

Servants for Freedom

Christian Abolitionists in Territorial Kansas 1854-1858

by Gunja SenGupta

One bitterly cold Christmas night in 1858, the firebrand abolitionist John Brown rode through the howling prairie winds of pioneer Kansas in the company of eleven fugitive slaves whom he had rescued from a Missouri plantation. Having tried in vain to find refuge for the bondsmen, the liberator clattered up to a rude log hut a mile west of the predominantly free-state settlement of Osawatomie at the source of the Osage River. Rev. Samuel L. Adair, Brown's brother-in-law and owner of the unpretentious dwelling, came to the door and lent a grave ear to Brown's urgent plea to shelter the fugitives. The clergyman consulted with his wife on the wisdom of complying with that dangerous request.¹ Florella Brown Adair responded, "I cannot let those poor slaves perish. Bring them in." The next morning, according to one chronicler, "the negro men were secreted in cornshacks and the negro women were safely packed away in the house. The following night, they were taken to a cabin about four miles west of Lane, where they were concealed for more than a month, while officers were riding the country in every direction in search of John Brown and the kidnapped slaves."²

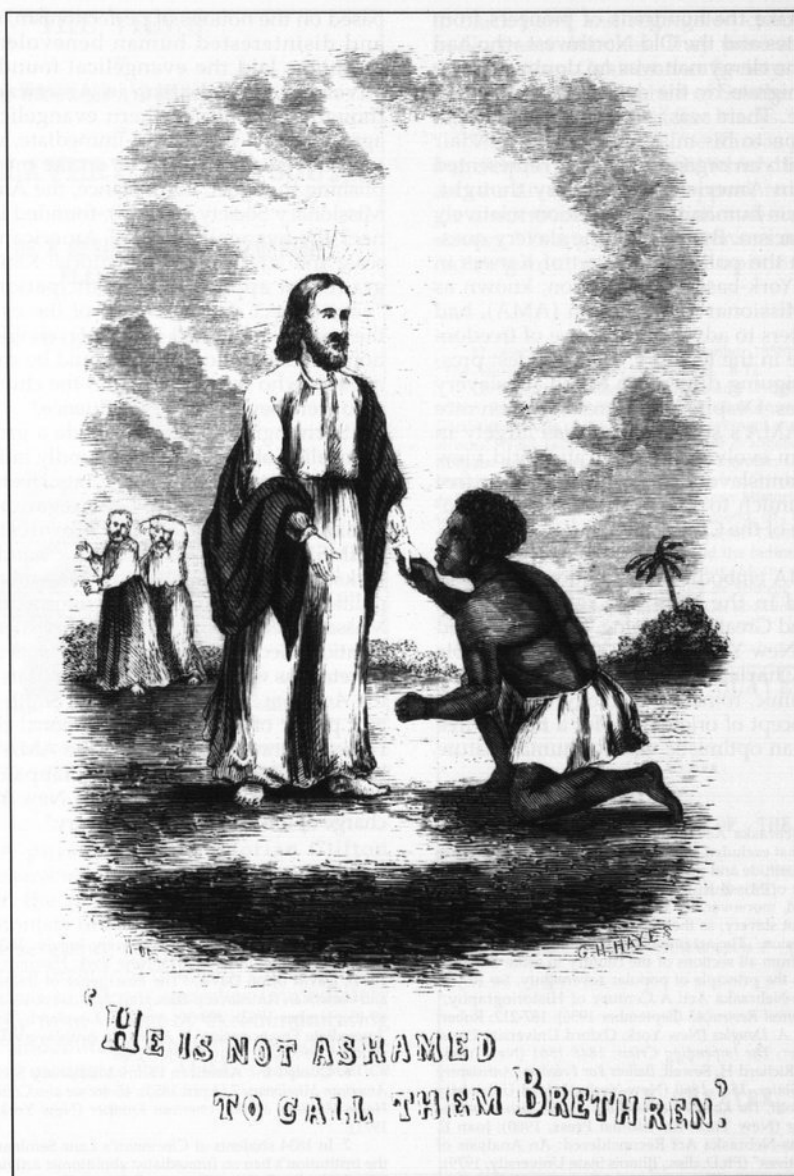
Adair, who so selflessly participated in Brown's daring venture that Christmas night in 1858, had left Whittlesey, Ohio, three years earlier to make his home in Kansas Territory, which had recently opened to white settlement under the explosive Kansas-

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1. Assisting fugitive slaves violated federal and territorial law. See James A. Rawley, *Race and Politics: "Bleeding Kansas" and the Coming of the Civil War* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1969), 91.

2. W. S. Jenks, "Some Unwritten History," newspaper clippings series, Charles and Sara T. D. Robinson Collection, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society.



Frontispiece of an 1853 publication, *Autographs For Freedom*, illustrates the controversial Christian views of the slavery issue.

Nebraska Act.³ Like the hundreds of pioneers from the Southern states and the Old Northwest who had preceded him, the clergyman was no doubt prompted in part to emigrate by the desire to improve his personal fortune. There was, nevertheless, an ideological dimension to his mission in Kansas. Adair was affiliated with an organization that represented a major strain in American antislavery thought, namely a religious-humanitarian tradition relatively free of explicit racism. By the time the slavery question faded from the political horizon of Kansas in 1859, this New York-based organization, known as the American Missionary Association (AMA), had sent eight ministers to advance the cause of freedom and racial justice in the territory. Their modest presence lent an intriguing dimension to the antislavery crusade in Kansas. Despite its progressivism on race questions, the AMA's social vision was largely in harmony with an evolving Republican world view that shaped the antislavery consciousness of the free North and did much to sharpen sectional antagonisms on the eve of the Civil War.⁴

The AMA embodied an abolitionist impulse rooted in the religious revivals of the "Second Great Awakening," which reached peak in western New York in the 1820s under the able apostleship of Charles Grandison Finney. Finney preached a dynamic, romantic theology that forsook the Calvinist concept of original sin for a faith in free will. Embracing an optimistic view of human nature

based on the notions of perfectionism, millennialism, and disinterested human benevolence, Finney's teachings laid the evangelical foundation for the advent of immediatism in American antislavery thought.⁵ Not all Northern evangelicals, however, agreed on the wisdom of immediate, unconditional, and universal abolition, or on the means of accomplishing that goal. For instance, the American Home Missionary Society (AHMS), founded in 1826 to pioneer the evangelization of America on a national scale and later active in territorial Kansas, favored a gradualist approach to emancipation. Despite its "very correct abstract views of the evil of slavery," the society continued to aid slaveholding congregations on the ground that it would be easier to reform masters who remained within the church than those who were beyond church influence.⁶

Such logic failed to persuade a group of radical evangelical abolitionists, profoundly influenced by the Finney revivals. In 1846 this group created a new society, the predominantly Congregational American Missionary Association, to protest against the AHMS's prevarication on black bondage. William Jackson, a distinguished businessman, antislavery politician, philanthropist, and reformer from Newton, Massachusetts, became the first president of the organization. George Whipple served as its corresponding secretary as well as the chief editor of its official organ, the *American Missionary*.⁷ Simeon Smith Jocelyn, a former pastor of a black Congregational church in New Haven, Connecticut, became the AMA's secretary of home missions in 1853. Lewis Tappan, a celebrated merchant and philanthropist of New York, assumed charge of the association's treasury.⁸

3. The Kansas-Nebraska Act repealed the part of the Missouri Compromise of 1820 that excluded slavery from the Louisiana Purchase north of 36° 30' north latitude and proposed the organization of two territories: Kansas, west of Missouri, and Nebraska, west of Iowa and Minnesota. It provided, moreover, for the admission of states into the Union "with or without slavery, as their constitutions may prescribe at the time of their admission." The act immediately set in motion a tide of emigration to Kansas from all sections of the country to settle the great question of slavery on the principle of popular sovereignty. See Roy F. Nichols, "The Kansas-Nebraska Act: A Century of Historiography," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43 (September 1956): 187-212; Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Richard H. Sewell, *Ballots For Freedom: Antislavery Politics in the United States, 1837-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Gerald Wolff, *The Kansas-Nebraska Bill: Party, Section and the Origin of the Civil War* (New York: Revisionist Press, 1980); Joan E. Lampton, "The Kansas-Nebraska Act Reconsidered: An Analysis of Men, Methods and Motives" (Ph.D. diss., Illinois State University, 1979).

4. See Clifton H. Johnson, "The American Missionary Association, 1846-1861: A Study in Christian Abolitionism" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1959); Clara Merritt De Boer, "The Role of Afro-Americans in the Origin and Work of the American Missionary Association: 1839-1877" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1973); Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), preface, vii.

5. Gilbert H. Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse, 1830-1844* (New York: D. Appleton Century Co., 1933; New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964); David Brion Davis, "The Emergence of Immediatism in British and American Antislavery Thought," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49 (September 1962): 209-30; Anne C. Loveland, "Evangelicalism and 'Immediate Emancipation' in American Antislavery Thought," *Journal of Southern History* 32 (May 1966): 172-88.

6. Quoted in "American Home Missionary Society and Slavery," *American Missionary* 7 (April 1853): 45-46; see also Colin B. Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971).

7. In 1834 students at Cincinnati's Lane Seminary rebelled against the institution's ban on immediatist abolitionist activism, and ultimately joined Oberlin College, Ohio. See Robert S. Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College: From its Foundation through the Civil War*, 2 vols. (Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College, 1943); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery* (Cleveland: Press of the Case Western Reserve University, 1969), 127-32; Lawrence T. Lesick, *The Lane Rebels: Evangelicalism and Antislavery in Antebellum America* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1980).

8. Johnson, "The American Missionary Association," 94-117.

THE VIEWS
OF
JUDGE WOODWARD AND BISHOP HOPKINS
ON
NEGRO SLAVERY AT THE SOUTH,
ILLUSTRATED FROM THE
**JOURNAL OF A RESIDENCE ON A GEORGIAN
PLANTATION**

BY
MRS. FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE,
(LATE BUTLER.)



A True Picture. A Photographic View of a Bodily-whipped Slave.

Two 1850s publications are examples of many that were issued expressing the clergy's varying stands on the question of slavery.

The AMA pursued what historian Clifton Johnson has characterized as a "Christian abolitionist" course on the slavery issue.⁹ Unlike the anti-church abolitionists of the Garrisonian brand who advocated the severance of all connections with the allegedly corrupt organized religions, Christian abolitionists worked to reform churches immediately and completely from within by excommunicating slaveholders.¹⁰ Indomitably committed to racial egalitarianism, they castigated the AHMS's acquiescence

9. Throughout this article, a Christian abolitionist is defined as one who subscribed to the AMA's official position on black bondage.

10. On the anti-institutionalism of the Garrisonian abolitionists, see Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959). For a critique of the Elkins thesis, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Stanley Elkin's *Slavery: The Antislavery Interpretation Reexamined*," *American Quarterly* 25 (May 1973): 154.

to black pews and segregated communion services in Northern churches. They were equally critical of the American Colonization Society, which they suspected was the brainchild of Southern masters wishing to rid the country of free blacks.¹¹

The campaign for a free Kansas proceeded along a multiplicity of channels which, by their number and the diversity of their appeal, rendered the struggle a microcosm of the national movement against slavery.¹² Evangelical abolitionism coexisted with an entire gamut of free-state opinion ranging from

11. *American Missionary* 2 (September 1858): 226; see also Johnson, "The American Missionary Association," 8-12.

12. Historians Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, among others, have drawn attention to the dichotomy between the radical Garrisonian wing of the antislavery movement and the "moderate, mainstream" Weld-Tappan-Birney faction of evangelical and political abolitionists. See Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse*; Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimke and Sarah Grimke* (New York: American Historical Association, 1934; Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1965); Dumond, ed., *Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 1831-1857* (New York: D. Appleton Century Co., 1938). On the differences between the moderates and the radicals within the abolitionist movement, see Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969). On abolitionist historiography, see

GOD AGAINST SLAVERY:

AND THE

FREEDOM AND DUTY OF THE PULPIT

TO REBUKE IT,

AS A SIN AGAINST GOD.

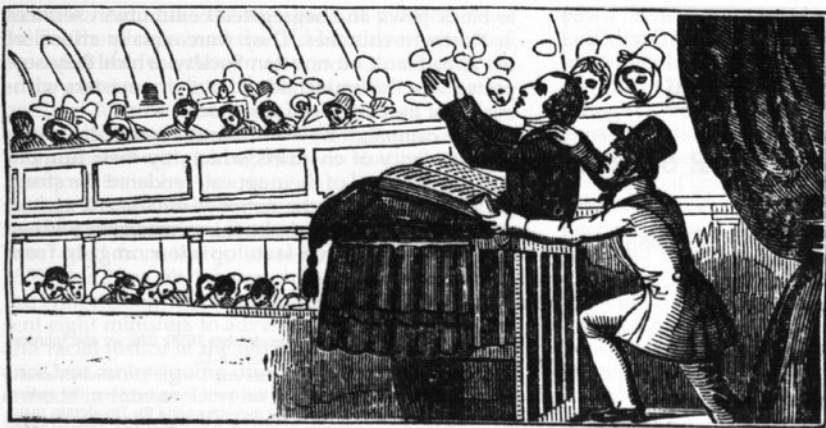
BY

GEORGE B. CHEEVER, D.D.

CINCINNATI:

AM. REFORM TRACT AND BOOK SOCIETY.

Depository, No. 28 West Fourth Street.



Among both proslavery and antislavery factions, ministers found their abolitionist preaching at times unwanted and dangerous. In this nineteenth-century sketch a minister is arrested for preaching against slavery.

antichurch moral absolutism to free-labor pragmatism. All too often, efforts to keep the territory free stemmed from the desire to keep it white.¹³ Despite their opposition to the extension of slavery to the West, free-staters did not necessarily show any overt inclination to challenge the institution where it already existed. Even the New England Emigrant Aid Company, perhaps the most high-profile representative of the reputedly more radical Yankee contingent in Kansas, disclaimed any intention of carrying the fight against the South's "peculiar institution" into Dixie. It aspired instead to persuade Southerners of the merits of gradual emancipation by demonstrating the economic and moral advantages of free labor.¹⁴

Merton L. Dillon, "The Abolitionists: A Decade of Historiography, 1959-1969," *Journal of Southern History* 35 (November 1969): 500-22; Ronald G. Walters, "The Boundaries of Abolitionism," in *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*, ed. Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 3-23; Lawrence J. Friedman, "Historical Topics Sometimes Run Dry: The State of Abolitionist Studies," *Historian* 43 (February 1981): 177-94.

13. Eugene H. Berwanger, *Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967); Rawley, *Race and Politics*; Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961).

14. The New England Emigrant Aid Company organ in Kansas, the *Kansas Herald of Freedom*, claimed, "It is not our purpose to engage in a crusade against our Southern brethren nor upon their institutions, so long as confined within their legitimate sphere." *Kansas Herald of Freedom*, Lawrence, October 21, 1854. It urged, moreover, that "when emancipation does take place, it should be gradual in operation, and the negro should be educated and fitted to sustain his new relationship to society." *Ibid.*, May 12, 1855.

In their view of race relations, the Christian abolitionists of the AMA represented the most radical fringe of this variegated spectrum. Yet as firm believers in the efficacy of political and constitutional mechanisms for the redress of national wrongs, they did not subscribe to the Garrisonian extremist rejection of American society as a fundamentally flawed institution in which slavery constituted only the worst sin. Instead, these reformists maintained that slavery was an anomaly in a basically good although divided society, which abolitionism would unite and strengthen by removing a deviant feature. The leaders of the AMA, many of them men of substance, shared in important respects the outlook of an evolving Republican world view that celebrated the materialism, social fluidity, and enterprise of a prosperous Northern social order based on the "dignity and opportunities of free labor."¹⁵ In the dispute over the extension of slavery to the territories, the issue at stake was "whether the western social order would resemble that of the South or of the North."¹⁶ Evangelical abolitionists shared, with other supporters of the free-labor doctrine, a commitment to carry the torch of Yankee-style material and moral progress into the West by planting there the free-

15. Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 48; see also Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

16. Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 54-56.

labor trophies of churches, schools, and mills.¹⁷ The affirmation of Northern society inherent in this broad definition of northeastern free-state goals legitimized antislavery politics, making Kansas a prominent factor in the creation of a Republican majority in the free states on the eve of the Civil War. The following is an examination of the AMA's contribution to that outcome, as well as the success with which it was able to promote its distinctive brand of color-blind evangelical abolitionism in Kansas Territory.

The AMA's role in the Kansas conflict began as soon as the "treason" embodied in the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was accomplished. In order to people Kansas Territory with free-state men and women, the association strove to stimulate a massive movement of "Christian Emigration" to supplement the efforts of organizations such as the Emigrant Aid Company. The pages of the *American Missionary* resounded with glowing descriptions of a well-endowed land crying for settlers of "the right stripe." It would be a "burning shame" to allow "this fair heritage" to "degenerate into another Virginia."¹⁸ Rev. Charles B. Boynton, editor of the *Christian Press* and secretary of the American Reform Book and Tract Society, used the same medium to make an emphatic plea for the predominance of the religious element in the forthcoming struggle for freedom in Kansas. It was imperative that organized emigration be no less than Christian emigration—true Christians moving as missionary colonies and planting churches at important points with "strong, capable men at their heads. . . . They would at once be radiating points of influence and centers around which society would form itself."¹⁹ Christian abolitionists believed that the will of God would determine the ultimate outcome of the crusade for a free Kansas.

17. For an alternative interpretation of religious-humanitarian reform motivation and its critique, see Clifford S. Griffin, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control, 1815-1860," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 44 (December 1957): 423-44; Lois W. Banner, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control: A Critique of an Interpretation," *Journal of American History* 60 (June 1973): 23-41. On social conservatism among evangelical reformers, see William C. McLoughlin, *The Meaning of Henry Ward Beecher: An Essay on the Shifting Values of Mid-Victorian America, 1840-1870* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970); Clifford E. Clark, Jr., *Henry Ward Beecher: Spokesman For a Middle-Class America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Louis S. Gerteis, *Morality and Utility in American Antislavery Reform* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Hugh Davis, *Joshua Leavitt: Evangelical Abolitionist* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

18. *Ibid.*, 8 (July 1854): 77.

19. *Ibid.*, 8 (October 1854): 102; see also Cora Dolbee, ed., "The Second Book on Kansas: An Account of C. B. Boynton and T. B. Mason's 'A Journey Through Kansas With Sketches of Nebraska,'" *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 4 (May 1935): 115-48.

In response to an advertisement in the *American Missionary* inviting correspondence from ministers interested in accompanying colonies to Kansas or Nebraska, Oberlin-educated clergymen Samuel L. Adair and Amos A. Finch wrote the AMA expressing their desire to serve the cause of freedom in the territory. Adair was first commissioned by the AMA as pastor of the Congregational church in Lafayette, Ohio, in November 1851 and was a life member of the association. Finch had been affiliated with the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of Michigan for about five years when he transferred to Cedar Falls, Iowa, in 1853; there he "labored with his hands and preached on the Sabbath." In October 1854 the AMA appointed both ministers to labor in Kansas under its auspices, pledging \$500 in aid to Adair and \$350 to Finch. A month later it commissioned Rev. John H. Byrd, formerly its missionary at Sicily, Ohio, to supplement the efforts of Finch and Adair in the territory at a salary of \$500.²⁰

The Adair family joined the second colony of emigrants sent out by the New England Emigrant Aid Company in September 1854 at Chicago.²¹ Florella Adair and their seven-year-old daughter traveled with a group conducted by company agent Charles H. Branscomb to St. Louis by railroad. When the party continued its journey to Kansas City by steamboat on the Sabbath, Florella refused to acquiesce in this violation of the Lord's day, staying on in St. Louis until the following Tuesday.²² The *American Missionary* registered a strong protest against the company's disregard for the sanctity of the Sabbath: "It grieved us, it grieved ministers here . . . it weakened the moral influence of the whole scheme and discredited New England." Whereupon, the president of the Emigrant Aid Company assured the AMA that the violation of the Sabbath was against the known wishes of his organization.²³

By September 1855 the AMA had appointed five missionaries to Kansas, all but one of whom were concentrated in free-state settlements south of the Kansas River. While Adair and Finch chose Osawatimie, Harvey Jones staked a claim three-quarters mile west

20. Samuel Adair to Simeon S. Jocelyn, June 24, September 19, 1854; Amos Finch to George Whipple, June 17, 1854, Archives of the American Missionary Association, Amistad Research Center at Tulane University, New Orleans, hereafter cited as AMA Archives; *Ninth Annual Report of the AMA* (New York: American Missionary Association, 1855), 52, AMA Archives.

21. Adair to Jocelyn, September 19, 1854.

22. *Ibid.*, October 21, 1854.

23. *American Missionary* 8 (October 1854): 102.

of Wabauunsee, 115 miles from the mouth of the Kansas River. John Lowry settled in Council City (later Burlingame), founded by a group of Pennsylvanians traveling under the auspices of the American Settlement Company, an affiliate of the New York Kansas League. The only AMA minister to make his home among friends of slavery was John H. Byrd, who settled in Leavenworth City in the northeastern part of the territory.²⁴ Since most of the early settlements were relatively small, the missionaries traveled to various points in the vicinity of their base of operations.

Occasionally a community applied to the AMA for aid in sustaining a "true Gospel" in their midst. Ebenezer Disbrow of Bloomington invited Henry H. Norton, the association's missionary in Lodi Station, Illinois, to preach in his neighborhood ten miles from Lawrence. The New York-born, Oberlin-educated Norton arrived in the territory in July 1856. He organized one church each in Bloomington and Kanwaka before his premature death the following year. The AMA commissioned Jonathan Copeland, formerly of Peterboro, New York, to fill Norton's position in the region of Topeka and Lawrence.²⁵ In the meantime, Henry Morell, a Frenchman educated in Switzerland, arrived in the territory under the misapprehension that a company of three hundred French persons had settled in Council City. Although disappointed in his intended mission, he decided to remain in Kansas under a commission from the AMA to replace Lowry at Council City. He ran into serious communication problems with his congregation, however, eventually prompting them to seek his replacement with an English-speaking minister.²⁶

By April 1858 three of the missionaries had moved to fresh fields in the territory—Amos Finch to Indianapolis (Miami County) and Henry Morell to Superior (Osage County), while Byrd relocated at Atchison, "formerly the strongest proslavery region in the territory," where, Byrd reported in his 1857 annual report, "until this spring scarcely a sermon had been preached. . . . But within a few months, eastern men have made extensive purchases of town

property . . . so that the complexion of the community is decidedly changed."²⁷

The location of Christian abolitionist missionaries suggests that they sought primarily to strengthen rather than create antislavery sentiment. Perhaps anticipating the limited scope the Kansas struggle offered for the use of moral suasion upon diehard proslavery men, the AMA envisioned for its missionaries the function of providing moral support to the more active combatants for freedom. From the start, the AMA determined to send missionaries to minister to the souls of free-state colonists on their way to the territory under the auspices of the eastern emigrant aid companies, "to go with them and strengthen and cheer them . . . share with them in their sacrifices and ultimately rejoice with them in their triumph."²⁸ On their part, the eastern companies welcomed the missionary clergymen, believing that their presence enhanced the reputation of local settlements and lent an aura of morality and respectability to the free-state movement.

Christian abolitionists in Kansas fought the slave power most visibly by establishing churches that did not fellowship slaveholders, although the lack of funds for building purposes severely hindered this endeavor. During 1857 AMA missionaries aided in the formation of six churches, most of them Congregational. Other instruments for the conversion of souls were Sabbath schools and Bible classes. These often were poorly attended, however, as a result of frequent outbreaks of sickness in the community, the lack of suitable schoolhouses, and problems of conveyance over long distances, especially in inclement weather. Harvey Jones wrote the AMA headquarters in New York that he would "very much like to add some books of an antislavery character" to the Wabauunsee Sabbath School collection, but he did not know how to procure them.²⁹ In the aftermath of each spurt of frontier violence and sectional strife, the missionar-

24. *Ninth Annual Report of the AMA*, 52-55; Harvey Jones to Jocelyn, March 4, 1856, AMA Archives.

25. S. S. Scofield, "Obituary of Reverend H. N. Norton," September 27, 1857; Jonathan Copeland to Jocelyn, September 28, 1857, AMA Archives.

26. Philip Schuyler to Jocelyn, March 15, 1857, AMA Archives.

27. *Eleventh Annual Report of the AMA* (New York: American Missionary Association, 1857), 71, AMA Archives. In 1857 Samuel C. Pomeroy, an agent of the New England Emigrant Aid Company in Kansas, acting on behalf of the company, joined Robert McBratney, agent of a Cincinnati-based emigrant company, in buying a controlling interest in the town of Atchison. See Samuel A. Johnson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom: The New England Emigrant Aid Company in the Kansas Crusade* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1954), 246; Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 148.

28. *American Missionary* 8 (June 1854): 58.

29. Jones to Jocelyn, April 2, 1856.

Christian abolitionists were much disheartened at the racism they encountered in the North. Two sketches from the *Anti-Slavery Almanac* depict Northerners enslaving a free black, and (below) free-staters destroying a black school.



ies helped relieve temporal distress by disbursing clothing and other provisions donated by eastern benefactors.

Missionaries sometimes contributed their energies to promoting Christian emigration by traveling east (for settlers from the East were most likely to be of "the right stripe") and disseminating information about conditions in the territory. In early 1857 Norton spent eight months traveling in the free states "as far east as Connecticut" delivering public lectures on the geographical, political, and religious condition of Kansas, and he believed that he had been instrumental in stimulating emigration of the "right sort" to the territory.³⁰

The burden of the antislavery missionary devolved upon clergymen who were willing to attack black bondage from the pulpit. In 1859 Byrd reminded Jocelyn that "considering the peculiar state of things here, you counselled me not to make

the subject of slavery too prominent in my Sabbath labors, while my ordinary efforts were to be faithful and persistent against it."³¹ Yet evidence of the missionaries' persecution by proslavery activists suggests that they were by no means silent about their Christian abolitionist convictions in word any more than in deed. Byrd's views on the "nefarious institution of slavery," expounded in a Sabbath sermon within the inhospitable environs of Leavenworth, provoked a proslavery proposal to give him a coat of tar and feathers if he dared to preach in town again.³² The missionary's well-known radical proclivities did nothing to endear him to the defenders of slavery, who he reported, "ranked abolitionists below murderers," and professed in "Missouri fashion" to "class such men as Seward and Chase with horse thieves."³³ In August 1856 Byrd was taken prisoner by the

30. *Eleventh Annual Report of the AMA*, 72.

31. John Byrd to Jocelyn, January 20, 1859, AMA Archives.

32. *Ibid.*, August 3, 1855.

33. *Ibid.*, July 7, 1855, December 27, 1859.



Evidence suggests that the Christian abolitionists in Kansas played a role in the operation of the underground railroad. Here fugitives are aided during their escape from the South.

enemy about the same time that a Missouri newspaper published the following extract: "We learn that a notorious abolitionist named Bird [sic] has been taken into custody. Preparations are making [sic] to take other birds of the same plumage."³⁴ Although Byrd, by virtue of his location, was the most vulnerable to proslavery chastisement, the other missionaries did not escape persecution. While wandering in the vicinity of the Neosho River, Finch came upon a proslavery trading post, the owner of which informed him that he had two prices, "one for white men, and one for abolitionists."³⁵

For a majority of Christian abolitionist preachers, living in predominantly free-state communities may not have been as challenging as settling amidst confirmed friends of slavery. Yet as previously noted, many free-state men in Kansas were enemies of abolitionism. It must have taken courage to adhere unswervingly to a position of racial egalitarianism in communities where the "black law" feeling was often the *raison d'être*.³⁶ Moral revulsion against slav-

ery among free-state emigrants did not necessarily translate into sympathy for blacks. Indeed, Byrd claimed that James H. Lane, "the most prominent and efficient free state man in the territory," was accustomed to declaring in his speeches, "I look upon this nigger question just as I look upon the horse or the jackass question. It is merely a question of dollars and cents."³⁷ Adair reported that he had been excluded from the house of a professed free-soiler from Ohio where he had earlier preached twice because he was an "abolitioner." The Ohioan told Adair, "you pray as if you would have the slaves all set free at once, and were in favor of their having their rights among us—a doctrine which I do not hold, and which I am unwilling shall be preached in my house." Much disheartened by the display of such negrophobia, Adair observed, "their free soil is free soil for the white, but not for the black. They hate slavery, but they hate the negro worse."³⁸ In a climate of such pervasive racism, the voice of the Christian abolitionist was often a cry in the wilderness. John Lowry "took the negative" in a debate sponsored by the Pioneer Institute, a lyceum in Council City on the subject "Is it right in the formation

34. *American Missionary* 10 (October 1856): 93.

35. Finch to Jocelyn, July 3, 1855, AMA Archives.

36. Rawley, *Race and Politics*; Berwanger, *Frontier Against Slavery*. Black law feeling referred to the support of excluding blacks from Kansas. The Free-state party adopted a black law provision as part of its platform at a convention held in Big Springs in 1855. See Johnson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom*, 108-9; Rawley, *Race and Politics*, 94-95.

37. Byrd to Jocelyn, November 16, 1855.

38. *American Missionary* 9 (October 1855): 93.

of a state government, to exclude free negroes?"³⁹ Byrd refused to turn out black children from the Sabbath school in Atchison where he preached, and often read letters and wrote replies for black families, earning the name "nigger preacher."⁴⁰ His consequent exclusion from the Union Meeting House hindered his ministry.

Abundant evidence suggests that Christian abolitionists in Kansas played a part in the operation of the territory's underground railroad, which from 1855-1859 apparently carried nearly three hundred Missouri bondsmen to freedom through Lawrence across Iowa and into Canada.⁴¹ Adair evidently was not alone among the AMA missionaries in his readiness to offer a sanctuary to slaves in flight from bondage. In her husband's absence, the wife of Rev. Amos Finch harbored a fugitive slave girl for a day and a half,⁴² prompting the proslavery *Kansas Pioneer* to comment scathingly on the "hired emissaries of such despicable traitors as Eli Thayer and Amos Lawrence, . . . among whom the wives of Reverend gentlemen are tolerated after taking to their bed and their own arms a stinking negro wench, only selecting a wench instead of a buck because it was she that made first application—judging whom from the past, we may early look for a flourishing crop of young mulattoes as members of ministerial families."⁴³

Legislation offered the most effectual avenue of tangible change in race relations. Although Kansas politics were less than amenable to Christian abolitionist pressure, Byrd occasionally was able to exercise his influence on behalf of the oppressed. As a member of a committee appointed by the Big Springs Convention to draw up a platform for the Free-state party in 1855, the preacher dissented from the adoption of a black law provision as part of the platform. Although he was overruled in the matter, Byrd thought his stead-

fast opposition to racism was reflected in a subsequent free-state convention held in Topeka. There a negro exclusion clause was submitted for a separate vote, rather than incorporated outright in the constitution framed in October 1855. In December, however, free-state men voted in favor of the black law.⁴⁴

The missionaries' outspoken radicalism on the race question may have alienated more discrete and pragmatic elements within the northeastern free-state contingent in Kansas. The New England Emigrant Aid Company's organ, the *Kansas Herald of Freedom*, maintained that the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery would destroy the master, and turn the slave "loose upon the world, ignorant, and wholly unqualified for the responsible duties of life."⁴⁵ Understandably, the company preferred to associate with less "ultra" missionary bodies such as the American Home Missionary Society, whose minister Samuel Y. Lum was invited to "supply the pulpit" of the Emigrant Aid Company-sponsored Lawrence Association for a year.⁴⁶ Finch wrote his headquarters in New York that Lum treated him "coolly," perhaps because "we don't exactly agree with regard to certain matters pertaining to the great questions of reform. [Lum] expresses his views in opposition to the position taken by the AMA . . . I do not regard Mr. Lum as sound antislavery in his operations here." Moreover, Finch continued, "Mr. Lum will not come out in daylight and say he is for the black law, but gives his decided influence in favor of those who take that position . . . because it is expedient to do so."⁴⁷

Finch's complaint against Lum's relative conservatism on questions of slavery and race echoed the general misgivings that the AMA harbored about the AHMS's position on those issues. Yet the representatives of the two organizations in Kansas appear to have managed quite frequently to bury their differences in the common endeavor to rid the territory of slavery, Romanism, vice, and whiskey. The Congregational Association of Eastern Kansas claimed members from both associations, and AHMS missionaries often supplied ministerial recommendations for renewing the commissions of clergymen employed by the AMA. In one instance of professional cooperation between the two evangelical societies, Byrd took

39. John Lowry to Jocelyn, July 5, 1855, AMA Archives.

40. Byrd to Jocelyn, April 23, 1858, July 22, 1859.

41. Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land With Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 259. The influx of slaves from Missouri into Kansas increased greatly with the outbreak of the Civil War. See Richard B. Sheridan, "From Slavery in Missouri to Freedom in Kansas: The Influx of Black Fugitives and Contrabands Into Kansas, 1854-1865," *Kansas History* 12 (Spring 1989): 28-47.

42. Finch to Jocelyn, March 16, 1855.

43. *Kansas Pioneer*, Kickapoo, cited in *Kansas Herald of Freedom*, April 14, 1855; see also Lydia A. Haag, "Slavery Agitation and Its Influence on the State of Kansas" (Master's thesis, Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, Manhattan, 1934), 52; Zu Adams, "Slaves in Kansas" (Typed manuscript, History—Slavery Collection, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society), 7-8.

44. Byrd to Jocelyn, November 16, 1855. On the Big Springs Convention, see R. G. Elliott, "The Big Springs Convention," *Kansas Historical Collections*, 1903-1904 8 (1904): 362-77.

45. *Kansas Herald of Freedom*, June 23, 1855.

46. Emory Lindquist, ed., *The Letters of the Reverend Samuel Y. Lum, Pioneer Kansas Missionary, 1854-1858* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1959), 39-67.

47. Finch to Jocelyn, February 28, 1855.

over Lum's ministry in Lawrence for two months in the AHMS missionary's absence in 1856. The AMA minister professed to be disappointed, however, at the small size of Lum's congregation, claiming that he had preached before larger audiences even in Leavenworth.⁴⁸ In 1858 Lewis Tappan requested Lum to serve as an agent for the *American Missionary* magazine in Kansas. Although Lum was a life member of the AMA, he declined to accept the position on the ground of his association with the AHMS.⁴⁹

Even if Christian abolitionists deemed some of their free-state compatriots more than a trifle conservative on the race question, they shared, with the agents of organized emigration, a commitment to mold the frontier in the image of the progressive Northeast. The missionaries threw the weight of their support behind the causes of temperance and education, in addition to antislavery. The institutions of "civilized eastern society" cultivated "honesty, frugality, diligence, punctuality, and sobriety," qualities exalted by the Protestant ethic and Republican outlook as essential to material and moral wealth, both hallmarks of Northern progress.⁵⁰ To the eastern evangelicals, decadent slaveholding Southerners and tough, hard-drinking, irreligious western frontiersmen appeared to embody the very antithesis of that progress, as did the expanding German and Irish Catholic immigrant population with their alleged intemperance and indolence, hostility to public education, and acquiescence in slavery. "Slavery and Popery practically promote licentiousness and intemperance," declared the AMA at its seventh annual meeting.⁵¹ It is thus small wonder that the missionaries generally established a correlation between an emigrant group's attributes, and its sectional/ethnic origin. Adair, for instance, claimed that the intemperate men at Osawatimie were "mostly southern or western."⁵² "Slavery, Rum, and Romanism," with all they implied for human progress, assumed a symbiotic relationship in these Northern evangelicals' definition of their reverse mirror images.⁵³

Disillusioned with their fellow free-staters, the missionaries remained optimistic about the future of emancipated slaves. The AMA envisioned a biracial "bourgeois Christian" order that would offer both blacks and whites the opportunity for property ownership through hard work.⁵⁴ Byrd was much impressed by Hiram Young, an ex-slave from Independence, Missouri, who had hired out his time, purchased his freedom, and launched an extensive business in wagon and ox-yoke manufacture, making sales of forty thousand dollars a year. He employed white men and hired slaves, many of whom he assisted in buying their freedom. Although he was illiterate and employed a clerk to do his writing, he made all contracts and paid all monies. "And," Byrd concluded, "I understand that he possesses the confidence of the community as an upright and enterprising businessman."⁵⁵

Unfortunately, not all freed slaves made smooth transitions into paid employment, and missionaries demonstrated a lack of understanding of the cultural implications of slave experiences for the emancipated black worker. Slavery, as Eric Foner has pointed out, was not designed to "produce workers socialized to the discipline of capitalist wage labor." The chief engine of industry in a capitalist system, namely the desire to progressively raise living standards, was not relevant to freedmen with little experience with the marketplace and accustomed to existing at subsistence level under slavery.⁵⁶ Yet like the Northern "soldiers of light and love" who went south during Reconstruction to inculcate the values of thrift, hard work, and punctuality among the former slaves, Christian abolitionists had no doubt that the right kind of education would equip blacks to take advantage of the opportunity for economic success offered by a free-labor system.⁵⁷ Thus they spoke frequently of saving the slaves' immortal souls, and of educating them, but never of providing them with the wherewithal for a livelihood.

In the final analysis, how effective were Christian abolitionists in bringing Kansas Territory under the

48. Byrd to Jocelyn, November 27, 1856.

49. Samuel Lum to Lewis Tappan, March 4, 1858; Lum to Whipple, September 4, 1857, AMA Archives.

50. Quoted in Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 13.

51. *Seventh Annual Report of the AMA* (New York: American Missionary Association, 1853), 75, AMA Archives.

52. Adair to Jocelyn, March 13, 1856.

53. Quoted in James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Era of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 117. On the mentality of the antislavery forces in Kansas, see Michael Fellman, "Rehearsal for the Civil War: Antislavery and Proslavery at the Fighting Point in Kansas, 1854-1856," in *Antislavery Reconsidered*, 287-307.

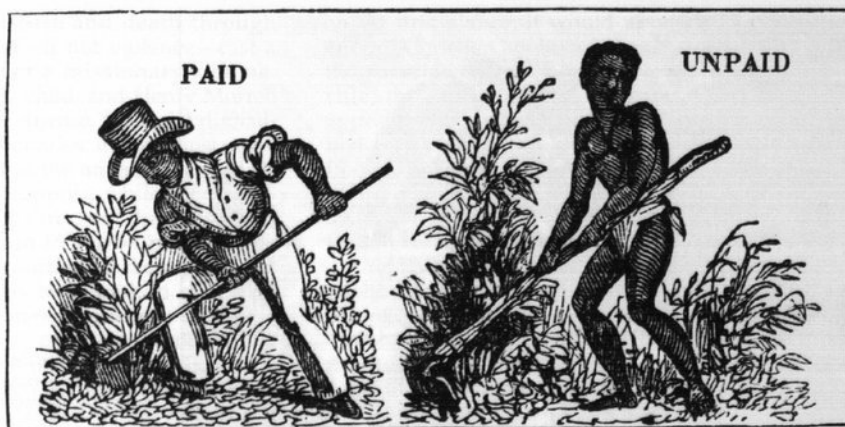
54. Quoted in James B. Stewart, "Politics and Belief in Abolitionism: Stanley Elkin's Concept of Antiinstitutionalism and Recent Interpretations of American Antislavery," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 75 (Winter 1976): 85.

55. Byrd to Jocelyn, July 7, 1855.

56. Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War*, 105-6.

57. See Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers & Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986).

Missionaries were optimistic about the future of emancipated slaves. This nineteenth-century drawing, "Emancipated Slaves Can Take Care of Themselves," illustrates the freed black taking his place among America's yeomen.



beneficent influence of "true" religion, culture, and antislavery? Besides negrophobia, the northeastern evangelical cause faced formidable obstacles in the general collapse of the restraints of civilized society, the near-universal "worship of Mammon," and the disruptive influence of political chaos within the territory. Profanity was commonplace, and the sound of the rifle and the axe desecrated many a Sabbath. Adair regretted to inform the AMA that one of the "old settlers of Osawatimie, a deacon in the Baptist church," one who had "heretofore been most decided in temperance, antislavery, and all reforms," had built a large hotel and applied for a license to sell liquor.⁵⁸ Groghshops proliferated in the vicinity of such a model settlement as Lawrence at an alarming rate while at Quindaro, in as many as three instances, men from New England engaged in "that heinous business" of rum-selling.⁵⁹

Territorial ministers also found housing their congregations challenging. The swelling tide of emigration called for more commodious houses of worship, forced ministers to preach at different places at different times, and exacerbated the problem of securing a permanent audience. On his arrival in Topeka, one minister found the prospects of building a church somewhat poor because of the three trustees of the church-building fund: one was slowly recovering from a severe illness, another had gone east to spend the winter, and the third was a prisoner

on trial at Leecompton with other free-state men.⁶⁰ The faithful of Manhattan were forced to congregate in a log cabin without floors or windows, "to which the light of heaven had no access, except by avenues which would admit equally the winds and storms of winter."⁶¹ At Lawrence, the hall that had served as the venue of public worship was, in due course, converted into a barrack for soldiers.

Territorial Kansas became a battleground for another kind of tussle that arrayed the materialism of pervasive speculative spirit against the progress of true religion. Most missionaries frequently referred to claim disputes among settlers: "Many claims are cut up badly. Some lose their timber, some their prairie, some lose both; . . . I often think of the Psalmist's expressions, 'The Lord is my portion;' 'Thou maintainest my lot.' Truly blessed must that soul be that finds itself in possession of such a claim."⁶² Practical needs, however, dictated the acquisition of earthly claims as well. The Yankees were heirs to a Puritan religious tradition fraught with the paradoxical requirement that man attend to his worldly calling faithfully without allowing material success to interfere with the higher love of God.⁶³ The missionaries found themselves engaged in a delicate balancing act to prevent their moral obligation to do well on earth from degenerating into an ungodly lust after material wealth. Not all were successful. The Christian aboli-

58. Adair to Jocelyn, June 30, 1859.

59. See *Home Missionary* 31 (November 1858), 164, Archives of the American Home Missionary Society, Amistad Research Center at Tulane University.

60. *Ibid.*, 29 (January 1857): 241.

61. *Ibid.*, 29 (June 1856): 48.

62. *Tenth Annual Report of the AMA* (New York: American Missionary Association, 1856), 79, AMA Archives.

63. Edmund S. Morgan, *Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1958), 7-8.



Forced to travel distances to preach at newly forming settlements, territorial ministers were often obliged to endure the discomforts of life in the wilderness.

tionist contingent in Kansas suffered a casualty in the losing battle with crass materialism when Rev. Amos Finch succumbed to the temptations of speculation and resigned from the AMA in 1860.⁶⁴

Numerous other tribulations beset the missionary endeavor on the frontier. The clergymen devoted a disproportionate amount of space in their periodic reports to recounting the physical discomforts of life in the wilderness. John Lowry spent several weeks with his son in an ox wagon covered with cloth. They cooked out in the open, and rainstorms frequently obliged them to go to bed without supper. Prowling wolves and Kansas winds were also vexing. "I am now seated on the bare ground," wrote Lowry, "with a trunk for a writing table and the wind blowing so hard that I can scarcely hold my paper and prevent it blowing away."⁶⁵

Like Lowry, the Finch family also suffered the hardships of pioneer life. In July 1855 the minister wrote:

We put up a small log house without one foot of lumber, split out stiff for floors, doors, and window casing, and were under the necessity of going into our house before we had the large cracks filled up. Yesterday, there came up a tremendous rain-storm with heavy winds, so that . . . there was not a dry thing left in the house . . . I have been obliged to prepare a field in which to keep my pony and cow. Labor is so high that my means will not admit of hiring much. Provisions of all kinds are also very high here: flour is \$16 per barrel, and sugar from 10 to 12 cents per pound. . . . So you see that it takes something to live in Kansas.⁶⁶

64. John F. Hawley to Jocelyn, February 24, 1858; Finch to Jocelyn, April 20, August 25, 1858, October 24, 1859; Adair to Jocelyn, March 31, 1858.

65. Lowry to Jocelyn, July 5, 1855.

66. *American Missionary* 9 (July 1855): 67.

Not infrequently, disease and death through exposure and a poor diet—if not violence—cast a heavy pall of gloom over a missionary's home. Harvey Jones lost his only child, and Henry Morrell his wife, to the ravages of disease. Financial difficulties also plagued the missionaries. In many instances, they received only a part of the amount pledged by the people toward their support, while the diminished receipts of the AMA's treasury during periods of economic downturn, as in 1857-1858, made it difficult to pay the portion assumed by the association. Harvey Jones' parishioners undertook to raise \$130 for his support. Since money was scarce, they paid him in produce and labor, much to the minister's inconvenience because the produce was paid at the settlers' own price and often in commodities that the clergyman did not need. The destruction of free-state property during border warfare compounded the general poverty of a majority of settlers, often making it impossible for them to redeem their pledges of ministerial support.⁶⁷

A territory in the throes of political anarchy offered poor grounds for the hope that the Bible and the ballot box would be effective weapons in achieving the victory of freedom and religion. Although the AMA advised its missionaries in Kansas "not to become mixed up with military companies," Norton reported that the exigencies of war had forced the "best Christians," even ministers of the gospel, including himself to take up arms. And who could blame clergymen confronted with "an invading and infuriating army of 3000 men under desperate leaders" for resorting to the "only natural means of defense: prayer and good rifles?"⁶⁸

At first glance, it would appear that the influence of Christian abolitionism was overwhelmed by the superior power of the bowie knife, the Sharp's rifle, the omnipotent dollar, and the demagogic appeal to racism. Byrd professed himself so dissatisfied with his labors that he would resign if he were free to do so—a lament borne out by the small size of the ministers' congregations.⁶⁹ In particular, Christian abolitionist pleas for a color-blind Kansas fell largely on deaf ears.⁷⁰

Yet however peripheral the role of the evangelical abolitionists of the AMA may appear to have been during the reign of chaos in territorial Kansas, their moral influence enhanced the tenor of the free-state movement. The AMA belonged to a mosaic of northeastern antislavery groups that projected the crusade for a free West as a larger struggle to implant the values of the Northern society on the frontier. This broad definition of Yankee goals in the territory was consistent with an evolving Republican ideology that juxtaposed the dynamism of the free-labor North and the stagnation of the slave South in a compelling indictment of Dixie's "peculiar institution." Kansas became a symbol of the struggle to decide whether the western social order would be modelled after that of the North or the South. The AMA's activities in the territory, reported to the Northern public through the pages of the *American Missionary* and the *New York Tribune*, helped shape that larger meaning of the Kansas crusade. Thus, Bleeding Kansas became a potent stepping stone to the creation of a Republican North on the eve of sectional conflict.

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67. Jones to Jocelyn, July 3, 1858.

68. Norton to Jocelyn, August 6, 1856, October 10, 1857.

69. Byrd to Jocelyn, August 11, 1856.

70. Kansas entered the Union as a free state in January 1861 under a constitution that did not exclude blacks from the state but denied them the right to vote. See Rawley, *Race and Politics*, 252.