

*First Presbyterian Church
of St. Paul, 1852*



The Puritan Tradition in a “New England of the West”⁹

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IN MAY, 1849, the Reverend Albert Barnes, minister of Philadelphia's First Presbyterian Church, issued a challenge to his parishioners and to like-minded religious Americans. He had just returned from a survey of western missionary fields which had included the newly organized territory of Minnesota. In a sermon preached in both Philadelphia and New York and later published as a pamphlet, Barnes made an impassioned plea for support of the American Home Missionary Society, through which Presbyterians and Congregationalists co-operated to carry their work into frontier areas.

Barnes recalled for his hearers how, standing above the Falls of St. Anthony, he had experienced “views of the greatness of my country such as I have never had in the crowded capitals, and the smiling villages of the East.” He had found the promise of

the new land intensely exciting, but he warned that this promise could be realized only if the new society created in the wilderness were enlightened by the principles and institutions of the “Puritan mind.”¹

He did not precisely explain this term in his sermon. Presumably eastern Presbyterians would realize what it meant to be “Puritan” and appreciate their share in the traditions of that broad religious community which traced its beginnings to Plymouth Rock. Barnes concentrated instead on describing the “Western mind.”² This he felt posed both a threat and a challenge to the tradition in which he stood. The churches of the East must understand that mind in order to convert it.

Barnes described the West as “a strange and mighty intermingling of minds of great

¹ Albert Barnes, *Home Missions: A Sermon in Behalf of the American Home Missionary Society, Preached in the Cities of New York and Philadelphia, May, 1849*, 9, 12, 38 (New York, 1849).

² Barnes, *Home Missions*, 11–16.

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power, under different propensities and views—constituting such a population as the world has never before seen on the settlement of a new land.” It was active rather than contemplative, bold and enterprising. It had energy in abundance; what it lacked was community. In the heterogeneous population of the West were to be found “the shrewd New Englander, the luxurious Southerner, the positive Englishman, the metaphysical Scotchman, the jovial Irishman, the excitable Frenchman, the passionate Spaniard, the voluptuous Italian, the plodding German, the debased African.”³

Such varied and unstable elements were, he warned, likely to be misled by political demagogues and religious sectarians. Even more dangerous than the threat of a radical outburst was the possibility that without eastern guidance western cultural development would produce barbaric, Roman Catholic, or even atheistic societies.⁴

Yet Barnes was no pessimist. He was confident that the East would guide the West. The steamboat connected the old and the new; western products were sent to eastern markets; towns and colleges like those in the old states had been planted in the West. The crucial factor—the sole instrument capable of capitalizing on those advantages—was the Christian ministry. Given that element the West was secure.⁵

Barnes concluded his sermon by defining the functions of the American Home Missionary Society. He described the missionary's dedication to his job and made a vigorous appeal for financial aid.⁶

THE SOCIETY had grown out of the discovery that both Congregationalists and Presbyterians could accomplish more through co-operation than through competition. The latter had proved well-nigh disastrous in 1801, when the two denominations struggled on the missionary field of western New York State. In that year a “plan of union” had been formulated which permitted Congregational and Presbyterian missionary

agencies to join in supporting ministers for small settlements. The agreement provided that in such communities the two groups would meet together, sharing the services of a single pastor. His religious affiliation would be his own concern; his parishioners were to remain in their original denominations. Twenty-five years later, in 1826, numerous local and state societies composed of individuals from both denominations came together in a national organization.⁷

The American Home Missionary Society was ever alert to new tasks. As early as 1847 its journal called attention to “Minnesota” in an article on the geography of the region that quoted extensively from a piece in the *Toledo Blade* and predicted with fair accuracy where the centers of population would be. Barnes's tour provided further information, and the Reverend Thomas S. Williamson, a Presbyterian missionary who was serving at Kaposia, a Sioux village four miles downriver from St. Paul, described the growth of the territorial capital in a letter to the society on April 10, 1849. The same month saw the territory's first newspaper, the *Minnesota Pioneer*, begin publication in St. Paul. It reported “multitudes” of immigrants “swarming” into the city.⁸

With this wave of immigrants went the

³ Barnes, *Home Missions*, 11, 14. The vivid collection of regional and national stereotypes was quoted by Barnes from Joseph F. Tuttle, “The West and Western Eloquence,” in *Biblical Repository and Classical Review*, Series 3, 1:644 (October, 1845).

⁴ Barnes, *Home Missions*, 21–34.

⁵ Barnes, *Home Missions*, 19, 20.

⁶ Barnes, *Home Missions*, 41–45.

⁷ Benjamin J. Lake, *The Story of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*, 57 (Philadelphia, 1956); Colin Brummitt Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier with Particular Reference to the American Home Missionary Society*, 173 (Caldwell, Idaho, 1939).

⁸ *Home Missionary*, 20:67 (May, 1847); *Minnesota Pioneer* (St. Paul), April 28, 1849; Williamson to [Aratus?] Kent, April 10, 1849, American Home Missionary Society Archives, in the Hammond Library, Chicago Theological Seminary. All letters and missionaries' reports cited in this essay are from this collection. The Minnesota Historical Society has microfilm copies.

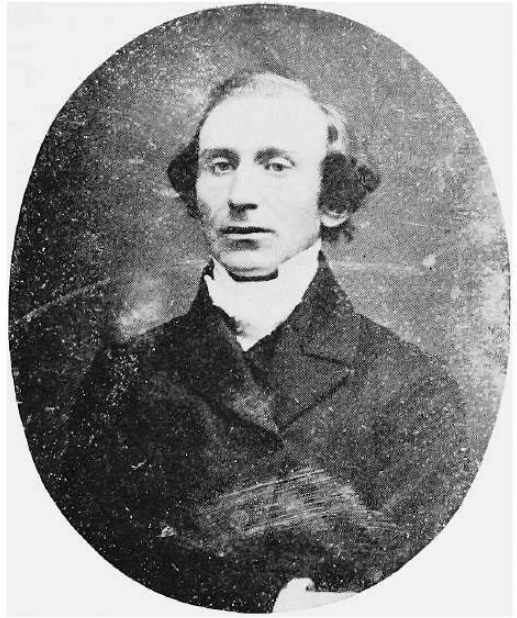
society's first missionary to the territory: the Reverend Edward Duffield Neill. Then twenty-six years old, Neill had graduated from Amherst in 1842 and was seasoned by two years of experience near Galena, Illinois. He was a Presbyterian and a man of enormous versatility who was to become a prominent leader in Minnesota. Over the years his contributions included serving as first territorial superintendent of education and first chancellor of the state university; he founded Macalester College in St. Paul, helped in organizing the Minnesota Historical Society, wrote a state history, and was one of President Abraham Lincoln's private secretaries during the Civil War. Historian, educator, and public servant, he made his initial mark as a missionary.⁹

Neill liked Minnesota from the beginning of his service there. It was still frontier, he said in his first report. "You cannot walk out but you see a Dakota with his pipe and gun and blanket wrapped about him." Many things pleased him, but he considered the people of St. Paul badly in need of moral discipline. Sin was rife in the village, Neill found, and it appeared that the task of restoring good order would be formidable: "Vice has travelled here with telegraphic speed. . . . As I write I can recall at least one dozen houses where 'liquid damnation' is sold in quantities to suit purchasers. Besides the numerous conveniences for becoming a drunkard 'of the first water,' there are billiard rooms and ball alleys whose business seems to require them to *roll over* the Sabbath."¹⁰

⁹For biographical information on Neill, see Franklin F. Holbrook, "The Neill Papers in the Manuscript Collection of the Minnesota Historical Society," in *Minnesota History Bulletin*, 1:369-377 (August, 1916); William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 4:434-442 (St. Paul, 1930). Neill's *History of Minnesota* was first published in Philadelphia in 1858 and ran through five editions, the last issued in 1883.

¹⁰Neill, "Report to the secretaries of the American Home Missionary Society," April 30, 1849; Neill to Milton Badger, July 19, 1849.

¹¹Neill, "Report," April 30, 1849; to Badger, July 19, September 13, 1849; *Pioneer*, December 12, 1849.



Edward Duffield Neill, about 1849

A zealous missionary could fight such overt sinning, but there was a more insidious evil to be dealt with. As Neill reported to the missionary society, the community was "deeply engrossed with the affairs of this world." Given the circumstances, it was easy to understand the materialism of the pioneers. Neill himself was impressed with the commercial possibilities of St. Paul and the surrounding country and, far from disapproving of the settlers' interest in business, considered their "wonderful degree of activity and intelligence" commendable. It was dangerous, however, to let commercial interests become preoccupations. James M. Goodhue, editor of the *Minnesota Pioneer*, recognized the same quality in the life of the territory, although his emphasis was different from that of Neill. Men had gone west to enjoy industrial, commercial, and political opportunity. Because such motives dominated, the work of ordinary men was more respected than in the East. In Minnesota, Goodhue insisted, all men were equal, and no man could demand deference because of his profession.¹¹

This equalitarianism was closely bound up with the materialism which worried

Neill. He felt that where such attitudes prevailed, missionaries would have special problems in establishing leadership. Furthermore, the work of guiding the community would be complicated for "Puritan" clergy by the presence of a substantial Roman Catholic population in St. Paul. Neill estimated that 1,800 of the more than 4,000 souls resident in the territory were Roman Catholic.¹²

Unlike Barnes, Neill expressed no hostility toward this group; in fact, they stimulated his historical curiosity. At the first meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society, January 1, 1850, he presented a paper on French explorers and in it observed that the real pioneers of the area had been Catholics. While New Englanders had been content to cultivate the land near them, the "ardent and excitable" French had pushed into the interior, and when the first American settlers entered Minnesota, they found a French community already well established there.¹³

Thus although Barnes might denounce Catholicism from Philadelphia, a more respectful attitude was shown by Protestants in St. Paul. When the *Pioneer* published Neill's historical essay, Goodhue added his own remarks, pointing out that the original community had been stable and strongly moral. It was not the French voyageurs, he maintained, but the new men from the East who had given Minnesota the reputation of being "a community of rowdies, wholly disregarding Sunday, trampling upon the Cross like so many Japanese." When the American settlers had begun to arrive, the *Pioneer* reported, there had been a lapse of social organization, but only for a brief time. As Protestant clergymen reached Minnesota they were creating "a moral influence in St. Paul, as mighty as ever controlled a Puritan village—more powerful than the law itself."¹⁴

BUILDING a moral influence meant founding churches and recruiting members. The American Home Missionary Society made a fundamental contribution to that effort by

supporting Neill. He was able to build a dwelling for his family with his wife's funds, but he required some six hundred dollars a year from the society. The second basic need, a meetinghouse, was financed by people in Philadelphia, mainly members of Barnes's First Presbyterian Church. Soon after his arrival Neill decided to build a church because there was "not a single grogery in town . . . [that] will not accommodate a larger audience than the building at present used by the Episcopal, Baptist and Methodist denominations." He wanted to have his own quarters as quickly as possible.¹⁵

By September, 1849, five months after Neill's arrival, the building was completed. It was only 20 by 30 feet, but the first services did not strain its capacity. Eight or nine persons came to the first weekly meeting; twice that number were present at the second. During the winter more people began to attend, and the next April Neill reported that his First Presbyterian Church of St. Paul was the second largest religious body in the village. The little meetinghouse was outgrown within the next year, and when it burned in May, Neill had already begun to plan a new edifice. "It was saddening to look at the flames," he said. Nevertheless, he thought that the fire would stimulate his congregation in its independent building efforts.¹⁶

The Presbyterians responded, and a new church was soon erected. The *Pioneer* greeted its completion in November, 1850, as an important event in the life of the village: "All St. Paul and the Nominee [*a river boat*] were at Mr. Neill's new church, where that energetic man, who has been sleepless in his efforts to accomplish the erection of

¹² Neill to Badger, September 13, 1849.

¹³ *Pioneer*, February 13, 1850.

¹⁴ *Pioneer*, March 20, 1850.

¹⁵ Neill to Badger, July 19, September 13, 1849; to the executive committee of the American Home Missionary Society, July 15, 1850. The quotation is from the letter of July 19, 1849.

¹⁶ Neill to the executive committee, September 21, 1849; April 15, July 15, 1850.

this noble building, from the hour when his chapel was burnt down, on the 16th of last May — delivered an appropriate discourse, of which it is sufficient to say, that it was worthy of the occasion and of himself.”¹⁷

When Neill submitted his next quarterly report to the secretaries of the society he could not resist boasting of his new bell, which could sometimes be heard five or six miles upriver at Fort Snelling. His church was larger than those of the other three Protestant denominations combined, and he obviously felt that he was proving himself a mighty spiritual leader.¹⁸

IN OCTOBER, 1849, the society sent a second Presbyterian missionary to the territory. The Reverend Joseph C. Whitney, a graduate of Union Theological Seminary, settled in Stillwater. Whitney’s approach to his field was quite different from that of Neill; like Barnes, he found dangerous elements in western thinking.

Because of its growing lumber industry and the large number of settlers from northeastern states, Minnesota was becoming known as “the New England of the West.” Whitney considered that characterization dangerously complacent. The pioneers were “a heterogeneous mass gathered from all over the world,” among whom were many “deists and infidels who pride themselves on their intelligence and freedom from superstition.” Even some professed Christians, who were supposed to be bringing their civilization to the wilderness, had brought card playing and dancing instead.¹⁹

While deploring that “all notions of etiquette and the like go by the board — Aristocracy is trampled under foot — and all

things become Westernized,” he hastened to add: “I do not mean that we have the same peculiarity as that which designates Wisconsin, Iowa or any other State Western.” He pointed out that Minnesotans were intelligent and attentive. The infidels and skeptics among them were “not to be frightened into a religious belief. They respect no man who doesn’t earn respect.” After six months in the territory Whitney felt that he had come upon “a citadel of the devil that *must* be taken.”²⁰

In January, 1850, the hard-driven Stillwater congregation had a meetinghouse well under way. A year later the missionary was projecting a more substantial building, and the young people had organized a temperance society, for “rum selling and gambling are not a going to leave us of their own accord.” This was progress equal to that of anyone in the St. Croix Valley, but it gave Whitney little satisfaction. He berated himself for his failure to bring about a great outpouring of piety. Not buildings nor organizations, but souls, were to him the measure of success.²¹

THE THIRD Minnesota village aided by the American Home Missionary Society was St. Anthony, where Neill, at the beginning of his service in St. Paul, had preached also. He organized a Presbyterian church there in 1849 and subsequently maintained close relations with it. However, his primary responsibility lay in St. Paul and, as his church there grew during the winter of 1849-50, it became apparent that another minister would have to supply the pulpit in St. Anthony. In February, 1850, Neill called upon the society to send a missionary to the village at the falls. He emphasized the need for “a man of the right stamp . . . who will not think himself a martyr because he is going to one of the most delightful places in Christendom.” Neill did not specify a Presbyterian.²² A Congregationalist was sent, and the ensuing situation revealed some of the difficulties of interdenominational co-operation.

¹⁷ *Pioneer*, November 14, 1850.

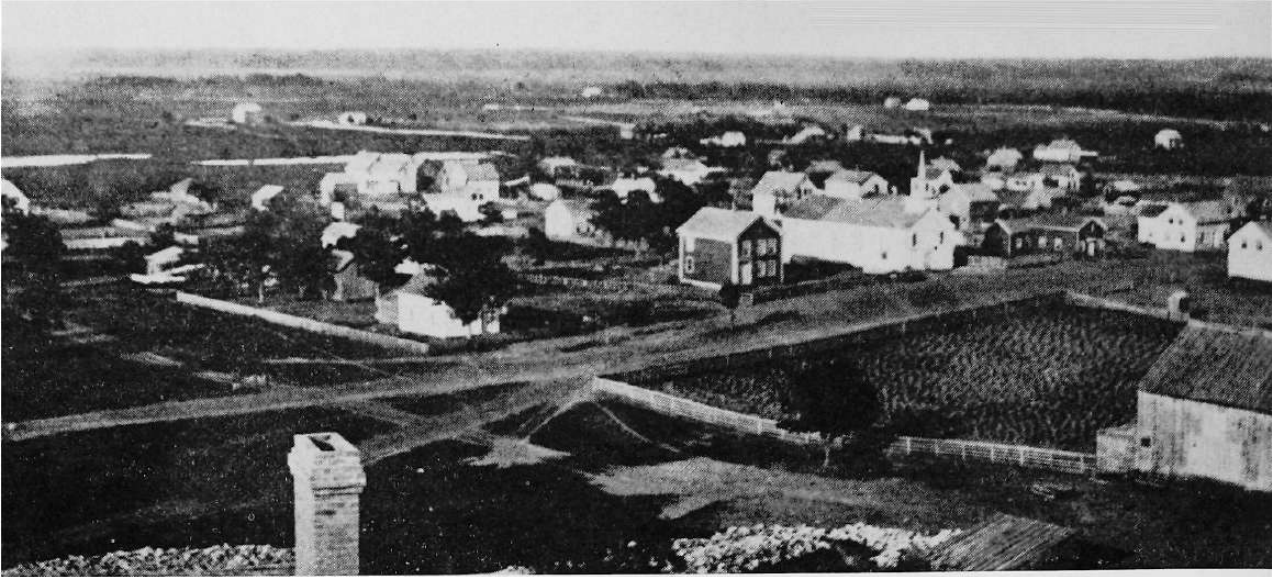
¹⁸ Neill to the executive committee, January 15, 1851.

¹⁹ Whitney, “Report,” January 3, 1851.

²⁰ Whitney to Badger and Charles Hall, January 4 [?], 1850; February 25, 1851; Whitney, “Report,” January 3, 1851.

²¹ Whitney to Badger, February 25, 1851.

²² Neill to Badger, February 9, 1850; *Home Missionary*, 24:217 (January, 1852).



St. Anthony and Minneapolis in 1857, showing the First Congregational Church

A month before the new minister began his work in St. Anthony, Neill and Whitney joined with a minister in Illinois to form the Presbytery of Minnesota. Then, as the society's publication put it, they "took the church at St. Anthony under their care."²³ Therefore, when the Congregational missionary arrived at St. Anthony on October 1, 1850, he found a Presbyterian church and a small but persistent presbytery determined to keep the tiny flock within the same denomination.

The new missionary was Charles Seccombe, a young man who impressed Neill as an effective preacher who would "gather strength and influence as he gathers years." Seccombe began his work with a piece of good fortune which had not been granted Neill. The local Baptists and Methodists were in the process of building churches, leaving Seccombe in sole possession of a schoolhouse that in the previous year had served the other denominations.²⁴

Seccombe had a congregation of ten people and felt confident that he could find more Congregationalists and Presbyterians who had not yet come forward. He complained that many people who had been church members in the East were reluctant to join the congregation being formed in their new home. They waited to be "searched out by the minister and urged up

to a performance of their duty." The same problem had been mentioned by Barnes, who felt that this falling away of the migrants could be explained by a lack of established social pressures in frontier communities. The missionary was needed, in part, to remind church members of old lessons that were too easily forgotten in the new environment.²⁵

It was Seccombe's misfortune that he could not continue freely with his work as Neill and Whitney had done. His church was Presbyterian, and despite the society's rule to the contrary its members knew him to be a Congregationalist. Just who had informed them was not clear, but by the spring of 1851 Seccombe strongly suspected Neill. In addition the Presbytery of Minnesota had demanded that Seccombe become a member, and when he declined, it declared his church to be "without a supply." This meant that he would have been replaced had not the society stood by its interdenominational principles and refused to support the presbytery's choice.²⁶

The situation was highly embarrassing for

²³ *Home Missionary*, 24:217.

²⁴ Neill to Badger, October 2, 1850; Seccombe to Badger, November 2, 1850.

²⁵ Seccombe to Badger, November 2, 1850; Barnes, *Home Missions*, 15, 16.

²⁶ *Home Missionary*, 24:217.

everyone concerned. Seccombe was an unwanted Congregationalist in a Presbyterian church, and the presbytery was unable to recognize a pastor serving within its jurisdiction. Moreover, the St. Anthony Presbyterians could not establish a normal relationship with their minister; Seccombe learned their thinking at second hand through Neill—a fact which did not improve relations between the two men.²⁷

Early in 1851, Seccombe reported an increase in the number of people attending services and a complete lack of co-operation from the members of the church. They simply refused to build a meetinghouse until they were supplied with a Presbyterian pastor. Ironically, Seccombe's very success in attracting worshipers increased his embarrassment by making a building more necessary. The frustration of being denied a full opportunity to do the work of which he felt himself capable was almost too much for the young minister. He reported to the society: "I could endure anything else almost, but to stand in my Master's vineyard with my hands tied, I could not endure."²⁸

Neill told Seccombe that "the whole affair should be Presb[byterian] or Cong[regational] throughout"; union would not work under the circumstances. Seccombe agreed, and he went ahead with the organization of a separate Congregational church. He remained missionary to St. Anthony and continued to be responsible for the Presbyterians, but he was able to commence building a church for his own denomination. At the end of a year's work, he could report the beginnings of a meetinghouse.²⁹

THE DISAGREEMENT among Neill, Seccombe, and the secretaries of the society was

²⁷ Seccombe to Badger, June 10, 1851.

²⁸ Seccombe to Badger, April 29, 1851.

²⁹ Seccombe to Badger, June 10, 20, 1851; to the secretaries, September 26, 1851.

³⁰ *Home Missionary*, 24:217–221; Neill to the executive committee, January 14, 1852.

³¹ Seccombe to Badger, February 17, 1852.

³² Seccombe to Badger, April 19, 23, 1852; to David B. Coe, July 26, 1852.

thoroughly aired in the *Home Missionary*, the society's national publication, although the editor was clearly unsympathetic to Neill's side of the argument. Resentful of what he called misrepresentation, Neill elaborated on his objections in a letter to the executive committee of the society. He stated that Seccombe had deliberately emphasized the differences between the two denominations and had compared Presbyterian church polity with papacy. This, Neill felt, was sufficient reason for replacing him.³⁰

Seccombe for his part was willing to preach to the Presbyterians if the society demanded it, but he insisted that some permanent solution would have to be found. He suggested that both churches disband and then vote together on which denomination they favored. The Presbyterians opposed that plan. As an alternative, Seccombe rather reluctantly proposed that the two churches join once more in a plan of union organization. The difficulty with this, he hastened to add, was that the Congregational meetinghouse was already under construction. If the Congregational Church of St. Anthony were to disband in favor of a union group, those who had contributed to the building might accuse Seccombe of bad faith.³¹

Resumption of the union arrangement, although unsatisfactory to Seccombe, was attractive to the society and acceptable to the Presbyterians. When the society's Minnesota missionaries met at Point Douglas in April, 1852, the two Presbyterians, Neill and Whitney, suggested that the St. Anthony difficulty be resolved on the spot. Seccombe tentatively suggested the union arrangement, and the Presbyterians quickly accepted it. Seccombe left the meeting with reservations, but the two churches were joined once more in July as the Plan of Union Church of St. Anthony.³²

Still the young Congregationalist's troubles did not end. By September he was faced with financial problems. Neill, who had been able to satisfy his own building needs

from sources within the Presbyterian church, suggested that Seccombe do the same. The resourceful Neill could have arranged a loan for Seccombe with the Presbytery of Peoria, Illinois. To receive the money Seccombe needed only join Neill and Whitney in the Presbytery of Minnesota and turn over the church property in the amount of two thousand dollars "in subscription and all" contributed by Congregationalists.³³

Financial pressure did not make the presbytery more attractive to Seccombe. He attempted to raise a loan in St. Anthony, but although the local Congregationalists were willing to stand security for it, no one had the money to lend. Therefore, Seccombe decided simply to finish the basement of his church. This could be done for two hundred dollars, "all of which could be provided for, except some few articles which *must* be purchased with *money*." By such a compromise, Seccombe reduced the total cash requirement to about thirty-two dollars, and drew that from his own pocket.³⁴

In doing so he demonstrated considerable dedication. Seccombe's troubles in organizing a church had been accompanied by grave personal problems. Like Neill, he was receiving six hundred dollars annually from the society, but unlike Neill, he had no private funds with which to pay for housing. He and his wife were obliged, therefore, to spend five months living in a barn, where their first child was born. Within a year the baby died, as did Mrs. Seccombe in February, 1852, shortly after giving birth to a second child. Despite these troubles, Seccombe was willing to use his own small resources to keep his church away from the Presbyterians.³⁵

With so much tension, it was obvious that union would not work. In January, 1853, Seccombe reported to the secretaries of the society that newly arrived Congregationalists were advocating separation. He agreed with their thinking but was following the wishes of the society by attempting

to maintain the union. In doing so he was acting in conflict with his own most fundamental loyalties, for he believed that union could lead only to the absorption of the Congregational denomination by the Presbyterians.³⁶

Union in St. Anthony ended in 1853. Early that year a former Presbyterian missionary to the Indians, Gideon H. Pond, began to preach at Neill's behest in various small places near St. Anthony. Within a few months he organized a church in the village of Minneapolis, just across the river from Seccombe's Plan of Union Church.

At first Seccombe feared that the new organization might be used as a weapon against him, but instead it provided at last a way around the great St. Anthony impasse. Pond's church was accessible to the Presbyterians of St. Anthony, while at the same time it did not offend the society's principles by introducing a second missionary into the community. By August, 1853, the Presbyterians were leaving Seccombe's church, and the First Congregational Church of St. Anthony was revived.³⁷ With that amicable parting, the one problem which had seriously embarrassed the society's efforts in Minnesota was solved.

YET ANOTHER COMMUNITY to which Neill called the society's attention was the area of settlement around Point Douglas and Cottage Grove, across the St. Croix River from Prescott, Wisconsin. Accordingly, Richard Hall, a Congregationalist, was sent there in October, 1850. Unlike Neill, Seccombe, and Whitney, who were working

³³ Seccombe to Coe, September 7, November 11, 1852.

³⁴ Seccombe to Coe, December 2, 1852.

³⁵ Seccombe to Badger, November 10, 1851; to Coe, March 2, 1853.

³⁶ Seccombe to Coe, January 25, 1853. Seccombe's fears in this respect may have been well grounded. A century later the Presbyterian historian, Benjamin J. Lake, concluded that Congregationalism in the West had been injured by union. *Story of the Presbyterian Church*, 57.

³⁷ Seccombe to Coe, March 23, April 4, August 3, 1853; Pond to Coe, August 5, 1853.

in rapidly growing villages, Hall found himself in a "field of labor . . . almost as unbroken as the untouched prairies around us." After two months he still did not know the population of the area, but he described Point Douglas as having a steam-powered gristmill and sawmill, ten houses, a store, a tavern, and a post office. The settlers were widely dispersed and Hall had to function as a circuit rider, addressing audiences of thirty to forty persons at each stop. Yet he was pleased with the community. Although the people were scattered both physically and denominationally, "there is a general sentiment favorable to the gospel." Given that much, Hall was confident of success.³⁸

As a Congregationalist, Hall shared Secombe's difficulties with the Presbyterians. He could not find it in his conscience to found a Presbyterian church, and yet Presbyterians from the South and East, Canada, Scotland, and the north of Ireland seemed to outnumber the New England Congregationalists in his area. Like Secombe he had to begin with a union arrangement and he, too, soon complained that Neill was attempting to force him into the Presbytery of Minnesota. Hall reacted vigorously and in doing so found a surprising amount of support among his parishioners.³⁹

At the end of his first year, Hall had made less progress than had his colleagues in St. Paul and St. Anthony; the people had contributed nothing toward his salary nor toward the building of a church. In less material terms, he felt that he had done some good by reprimanding skeptics and sinners and, at the very least, had made Sabbath breaking and intemperance less respectable than they had been. Still, he had some doubts, planted by visiting preachers, as to whether Cottage Grove and Point Douglas were important enough to

justify the mission. He had visited La Crosse, which was growing rapidly, and he had found the leading citizens there eager for his services and willing to relieve the society of part of his support. A transfer, he suggested, was something to be considered.⁴⁰

This proposal met with a stern rejection. Moreover, the news that both Cottage Grove and Point Douglas were at last planning to build churches gave Hall new encouragement. In December, 1851, he was staunchly advocating that missionary efforts be made early in western communities. Unlike Whitney, he felt that Minnesota would indeed be a "New England of the West" if properly guided from the very outset of its growth. Hall celebrated Thanksgiving of 1851 in the St. Croix Valley by commemorating the Puritan fathers and, most probably, by feeling like one himself.⁴¹

In the early months of 1852, the missionary's work began to show results. His Point Douglas Congregational Church numbered six members, and he was sure that after the next communion service this would have doubled; forty persons attended his Bible class; and fifteen children were enrolled in the Sunday school. At Cottage Grove the congregation lightened his burden by holding a donation party at which \$29.95 in money and provisions was pledged to the minister. But Hall was still obliged to divide his work, preaching at the two tiny settlements on alternate Sundays.⁴²

Meanwhile, he considered expanding his field to include places as much as twenty-five miles away on the Wisconsin side of the St. Croix. The movement of population seemed to be in that direction, vindicating Hall's earlier doubts about the future of Point Douglas. Prescott appeared on its way toward becoming an important lumbering center. The summer of 1852 saw a steam sawmill and six or eight houses under construction there, while the milling company on the Minnesota side had gone out of business and people were leaving. Hall soon followed them, the society permitting him

³⁸ Neill to Badger, February 9, August 12, 1850; Hall to Badger, December 6, 1850.

³⁹ Hall to Badger, December 6, 1850; February 25, 1851.

⁴⁰ Hall to Coe, September 24, 1851.

⁴¹ Hall, "Report," December 30, 1851.

⁴² Hall to Coe, February 25, March 31, 1852.

to cross over to Prescott. His activities were thus removed, for a time at least, from the Minnesota missionary field.⁴³

THE SOCIETY'S work in the territory's two largest towns was virtually completed in 1853. On the theory that Neill's church could bear paying something toward the missionary's support, the society proposed reducing his salary that year to two hundred dollars. Neill rejected this offer and told the executive committee that if they wanted preaching in St. Paul, "then it must be done at \$800 per annum." He pointed out that since missionaries were allowed to accept support only from the society and from their own congregations, he would be better off if he were to drop his connection with the society and seek some more substantial supplement to the income he derived from his church. Meanwhile, Seccombe's First Congregational Church of St. Anthony was able to assume part of its pastor's salary by October, 1853. Moreover, the congregation expressed its intention of taking over the entire amount and repaying what the society had already given Seccombe, once the church building was paid for.⁴⁴

At about the same time a new pattern began to appear in the expansion of the society's work within Minnesota. Heretofore the organization itself had taken steps to open the territory as a missionary field. Beginning in 1853, however, the initiative apparently passed from the society to the settlers. The cases of the next two missionaries who were supported within the territory illustrate this change.

Royal Twichell entered Minnesota in October, 1852, and took up residence seventeen miles above St. Anthony at the junction of the Rum and Mississippi rivers. There he found the village of Anoka just being surveyed and a sawmill under construction. A town with a sawmill deserved a church, reasoned Twichell, and he proceeded to preach.⁴⁵

Although Twichell held no commission

from the society, he had been in correspondence with it, and finding that Anoka could not support a minister he applied for a missionary's salary. In this he was supported by a recommendation from Seccombe, who described Twichell as a powerful preacher, although "somewhat of an elderly man." He possessed "an old-fashioned bluntness and point that sits a little too close upon the ear of our ease-loving world" and stood for "the faith once delivered to the Saints—a little too earnestly for that Arminian, Socinian, Nothingarian spirit of liberalism which is so prominent in every new Society at the West." Seccombe obviously liked Twichell, and so did the people in Anoka. The society commissioned him for one year, and at the end of that time a committee of the town's citizens requested his continuance. According to their petition, the Reverend Royal Twichell was a mighty force for good in Anoka.⁴⁶

At about the same time an unusual new community appeared just west of present-day Minneapolis. Its founders, organized in the Excelsior Pioneer Association, immigrated from New York State as a colony. They did this not from religious convictions or communitarian principles, but simply to preserve the pattern of their community life. The original plans had included sixty-two families, enough to sustain a minister, but only twenty actually made the move. This number could not support a minister; yet they found it unthinkable to abandon their plans for a church. As they told the

⁴³ Hall to Coe, June 29, 1852; Hall, "Report," July 8, 1856. Hall later became superintendent for the American Home Missionary Society in Minnesota, a position he held from 1856 to 1874. Warren Upham and Rose B. Dunlap, *Minnesota Biographies*, 292 (*Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 14, 1912).

⁴⁴ Neill to the executive committee, September 2, 1853; First Congregational Church of St. Anthony to the secretaries, October 6, 1853.

⁴⁵ Twichell to Coe, October 15, December 22, 1852.

⁴⁶ Twichell to Coe, October 15, 1852; Seccombe to Badger, January 13, 1854; citizens of Anoka to the American Home Missionary Society, October 24, 1853.

secretaries of the society, "the nearest place of Public Worship to us is Twenty Miles off at a place called Minneapolis." Therefore, organizing the First Independent Church of Excelsior on July 17, 1853, they called upon the society to aid them in the support of their pastor, the Reverend Charles Galpin.⁴⁷

The Excelsior request was endorsed by both Pond and Seccombe. The secretaries also received a long letter from Galpin, a Congregationalist, explaining himself and his church. He was a proud individual who hastened to point out that he had been "comfortably situated" in West Stafford, Connecticut, and had not gone to Minnesota for want of employment. Moreover, he had not planned to accept the society's money, having sufficient of his own, but his wife was "somewhat disheartened" at the expense they had in moving there, so he had "consented to have a half salary."⁴⁸

The Excelsior church included Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Methodists. Therefore when at length it came under the wing of the society Galpin had to extend the margins of the usual Congregational-Presbyterian union arrangement. The church adopted its own articles of faith, which the minister admitted were "a little peculiar." They presented the most general Protestant position and the church drew its only denominational coloration from its congregational polity.⁴⁹

Throughout 1854 Galpin was the only

preacher within twelve miles. Despite two attempts to draw the Excelsior Methodists back into their own denomination, they remained loyal to the Independent Church, and the organization enjoyed a healthy rate of growth.⁵⁰ Thus, the missionary society took a part in planting a church that was neither restricted to the denominations represented in the society nor founded upon the accepted kind of union between them.

THERE appeared no need in Minnesota for a return to the policy of imposing religious organization upon passive communities. Although the society commissioned Richard Hall in 1856 to seek new missionary fields within the state, his duty was simply to inform scattered settlers of the aid available to them through the society. A Sauk Rapids pioneer no doubt expressed the feelings of many such immigrants when he wrote in behalf of himself and five friends to ask help in beginning an "Orthodox Congregational Church." Conscious of the extravagance of sending a minister to six people, he argued that Sauk Rapids would soon grow to importance and ended by saying, "We keenly feel the deprivation of Sabbath and sanctuary privileges [*sic*]."⁵¹

During its first five years of work in Minnesota the American Home Missionary Society had done much to prevent such deprivation. Also—as evidenced by requests like those from Anoka, Excelsior, and Sauk Rapids—it had helped in maintaining and strengthening the ties which bound the new territory to the culture of the East and the traditions of the "Puritan" mind. Not in vain had the Reverend Albert Barnes appealed "to those who remember what an intelligent ministry did for New England, when our fathers were driven to these Western Shores; to those who remember what Harvard, and Yale, and Nassau Hall have done for our country; to those who appreciate . . . the value of the evangelical doctrines . . . and who would wish that these same blessings should be diffused all over this beloved land."⁵²

⁴⁷ James Phillips and Joshua Moore to the secretaries, November 25, 1853.

⁴⁸ Phillips and Moore to the secretaries, November 25, 1853; Galpin to the secretaries, November 26, 1853.

⁴⁹ Galpin to Charles Hall or Milton Badger, November 26, 1853 [P].

⁵⁰ Galpin, "Report," February 28, 1854; to Coe, August 8, 1854; to the secretaries, August 18, 1854.

⁵¹ Hall to Coe, July 8, 1856; to Badger, August 14, 1856; William C. Hurd to the secretaries, March 19, 1853.

⁵² Barnes, *Home Missions*, 44.

THE SKETCH on page 1 was drawn in 1852 by Robert O. Sweeny; this and all other illustrations are from the picture collection in the Minnesota Historical Society.



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