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PIONEER RELIGION

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LINCOLN FEBRUARY 1940

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Christ is carryin' the golden candle for you, brothers and sisters. You're here, he's here, and he wants you! TANTS YOU BADLY! So come forward now and repent your sins. Look unto Him when you're at this meeting. Look unto Him, in the same way, when you're outside ... workin'—diggin' in the dirt. Cast out your sins through belief in Him. He'll take your burdens for you if you only let Him. Because Everything is His. This grass, these trees that very stream ... they are all His, AND THAT INCLUDES YOU. Can't you see this, brothers and sisters? Can't you see how grand it is? SO COME YE ALL UNTO HIM! Get down on your knees, won't you? Right here! RIGHT NOW! At this plank. KNEEL DOWN. And as you kneel pray for forgiveness and PUT YOUR FAITH IN YOUR PRAYER SO HE CAN SEE IT.

This homely sermon was preached by the Methodist circuit rider, Rev. S. B. Torley in 1866 on the banks of Oak Creek, near the present town of Valparaiso, where a log cabin was under construction. The loose timbers had been spread out to make seats for one of the first religious gatherings ever held in Saunders County.

But it was not the first sermon ever delivered in the State. That had taken place 47 years before, in Camp Missouri (later named Fort Johnson). Fourteen years later, in 1833, the Baptist minister, Moses Herrill, preached in the river town of Bellevue. The Catholic priest, Father de Smet, also conducted services during this period, when most people regarded the land west of the Missouri as a wilderness fit only for Indians and fur traders.

It was not until after 1864, when the Nebraska Territory was opened, that ministers and missionaries of various denominations began to filter in—Baptist, Catholic, Christian, Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian.
Among these was Rev. Peter Cooper, a Methodist minister, who preached the first sermon in Omaha on August 13, 1854. The congregation consisted of 20 persons who met at the home of William P. Snowden. Later, in the spring of 1855, Rev. Isaac Collins, who had succeeded Reverend Cooper, conducted services in the new Territorial Capitol building. Only six people were sufficiently interested to attend.

The first Catholic Mass ever celebrated in Nebraska took place in the same building in May of that year. Two years later the Catholic Church designated the Nebraska Territory as a separate apostolic vicariate. At this time there were only two Catholic clergymen in the territory, serving three hundred families in towns along the Missouri River. By 1868, however, the Catholic population numbered 7,000, including Indians who had been converted.

The Christian Church (often called Campbellites in the early days) had a minister in the State as early as 1846, when, on June 15, Reverend Foster preached near the present site of Ogallala. Congregationalists were represented at an even earlier date, 1834, although their churches were not established until twenty years later, in 1854, when Rev. Reuben Gaylord came to Omaha for that purpose. Reverend Gaylord, two years later, complained that the religious sentiment in Omaha had yet to be created and there were few to aid in creating it.

Baptists, who had been represented in Nebraska since 1835, built their first church in Nebraska City in August, 1858. Its first congregation was composed of 22 members.

One of the first Lutheran sermons in the new territory was preached in the front room of the Bates House, Dakota City, in November, 1858. Rev. H. W. Kuhn, a Trinity Lutheran missionary from Pennsylvania, was the minister. Lutheran churches were founded in Omaha and Fontanelle in the same year.

The Mormons spent the winter of 1846 at the present site of Florence. A number of this group, who did not choose to continue with the mass migration to Utah during the following spring, settled in Genoa, Niobrara, and at scattered points over the State.

The Seventh Day Adventists, Episcopalians, Mennonites, Unitarians and Quakers had ministers and adherents in Nebraska by the time it had reached Statehood. Jews had also settled in Nebraska, for the most part in Omaha and Lincoln.

Places of Worship

Many of the early church services were held in strange places, such as sodhouses, barns, machine sheds, cellars, courthouses, on the open prairie and near creeks, in saloons, in tents, in hotel dining rooms and, with the coming of the railroad, in boxcars and depots. Such primitive housing facilities were used until the time came when there were people and wealth enough to justify the building of churches.

The Baptist Church of Cuming City, for instance, was organized by Rev. E. G. Great in April, 1869, in a side tracked boxcar. Services were conducted here for several months. Another new congregation met in a sod stable.
When the Congregational minister, Rev. A. E. Ricker, arrived in the new village of Crawford in 1866, he preached in a tent that also served as a feed store. Members of the congregation seated themselves on rough boards that had been laid across feed bags. A barber, with keen business foresight, moved his chair into one corner of the tent where he was kept busy at his trade, shaving and cutting the hair of the male members of the congregation throughout the service.

The Methodist circuit rider, Rev. Charles Wells, was assigned to Jefferson County in the early 1870's. On one Sunday morning, shortly after he had taken over this circuit, he chose the wrong trail to the schoolhouse where one of his congregations was waiting for him. The resulting delay amounted to several hours, so when he was about a mile from his destination he met the entire church group on the road. Tired of waiting, they were headed for their homes. Reverend Wells suggested that services be held where they were. So, after the congregation had seated themselves as best they could, he proceeded to preach the Gospel by the roadside in the way the thirteenth century Saint Francis of Assisi used to do.

Reverend Wells also relates that it was the custom for members of the congregation to bring their own lighting facilities when services were held in country schoolhouses at night. At one such meeting, where Reverend Wells was scheduled to preach, each church member came to the meeting with the expectation that another member would bring lamps or candles. The result was that the minister, after a fifteen-mile drive, was forced to preach his sermon in the dark.

But it is doubtful if the lack of light made much difference to the early ministers since the makeshift places of worship in dugouts and soddies were naturally dark. It was not unusual, during services, to see a preacher hold a candle in one hand and a Bible in the other.

In the early 1870's Rev. George Morley created amusement when, after preaching a sermon in a soddie, he passed among the congregation for the purpose of shaking hands with the members of his flock. At the back of the dimly lighted room he held out his hand to one of his sons, James Morley, and said, "How do you do. That's your name?" Bystanders roared with laughter.

Ventilation for a large gathering of people in a small room created another problem, especially when the weather was cold. A vent was usually cut in the roof and covered with a box which was open at the sides.

The pioneer Catholics had the same difficulties as the Protestants in finding suitable places for worship. In some ways their difficulties were greater because their ceremonies were more elaborate.

The first mass in Trenton was celebrated in a railroad section house to which each participant had to bring his own chair. The altar was constructed out of rough boards and crate lumber.

In McCook mass was held in a railroad depot in 1885; in Plattsmouth it was celebrated in the home of Samuel Martin. The Rev. George J. Glauber made trips to Red Cloud from Hastings in 1878 to celebrate mass in the log house of William Jackson. A year later, in 1879, the Catholics in the community of Weston were forced to hold their first celebration of the mass in a harness shop.
Some localities probably had wealth and people enough to support a church but not sufficient religious interest to justify its erection. Such was the situation Colonel and Mrs. H. S. Babcock found when they arrived in Billmore County in 1871. "Sunday," wrote Colonel Babcock, "could not be distinguished from the other days in the week."

Plattsmouth, in July of the same year, had more ministers than churches, with the result that the former were forced to attempt street preaching. But even this novel idea was doomed to failure, as is best related in a letter written by a visitor from Charlotte, Michigan, O. S. Ingham, to the editor of his home town paper. He said:

"Plattsmouth has between three and four thousand inhabitants. Among them are some pretty tough chaps—if swearing, drinking and gambling is any evidence. As a last resort the ministers have taken to street preaching. Just after reaching here today (Sunday) I heard what I supposed to be a serenade, although 6:30 p.m. seemed too early for such an event. Upon closer investigation, I learned that the audience, which was small, was opening the meeting by singing. Three or four ministers, who were good singers, took part.

"The scene was rather ludicrous. A few faithful stood near the minister, then, all along the street you could see heads poked out of windows, from the doors of saloons, billiard halls and grocery stores, where men were perched on barrels or dry goods boxes. They were all smoking, staring at the preachers and making comments that were anything but religious in character. I don't believe the preachers, who talked loud and long, converted a single soul."

A few of the ministers found conditions of worship so dangerous that they had to arm themselves. Elder E. C. Brand of the Reorganized Church of the Latter Day Saints often carried a pistol with him during his trips between Columbus and Hastings in the 1860's. He tells of times when he held a Bible in one hand and a pistol in the other, keeping both articles in full view of his congregation.

Mr. E. T. Grantham, of Lincoln, recalls an interesting experience of his father, a Methodist circuit rider, in Swan City (now a ghost town) during the early 1870's:

"The saloon keeper, whose name was Bill Stailey, had just built a new building for his wares; but, before opening it he called on father to hold a meeting in it. Father was a bit dubious, but finally, since the village didn't have a church, decided to try. So Bill passed the word around that father was going to preach in his new saloon on the following Sunday morning.

"The services began as scheduled, with father using the bar for a pulpit. Everything went along smoothly at first, but as the meeting progressed a growing disturbance was noticed in the street. Bill went out to see what was going on. That he saw was a large crowd of hoodlums and riff raff who were
cursing and jeering. Then they saw Bill, they hooted that they were 'ag'in' a good drinking place being spoiled by such 'goin' ons' and threatened to force fully clear out the congregation.

"Bill's answer to their threats was to go back into the church-saloon for his fun; after which he told them, 'You men want to disturb people who have come here for a good purpose. Now, let me tell you something! The first man the comes near this door, unless he comes peaceable, is going to need a doctor!"

"The mob immediately quieted down. Some of the men even came into the saloon for the meeting, which father had continued through ut the foregoing event as if nothing had happened."

A beer garden at the outskirts of Dannenberg was another unusual place for a religious meeting. People from miles around came here for their revelries in the early 1890's, because, in conjunction with the beer tables were a wine room, a show house and a dance hall. It was therefore not surprising that the community was both amazed and curious when it heard that the beer garden, which some referred to as the "Devil's inner sanctum," was going to be used for a revival meeting.

The meeting was arranged by Rev. A. Wilson, now of Lincoln, who tells that the evangelist, Rev. H. L. Powers, a small man with chin whiskers, decided that the best base for his sermon was the surroundings in which he preached. He named it his "Devil Sermon." So, in pleading with his congregation, he said: "The Devil and his allies—drink, cards, dancing, tobacco and scoffing, are all around you. You're in his house now but we'll push him out because we have carried the battle into his stronghold."

Reverend Powers was well satisfied with the results of his revival meeting in the beer garden. He estimated that 75 people came to the improvised altar in testimony of their conversion during the course of the evening.

Rev. George Scott, who came to Nebraska as a young Congregational minister in 1871, was assigned to organize a church near Covington. His first services were held in a log schoolhouse while the money and labor for a church were being secured.

Many of the men in Reverend Scott's congregation hadn't heard a sermon for years, so it was natural, in this rustic environment that they should be slow in adjusting themselves to conventional church deportment. One of their worst habits consisted of chewing tobacco during every waking minute. They even insisted upon bringing a liberal supply of it to church meetings. The schoolhouse floor, during these occasions, served as a cuspidor.

Then the congregation had moved into the newly built church, the members still insisted on chewing. Reverend Scott, in desperation, decided to do something about it. So, on one Sunday morning, he opened his sermon by saying:

"Many of you men used to chew tobacco and spit all over the floor in the schoolhouse. I didn't say anything about it at the time, but now that we are in a new church I wish you wouldn't do it. I know it will be difficult for some of you, but you can surely arrange to give up chewing for an hour if you want to."
"If you can't we will get a leg of wood and place it outside of the door where, as you enter the church, you can place your quid, using whatever precautions you wish to avoid getting them mixed up. If you find, during the hours of service, you can't endure the abstinence, you may get up and chew by the leg for a few minutes. After chewing you may return to the meeting. You will not be considered as disturbing the services and I guarantee that your quid will be where you place it, because there isn't a hog in the county that would touch it."

**Preaching Experiences**

The most colorful figures in the State's pioneer religion were the circuit riders, who conducted services at stated intervals over a wide area of territory. Each circuit rider had a given number of appointments (where his congregation met), the number determining how often he could preach at any given point. For instance, a man with six appointments could, by hard riding, manage to conduct services for each congregation every two weeks. If he had more congregations, he would come less often, sometimes only once a month.

The circuit rider's life was hard, since he had to be cut in all kinds of weather, ranging from a blistering hundred degrees in the shade to a biting snowstorm. The majority rode horseback, with their few belongings in a saddlebag, although a few were able to afford light rigs. Occasionally an impoverished minister had to walk, as was the case when his pony had died and he didn't possess sufficient money to replace it.

Much of the circuit route was made over uncharted plains with only a broken trail, at best, to follow. In some instances the rider would cover 60 or 70 miles of open prairie without seeing a house or a human being.

Worship was often held in sod houses, in barns, or, when the weather was favorable, on the prairie itself. Usually the worshippers met in the home of some member of the congregation, where the settlers from miles around would gather.

Such a service was heard by the Andrew Johnson family on Oak Creek near Valparaiso in the summer of 1866. Mrs. Nellie Magee, of Lincoln, a granddaughter of Andrew Johnson, was often told about this early meeting by her father, who retained a vivid memory of it because it took place on the first afternoon the Johnson family ever spent in Saunders County. They had just arrived in their covered wagon to homestead on the sweeping prairie, which stretched to the horizon on all sides.

In front of a homesteader's sod house, where they had stopped for advice on the lay of the land, they found a religious service in progress. The Methodist circuit rider, Rev. C. B. Torley, had arrived some hours before, and with his coming, neighbors from as far as ten miles away had driven to the Wilkin soddie for worship. The Johnsons found the minister deep in prayer when they gathered outside of the rude doorway:

"Oh Lord, come down, come down now. Lord, save a lost and ruined world! Lord, have mercy on the sinners! Have mercy on their souls—touch them with a live coal from Thine altar. Stir 'em up, STIR 'EM UP LORD! Get 'em to the front, Lord! Come right now, Lord. RIGHT AWAY! Ain't you said,
Lord, that where two or three meet together there ye'll be in the middle? "Ye're here. SO COME NOT!"

Using to let the Johnsons come into the 12 by 14-foot soddie, the minister continued with his praying, this time with the congregation on bended knees:

"Now Lord, bless us ... bless us all. We rest our souls in Thee. So keep us in the hollow of Thy hand. Let Thy strong arm be around us. Never leave us or forsake us."

Each climax, as the minister paused, was punctuated by a chorus of Amen from his congregation. After he was through, the entire group stood up and raised their voices in song. Basses, tenors, baritones, sopranos, contraltos, altos—all sang soprano. There was no instrumental accompaniment, and the end of each line was prolonged until it dovetailed into the next. The concluding lines were amplified into a tremendous shout.

Another circuit rider who came to the State was the Methodist minister, Rev. J. A. Nichols. His field of operation during the 1870's was Thayer County. Reverend Nichols recalled that when making pastoral visits, which was an important part of the pioneer minister's work, he had to walk the prairie and attempt to locate the homes of his members by scanning the grassy levels and slopes for signs of smoke issuing from the ground, since the dug-outs (in which most of the families in this community lived at this time) were excavated along the sides of small hills or ridges.

Mr. N. C. Ryerson, of Lincoln, who is now 93 years old, came to Nebraska in 1874. He was never an ordained minister but preached a number of sermons for the Free Will Baptists in Saline County, where meetings were held in dug-outs or low sod houses. Mr. Ryerson believes that the services conducted in these rude surroundings were among the most sincere that have ever been held. He says that everyone took part in both the prayers and songs; but what was most interesting were the testimonials made by members of the congregation. The following, made at a meeting in the 1870's, is typical:

"Oh, Dear Brothers and Sisters, I was filled with sin and wickedness. The Devil was at my elbow and I couldn't beat him off. During this period the fires of damnation were upon me and the prairie fire took my hay. Then the Great Light came all around me and I was saved. I could feel the sin and wickedness pouring off me like water and as each scalding drop dripped from my finger tips I gave thanks to the dear Lord. Let us pray."

The Free Methodists, likewise, ignored all attempts of formality at their early services. The congregation added emphasis to all sermons, prayers and testimonials with such phrases as "Amen," "That's right," "Ah, yes," "He's right, Lord," "Oh, these sinners!" Further ejaculations came from the more excited members in carefully timed moans and groans. At the close of the services the entire congregation got up and milled about, fervently clasping hands and greeting each other. As they threaded back and forth, their movements developed into a rhythm, in some ways a quadrille. Through this emo-
tional activity the sermons, which were often threadbare and dull in themselves, were given an enlivened and inspired meaning.

The singing of hymns also gave added zest to the services. The singing was usually begun by "raising a tune" with a tuning fork, since there were few organs in the new country. Even hymn books were lacking. The minister would "line the hymn" for his congregation by singing two lines of it, after which the congregation would repeat what the minister had sung. Then the minister would "line" the next two lines, and so on until the hymn was finished.

There is the story of one preacher who had poor eyesight and was unable to read without his glasses. One Sunday, when he was conducting a service in a sodhouse, he found that he was unable to "line the hymn" because he had forgotten his glasses. He tried to explain his predicament to the congregation by saying:

"My eyes are dim, I cannot see,
I left my specs at home."

The congregation, thinking he was lining a hymn, burst into song and faithfully reproduced his words. The minister, now frantic, made another attempt to clarify the situation by saying:

"I did not mean that you should sing,
I only meant my eyes were dim."*

But the audience, now warmed up to the singing, hastily repeated these lines. It is not known how he finally made them understand he wasn't singing a hymn.

Rev. G. C. Chadwick, who was a Methodist circuit rider in the vicinity of Hamilton County during the 1880's, says that his charge (known as the Marquette Circuit) consisted of the town church situated in Marquette, which was borrowed from the Christians, the Blue River church and a schoolhouse meeting place. He covered this route with a black horse, named Blackbird, who during her years of work, traveled over 60,000 miles.

During this period ministers were not considered working men. The reason was that the pioneers were engaged in pursuits which called for laborious physical exertion. A shovel or hoe was the only recognized badge of industry. Consequently the term, "I've been out begging for the preacher," was often used.

The salary "begged for," in Reverend Chadwick's case, consisted of $250 a year and a furnished parsonage. Nor was all of the salary furnished in actual cash, since "gifts" of feed for the horse or fuel for the house were invariably deducted from the salary. The salary was further augmented through

* According to an elderly resident of Lincoln, this story was current in Pennsylvania in 1870, the minister being reported as saying:

"You dunderin' fools what are you 'bout? If I come down, I'll break your schnout. I did not mean that you should sing, I only meant my eyes were dim."
"pound parties"—to which each member of the congregation brought a pound (or more) of food. But there were instances where the minister also took deductions from his salary because of these "pounds."

Reverend Chadwick, in recalling these days, said: "The minister's work was never finished because, besides his preparation and delivery of sermons, he was making continual rounds during which he traveled great distances to make pastoral calls and hold worship with families during the week days.

"The coming of the minister was quite an event in the sodhouse home and every effort was made by its occupants to provide a big company dinner when their pastor was expected. My wife ate so much fried chicken during these visits that one day she said, 'I hope I never have to eat another chicken, or even see one cross the road ahead of our horse.'

"A few days later, when we were calling on a family who did not know about our coming, we felt certain that there wouldn't be any fried chicken waiting for us. But, when we were still a quarter of a mile away from their place, we saw one of the boys running to the chicken house. They, like everyone else in the community, thought our coming called for chicken instead of the plain fare we craved."

Another pastoral-dinner story is told by a minister who visited a family near Loyal in 1880. This pastor had arrived, without warning, at the home of a farmer who was noted for his meagre meals. Then all were seated at the table, the hired man, instead of the minister, was asked to say grace. He offered this original and timely thanks:

"Oh Lord of Love who art above,
Thy blessings have descended:
Biscuits and tea for supper I see,
When mush and milk was intended." *

Accounts of this period also tell of pioneer children who registered a positive delight when the preacher arrived for meals. They could be heard saying, "Oh goody, here's the preacher. Now we're going to have something nice to eat."

During his work as a circuit rider Rev. A. C. Chadwick performed many marriages. He tells of one instance, in the late 1860's, when he received word to marry a young couple who lived fourteen miles northwest of Marquette. The drive, behind his horse Blackbird, was made against a biting blizzard. Reverend Chadwick states that "under the circumstances, one would suppose that this, the red letter day of a young man's life, would tend to open both his heart and his purse strings. In this case it seemed to do neither. "When the ceremony had been nicely finished, and everyone was kissing the bride, the young man came over to me and gave me a fervent handshake and one dollar to pay for my 14-mile drive. I accepted graciously, hiding my disappointment.

* This "grace" was also current in Pennsylvania in 1870, the first two lines being:

"The Lord be praised, for I'm amazed
To see how things have ended."
"After the visiting period and wedding lunch were over, my wife and I prepared to return. As we were about to get into the buggy, the bride's father rushed out and asked how much I had been paid.

"'One dollar,' I answered.

"'Hold on there, that ain't enough.' Then he dashed into the house and brought out a head of cabbage and a small piece of pork.

"Such was a circuit rider's life."

J. P. Berry, of Lincoln, who is now 70 years old, came to Holt County with his parents in 1879. His recollections of those days are vivid.

"... Father and mother always had a hankerin' for religion and would go any distance for a meetin'. Us kids went too, but those old benches got hard as rocks during the course of the sermon, especially after the big folks got up and began blessin' each other.

"But they were good folks who took their religion without fuss and feathers. Line manners and stiff fronts had no place at these gatherings. The women dressed in calico and the men in overalls and cowhide boots, although some of the men went so far as to blacken up their boots with some blacking.

"We used to go to meetin' at the 'Wild Rose schoolhouse where the preachin' was done by a neighboring farmer named Monroe. He was a free Methodist who did some bang up shoutin' when he got hot up. The folks in the community called him the 'Barefoot Parson' while others (outsiders) referred to him as the 'Cloghopper Preacher.'

"His congregation was not tied down by a lot of church rules and high falutin' ways. Come time for meetin' and maybe Brother Monroe would be cut doin' the chores on his farm. Then he was through he would set out across the prairie to the schoolhouse barefooted and wearin' his overalls. In this dress he would burst into the room where the folks were settlin' settled for the meetin'. He could always tell when he entered because his bare feet sounded like raps as they hit the hard floor.

"Brother Monroe never wasted any time in beginnin' his sermons, although sometimes he'd get so excited he'd take off his shirt if he happened to have one on. It was we to anyone in the congregation who had slid from price by dancin' or chewin' tobacco. Then he'd show it he would point his finger at the culprit and say: 'The Devil's amin' right at you. Better get right on His wagon or else kick the Devil off of your'n. You're part'n ear in his fiery furnace now. Turn back, brother, turn back afore it's too late.'"

Rivalries

Mrs. Nellie Magee, of Lincoln, recalls one early religious occurrence which, while serious in its implications, has an element of humor running through.

It occurred during an attempted combined meeting between the Christians and Methodists in Valparaiso sometime in the 1880's. The two denominations were greatly prejudiced against each other, much more than they are today.
The purpose of this meeting, which was held in the Christian Church, was to iron out some of these differences.

The combined service went along smoothly throughout the sermon, the singing and the prayer; but when the time came for communion the rivalry of the two groups flared up. It occurred when one of the Christian elders stepped up to the platform before the altar and said, in a voice of command:

"All Christians remain for communion; sinner, please depart."

At that time all the members of the Christian Church argued that anyone who had not been properly baptized according to their belief (totally immersed) was a sinner who was not in a fit spiritual condition to partake of the Lord's supper. So it was gall and wormwood to those staunch Methodists when they heard themselves cataloged as sinners. They got up in a group and indignantly marched out of the church.

No more union meetings were held in Valparaiso after this unfortunate incident had taken place.

The intense rivalry between the Methodists and the Christians (better known then as Campbellites) is illustrated by an incident that is reported to have occurred on April 10, 1858, when Rev. Zenas B. Turnman and Reverend Burch, Methodist ministers, were crossing the Nemaha River near Falls City in a ferry boat. Then they were half way across the river, Reverend Turnman's horse jumped overboard into the water. Its owner, however, held onto the bridle. This enabled him to force the horse to swim to shore alongside the ferry.

After the party had safely reached the opposite shore, Reverend Turnman led his dripping animal up to Reverend Burch and said in a loud whisper, "Brother Burch, I have just found out the true sentiment of my horse. He is a Campbellite, so I will sell him. I refuse to own such a horse."

Similar rivalry was observed by the Campbellite minister, Rev. R. C. Barrow, who came to Nebraska in 1864, and whose experiences are related by his son, Frank Barrow. Then Reverend Barrow conducted camp meetings near Rock Bluff in 1865, all converts who came forward were baptized in the Missouri River at the same hour they became converted to the Campbellite faith. One eighteen year old girl, who became converted and baptized at one of these nightly meetings, made her father (a widower) so angry that she was driven from her home and had to stay with neighbors. Her father, however, quickly took her back in order to have a "mother" for the younger members of his brood. Another reason for his repentance, according to village gossip, was that he needed someone around that could be forced to listen to his violent abuse of the Campbellite religion.

Reverend Barrow found even more opposition in Pawnee City. Here one group of men, suspected of being Methodists, dragged the carcass of a dead sheep over half a mile to the pool where Reverend Barrow had been doing his baptizing. It was felt that too many converts were being won over and if the Campbellite conversions continued there wouldn't be any other denominations left in the village.

Reverend Barrow then went to London, Nebraska (now a ghost town), where
he persuaded the Methodists to allow the use of a building which they had converted into a church. A large audience gathered for the meeting. Many, Reverend Barrow suspected, came out of curiosity, because as he walked up the aisle before the beginning of his sermon he heard such whispered comments as, "That's him ... the Campbellite!" and the answering remark, "I don't see a hump on his back!"

A notice was later posted on the building which stated that no future Campbellite services would be allowed. One of the converts, Edwin Money, then placed seats in his storehouse for services.

A few weeks later, in Tecumseh, Mary Burns fitted out her 10- by 12-foot kitchen in the same way. The room was filled with people for the first two meetings. But a show that came to town on the evening of the third meeting emptied the kitchen, causing Reverend Barrow to reflect sadly that the Tecumseh citizens were more interested in "worldly glitter" than in religion.

Another Campbellite minister who often worked with Reverend Barrow was Reverend Dunton. He rode about on a one-eyed pony, preaching the Gospel wherever the opportunity offered.

At one meeting, which was held in Rock Bluff, Leonard Parker, who was a fervent Methodist, challenged Reverend Dunton to a debate. Parker, who was a self-named "Campbellite killer," then proceeded to attack his hosts with a long speech of slander. He was quickly vanquished when a member shouted, "Out of scrap" (a then current expression that meant that his remarks were ridiculous). Another voice immediately asked, "Yes, and he's got a big washing on hand." Parker, in disgust, was routed from the meeting.

The foregoing incident was not an unusual occurrence. It was a frequent habit of the exponents of a denominational belief to attend the camp meeting of another denomination for the purpose of learning what was going on in the "enemy camp" and to argue with its followers.

Disagreement with the opposing denomination's belief was sometimes shown through the medium of prayer. Mrs. W. B. Alexander, of Lincoln, whose husband was an early Nebraska minister, states that "guests" who had come from the opposing camp often stood up at "prayer time" and asked for forgiveness and guidance for the believers of the denomination he was visiting, "in order that they might find the True Religion." The "true religion," of course, was always their own. A variation of this type of prayer took place at a Seventh Day Adventists' camp meeting held in Lancaster County when a visiting Methodist minister, who was asked to pray, insulted his hosts by leading off with the words, "Oh Lord, if it be possible, bless this meeting."

Sometimes a pitched battle of prayer debate would take place with the members of both denominations praying for the opposition "to see the Light and the Truth of the Word." Both factions, in this way, were striving to establish themselves in a position that was impregnable.

At other times a more violent opposition would be created, such as at an outdoor meeting that Elder W. B. Hill of the Seventh Day Adventists held in Cheney, when visitors of another denomination not only interrupted the sermon
with loud shouts but attempted to smoke out the congregation by stopping up the stove flue with rags.

At another service, which Elder Hill conducted in the Decatur Dunkard Church, he was interrupted by a member of the Latter Day Saints who tried to bring about an argument by saying that "the Commandments are surely not to be observed, since, in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve owned everything so how could they steal?" An old gentleman, named Mr. Keeding, got up and answered this bit of sophistry by exclaiming, "I thought there was some fruit in the Garden which did not belong to them!"

A fanatic religious sect, known as the Figgites, flourished in the vicinity of Gretna during the 1890's. The sect was begun by a Gretna citizen, Louis Figg, who claimed he received communications from the Holy Ghost through visions. Followers, upon becoming converted, were also supposed to possess the power of hearing from their Lord in the same manner.

Most of their instructions, judging from the Figgites' activities, seemed to consist in telling them to heckle and argue with all the other religious denominations in the community. The \textit{Papilion Times}, in the July 29, 1897, issue, commented as follows:

The new religious sect of Gretna seems determined to make things lively for the churches of that town and the surrounding country. The Methodist people of Spring Grove, a community five miles north of Gretna, had appointed an all-day meeting to be held last Sunday and to be conducted by Rev. Hatherall.

The Figgites got news of the meeting and also got one of their "visions" to attend in a body and show those Methodists the error of their ways. Accordingly, when the service had progressed to the testimony meeting, Mrs. Dora Cockerill, one of the most zealous of the Figgites, sprang to her feet and began a scathing denunciation of Methodism in general, and that congregation in particular. Then she began calling out people by name the pastor struck up a hymn, in which the congregation joined. Mrs. Cockerill then began shouting, 'Ball! Ball! Ball!' as a free and candid expression of her emotion.

After the song was finished another Figgite sister, a Mrs. Browning, rose and made known in no guarded terms her opinion of the singing down process. Confusion at the meeting now reigned supreme. Shouting, singing, dancing and uncomplimentary epithets were hurled through the air like hot shot.

As soon as a convenient opportunity presented itself Rev. Hatherall announced that the next person who disturbed the meeting would be arrested and fined. Several Figgite shrieks immediately rent the air in a wild disapproval of the minister's announcement. The meeting was then dismissed for dinner, but members of the two faiths indulged
in recrimination and mutual reproaches during the meal.

The meeting convened again after dinner and progressed comparatively smoothly for some time, being interrupted only six or eight times by Mrs. Donahoo, a sister of Mrs. Cockerill, who shrieked at several points where she took exception with the minister. But it was not until the religious experience meeting took place that the most exciting "vision" was received by the Figites. Mrs. Cockerill was again the first one to rise in response to the pastor's invitation. During the delivery of her message she stepped from bench to bench until she had reached the one directly facing the minister. Several remarks passed between the two, then Mrs. Cockerill, without warning seized the minister's hair in both hands. Fortunately for the peace of the meeting, Rev. Hatherall did not attempt to retaliate but, with a little physical persuasion, induced the present Figite to sit down. The meeting then came to an abrupt close and the "messengers of the Lord" took their departure, presumably happy in the consciousness of having done their duty. It is possible arrests may follow.

The Papillion Times, one year later, in August 11, 1898, tells of another Figite escapade, this time in the Christian Church at Gretna where, during a meeting, it was discovered that the Devil had taken refuge in the church.

Immediately they began calling out their peculiar war-cry against sin and began chasing Satan about the church, finally driving him into a cornfield where he eluded his pursuers.

Three years later, in 1901, the Figite sect was still active in its attempts to convert other denominations to their way of thinking. In the May 16th issue of the Papillion Times, is the following comment:

Mrs. W. W. Browning, a member of the Figite sect, has been disturbing religious meetings at Gretna again. She created quite a disturbance at the Methodist church last Sunday morning when the Pastor, Rev. Kemp, was absent from the pulpit. Mrs. Browning immediately occupied it and commenced preaching to the congregation. She shouted, "You all are going to hell unless you get the Holy Ghost!" Rev. Kemp interrupted her exhortations to say that this was a Methodist meeting and for her to keep quiet and to get out of the pulpit. Her reply was that, "This is not your meeting but mine. The Lord has sent me here." Rev. Kemp's answer was to take her by the arm and forcefully lead her out of the church. As she was going out of the door she said, "That's right, put me out of your synagogue--Jesus said you would."