious element of New England. But it should also be pointed out that it was not a groundless fear conjured up in the imagination. The men on the field had to face the reality of the problem, and they were anxious that the New England "Way" should win out in the end.

Interdenominational Rivalry

There is reason to believe that interdenominational rivalry was also a motive for missions to the West and to Wisconsin in particular. The protestant denomination which first directed organized missionary effort toward Wisconsin was the Episcopalian Church. The Board of Directors of the Missionary Society of that Church reported in 1825-1826, "Other denominations are even now taking the field; let it not be our reproach that we are always too late."⁵⁷

Whether ministers representing the various denominations on the frontier in Wisconsin cooperated or not depended to a large extent upon the individual. Hints now and then occurred in the letters and journals of the missionaries indicating intolerance toward other denominations. The Presbyterians and Congregationalists in general deplored the methods employed by the Baptists and Methodists--'sects', they often

⁵⁷ Julia C. Emery, A Century of Endeavor, 1821-1921 (Chicago, 1921), 48.

called them. An interesting appeal for ministers was made by Stephen Peet from Green Bay to Mission headquarters in 1839.

He wrote,

For the want of some attentions and encouragement of this kind, [ministers] it is to be feared that some of our church are inclined to take up with the means furnished by the Methodist, and in some instances are beguiled into a permanent union with them.⁵⁸

Not all the missionaries in the service of the American Home Missionary Society or American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions were afraid the settlers would "take up" with the Methodists. There were many instances of cooperation between the various denominations, particularly between the Methodists and Presbyterians.

The missionary spirit which emerged in the East was directed to the West. The next chapter will show how this impulse motivated certain men to come to Wisconsin to save the Indians.

⁵⁸ Peet to A.H.M.S., April 9, 1839, in A.H.M.S. Papers.

CHAPTER II
THE ATTEMPT TO CHRISTIANIZE AND
CIVILIZE THE WISCONSIN INDIANS

I cannot doubt that all reasonable men must consider the unhappy wanderers of the wilds have some claim upon the philanthropy of the nation,....¹

I

Location of the Various Tribes

The Indian tribes of the Wisconsin area had been left to go their own heathen way for many years. The Catholic Church had more or less abandoned its work with the defeat of France in 1763. From that date until 1823 very little effort was made by them to convert the Indians in Wisconsin.² And Protestantism actually did not enter Wisconsin until 1820 when Dr. Jedidiah Morse preached the first Protestant sermon at Green Bay.

A brief explanation of the location of the more important tribes residing in the Wisconsin territory around 1825 will give a setting for the story of the pioneer

¹ General Joseph Street to Dr. A. Posey, December 12, 1827 from Prairie du Chien. Street Papers in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

² Reuben G. Thwaites, Wisconsin: The Americanization of a French Settlement (New York and Boston, 1908), 254-5.

protestant missionaries. According to some authorities, about the earliest aborigines that lived in the Green Bay area were the Menominees, perhaps driven from Canada very early by the Chippewas. The northwestern part of the state above the Black River was fought over by the Chippewas and Sioux, and finally abandoned by the latter tribe when they moved on to the western plains. The Winnebagoes moved from the eastern part of the state to the Wisconsin River and Prairie du Chien region in 1834, from whence the Sacs and Foxes had previously moved on to the south and west toward Iowa.

The Christianized Stockbridge and Brothertown Indians of western New York sought a new home in the West after the War of 1812. Some of the whites were anxious to have them leave--the land speculators for obvious reasons, and the Christian whites for fear that the tribes would be affected by the evil influences of incoming settlers. The government wanted them to move to act as a check on the untamed tribes in Wisconsin.³ The authorities took up the problem of where they should go and in 1820 commissioned Reverend Jedidiah Morse to travel to the West and report on the desirability of removing them to the country west of Lake Michigan. It

³ Deborah B. Martin, History of Brown County Wisconsin, Past and Present, 2 vols., (Chicago, 1913), I, 105.

was chosen as a good site, and as a result, these tribes were moved to the Green Bay area in 1822. The principle tribes among whom the missionaries operated, then, were the Menominees, Stockbridges and Brothertowns in the East, the Winnebagoes in the Prairie du Chien area, and the Chippewas and Sioux, in the northwest along the Mississippi River and Lake Superior.⁴

II Opportunity Among Indians

Previous to 1825 missions had been established among the Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws and Cherokees of the southern states. But among the some 45,000 Indians of Indiana and the Old Northwest Territory very little had been done. The Morse report gave out the information that there were 15,000 Chippewas in the region and that the total of 45,000 "open a wide field for benevolent exertions."⁵

Whatever may have been the degree of ultimate success of missions to the Wisconsin Indians, there were those who believed that the "sons of the forest" were capable of being

4 Thwaites, Wisconsin: The Americanization of a French Settlement, 254-256, 204-216; Alfred Brunson, "Early History of Wisconsin", in Wisconsin Historical Collections (Madison, 1906), IV, 223-251.

5 Abstract of Jedidiah Morse's Report, in Walter Chapin, The Missionary Gazeteer (Woodstock, Vermont, 1825), 255.

civilized and Christianized. Previous success had taught them this, it seemed. No doubt many easterners had an exaggerated idea of the eagerness with which Indians accepted or would accept the Christian way. The following excerpt admirably illustrates the view which in part must have been wishful thinking:

The result [of efforts to Christianize the heathen in America] has shown that the American Indians, compared with other heathen, have been remarkable for both readiness and ability to perceive and admit the value both of Christianity and civilization. Among no other heathen in modern times has the gospel had such early and decided success. No other savages have so readily thrown off their barbarism and become civilized men.⁶

The writer then went on to prove his point by using as an example the Christianizing of the Stockbridge Indians. It must be remembered, however, that even though a missionary had resided among them since 1734, the whole tribe had not been converted.

The men who came to Wisconsin to preach to the Indians had evidently received an impression from some source that the Indians would readily accept Christianity. Five months before he left to set up a mission for the Chippewa Indians at La Pointe, Wisconsin, under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Sherman Hall wrote to his sister from

⁶ Joseph Tracy, "History of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions", in History of American Missions (Worcester, Massachusetts, 1840), 26.

Andover Theological Seminary:

There never was a time perhaps, when the unevangelized world presented a more inviting prospect of success to missionary labor, than the present. There are now no great political commotions to disturb the missionary and drive him from his labour. There appears to be a more general disposition among the heathen nations, to permit missionaries to reside among them, and instruct them, than has been known before for a very long period. Millions are ready to receive the gospel as soon as it shall be sent to them.⁷

Some Indians expressed appreciation of the work of the missionaries. As Reverend Cutting Marsh of the Stockbridge mission and some members of that tribe were planning to visit the Sacs, Fox and Delaware tribes, John Metoxen, leader of the Stockbridges, made a plea to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to send a missionary also among the ones they were to visit.⁸ Metoxen was a Christian, and it was to be expected that he should desire to "tell them of the great benefits we have received from being taught the gospel." But if the records of the missionaries are to be given credence, there were times when the unconverted Indians asked for missionaries and schools. One of these was

⁷ Sherman Hall to Lydia Hall, February 7, 1831, in William E. Culkin, Early Protestant Missions in the Lake Superior Country, 3 vols., (Superior, Wisconsin, 1937), III, 3. Typewritten, bound copies of letters and journals of missionaries at the Head of the Lakes, Project #3264, in the possession of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Hereafter cited as Culkin.

⁸ Missionary Herald, XXX, 140, (April, 1834).

when Alfred Brunson (Methodist) visited and had a council with the Chippewas near The Crow Wing River in 1838. Brunson explained his purpose in coming, whereupon, "They favored my objects and desired a mission, and a school and pointed the spot where they wished it to be located at the mouth of Pine River, on the west bank of the Mississippi...."⁹

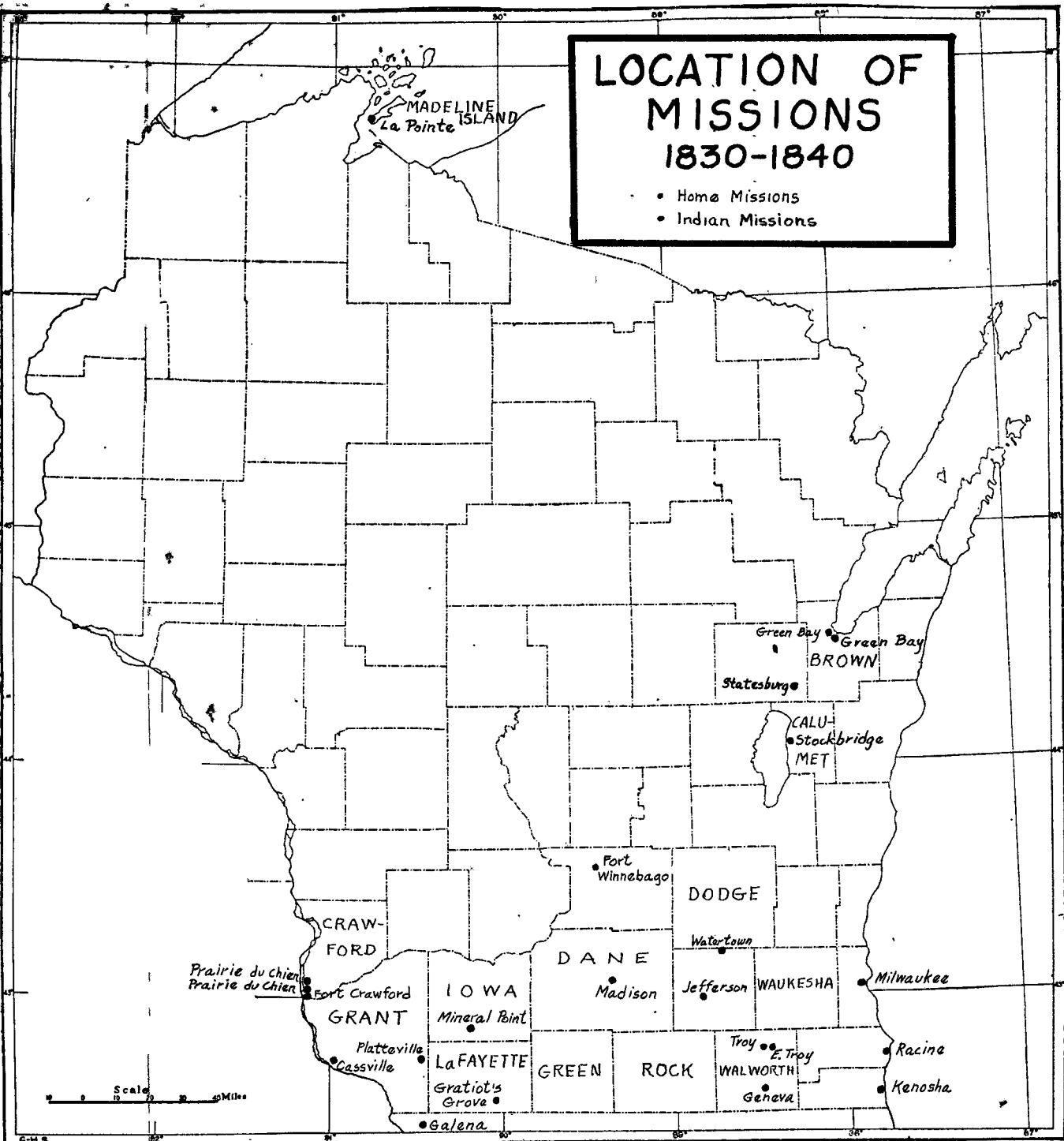
When it was discovered that the spirit of emigration had seized the Oneidas and other Indians in New York, and when it was seen that the Christianized tribes near Green Bay desired a missionary among them, the Christians of the East who possessed the missionary spirit saw a providential opportunity to perhaps present the gospel to other tribes "in that region".¹⁰

When Sherman Hall, missionary to the Chippewa Indians at La Pointe, (see map, page 40) arrived on the scene of action he found opportunities awaiting him and his helpers. Head men of certain bands showed by their conversations that they were not opposed to having teachers sent among them.¹¹

⁹ Alfred Brunson, Personal Narrative, July, 1835- November, 1838. Copied from the original by Arthur F. Giere, Brunson Papers, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

¹⁰ Nathan Bangs, An Authentic History of the Missions under the Care of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church (New York, 1832), 166-167.

¹¹ Hall, Journal, July 28, October 1, 1832, in Culkin, II, 35-37.



Sources: Historical Atlas of Wisconsin, 1878; Map of the State of Wisconsin, by I. A. Lapham, 1850.

His inquiries into the attitude of the Indians toward having missions established among them led him to write to the mission board headquarters in 1833, "It appears to me that the whole Ojibwa [Chippewa] country is open for missionary effort, and the sooner it is entered by judicious and pious missionaries, the better."¹²

III Green Bay

Episcopal

For the first two decades of the nineteenth century the Protestant Episcopal Church paid little attention to the West. Most of its membership came from prosperous city people in the North and from the aristocratic class in the South, and they seldom moved to the West. But in 1821 this church too caught the missionary spirit and formed the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society. Until 1829 they confined their work wholly to the United States, and its most important mission was at Green Bay.¹³

Following the survey and report of Dr. Jedidiah Morse in 1820, Eleazer Williams of the St. Regis tribe came to the

¹² Hall, Letter, June 21, 1833, in Culkin, II, 65.

¹³ Colin B. Goodykoontz, Home Missions on the American Frontier (Caldwell, Idaho, 1939), 208.

Green Bay area with a delegation of Oneidas, Onandagas, Tuscaroras and Stockbridges to treat with the Menominees and Winnebagoes for a cession of land. The result was that a vague treaty was drawn up in 1821 ceding a small strip of land around the Little Kakalin near Green Bay, and the next year Eleazer Williams, accompanied by a helper, Mr. Albert G. Ellis, came with some more Indians.¹⁴

Williams was the son of a chief of the Iroquois nation and served the Oneida Indians in the capacity of missionary or minister, having professed the Christian faith and been licensed by the Bishop of New York in 1816.¹⁵ Mr. Albert G. Ellis was appointed in 1822 by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society as catechist and lay reader to the Oneidas at Green Bay, which position he held for about five years.¹⁶

These two men--Williams and Ellis--were supported by the Episcopal Church, and during the winter of 1822-23 they lived at Fort Howard while Ellis taught school for a short time in a building owned by the Episcopal Church. No Indian children came to the school, however.¹⁷

14 Martin, History of Brown County, I, 105-106.

15 Chapin, Missionary Gazeteer, 260. Later a great deal of mystery surrounded his life, for he claimed to be the Lost Dauphin and on many occasions was found guilty of prevarication and inconsistency.

16 L. C. Draper, Sketch of Ellis, in Wisconsin Historical Collections (Madison, 1908), VII, 207-208.

17 Martin, History of Brown County, I, 110.

The Episcopal mission proper at Green Bay really was begun in 1825 by Mr. Norman Nash. He seemed not to have the ability to accomplish the task, however, for he spent much of the Board's money and left a few months later without effecting a permanent establishment. Eventually the school which Ellis taught was forced to close in 1827 when most of the troops were removed from Ft. Howard to Jefferson Barracks.¹⁸

In 1827 the effort of the Episcopalians at Green Bay was encouraged by the government, for in that year a treaty was signed between the United States Government and the Indians at Green Bay, which provided for the establishment of schools for Indian children. The Protestant Episcopal Missionary Society benefited by the treaty, receiving money and land.¹⁹

The mission became a going concern when in 1829 Reverend Richard F. Cadle came to be its superintendent and also the rector of Christ Church at Menonimeeville. "The objects of this mission embraced the education of Indian children, ... the improvement and civilization of their parents, and other elders; as well as some degree of ministerial attention to the spiritual wants of the white residents."²⁰

¹⁸ A. G. Ellis, "Fifty-Four Years' Recollections of Men and Events in Wisconsin", in Wisconsin Historical Collections, VII, 237.

¹⁹ William Cutter, "Missionary Efforts of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States", in History of American Missions, 566.

²⁰ Ibid.

By October, 1829 the Sunday School had sixty pupils, most of whom could not speak English. To meet the situation the Sunday School Society of the Episcopal Church translated and published parts of the New Testament into the French, Menominee and Chippewa languages.²¹ Within a year and a half after its opening the mission school under Cadle and his sister had an enrollment of around two hundred. The school was a tremendous expense, for the children had to be boarded and clothed as well as instructed. Furthermore, the results did not reach the expectations of those in charge. They had hoped to reach more natives, whereas most of the pupils were half breeds and children of traders.²²

Reverend Cadle stayed with the school until in 1834, although he resigned in 1833. In 1834 Daniel Brown became the superintendent and thereafter Cadle held other ministerial positions in Wisconsin.²³

In 1840 it was estimated that 270 Indian children had enjoyed the benefits of the mission school. Of these, some, of course, went back to Indian customs, but many held to the

²¹ C. H. Bremer, History of Religious Education in the Episcopal Church to 1835 (New Haven, 1924), 216-217.

²² Ellis, "Fifty-Four Years' Recollections", in Wisconsin Historical Collections, VII, 239.

²³ Cutter, "Missionary Efforts of the Episcopal Church", in History of American Missions, 566.

beliefs of their adopted religion. One writer commented,
 "Some are now adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour, by a
 life which becometh his holy gospel."²⁴

The Episcopalian mission school suffered the same fate as others finally did; a reduction of the school, with a view to its final extinction was begun, and by 1839 the school contained only a small remnant of Menominee children. The unsettled state of the tribes due to incoming settlers, and treaties providing for the removal of the Indians farther west resulted in the abandonment of the school.²⁵

The American Board of Commissioners
 for Foreign Missions--
 Reverend Jesse Miner and Cutting Marsh

When the Stockbridge and Brothertown Indians came to Wisconsin from New York in the 1820's, they did not leave their adopted religion--Christianity--behind them. When no missionary was among them they kept up religious worship on the Sabbath, held the Monthly Concert, Sabbath School, weekly conference, female prayer meeting and a meeting of the young people for the reading of Scripture. They were not long without a missionary to minister to their needs, however. In 1827

²⁴ Cutter, "Missionary Efforts of the Episcopal Church", in History of American Missions, 570.

²⁵ Ibid, 569.

the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions sent Reverend Jesse Miner, their former pastor, to report on their condition and prospects, whereupon he was appointed missionary among them, arriving in June, 1828. To help Mr. and Mrs. Miner in the work the Board sent Mr. and Mrs. Augustus T. Ambler, the latter a physician who was to be a teacher at the mission. The cause of the Kingdom among those tribes went forward under Miner's supervision, for several converts were admitted to the church. This laborer was soon removed from the harvest field, though, for on March 22, 1829 Jesse Miner died. Grief-stricken Mrs. Miner left the station and returned to her people in the East.²⁶

The missionary who came to Statesburg (see map, page 40) to fill Reverend Miner's place was one of the most interesting men who labored in the Wisconsin area. Cutting Marsh had been trained in true New England style, having graduated from Dartmouth College in 1826 and from Andover Theological Seminary in 1829 at the age of twenty-nine.²⁷

He took up where Miner left off in the spring of 1830.

²⁶ Missionary Herald, XXV, 12, (January, 1828); Joseph Tracy, "History of American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions", in History of American Missions, 182, 194.

²⁷ George T. Chapman, Sketches of the Alumni of Dartmouth College (Cambridge, 1867), 232.

According to one authority, he had expected to carry the gospel to the Sandwich Islands, eventually, remaining only one year with the Indians.²⁸

But if those were his intentions, they were altered, for he stayed in Wisconsin.

Young Mr. Marsh, who answered the call to the Stockbridge Indians at Green Bay, began preparations for the long journey soon after the news of Miner's death reached the East. He, like thousands of other westward moving people, came by the way of Buffalo. At that point he took the boat "Enterprise" for Detroit. Having missed the last boat for Green Bay that fall (1829) he remained at Detroit for the winter, making use of his time by learning about the Indians and helping occasionally in the mission work there.²⁹ He had the opportunity to observe the Indians at first hand, perhaps the first ones he had ever seen. His vivid description of them shows how they impressed him:

...squalid, ragged, their countenances as vacant as the stupid ox's and they wander about like the wild asses of the desert with none to pity them. All they seem to desire is enough to eat and whisky to drink. Like beasts they live and like beasts they die.³⁰

²⁸ William F. Brown, Past Made Present, Presbyterians in Wisconsin 1830-1900 (Chicago, 1900), I, 169.

²⁹ Cutting Marsh, Diary for August to November, 1829, *passim.*, Cutting Marsh Papers, in the possession of Historical Society of Wisconsin.

³⁰ Ibid, 22.

To the Maumee Indians around Detroit he preached at different mission stations through an interpreter. He took notes on the beliefs of the Indians, aided in forming a temperance society and recorded his own religious feelings and conversations with sinners.³¹ No doubt his experiences at Detroit during the winter helped to better equip the novice for the tasks which lay before him at Green Bay.

When Cutting Marsh arrived at the mission station located at Statesburg, 20 miles up Fox River from Green Bay in the spring of 1830 he was coming to a tribe of Indians who had had preaching and teaching for about one hundred years. The Stockbridges were quite civilized, some of them being farmers and mechanics. Church attendance was good. Thirty-nine were members of the church, and twenty-eight of these were converted.³² The task, then, which faced the new missionary was not as formidable as that which confronted many in coming to altogether pagan tribes. Of course Reverend Miner had helped lay the groundwork. There were buildings - a church and a school already built for the Stockbridges at Statesburg, near South Kaukauna.³³ When Marsh sent in his report to the

³¹ Marsh, Diary, November 25, 1829 to January 26, 1830, passim., Cutting Marsh Papers.

³² Missionary Herald, XXVI, 13, (1830).

³³ Thwaites, Wisconsin: Americanization of a French Settlement, 255.

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions headquarters in September, 1830, he was able to show that progress had been and was being made. The mission school, now under a Mr. Stevens, had forty-five scholars. The cause of temperance was going forward and Sabbath School and Church were well attended.³⁴ Four months later, it was stated that out of about 225 people there were only twenty adults who could not read the New Testament. There were sixty-eight children between the ages of five and twenty who lived near the mission; fifty-two of these were in school.³⁵

Stevens and Marsh worked not only for the piety and education of the Indians but they worked also to promote industry among them. In June, 1831 a few of the Indians formed a society for promoting industry among themselves. The proceeds earned by working at the mission house and farm they donated to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.³⁶ There were tangible results of the industry of the Indians, for in the growing season of 1831 they raised

³⁴ Marsh, Report to American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, September 7, 1830, in Missionary Herald, XXVI, 385-6, (December, 1830).

³⁵ Stevens, Report, January 11, 1831, in Missionary Herald, XXVII, 151, (May, 1831).

³⁶ Stevens, Letter, January 13, 1832, in Missionary Herald, XXVIII, 363-4, (November, 1832).

2000 bushels of wheat, 3000 of corn, 4000 bushels of potatoes, and other grains and staples. "We do hope that the time is not far distant when these people shall be as noted for industry and temperance as they have long been for indolence and temperance."³⁷

Here on the raw frontier hundreds of miles from New England was a society which resembled other numerous societies in the East for promoting many things--morality, temperance, sabbath-keeping, and others. It was an age of reform, and the missionaries brought that spirit with them to the West.

This Indian community was not without its periods of religious excitement, reflecting perhaps the interest in revivals in the East. In the spring of 1832 an increased interest in piety was manifested among them when prolonged prayer meetings were held in the school house, one lasting from sunrise to 10:00 a.m. and on the same day another meeting at 3:00.³⁸ The teachers and missionaries must have related these things to headquarters with great satisfaction.

Cutting Marsh carried on his work of ministering to the sick, calling, preaching twice every Sunday, superintending the Sunday School, conducting weekly prayer meetings, and

³⁷ Stevens, Letter, May 1, 1832, in Missionary Herald, XXVIII, 364.

³⁸ Ibid.

laboring in revivals not only among the Christian Indians (Stockbridge) but to the savage Menominees, Brothertowns and Winnebagoes.³⁹ In 1832 he reported a number of cases of discipline and suspension among the some sixty-two members of his church, but no cases of excommunication.⁴⁰ With clarity and detail that divine described unusual conversions and death-bed scenes. In the fall of 1834 he visited an Indian woman who was dying of tuberculosis. "She said in answer to my inquiry that she thought herself near her end; but she had no fear of death and that the Sav. [iour] seemed near and precious...."⁴¹ He recorded with joy the fact that at an Indian wedding which he attended there was no strong drink served, and he commented that a few years ago there surely would have been a drunken frolic at the close of a wedding ceremony.⁴²

The contrast seen in the following quotations reveals a note of disillusionment which occurred after nine years of

39 John E. Chapin, "Sketch of Cutting Marsh", in Wisconsin Historical Collections (Madison, 1900), XV, 28.

40 Marsh, Report to John Tawse, Secretary of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge in Edinburgh, Scotland, August 1, 1832, in Ibid, 69.

41 Marsh, Report to Scottish Society, Ibid, 98.

42 Ibid, 91.

trying to civilize and Christianize the Indians. During his first year with the mission, Mr. Marsh made the following general statement: "The Stockbridge Indians appear to be advancing somewhat in habits of civilization."⁴³

In 1834 a new location was found for the Stockbridge Indians twenty or twenty-five miles to the south of Statesburg on the east shore of Lake Winnebago. The new village was named after the tribe - Stockbridge. (See map, page 40).

In 1839, troubled over the uncertainty of the Indians' being allowed to remain at Stockbridge much longer, Marsh only hoped that at least a few would be saved.⁴⁴ Looking back over a decade of labor, he was disappointed at the overall results of Indian work. A few saints who were true to the Faith were a source of comfort to him.

Whilst many of our fond hopes of individuals like vernal blossoms are blighted, and our hearts pained at seeing some make ship-wreck of faith and others unable to stand when temptation or trials come, yet blessed be God this is not the case with all. We are permitted to witness some precious fruits of our labors.⁴⁵

In 1848 his work with the Stockbridges was ended and

⁴³ Marsh, Letter to Mrs. C. [?], October 15, 1830, Marsh Papers.

⁴⁴ Marsh, Report to Scottish Society, May 8, 1839, Marsh Papers.

⁴⁵ Marsh, Report to Scottish Society for June, 1840, in Wisconsin Historical Collections, XV, 169.

Marsh took a church for a year at De Pere. Some of the Indians of that tribe stayed at Stockbridge and eventually became citizens, while others removed to a reservation in northern Wisconsin.

Methodists at Green Bay

Methodism entered Wisconsin in 1826 when Colonel Samuel Ryan came to Fort Howard with the United States troops. But it was not until six years later that the Methodist missionary society sponsored a missionary. John Clark was assigned to the Green Bay mission in 1832 and formed the first Methodist class in Wisconsin in July of that year.⁴⁶ He built a school-house on Fox River and organized a class of twenty-five. Portions of Scripture had been translated, and these, along with hymns especially prepared for them, were circulated among the Indians.⁴⁷ In 1836 a subscriber to the local Green Bay newspaper noted the work of the Methodists, the Day and Sabbath School with more than thirty scholars,

⁴⁶ William W. Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, 4 vols., Vol. IV, The Methodists (Chicago, 1946), 64, 413; Wesley C. Boag, "One Hundred Years of Methodism in Green Bay", in Green Bay Historical Bulletin, Published by the Green Bay Historical Society, September-October, 1926, Vol. II, No. 5; Mrs. Bella French, History of Brown County Wisconsin (Green Bay, 1876), 81.

⁴⁷ William P. Strickland, History of the Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church (Cincinnati, 1850), 88.

and the Temperance Society among the Oneidas.⁴⁸

The missionary efforts of John Clark were not confined to the immediate vicinity of Green Bay. Leaving Daniel Adams, a trustworthy Christian Indian, in charge of the mission at Kaukauna, he formed several small mission stations at different points on the Lake shore north of Green Bay, one at Marinette. These did not live long, however, and the main mission at Kaukauna eventually was given up.⁴⁹

IV Prairie du Chien

David Lowry

Across the state from Green Bay on the Mississippi River was another outpost of civilization. Life at Prairie du Chien centered around Fort Crawford, and missionary activity among the Indians (Winnebagoes) of the surrounding territory was at first intimately connected with government policy. In 1832 a treaty was drawn up at Fort Armstrong, Rock Island in which the general government agreed to maintain a school for twenty-seven years at or near Prairie du Chien for the education and support of such Winnebago children as would

⁴⁸ Green Bay Intelligencer, January 13, 1836.

⁴⁹ Philo S. Bennett, History of Methodism in Wisconsin (Cincinnati, 1890), 13-17.

voluntarily go to it.⁵⁰ General Joseph Street, who was in command at Fort Crawford, was responsible for the appointment of Mr. David Lowry to the Indian School established at Yellow River, a few miles west of Prairie du Chien. It was only natural for Street to seek a man for that post who was of the same denomination as he; Reverend Lowry was a Presbyterian. The new missionary came to Prairie du Chien in 1833, but his salary for the Indian school did not begin until January, 1834, and the school was not finished until a year later. Meanwhile, he acted as chaplain at the Fort.⁵¹

The comment of a fellow-missionary upon his work reveals to some extent the success of Reverend Lowry at the Indian school. Alfred Brunson, a Methodist working in the same area, commented, "...I must say he [Lowry] has done well. The natives begin to wave their prejudices, and his school is increasing."⁵²

The Indian school at Yellow River with its earnest, hard-working Christian superintendent was destined to a short

⁵⁰ History of Crawford and Richland Counties (Springfield, Illinois, 1884), 315.

⁵¹ Peter Scanlan, Prairie du Chien: French, British, American (Menasha, Wisconsin, 1937), 202.

⁵² Alfred Brunson to Lewis Cass, November 9, 1835, Galena, Brunson Letter Book, Brunson Papers.

life, however. The oncoming white settlers demanded more land, and treaties between the United States Government and the Indians in 1837 resulted in the removal of the northwestern tribes to the trans-Mississippi region. The Indian school was abandoned within a few short years after its inception.

Alfred Brunson

As has been mentioned before, Alfred Brunson, of the Pittsburg Methodist Conference, was attracted to the Indian mission field partly by Lieutenant Allen's account of the Schoolcraft Expedition of 1832. After having been put in charge of those districts in 1835, he made a tour of the Galena and Upper Mississippi area.⁵³ He found a warm reception at Prairie du Chien where he preached several times to the white settlers. Although he was instrumental in organizing a Methodist class there, most of his time was taken up with riding from one Indian mission to the other, preaching and teaching. His parish was indeed a large one, and he encountered many hardships.

This indefatigable worker had high hopes for the civilization of the Indians according to the white man's standard. He hoped to persuade them to form villages and to teach them

⁵³ Bennett, Methodism in Wisconsin, 26-27.

mechanical and agricultural arts along with the way of salvation. He also had dreams of "an academy in some central situation, to prepare native teachers for their schools, and to qualify their young men to fill any office to which they may be called in their improved state of society."⁵⁴ He and his workers were not to hold themselves aloof from the Indians, but to try to be "one of them", to sleep with them, learn their language as soon as possible, hold the ax, plow, hoe with them and preach Christ as the way of salvation.⁵⁵

Brunson established missions among the Sioux, Winnebagoes, and Chippewas, using Prairie du Chien as his headquarters. The missions under his care made rapid progress, compared with some of the efforts of Presbyterian missionaries whose policy it was to stay in one place. For Methodism as a whole was a missionary venture, with no distinction being made between missions and evangelism.⁵⁶ Brunson, like nearly all Methodist itinerants, was a missionary wherever he went. He set up schools, and 130 native children were receiving Christian instruction in 1839.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Brunson to Cass, August 31, 1835, Brunson Letter Book, Brunson Papers.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Charles Keller, The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut (New Haven, 1942), 187.

⁵⁷ Strickland, Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 92.

For the Sioux Nation Reverend Brunson established a mission at Little Crow Village. Two army officials, Colonel Davenport and Major Taliaferro asked for it.⁵⁸ The natives worked a farm of 100 acres, eighty of which the Indians planted. The yield was 1200 or 1500 bushels of corn, beans, peas, potatoes and other crops.⁵⁹ At least some of the plans of the ambitious missionary were fulfilled. In the spiritual realm he was able to witness the conversion of several and the religious enlightenment of some of the pupils in the schools.⁶⁰

Compared with the amount of effort expended, the results were meager indeed. The unsettled condition of the tribes, the effects of the liquor traffic and the poor health of Brunson were factors in the ultimate failure of the mission work in the Prairie du Chien area. In 1839 Mr. Brunson was put on the Superannuated list. Mr. B. T. Kavanaugh succeeded him, but seemed to lack the necessary qualifications to make a success of it.

He finally sold out the Mission house and farm to the Government for an Indian farm which was under the charge of Dr. Williamson of the American Board, and our Missions

58 Brunson to Poinsett, Secretary of War, April 8, 1839, Brunson Letter Book, 39, Brunson Papers.

59 Ibid, 46.

60 Brunson, Personal Narrative, January 30, 1864, passim., Brunson Papers.

to the Indians in that region was abandoned.⁶¹

V
La Pointe

The northernmost point at which the protestants established Indian missions in Wisconsin was at La Pointe on Madeline Island, almost at the western end of Lake Superior. (See map, page 40). There, as at Green Bay, the fur traders preceded the missionaries. Living at La Pointe was Lyman Warren, a trader working for the American Fur Company. His Puritan upbringing in Massachusetts no doubt caused him to be concerned over the lack of all religious and educational observances there. For, although not particularly pious himself, he found Frederick Ayer of Massachusetts teaching at the Mackinaw mission school and persuaded him to return with him to La Pointe in 1830 to open up a school for the Chippewa Indians.⁶² With one of his Mackinaw pupils as interpreter he collected a small school, acted as a catechist, studied the language and acquired "such information as was decisive in favor of establishing a mission there."⁶³

⁶¹ Brunson, Personal Narrative, 27.

⁶² Mrs. W. F. Pett, "A Forgotten Village", in Wisconsin Magazine of History, XII, 13-15, (September, 1926).

⁶³ Joseph Tracy, "History of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions", in History of American Missions, 208.

In 1831 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions sent Reverend Sherman Hall, recent graduate of Andover Theological Seminary, and his wife to further the work of the Congregational mission begun at La Pointe by Ayer. Reverend William T. Boutwell, a classmate of Hall's and his wife, also came as missionaries. They stopped at Mackinaw in July and remained several weeks, obtaining information about the Indians and deciding who should be the ones to proceed to La Pointe. The mission family, making the trip from Mackinaw to La Pointe in a French batteau provided by the traders, consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Hall, Mr. Ayer, and Miss Campbell. Miss Campbell was evidently part Indian; at any rate, she accompanied them because she knew the Ojibwa and French languages. Mr. Boutwell remained at Mackinaw to study the Indian language. In October he went to the Falls of St. Mary, where he received help in his study from Dr. James of the United States Army and from Henry Schoolcraft, government agent for Indian affairs.⁶⁴ Reverend Boutwell then went to La Pointe that fall before he left in 1832 to accompany Schoolcraft on his famous expedition. While visiting the Hall's he assisted them by writing a grammar and a

⁶⁴ Tracy, "History of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions", in History of American Missions, 219-20.

reader in the Ojibwa language.⁶⁵

One of the first things that Sherman Hall did that autumn upon his arrival at La Pointe was to collect some of the Indians for a talk. He told them the purpose of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in sending him and what they were going to do; that they had come not just to conduct a school, but to spend their lives with them. The chiefs in answering said their children could go to school if they wanted to, but of course the parents had to hunt.⁶⁶

With the help of one or two assistant teachers and a mechanic to do the manual labor about the mission, Mr. Hall toiled night and day to enlighten the pagan mind and teach the children in the school. In 1835 there were forty-six scholars in the school, although not more than twelve or fifteen of those were regular attendants. When the band of Indians was encamped near the station, attendance naturally rose. Mr. Hall reported that in that year there had been more interest manifested in the school by the parents and children than at any previous period.⁶⁷ To make things as

⁶⁵ Mrs. W. F. Pett, "A Forgotten Village", in Wisconsin Magazine of History, XXI, 15, (September, 1928).

⁶⁶ Hall, Letter, September 17, 1831, in Missionary Herald, XXVIII, 50, (February, 1832).

⁶⁷ Hall to Cass, October 1, 1835, in Culkin, II, 125.

simple as possible for the young children Infant school principles were used, that is, pictures and singing lessons. The number of scholars who came to the school was seldom very large, but their improvement encouraged the laborers. Among other hardships, they were handicapped by a lack of books in the Indian language, so progress was of necessity slow.⁶⁸

The school seems to have been more popular with the Indians than the preaching of the Gospel. In the summer of 1838 Reverend Hall was able to report to his mission board headquarters that, "Our school has never attained so much popularity as during the past year, especially among the more enlightened part of the people here."⁶⁹ He did not observe, however, a corresponding interest in religion, for in the same letter he reported no special attention to religion in the members of the church in the last year, not much of the true Christian feeling and spirit. "They generally persevere in rejecting the only Saviour of sinners and cleave to heathenism."⁷⁰

Toward the end of the period under our consideration (1839) progress in religion among the Indians at La Pointe

68 Hall to Greene, August 8, 1837, in Culkin, II, 205.

69 Hall to Greene, August 16, 1838, Ibid, 217.

70 Ibid, 218.

was disappointing indeed. They still manifested much indifference to instruction and improvements of any kind. Nevertheless, the missionary was inspired by the advancement made in another way.

I can see, however, on comparing this present condition of the Indians at this place with what it was when I came here, that they are much better furnished with the necessaries of life now than they were then. They plant more than they did then, and are much more industrious in other respects. Work was a disgrace with many then. Now it is not difficult to obtain almost any one to do common labour, such as they are capable of doing.⁷¹

In spite of slight success and small gains the untiring Mr. Hall regarded that field as presenting unusual opportunity. "In regard to this country as a field for missionary operations--we repeat what we have before said--it is open and invites immediate occupancy."⁷² Hall and his associates could not understand why more men in the East did not come out and help, for there was always a dire need of more workers. It was even suggested among them that some of them go back East to recruit men "and tell them their duty."⁷³ One may well wonder what the results would have been if their requests for workers had been granted.

⁷¹ Hall to Laura Mudgett, June 11, 1839, in Culkin, III, 244-245.

⁷² Hall, Boutwell, Ayer and Ely, to A.B.C.F.M., September 12, 1835, Ibid, 236.

⁷³ Ibid, 239.

VI
Cooperation between
the Government and Indian Missions

It is an interesting fact that in a country where separation of church and state is the policy, the government provided funds for the support of missions. On the other hand, this should not be thought unusual by virtue of the fact that the Indian policy of the United States Government was to civilize the wild tribes, that is, have them cease from their wandering, hunting, fighting habits and settle down in communities to pursue the occupation of agriculture. In this the missionaries and the government had a common aim, though for different reasons. The task of the missionaries was made easier when the Indians lived in communities, and then of course, the fighting, worshiping of idols and other customs were contrary to Christian teaching. The government was chiefly concerned with meeting the demands of white pioneers for land, as thousands steadily advanced to the Mississippi River and beyond. They supported the missionaries because they saw the civilizing effects of Christianity operating upon the wild sons of the forest.

The Civilization Fund was set up in 1819 by an act of Congress which appropriated \$10,000 annually for Indian civilization and improvement under the direction of the President, "to be distributed among individuals or societies who have

established or contemplate establishing schools for the education of Indian children, and who desire the cooperation of government". To receive aid, plans and cost estimates were to be submitted to the Secretary of War. The Government was to pay two-thirds of the expense of erecting the necessary buildings and aid in operating the schools according to the number and progress of the pupils.⁷⁴

Missions in Wisconsin did not become important until the late 1820's, and consequently did not draw upon the government for help until around 1828. In that year, the Episcopal Mission at Green Bay was granted \$1,000 for three years, and \$1,500 a year after that for educational work; this aid came to an end after the three years had expired.⁷⁵

The La Pointe mission was also the beneficiary of government funds. A small sum was granted in 1834 or 1835 for the purpose of furnishing the means of assisting the Indians in erecting small log buildings. This was done, of course, to encourage the natives to adopt a more settled way of life.⁷⁶

Before Alfred Brunson assumed his duties as missionary

⁷⁴ Jedidiah Morse, Abstract of Official Report, in Chapin, Missionary Gazeteer, 255.

⁷⁵ Julia C. Emery, A Century of Endeavor, 1821-1921 (Chicago, 1921), 51.

⁷⁶ Missionary Herald, XXX, 228, (June, 1835).

to the Indians in the Upper Mississippi region, he wrote a letter to Secretary of War Lewis Cass expressing his conviction that the success of his mission would depend upon the attitude toward religion of the Government Indian Agent. He even suggested that he himself be appointed agent or sub-agent, "the nature of which [office] seems to be more of a benevolent than civil character, and therefore not inconsistent with my profession."⁷⁷ His fears in this case were unfounded, however, for in November he withdrew his application for an agency job. He had found that General Joseph Street had done so well that he hoped he (Street) would be maintained at Prairie du Chien.⁷⁸

The religious influence of General Street has been indicated above. Other officers connected with army posts or Indian affairs showed tolerance toward and welcomed the missionaries. Henry Schoolcraft, whose headquarters were at Sault St. Marie, wrote to Sherman Hall that any place which the latter would choose for a mission would be approved by him. He forwarded to Hall a letter he received from Acting Secretary of War John Robb, written October 1, 1832:

⁷⁷ Brunson to Cass, August 31, 1835, Brunson Letter Book, Brunson Papers.

⁷⁸ Brunson to Cass, November 9, 1835, Brunson Letter Book, Brunson Papers.

The department will not certainly object to the establishment of a mission among the North West Indians, at a point selected and approved by you. [Schoolcraft] Mr. Hall may be informed, that his undertaking is not only sanctioned, but cordially approved.⁷⁹

Governor Dodge was impressed with the good effects of the Indian mission work of Alfred Brunson. In 1837 Dodge was instrumental in bringing about treaties between the Chippewas and Sioux, in which the Chippewas sold to the government a large tract of land. Two of Brunson's Chippewa boys assisted in interpreting at the treaty-making. The boys were "introduced to Governor Dodge, as specimens of the fruit of our missionary labours among Indians, the Governor not having seen any such before, expressed himself highly pleased and promised his cooperation in trying to elevate the race."⁸⁰

Other instances could be cited to show the attitude of particular government officers toward mission work. Those already given are intended to show that the spirit of cooperation operated between the government and its officers in the Wisconsin area and the missionaries to the Indians.

VII

Final Outcome of Indian Missions

Though the government gave its sanction and material

⁷⁹ Report of Hall and Boutwell to the Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, February 7, 1833, in Culkin, III, 206.

⁸⁰ Brunson, Personal Narrative, 10, Brunson Papers.

aid to Indian missions in Wisconsin, and though many consecrated missionaries literally gave their lives to the cause of converting the "benighted sons of the forest" to Christianity, the final results were amazingly small. According to one writer, the work done among the Indians in Wisconsin "left few permanent visible results."⁸¹ The missionaries themselves were slow to admit defeat and felt that even if a few souls were saved, they were rewarded for their efforts. However, the over-all picture revealed, with the passing of time, that the Indians were not as ready to accept Christianity as was believed by many easterners and by the missionaries themselves.

Insurmountable obstacles prevented the missionaries from accomplishing their goals. An attitude of aloofness and an element of condescension in the work of evangelizing the red man operated against its educative value.⁸² One thing was certain--the Gospel could never be as significant as a constructive factor in the civilization of the Indian as it was in the white settlements of the frontier.

⁸¹ Frank N. Dexter, A Hundred Years of Congregational History (Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, 1933), 1.

⁸² Peter G. Mode, The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity (New York, 1923), 30.

CHAPTER III

THE MACEDONIAN CALL FROM THE WHITE SETTLERS IN THE WISCONSIN AREA

The harvest is great; the laborers are few.--Luke 10:2.

I

The General Nature of the Call

As long as frontier conditions prevailed in Wisconsin communities the demand for ministers was always greater than the supply. The call which came to the home mission headquarters from young preachers already on the field and from laymen was invariably, almost monotonously, the same as that first Macedonian call to Saint Paul, "Come over and help us." It was a natural situation. From 1825 to 1840 the whole Mississippi Valley was filling up rapidly with settlers from the East, so that it could rightfully be said (as John Calhoun did) that America was "fearfully growing".

Most of the people who came to settle in the southern half of Wisconsin in this early period were from New York and New England. One minister estimated in 1838 that of the 20,000 inhabitants in the territory, probably 19,000 came from eastern states, meaning New York and New England.¹

¹ Lemuel Hall, Report, in Home Missionary, XI, 271-272.

The promising character of the population was encouraging to the missionary, and he told that fact to his eastern friends, hoping it would counteract the conception that the West was in an extremely barbarous state. The people who came here were in general intelligent, enterprising, favorable to religion. They revered the Puritan name. This, of course, was a distinct advantage to the Presbyterian and Congregational ministers who served under the American Home Missionary Society. Unless the settlers had completely left religion out of their lives while they still resided in the East, the doctrines which the pioneer preachers proclaimed to them were not strange by any means.

All the missionaries were conscious of the fact that some day Wisconsin would be an important part of the nation. The rapid rate at which settlers were pouring into the territory told them that. Their reports and letters were filled with predictions as to the coming greatness of this or that city or region. Milwaukee was considered by one writer as "a point of great importance both in itself and on account of its influence on the interior, with which it must be connected in its business and [in?] a thousand ways."² The potential

² Stephan Peet to American Home Missionary Society, July 20, 1839, in A.H.M.S. Correspondence, in the Library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, photostatic copies of the originals, which are possessed by the Hammond Library of the University of Chicago. The two main sources for this chapter are the A.H.M.S. Correspondence and the Home Missionary.

greatness of the territory was a point frequently used by the missionaries in persuading their eastern friends to send more ministers to Wisconsin. While those boosters of a hundred and ten or twenty years ago were not free from exaggeration, time has proved that they were right in their predictions.

The healthfulness of the climate and the fertility of the soil were two other arguments used in their pleas for help. Many easterners were ignorant of the geography of the area, and the missionaries helped to enlighten them. The following quotation illustrates the publicity Green Bay received from the men who wanted to attract other settlers and preachers: "The health of Green Bay is proverbial. Fevers have not prevailed at all there. Perhaps there is not a place between Lake Superior and the Mexican gulf, where there is less disease."³ Another minister wrote concerning Walworth County, "Most of the time we have a clear sky and an elastic air. It is the experience of numbers who came into this country with feeble health that they rapidly recovered."⁴

The reports and letters of the missionaries did not contain an altogether roseate picture of the living conditions

³ Unsigned item, "Appeal for a Missionary to Green Bay", in Home Missionary, VIII, 153, (1836).

⁴ Lemuel Hall, Report, in Home Missionary, XI, 271, (April, 1839).

in Wisconsin, however. There would be hardships, they admitted. But these would be only temporary. The future looked bright because the region was being inhabited and developed rapidly. One writer observed that he knew of no one who had not improved his economic condition by coming here.

While the things mentioned above--the intelligent character of the population, the potential greatness of the region, the agreeable climate, and economic opportunity--were used as inducements to attract settlers and young ministers to Wisconsin, the most important consideration of all was, of course, the spiritual needs of the people. After giving attention to the opportunities for young missionaries in the territory as a whole, a closer examination will be made of the needs of some particular communities. The pleas which were made will be seen in greater detail.

When the agent for the American Home Missionary Society in the Wisconsin area wrote in 1839 to his headquarters that it was time that they and the public understood more about the situation and wants of the territory, he was voicing the opinion of many of his fellow-workers. For ten long years (1830-1840) the appeals for more ministers went forth. Many of these reached a wide reading public through the medium of the Home Missionary. The calls were urgent and were for immediate help.

As early as 1831 the Home Missionary Society sent out a man--D. W. Lathrop--to ascertain the needs of the territory. He pointed to the lack of preachers at Forts Crawford and Winnebago. He was sure that General Street would give his support to religious services, and the settlement, as well as the officers, needed someone.⁵ One writer was very much disturbed over the fact that the army had been so neglected in regard to religious services. He issued a sharp rebuke to "our country" for not providing religious instruction to the officers of the frontier forts.⁶

The character of frontier society, with its freedom from restraint and unsettled state, was a source of alarm to the Wisconsin preachers in this period. For that reason a frequent appeal was that ministers were needed to help form the character of the population. To them the time element was important:

I am extremely anxious that labourers should take the field in time, and not linger until the weeds of error and vice shall...get above our heads.... 'Brethren, come over to the Mississippi, and help us.' When will the time come, that laymen will feel that they, as well as ministers, are in duty bound to go where they can do the most good?"⁷

⁵ Reverend D. W. Lathrop, in Home Missionary, IV, 150-151, (1831).

⁶ Aratus Kent to A.H.M.S., June 14, 1832, A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

⁷ Aratus Kent, Report, dated February 9, 1830, in Home Missionary, II, 193.

To prevent the "weeds of error and vice" from getting above their heads, the missionaries already on the field pleaded not only for more Christian workers but also for pious families to settle in communities and act as a leavening influence on the whole of society. Aratus Kent, for instance, did not want to excite a "promiscuous" emigration but sought to persuade religious people to come. In 1832 he mapped out a possible program for a minister who would have his headquarters at Prairie du Chien. He suggested that the man who contemplated coming to fill the place should begin by "enrolling a colony of pious families" to settle on the rich farm land near there.⁸

Lest the eastern people be unduly frightened over reports of Indian wars and outrages on the white population, the attempt was made to give them a correct view. It was true, Aratus Kent wrote in 1832, that the Indians were creating great alarm and confusion, but he assured his readers that the trouble was being instigated by one restless spirit (Black Hawk), and that measures were being taken to secure the inhabitants from apprehension in the future. "So that these various alarms some of which are greatly exaggerated should have no influence on any plans of operation which are to take

⁸ Kent to A.H.M.S., June 14, 1832, A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

effect 6 or 9 months hence.⁹

What kind of ministers did the missionaries residing in Wisconsin ask the Missionary Society to send them? Some of the men were quite explicit as to the qualifications they thought necessary to be a successful home missionary on the frontier. Emphasized again and again was the fact that he must be able to endure hardship. They wanted no one who had been pampered by ease and pleasure or who was possessed of effeminate habits. He would have to know how to face all kinds of weather, to endure hardness as a good soldier. Reverend Aratus Kent, who must have possessed many of those qualities himself, wrote out his ideal:

A man who can sleep sweetly on the 'soft side of an oak plank' or on the green sod of the mother Earth with no covering but his blanket and no company but his horse, or perchance a passing wolf or a benighted whip-poor-will; and who in the mean time, can preach with apostolic zeal whenever he can collect a dozen precious souls to listen.¹⁰

Those who could already qualify as veterans in the work of the Lord made it plain that they wanted orthodox men, able to combat infidelity, and men who had not studied theological systems till they had almost forgotten the Bible.

9 Kent to A.H.M.S., June 14, 1832, A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

10 Ibid.

Yes, Sir, thorough-going, orthodox men who are not ashamed to declare the whole counsel, and who will depend not upon numbers for success, but upon the power and efficacy of divine truth. Such we must have or else this part of our American Zion will never be like a field which the Lord hath planted--And shall we call in vain? We ask and want some pioneers, bold and courageous men, as well as meek and gentle unto all men.¹¹

It need hardly be said that for the most part the pioneers in the realm of religion measured up to the standard they set up for others. But they were above all humble, and usually the last to admit that they had achieved success. After they had done all they could they called themselves unprofitable servants who had only done their duty.

II Southwest District

The incoming settlers from the East did not or perhaps could not take the advice of the editor of the Detroit Free Press. In answering the complaints made in the East about the western exodus of their preachers, he suggested that they come with them. "Let ministers join in the current and accompany the emigrants."¹²

Located at Galena, Illinois, only eleven miles from the southern boundary line of what finally became the state of

¹¹ Cutting Marsh to A.H.M.S., August 14, 1837, A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

¹² Green Bay Intelligencer, January 27, 1836.

Wisconsin (see map, page 40), Aratus Kent was in a position to know the needs of the area bounded by the Wisconsin River on the North and the Rock River to the southeast. He early pointed out to the officials of the American Home Missionary Society the opportunities for a minister in a district which was the goal of thousands of emigrants in the period from 1830 to 1840.

This faithful Presbyterian minister working under the American Home Missionary Society was anxious for others of his denomination to come and share his labors. In 1831 Kent saw that a church of ten or twelve Presbyterians might be gathered at Prairie du Chien, which had prospects of a great influx of people "next spring".¹³

As late as 1836 Cassville had not yet been supplied with Presbyterian services, and Platteville in 1839 was "calling loudly" for a Presbyterian minister, offering liberally to support one and to erect a meeting house.

By 1839 Mr. Kent was discouraged, indeed. Let him tell his plight in his own words:

It is now ten years since I came here, and during all that time I have called in vain for help.... But there is a field of labor in this vicinity, [Galena] composed principally of farmers, where there are members enough

¹³ Kent to A.H.M.S., December 1, 1831, A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

to form a respectable church, where they are now building a house for worship, and where they have ability to do something.¹⁴

He went on to say that he wished a fraction of the mental energy that had been wasted in the last year in useless controversy could have been applied to preaching the gospel in the West, "and whether old school or new, it maketh no matter to me."

In some cases there was a desire and an attempt on the part of frontier churches to rely more on their own ability to supply ministers than on the American Home Missionary Society. For instance, the Presbyterian Church in Galena resolved in 1836 to "endeavor, with the help of the Lord, to have, within five years, at least ten young men in a course of preparation for the Gospel ministry."¹⁵

The spiritual needs of the residents of Prairie du Chien during the fourth decade of the century were met for the most part by men whose main job was to take care of Indian mission work. Mention has already been made of Reverend David Lowry of the mission at Yellow River west of Prairie du Chien and of Reverend Alfred Brunson, the Methodist missionary. The

¹⁴ Kent, Report, in Home Missionary, XII, 59, (1839).

¹⁵ Horatio Newhall to A.H.M.S., March 7, 1836, A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

latter organized a Methodist class in 1836. They preached to the white settlers in the town and at Fort Crawford occasionally. In 1836 Reverend Richard F. Cadle, formerly of the Episcopalian mission station at Green Bay, came to Prairie du Chien as chaplain. Along with his duties at Fort Crawford, Cadle ministered to the people of the village and organized a parish in 1837.

Not until after 1840 was the American Home Missionary Society able to send a settled pastor to Prairie du Chien. In 1841 Jedidiah Stevens, a man who had received experience in Indian mission work at Green Bay, went to that up-and-coming frontier village.¹⁶ The critical shortage of ministers had ended for that city as it had for many southern Wisconsin communities by 1840.

Bishop Jackson Kemper, who headed the missionary enterprise for the Episcopalian Church in the Northwest Territory, surveyed the religious needs of Wisconsin during a tour in 1838. At Mineral Point he found no settled clergyman of any description. The same sad condition existed at Cassville. And at both places he found people ready to hear preaching; attendance at divine services held in a schoolhouse at Cassville was good. He also discovered that there were no

¹⁶ Kennedy, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, 116, 117.

religious privileges at Platteville.¹⁷

The policy of using lay preachers allowed the Methodists to be earlier on the field, at least in some places, than their Calvinistic brethren. A report from Gratiot's Grove in 1835 showed that where there was only one Presbyterian minister in a field a hundred and fifty miles from north to south and from east to west, the Methodists had "no less than four ministers, either local or circuit preachers, in this very region. And yet there are many neighbourhoods entirely or almost destitute of a preached Gospel."¹⁸ At Platteville in 1840 there was a flourishing Methodist society with a fine church building, the basement of which held a school of 130 members of both sexes and all ages.¹⁹

III The Southeast

Another part of Wisconsin which was a ripe field for ministers of the Gospel was the two southernmost tiers of counties in the eastern half of the State. There were in the region a lack of ministers in every denomination: Baptist

¹⁷ Jackson Kemper, "A Trip Through Wisconsin in 1838", in Wisconsin Magazine of History, VIII, 428-430, (Madison, 1925).

¹⁸ Home Missionary, VIII, 8, (1835).

¹⁹ Home Missionary, XII, 270, (1840).

and Methodist as well as Presbyterian and Congregational. One who reported the condition of Racine County was Reverend Cyrus Nichols, a Presbyterian. He had not seen a Presbyterian preacher for two years in 1838. His appeal for help was printed in the Home Mission magazine in that year:

Please invite the friends of Home Missions, in the East, to cast their eye beyond the fertile plains and moral wastes of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, to the widely-extended moral wilderness of Wisconsin.... The work to be accomplished here is great.... I need help more than tongue can describe.²⁰

Those who had many settlements to care for had to do a great deal of traveling, and in a day before good roads and bridges this worked a real hardship. The fact that their efforts were so scattered disturbed them. Some people heard sermons only once a month, or once in several months. The home missionary usually lived in one larger settlement, but was not able to devote all his time to it, for he saw outlying communities within a radius of fifty or sixty miles, sometimes more, which were just as much in need of attention as the town he had chosen as a dwelling place. The following quotation aptly describes the condition which faced the overworked missionary in Wisconsin:

Half a dozen blasts of the Gospel trump, in close

²⁰ Cyrus Nichols, Report, in Home Missionary, X, 143, (1838).

succession, will annoy the devil more than a hundred at long intervals. But alas, the labors of Christ's servants here [Milwaukee and vicinity] are so detached--so long between--and the number of laborers so small, what can we do to meet the moral condition, and increasing demand for the bread of life, over such vast regions?²¹

Reverend Lemuel Hall pointed in 1838 to several settlements in Walworth County which might sustain a pastor. At Geneva he found fifteen or twenty professors of the Presbyterian Church who were anxious to have preaching. A few miles from there at Spring Prairie a small flock of believers carried on in spite of the absence of a shepherd. A young man, presumably a godly person, had gathered and sustained a Sabbath school and held meetings on Sundays by reading sermons to the people.²²

By the summer of 1839 the county had two Presbyterian Churches and a county Temperance Society, the first in the Territory. Reverend Stephen Peet, the Home Missionary Society's agent, toured the county and found the field of labor altogether too large for one man. He thought Troy and East Troy could provide half the living for a preacher. "This little band greatly desires some one to break to them the

²¹ Gilbert Crawford, Report, in Home Missionary, XII, 9, (1839).

²² Lemuel Hall, in Home Missionary, XI, 176, (1838).

bread of life, and will do all in their power to sustain the preached gospel among them."²³

Mr. Peet found the Society-supported missionary at Geneva living fairly comfortably "in a small log house with but one room, provided by his people, but chiefly fitted up with his own hands." They appeared as contented and happy as "their more favoured brethren who receive large salaries, and have more convenient or splendid establishments."²⁴

In Rock Country the inhabitants were of a definite religious character. In one settlement meetings had been held from its beginning, and in 1839 some of those good people had some expectation of obtaining a young man from a seminary in East Windsor, Connecticut.²⁵ The towns of Jefferson and Watertown in Jefferson County were also pointed to as ample fields for labor. "Do send them at least one minister," pleaded Mr. Peet.

Bishop Kemper found Madison in 1838 to be a small village of "perhaps two dozen" houses, but the religious spirit was not lacking among the dwellers. During his visit to the capital city, which extended over a Sunday, he held two

²³ Peet to A.H.M.S., July 20, 1839, A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

services in an unfinished store building. The attendance was good.²⁶ In the summer of 1839 Madison still had no church, though a sabbath school was in operation and there was a general disposition to attend religious services.²⁷

After Stephen Peet had summarized and reported the results of his tour in 1839, and the need of the Territory had received some publicity, the men were still not supplied. Some men had come, but not nearly enough.

Still we are glad of what we have--But send us some more. Can't you send two or three first rate (or middle rate, for they are the best) young men to take hold and build up in this Territory.... Please inform me what the prospect is of ministers coming here. I am continually enquired of, by churches and Christians.²⁸

IV Milwaukee

The town which was to become Wisconsin's largest city was recognized as an important place for the establishment of facilities for public worship. It was one of the Lake gateways to the agricultural interior and the landing place of thousands of emigrants. It was above all a center of business

²⁶ Jackson Kemper, "A Tour Through Wisconsin in 1838", in Wisconsin Magazine of History, VIII, 431-432, (Madison, 1935).

²⁷ Peet to A.H.M.S., July 20, 1839, A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

²⁸ Peet to A.H.M.S., December 10, 1839, in A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

activity, and the pious Puritans were anxious to counteract the tide of worldliness due to land speculation and seeking for material gain. The Presbyterian Church was organized in Milwaukee in April, 1837 by Moses Ordway and Cutting Marsh.²⁹ A Methodist Church was organized in the fall of the same year.

V
Green Bay

Cutting Marsh, who came to Wisconsin in 1830 as Missionary to the Stockbridge Indians, did not confine his efforts to them. Perhaps it was because he saw that the Gospel was not being as readily accepted by the tribes as had been expected; perhaps it was because the demand for his services among the whites was so pressing, or it may have been a combination of those reasons which was responsible for his turning his attention to the spiritual needs of the white people. At any rate, he helped organize the first Presbyterian Church in the Wisconsin Territory in 1836.³⁰ This was at Green Bay.

Although Green Bay was one of the most important settlements in Wisconsin, the settlers there struggled along from year to year, with preaching being supplied only

²⁹ Thomas S. Johnson, "Moses Ordway, Pioneer Presbyterian Missionary", in Wisconsin Magazine of History, II, 269, (Madison, March, 1919).

³⁰ Ibid.

irregularly by missionaries whose efforts were scattered over a wide area. Appeals were printed in the Home Missionary in 1833 and again in 1836, but without the desired results. Reverend Marsh, after the church was formed in January, 1836, supplied the pulpit occasionally. Moses Ordway, who came West from New York state, was the leader of the small band for a few months. Stephen Peet arrived in October, 1837, and under his ministry the Presbyterian Church prospered and grew. But he felt that he should try to help other struggling churches too, so much of his time was spent touring the state, strengthening little groups, forming churches, and ascertaining the needs of the state as a whole.

In 1838 the American Home Missionary Society headquarters received another request for a minister at Green Bay, this time from two elders in the church. They asked them to help them support a shepherd for a flock which was scattered. The times were hard, but they pledged themselves to help the Society later on if aid could be given to them at that time. "Help us in this extremity and we shall hope hereafter to help you in sending the Gospel into the interior of this rising Territory."³¹

³¹ A Hotchkiss and William Mitchell to A.H.M.S., July 11, 1838, A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

In the spring of 1839 Stephen Peet was still sending appeals to the Home Missionary Society. He felt that if the Green Bay Church could be supplied he would be free to visit the interior.

Can't you send us a man?-I wish you could soon-early in the season-a young man or one who would want no wife for a year would be best adapted to our wants. (Besides we can furnish that article when needed)-It is thought by many that I ought to visit the interior this summer spending a month to set matters right-form churches, etc.... We want a good man here-We will find enough for him to do.³²

VI

The Need for Ministers Being Met

The repeated calls from the Wisconsin Territory came to the attention of the public through the Home Missionary. Indeed, toward the latter part of the decade more space was given to Wisconsin than had been up to that time. In the November, 1839 issue of that magazine there appeared a long, unsigned article about the state, describing the country, telling its advantages. This was followed by an announcement of a proposal of the Executive Committee of the American Home Missionary Society, "to make IMMEDIATE AND ENERGETIC EFFORTS TO SUPPLY WISCONSIN WITH THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL."³³ A

³² Peet to A.H.M.S., March, 1839, A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

³³ Home Missionary, XII, 146, (November, 1839).

special committee hoped to send at least one missionary to ten or eleven specifically named points in the state.³⁴ A copy of a letter was included in which an unnamed person pledged \$1,000 for missions in Wisconsin.³⁵

By January of 1840 the vacancies on the Wisconsin frontier were beginning to be filled. Green Bay, Milwaukee, Southport, Racine, Mineral Point, Whitewater Prairie and Prairie du Lac were soon to have men for either Congregational or Presbyterian Churches.³⁶ In September of the same year an encouraging report was published in the Society's organ. "Ministers are coming among us in considerable numbers. Five have already arrived; others are expected soon.... The prospects of our cause in this Territory are exceedingly animating."³⁷

A few months later Stephen Peet wrote that there was no difficulty in getting men to come to "this region", except that they seemed unwilling to go to the Mississippi Country.³⁸

³⁴ Home Missionary, XII, 146, (November, 1839).

³⁵ Ibid, 147.

³⁶ Home Missionary, XII, 201, (January, 1840).

³⁷ Stephen Peet, in Home Missionary, XIII, 102, (September, 1840).

³⁸ Peet to A.H.M.S., January 10, 1841, A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

Everywhere the ministers went they found small groups of people who were ready and willing to hear the Gospel preached. From the evidence presented it would seem that the critical shortage of ministers for the white settlers in the Wisconsin Territory had, by 1840 or 1841, been considerably alleviated. This shortage, while it lasted, worked a hardship on those who carried the load, but this was only one of many problems which confronted the pioneer missionary. The nature of some of the hardships presents another interesting story.

CHAPTER IV

PROBLEMS OF THE MISSIONARIES

We are troubled on every side....--St. Paul.

I

Indian Mission Work

The migratory character of the Indians was one of many factors which prevented the missionaries from being as successful in their work as they would have desired. One wonders if the carriers of the Gospel lacked knowledge of the habits of the redmen. Even if they knew about their roving customs previous to their contact with them, however, they must not have been aware of the difficulties which might occur. They could not have predicted the various steps which the United States Government was to take regarding the removal of the aborigines to Trans-Mississippi regions. The reports of the missionaries contain many references to this subject.

While the American Fur Company officials encouraged the Indians to continue their shifting from place to place in order to hunt, the Government and the missionaries tried to get them to settle down. Reverend Sherman Hall of the La Pointe mission soon discovered what implications this would have for his work of converting the Chippewas. He wrote in 1832:

The Indians of that band are very much scattered. In the summer they separate into small villages about the numerous lakes in the section of the country which they occupy.... During the time they are in the deer country they are constantly moving from place to place.... It will be very difficult therefore to come in contact with them to give them instruction.... If a station should be established among that band, it would benefit them very little unless the missionary should spend much of his time in itinerating.¹

Five years later the problem was still with them. The treaty of St. Peters made in 1837 resulted in drawing away many Indians from La Pointe, who, had they stayed, would have visited the mission.²

At La Pointe the United States Government stepped in to try to change the nomadic character of the Indians. Money was granted for the purpose of building log houses for the natives in the vicinity of that mission station.³

This measure did not bring the desired results, however; for though a few of the tribe had a disposition to settle down, most of them adhered to their old habits of wandering from place to place.

1. Sherman Hall, Journal, October 1, 1832, in William E. Culkin, Early Protestant Missions in the Lake Superior Country, (Superior, Wisconsin, 1937), II, 37. Hereafter referred to as Culkin.

2. Hall to American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (hereafter cited as A.B.C.F.M.), August 8, 1837, in Culkin, II, 180.

3. Missionary Herald, XXX, 228, (June, 1835). This fact was mentioned in another connection on page 65.

Another perplexing situation which disturbed the missionaries was the fact that the sons of the forest displayed indifference to religion; not only indifference but actual opposition. In the estimation of the Chippewas at least the small favors occasionally granted to them by the missionaries--a meal now and then, medicine, a gift--did not compensate for occupying their ground, using their wood, grass, and taking fish out of their lakes.⁴ Some of them suspected that the missionaries had sinister motives and that they were tools of the government.⁵

The Indians in the region of La Pointe thought they were doing the missionaries a favor by listening to their Gospel. Consequently, they expected gifts in return. Mr. Hall wrote that even the gospel itself could not eradicate that trait in their character which seemed so deeply inwrought. He sought for a solution to this problem: an appropriation was requested from the mission headquarters in Boston for the purpose of buying clothes and gifts for the Indians. Hall hoped that this would increase the number of scholars in the school and cause the parents to think more highly of the

⁴ Hall to A.B.C.F.M., October (n. d.) 1838, in Culkin, II, 225.

⁵ Ibid, 231.

missionaries.⁶

However adequate was the theological training of the missionaries, and willing as they were to endure hardship for the sake of Christ's Kingdom, there was one deficiency which worked as a real barrier in winning the Indians to Christianity. This was a lack of knowledge of the Redman's language. The usual procedure, indeed, about the only way possible in those days, was to learn the dialect after they arrived on the field of labor. Sometimes this was a long and tedious process. It always operated as a handicap. And native interpreters were difficult to secure.

Reverend David Lowry, who worked among the Winnebago Indians near Prairie du Chien, wrote, "We are as destitute of capacity to understand each other, as if we had been animals of entire different species."⁷ Alfred Brunson, the Methodist missionary whose headquarters were at Prairie du Chien, used two young Chippewa boys for interpreters at one time. Sherman Hall at La Pointe employed in 1832 a boy about seventeen years

⁶ Hall to A.B.C.F.M., February 8, 1835, in Culkin, II, 105.

⁷ David Lowry, November 15, 1833, in Revivalist, (January, 1834). Typewritten copies of some items by Lowry which appeared in the Revivalist of Nashville, Tennessee are to be found in the Joseph M. Street Papers, in the Library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

old, whom he did not consider a "suitable" interpreter. On Sundays he conducted three services, two of them in the Indian language, and when he lacked a native to translate he tried to speak it himself. "Mr. Boutwell and myself are trying to speak the language; but as yet we make poor work of it. We are barbarians to the Indians, and they to us...."⁸ When a Mr. Campbell and his family left the station in 1835 Hall was left without an interpreter, thus leaving him more handicapped than ever.⁹

The missionaries had difficulty not only with the spoken word but with the written word. They seemed always in need of readers, grammars and of Bibles for the use of the children in the mission school. Long, laborious hours were spent over translations of portions of the Scripture. Mr. Hall translated the Gospel according to Saint Luke and sent it back East to be printed in the fall of 1836.

The opposition of the fur traders and sometimes of the Indian Agents was a grave threat to the success of the missionaries. The traders feared that if the redmen turned their attention to agriculture they would not bring in the pelts to prosper that lucrative business. Consequently, they opposed

⁸ Hall to Lydia Hall, December 25, 1832, in Culkin, III, 11.

⁹ Hall to A.B.C.F.M., July 4, 1835, in Ibid, II, 115.

the policy of the government and of the missionaries to encourage the Indians to adopt a more settled way of life.

One of the items of barter was whiskey, which the trader offered in exchange for the furs. The results of the liquor traffic were a real hindrance to the work of the heralds of the Gospel. Reverend Cutting Marsh, near Green Bay, testified that the downward course of the pagans was greatly accelerated in consequence of mingling with fur-traders and others engaged in the traffic of ardent spirits.¹⁰

David Lowry near Prairie du Chien also complained of the same trouble. He wrote in 1833:

...most of the intercourse, kept up between the white people and Indians, is by men of dissipated characters, traders, whose sole object is to make money, and who frown on every attempt to improve the condition of the poor Indians.... There are ten obstacles to be encountered in attempting to Christianize them, to one among white people.¹¹

Alfred Brunson partially attributed the failure of the Methodist missions among the Indians to this very thing. Admitting that the children in the school made considerable advancement and that some of the Indians showed "signs of religious enlightenment", he went on to say, "But the ceding of

¹⁰ Marsh to the Secretary of the Scottish Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, August 1, 1832, in Wisconsin Historical Collections, (Madison, 1900), XV, 72.

¹¹ Lowry, November 15, 1833, in Revivalist, copy in Street Papers.

the lands on the east side of the river brought the rum seller so near as to destroy all our efforts to reform and save the Indians."¹² However, before he began his work, Brunson was warned against the class of men which "may possibly do more to thwart your purposes, than the savages themselves."¹³

It appeared to that Methodist missionary, who later became sub-Indian Agent for northwestern Wisconsin, that the American Fur Company and the government were struggling for the ascendancy among the Indians. The traders encouraged the redskins to defy the laws and treaties of the government. It was Brunson's opinion "that the humane policy of the government towards them [the Indians] will never be executed, nor her plighted faith redeemed, while the fur trade is tolerated, in the present mammoth form."¹⁴

Strained relations seem not to have prevailed between the mission at La Pointe and the fur company. A different situation apparently existed there than at Green Bay or at Prairie du Chien. It will be recalled that it was an official

¹² Brunson, Personal Narrative, January 30, 1864, in Brunson Papers, in the Library of the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

¹³ Andrews to Brunson, August 24, 1835, in Brunson Letter Book.

¹⁴ Brunson to Cass, from Galena, November 9, 1835, in Brunson Letter Book.

of the American Fur Company, Lyman Warren, who was responsible for bringing the missionaries to La Pointe in the first place. This fact may partially account for the lack of opposition on the part of the fur company there. At any rate, Sherman Hall wrote many letters to the headquarters of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions assuring them that they should not fear the opposition of the fur traders.

I have sent you a long communication, which I hope, will in some measure relieve you from the apprehensions which your letter expresses, that your missions in this country will meet with opposition from the American Fur Company. I see no ground as yet for anticipating serious evil from this source.¹⁵

The fact that fur company agents such as Lyman Warren were sympathetic with the work of the mission was one reason that the La Pointe mission experienced little, if any, opposition. The agents which other missionaries in Wisconsin came into contact with were not of the same calibre as those two men, if the record of the men of God is to be believed.

The frontier usually provided plenty of job opportunities for those who wanted them. In the work that the missionaries were engaged in there was always a shortage of laborers. Frequently the missionaries were depressed because of a dire need of another teacher for the school, an

¹⁵ Hall to A.B.C.F.M., November 28, 1834, in Culkin, II, 101.

interpreter, a woman to help with household duties, or a man to perform manual labor. Because there were not enough helpers, and the stations were not adequately financed, some were compelled to spend a great deal of time keeping up the physical plant, to the neglect of the teaching and preaching of the Gospel, and of learning the language of the Indians.

The depression of 1837 forced the American Board of Foreign Missions and the American Home Missionary Society to decrease the amount of money allotted to the men on the frontier. Alfred Brunson who was in the service of neither of the aforementioned organizations, was supported by funds from individual missionary societies which took up collections for him. Provisions were difficult to secure, long in arriving after they had been ordered, and expensive. Sherman Hall wrote in 1838, "Everything that can be purchased at all, is procured at an expense double that for which it can be procured with you."¹⁶

Washing, cooking, scrubbing, sledding wood, making furniture--these were some of the tasks which Mr. Hall had to perform in the absence of efficient helpers. In writing to his headquarters he listed the reasons why he thought this situation ought not to exist: It was bad policy, for it took them away from the thing they were sent there to do--that is,

¹⁶ Hall to Lydia Hall, August 8, 1838, in Culkin, III, 13.

preach the Gospel; it gave the appearance of secularity to the mission, and it exposed their health. Finally, in 1839, worn down by eight long years of strenuous work, he requested a year's leave to visit New England. He and his wife both needed rest, they desired better advantages for their children than could be found on the frontier, and they needed "the exhilarating influence which we should derive from new scenes and new society, to recruit our jaded spirits."¹⁷

The records which those missionaries to the sons of the forest left behind them reveal that they would have been justified in complaining of overwork on many occasions. That they seldom did attests to the fact that they possessed a spirit of self-sacrifice which sought the welfare of others, namely the salvation of the heathen redmen.

II

The White Settlers

If the missionaries to the Indians were hindered in their work by the migratory character of the tribes, it can also be pointed out that the ministers who preached to the white settlers in Wisconsin were faced with this problem.

The people of this country are mainly a floating population and vast numbers left us last season on account of the pressure of the times, and our congre-

¹⁷ Hall to A.B.C.F.M., October 19, 1839, in Culkin, II, 220.

gation is small, nor can we expect that much good will be accomplished, until the land is offered for sale, and permanent improvements encouraged.¹⁸

The missionaries were powerless to do anything about the fluid state of frontier society, but they did possess the means to combat another problem which faced them, one which they considered the most serious threat to the success of the Gospel--that was the spirit of worldliness. That kind of atmosphere which the men of God had to work against was, however, natural in a region inhabited by lately-arrived, land-hungry immigrants. The records of the missionaries show that they were aware of this; one quotation will serve as an example.

We have also infidelity, coarse and clamorous, petty grog shops becoming numerous, much profane swearing, contempt of the Sabbath, and of all religious institutions, and most determined irreligion, in the case of many who claim they will not oppose religion. A strong, sweeping current of worldly enterprise, a rush and scramble after wealth, prevails as a matter of course.¹⁹

By preaching services, visitation, weekly prayer meetings, and by holding revivals the missionaries strove to counteract that spirit of worldliness which militated against the teachings of Christ.

¹⁸ Aratus Kent to American Home Missionary Society, February 26, 1831, in A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

¹⁹ A. L. Barber, Report from Milwaukee, in Home Missionary, VIII, 80, (September, 1835).

Inadequate financial support was not the least of the troubles which faced the pioneers in the realm of religion. The Home Missionary Society gave only a small salary, and sometimes it was withheld for a while during the depression. The congregations which supported the home missionary were often poor. The payments came to the preacher irregularly. When times were hard, as they were in 1837 and 1838, the ministers suffered from want.

The summer of 1838 was especially severe, when, according to one writer there was no credit and almost no current money. The hard times struck the immigrants the preceding winter before they were able to plant and harvest the necessary crops. The writer above referred to knew several families who subsisted for a while on potatoes and milk. Some had nothing to eat but potatoes and salt for weeks during the winter of 1837-1838, and some lived on turnips.²⁰

The rising towns along Lake Michigan such as Racine and Milwaukee were affected sharply by the depression. The minister at Racine received only sixty dollars in two years from the people.²¹ Cyrus Nichols of Racine wrote that "it is generally true here where people have given to support the

²⁰ Unsigned report from Wisconsin, in Home Missionary, XI, 64-65, (July, 1838).

²¹ Ibid, 273, (April, 1839).

Gospel, they have given of their penury."²²

Gilbert Crawford left a good job and home in Lockport, New York to become the pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Milwaukee in 1838. He was very disillusioned, for the people there who had promised to pay him \$1,000 could not give him even 1000 coppers! He was forced to request more money of the American Home Missionary Society.²³ His appeal appeared in the Society's monthly magazine:

When we plant the banner of salvation in the wilderness, amid all its hardships--without pork, or butter, or a cow, or a horse, or a road, or a bridge, or hardly a house to live in... our good brethren at the East ought to help us.²⁴

Bad roads, few bridges, and the distances between isolated settlements were disadvantages which handicapped everyone on the frontier. But the missionary who had to travel over a whole county or several counties to reach his parishioners often had to undergo hardships. Consider, for instance, the case of Jeremiah Porter who in the fall of 1840 spent five days on horseback traveling from Green Bay to Milwaukee to attend a special conference. It rained four of

²² Unsigned report from Wisconsin, in Home Missionary, XI, 273, (April, 1839).

²³ Crawford to A.H.M.S., August 20, 1838, in A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

²⁴ Home Missionary, XI, 60-61, (July, 1838).

those days.²⁵ Not only the ministers, but those who desired to gather with other Christians to worship had to face all kinds of weather. In zero weather families sometimes used oxen to plough through twenty-inch snow for several miles in order to worship on a Sunday morning.²⁶ Upon arriving at their destination, the worshipers often crowded into the small dwelling house of a fellow-Christian, instead of a commodious church with a beautiful interior.

To be without church buildings was not as serious a problem as for the ministers to be inadequately housed. This was not always the case, of course, for some were fairly comfortably situated. Sherman Hall, for example, wrote that he was as well taken care of in his snug little house on Madeline Island as he would have been back in New England. Others had to endure living in a "shack" until something better could be procured. Reverend Lemuel Hall at Geneva was one of these. A traveling agent of the American Home Missionary Society observed his (Hall's) unpleasant situation:

I found him and his little family occupying a miserable 'shanty', through which the rain poured copiously during a shower which occurred in the night. His privations and trials were abundant, but he is cheerful and

²⁵ Jeremiah Porter, Report, in Home Missionary, XIII, 196-197, (January, 1841).

²⁶ Unsigned article from a missionary in Wisconsin Territory, in Home Missionary, IX, 203, (March, 1837).

contented, and not one murmuring word escaped from himself or companion during my visit.²⁷

III How the Missionary Fitted into Frontier Society

It is difficult to determine with accuracy how the ministers adapted themselves to the civilization which they were helping to construct on the western frontier. We know that some men were not able to endure; they were lacking in either physical strength or moral courage to endure the hardships of a rigorous life. Gilbert Crawford returned to his home in New York after serving the Milwaukee Presbyterian Church for a short time. However, it is safe to conclude that most of the ministers succeeded in adjusting themselves to the situations which they found in Wisconsin during the 1830's and that they were accepted as a part of the growing society. In contrast to the way the Indians received the missionaries, the white settlers usually esteemed the ministers who came to their communities. A Milwaukee minister said there were few open scoffers, and he went on to say:

The ministers of the Gospel will be in general respected, their services appreciated, pretty generally attended, and compensated according to the people's ability. A devoted, intelligent, and judicious ministry,

²⁷ Reverend F. Bascom, in Home Missionary, XII, 151, (November, 1839).

will, I think, meet with all reasonable acceptance both from saint and sinner.²⁸

When Aratus Kent arrived in Galena in 1828 he was "favourably received", according to one writer.²⁹

The missionaries in Wisconsin were early called upon to offer public prayer at meetings of the legislature. Reverend John Clark, a Methodist missionary to the Indians, Reverend Richard Cadle, of the Episcopalian mission station, and other religious leaders asked for divine guidance at different times at the Seventh Legislative Council held in Green Bay in January, 1836.³⁰

In other various ways the missionaries furthered the development of Wisconsin, that is, aside from preaching the Gospel. Albert G. Ellis, who was teacher and catechist in the Episcopalian mission at Green Bay, was one of the founders of the Intelligencer, ran for the House of Representatives, and was member of a committee which drew up a resolution in favor of an inland communication between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi, and between the northern and southern portions of the territory.³¹ Cutting Marsh acted as postmaster for several

²⁸ Reverend Gilbert Crawford, in Home Missionary, XII, 9, (May, 1839).

²⁹ Home Missionary, II, 45.

³⁰ Green Bay Intelligencer, January 20, 1836.

³¹ Wisconsin Democrat, March 24, 1838.

years at Green Bay. And Alfred Brunson also contributed to the advance of the state. He was sub-Indian Agent for northwestern Wisconsin, and he wrote an article about the history of the Indian tribes in the state which was printed in the Wisconsin Historical Collections (volume IV). Much could be written about the interest of the missionaries in promoting education, but it will be only mentioned here that many were influential in establishing schools and colleges.

Much emphasis has been placed by some writers upon interdenominational rivalry as a motive for missions. Frederick Jackson Turner wrote that the real struggle in Christianizing the West was between the sects. It cannot be denied that this furnished a strong incentive for missionary activity. And the young men who came to Wisconsin as ambassadors of Christ looked upon their work from a sectarian viewpoint. The correspondence of the missionaries shows feeling on the subject, and occasionally the men who came from New England lashed out against the Methodists and other "sects", as they called them. But once in the "field of battle" the men of God often became tolerant of one another. Perhaps it was because the field was large enough to prevent overlapping; there were always, while frontier conditions prevailed, more calls for ministers than there were men to supply them. At any rate, however the New Englanders felt about saving the

West for Puritanism, frontier conditions modified sharp denominational competition.

There were cases of collaboration between the Congregationalist or Presbyterian minister and the Methodist circuit-rider in supplying the spiritual needs of a community. The most notable of those large-souled men was Aratus Kent, who served the Galena mining district and southwestern Wisconsin. Kent, a Presbyterian, worked harmoniously with the Methodist minister at Galena, so that when Kent was "in the country" the other man supplied the pulpit in Galena, making it possible for the inhabitants to have preaching every Sunday.³²

Reverend John Clark, Methodist who helped to establish several Indian mission stations in northern Wisconsin, visited Sherman Hall's mission at La Pointe. Hall wrote to his headquarters in Boston, "He [Clark] showed nothing of a sectarian spirit and the utmost harmony of sentiment and feeling existed in all our intercourse in relation to the prosecution of missions in this country."³³

In 1832 Reverend Richard F. Cadle, Superintendent of

³² Kent to A.H.M.S., July 3, 1834, A.H.M.S. Correspondence.

³³ Hall to A.B.C.F.M., August 9, 1836, in Culkin, II, 141.

the Episcopalian Mission at Green Bay, visited the Indian mission under the care of Congregationalist Stevens and Marsh, and administered the sacrament of the Lord's supper.³⁴ There were times, then, when friendly relations existed between the representatives of different denominations.

IV

Success of the Ministers in Shaping the Communities after Their Ideal

As has already been indicated, there were several means which the ministers used to counteract the spirit of worldly gain which prevailed in frontier communities. These were essentially the same as those employed in New England and other parts of the East to keep up a standard of piety. Lest it be thought strange that the same measures were used in two entirely different sections of the country, it should be remembered that most of the early settlers in Wisconsin came from New York and New England. The emigrants were accustomed to hearing about, if not to attending, the preaching service, weekly prayer meeting, temperance meeting and sabbath school. The extent to which the men of God were successful in their efforts to Christianize the settlements, especially in the southern part of the Territory, will be briefly indicated here.

Aratus Kent of Galena and vicinity summed up his

³⁴ Stevens, Report, May 1, 1832, in Missionary Herald, XXVIII, 365, (November, 1832).

achievements in 1837 as he was about to leave the service of the American Home Missionary Society. The church in Galena, with a membership of sixty-two, supported morning and evening meetings for prayer, a female benevolent society, a maternal association, prayer meeting, monthly distribution of tracts, and a sabbath school. Furthermore, a house for public worship had been begun, and \$4,000 had been subscribed.³⁵

The strict keeping of the sabbath was a Puritan belief which the Methodist preachers and the ministers working under the Home Missionary Society insisted upon not only for their congregations but for everyone in the community. The convention of churches in Wisconsin held in 1840 deprecated all traveling on the Sabbath except for purposes of worship and mercy, all changing of mails or frequenting the post office, all social visiting, and literary or secular reading.³⁶ After having been in Galena not quite two years Reverend Kent observed that the merchants were disposed to close their shops and go to meeting, that teamsters who came in found it difficult to do business as usual.³⁷ In 1838 a minister noted

³⁵ Kent, Report, in Home Missionary, X, 2, (May, 1837).

³⁶ Home Missionary, XIV, 53, (July, 1841).

³⁷ Kent, Report, in Home Missionary, II, 193.

sabbath-breaking in Racine, but had been assured that the citizens were improving in those respects.³⁸ At Geneva violation of the Fourth Commandment took the form of hunting and fishing, but Sunday was "generally respected by the inhabitants in the village."³⁹ The way the sabbath was kept in Galena, Racine and Geneva only indicates that the Puritan-minded ministers and their congregations did exercise influence in this matter.

Church leaders were not the only ones to concern themselves over observance of the holy day. Sometimes newspapers contained articles encouraging it. One instance was that of the Miner's Free Press of Mineral Point, which reprinted an article from the Baltimore Patriot urging young business men to go to church and properly observe the sabbath.⁴⁰

The temperance movement was not a reform which was confined to the East. The New England-trained ministers preached total abstinence and encouraged the formation of temperance societies. It is not surprising that by 1840 the New York and New England element of the population in southern Wisconsin had responded to the appeal to abstain from spiritous

38 Home Missionary, IX, 181-182, (February, 1837).

39 Lemuel Hall, in Home Missionary, XIII, 127, (October, 1840).

40 Miner's Free Press, January 1, 1839.

liquors. Several county societies had been organized and a Territorial Temperance Convention called for January, 1841.⁴¹ Local Temperance organizations were quite common.

Perhaps the Reverend Kent was a little over-optimistic in his observation regarding the use of liquor in the mining town of Galena; anyway, he wrote, "It is said that the quantity of ardent spirits drank [sic] here is greatly diminished"⁴² In 1836 he reported that a Mr. T. Turner had lectured for him and got seventy-two names to his tee-total pledge.⁴³

Truly, the cause of temperance was advancing steadily by 1840. In a report on the general state of religion in Wisconsin the progress of the cause was outlined.

A Territorial Society exists, and has its annual and semi-annual meetings, and is doing good. A quarterly 'Temperance Journal' is published under their direction at Milwaukee. Nearly all our churches embrace the total abstinence pledge in their confession or covenant.... In Southport, with a population of 400, not a drunkard is to be found.... In Mount Pleasant, a society was formed in March and now embraces every individual within four miles of its location, and numbers 166 members. Temperance taverns exist in numerous places.⁴⁴

Another method of promoting the cause of religion

41 Home Missionary, XIII, 223.

42 Home Missionary, III, 117-118, (October, 1830).

43 Home Missionary, IX, 87, (September, 1836).

44 Home Missionary, XIV, 54, (July, 1841).

among the white settlers on the Wisconsin frontier was the revival. The Methodists held their camp meetings. And the men working under the American Home Missionary Society encouraged revivals. The year 1840 was a notable one in many southern Wisconsin communities. Revivals were reported in Pike Grove, Troy and East Troy, Beloit, Platteville and other towns. Protracted meetings at Green Bay resulted in twenty conversions.

In Southport, the Spirit descended like a rushing, mighty wind, and in a few weeks about 100 were hopefully converted. The whole place seemed to be moved-- fifty-seven have been added to the Congregational church, and a goodly number to other churches in the village.⁴⁵

The writer in the Home Missionary summarized the results of the awakening thus:

As the fruits of these gracious visitations, many grievous backsliders have been reclaimed, the tone of piety elevated in the churches, and over five hundred souls converted and gathered into the fold of Christ.⁴⁶

Taking into consideration that the favorable accounts given by ministers of the success of their work may have been at times a little too hopeful, still, it appears that the mission work among the early residents of Wisconsin was a strong influence on frontier society and served to raise the moral and religious standards of the day.

45 Home Missionary, XIV, 54, (July, 1841).

46 Ibid.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The process of Christianizing the Wisconsin frontier had its origins in the East. At the same time that the line between civilization and frontier was being pushed farther and farther to the west, a movement was being carried forward in the East which resulted in the efforts of missionaries to provide the frontier with Christian institutions. Few serious-minded Christians in the East escaped the impact of the missionary spirit which prevailed from 1800 to 1830. The men who brought the Gospel to Wisconsin were no exceptions. They felt the influence of revivals and of the increased interest in missions. In the period 1825-1840 Cutting Marsh, Sherman Hall and William Boutwell, all members of a Society of Inquiry at Andover Seminary, ranked high among the pioneers of the Gospel in Wisconsin. Others who came to Wisconsin were also inspired by the missionary impulse.

These builders of civilization in early Wisconsin were brave men who seldom complained of their lot. They endured loneliness, overwork, sickness and poverty along with the rest of the hardy pioneers. But they bore an additional burden--that of trying to persuade Indians and white settlers

that the Christian way was the best way of life on the frontier as well as in settled society.

Some Americans felt almost from the beginning of our history some kind of moral or spiritual responsibility toward the aborigines whom they finally dispossessed. On the surface it may appear ironical that some of the missionaries to the Wisconsin Indians went out under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The real natives were treated as foreigners. Yet, in a sense they were foreigners, for their culture was entirely strange to the apostles of the white man's civilization.

If the missionary had possessed a fuller knowledge of the culture and nature of the Indians, if he had been aided by more helpers, translators and interpreters, and if he had not had to contend with the curse of the liquor traffic, the results might have been different. But there is no use speculating. The fruits of the missionaries' labors among the Wisconsin Indians were meager indeed, and most of the more prominent workers turned to the task of ministering to the white settlers.

That the "American" population in Wisconsin was ready for the Christian minister there can be no doubt. In most cases the people were waiting to hear the Gospel. Everywhere the missionaries traveled they encountered small groups of

people who wanted preaching. By 1840 the difference between supply and demand was decreasing. It may have been that Wisconsin was more attractive to candidates for the ministry in the East because the rawness of the frontier was passing away.

Although the Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Congregationalists preached the same doctrines in Wisconsin as were presented in those churches in the East, and although the same general type of religious organizations were used, there were some things on the frontier which operated against achieving the success which the ministers desired. The fluidity of population resulted in changing congregations, so that it took longer to establish a permanent, stable church. The attention of many people was diverted from religion by the fact that so much time went into earning a living. The spirit of worldly gain contributed to the same end. The distances which separated people from each other and from centers of worship also prevented religion from becoming as important to many settlers as it otherwise would have been. And this isolation also made the work of the missionary more difficult.

Although the missionaries deplored sabbath-breaking, the mad rush after material wealth and the indifference to religion which they saw on every hand, the little churches which they formed were nuclei around which other people in succeeding generations gathered as time went on and which

served as a wholesome, leavening influence for frontier society in general.

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Daniel Smith

Univ. of Calgary,
CALGARY, Alberta, Canada

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