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## ANTI-CATHOLIC PROPAGANDA AND THE HOME MISSIONARY MOVEMENT, 1800-1860

BY RAY A. BILLINGTON

The concern of eastern Christians for the religious and educational welfare of those who had gone out to the frontier was evidenced even before the Revolution. In 1774 the General Association of Connecticut Congregationalists agreed to send missionaries into Vermont and New York to care for the religious needs of former Connecticut citizens, and while the Revolution prevented the execution of this project, the close of hostilities saw the simultaneous development of domestic missionary activity all over New England. Connecticut Congregationalists led the way by founding a state missionary society in 1798, Massachusetts followed in the next year, and additional state and local societies were formed immediately afterward.<sup>1</sup>

Interest in the domestic missionary movement, while centered in New England, was not confined there. The religious welfare of the West was a thing of intimate concern to every easterner. To the East the newer regions of the country seemed crude, uncivilized, and peopled with men and women fast drifting toward religious and cultural degeneracy. The natural hesitancy of poverty-stricken frontier communities to found schools and colleges indicated to easterners only a deplorable lack of interest in ancient ideals. Therefore in the first quarter of the nineteenth century domestic missionary societies were established throughout the eastern states and in 1826 these local efforts were coördinated with the formation of the American Home Missionary Society.<sup>2</sup> For many years thereafter this society and the other similar societies which continued a separate existence were to play a valuable part in the religious and cultural development of the West.

Two dominant motives lay behind these organized efforts. One

<sup>1</sup> Williston Walker, *A History of the Congregational Church in the United States* (*American Church History Series*, III, New York, 1894), 311-13; Joseph B. Clark, *Leavening the Nation. The Story of American Home Missions* (New York, 1903), 31.

<sup>2</sup> Clark, *Leavening the Nation*, 59-63.

was the natural desire of the religious men to perpetuate in the West the ideals, traditions, and civilization of the East. The other which gave great impetus to the home missionary movement, was the desire to save the West from Catholicism.<sup>3</sup> A generation with sufficient self-esteem to create the concept of manifest destiny was only too ready to believe that the Pope wished to extend his political domination into the realms of the Republic. The fear that an infidel people in the Mississippi Valley might succumb to Rome's advance agents spurred the missionary societies in their efforts to educate their western brethren in the doctrines of Protestantism. Nativistic propaganda of the day was creating a popular fear of Catholicism and the domestic missionary societies, aware of its importance, used it to good advantage in their appeals for support.

The first predictions of Rome's design on the West came in the 1820's when the religious press warned its readers that the forces of Catholicism were already insinuating themselves into the Great Valley.<sup>4</sup> This fear was echoed by such divergent church organizations as the Sabbath School Teachers of Boston<sup>5</sup> and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church.<sup>6</sup> At first these

<sup>3</sup> The few scholars who have dealt with the development of domestic missions have considered the efforts to perpetuate eastern ideals in the West but have failed to emphasize properly this fear of Catholicism. Colin B. Goodykoontz in his article on "Protestant Home Missions and Education in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1835-1860," in James F. Willard and Colin B. Goodykoontz (eds.), *The Trans-Mississippi West* (Boulder, 1930), touches on the effect of nativistic propaganda in fostering Protestant educational efforts in the West, but does not develop the subject. Henry K. Rowe in his suggestive *History of Religion in the United States* (New York, 1924), 79-80, indicates the importance of this anti-Catholic fear, but makes no attempt to demonstrate the truth of his statement. The other writers who have discussed the domestic missionary movement in the West fail even to mention this important phase of the subject. See W. W. Sweet, *Story of Religions in America* (New York, 1930), 360-63; L. K. Mathews, "Some Activities of the Congregational Church West of the Mississippi," in *Essays in American History Dedicated to Frederick Jackson Turner* (New York, 1910), 8-33; Clark, *Leavening the Nation*, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> *New York Observer*, August 14, 1824, October 20, 1827, December 19, 1829; *Connecticut Observer*, quoted in *ibid.*, January 16, 1830; *Church Register*, June 6, 1829; *Episcopal Recorder*, June 25, 1831, August 25, 1832; *Protestant Episcopalian and Church Register* (Philadelphia, 1830-38), III (1833); *The Protestant*, January 9, 1830, February 6, 1830, February 20, 1830, November 13, 1830; *Protestant Magazine* (New York, 1833-1834), I (1833); *Christian Watchman*, April 6, 1832.

<sup>5</sup> *Massachusetts Yeoman*, March 31, 1829.

<sup>6</sup> *New York Observer*, July 12, 1834. See also *ibid.*, August 14, 1830, July 16, 1831, December 3, 1831, July 21, 1832; *Massachusetts Yeoman*, April 17, 1830.

suspicious were directed in general against Rome but within a short time nativistic editors had centered their attention on two European societies, one of which was the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, organized at Lyons, France, in 1822, for the purpose of furthering the growth of the church in Protestant and heathen countries.<sup>7</sup> The other was the Leopold Association.

Both of these organizations were particularly active in aiding the Catholic church in new lands but the Society for the Propagation of the Faith was by far the more influential in the United States in so far as financial contributions were concerned.<sup>8</sup> It did not, however, attract the scrutiny of the anti-Catholic press<sup>9</sup> as did the Leopold Association, which was formed in Vienna in 1829 in response to the needs of German Catholics in the Middle West. Material aid from this society was comparatively small,<sup>10</sup> but the fact that its efforts were confined solely to the promotion of the church in North America gave it undue prominence in the eyes of nativists.

It may be doubted if the early sporadic attempts to inflame the minds of American Protestants against the Leopold Association<sup>11</sup> would have aroused more than a spark of interest had not Samuel F. B. Morse hailed it as the agent of Rome's first move on the Mississippi Valley. This champion of the nativist cause was the son of the Reverend Jedediah Morse of Charlestown, who himself had evinced little tolerance and great alarm

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Freri, *The Society for the Propagation of the Faith and Catholic Missions, 1822-1900* (Baltimore, 1902), 58. The purpose of the society was demonstrated in its form of organization. See *Annales de l'Association de la Propagation de la Foi, Recueil Periodique des Lettres des Evêques et des Missionnaires des Deux Mondes et de Tous les Documens Relatifs aux Missions et a l'Association de la Propagation de la Foi* (Lyons et Paris, 1823-), I, no. 3 (1824), 31-32.

<sup>8</sup> In 1840 the year's contributions amounted to \$125,000 and by 1859 the annual aid was as high as \$173,000. Freri, *Society for the Propagation of the Faith*, 27-28.

<sup>9</sup> Contributions of the society to America were noticed in the *New York Observer*, March 6, 1830, May 25, 1833, January 26, 1833; *Christian Watchman*, February 26-March 19, 1830.

<sup>10</sup> *American Catholic Historical Researches* (Philadelphia, 1884-1912), I (1905), 314-16. Between 1829 and 1846 the association sent only about \$330,000 to the United States. Raymond Payne, "Annals of the Leopoldine Association," in *Catholic Historical Review* (Washington, 1915-), I (1915), 52-57.

<sup>11</sup> Americans first were warned of the society through a series of articles in the *New York Observer*, January 18, 1834 and ff. These warnings were repeated and magnified in the *Protestant Magazine*, II (1834) and the *Christian Watchman*, January 17, 1834 and ff.

over the coming of the foreigner in a sermon against the Bavarian Illuminati.<sup>12</sup> The younger Morse had his early natural prejudices sharpened by an experience while an art student in Rome in 1830. It was here that he had his hat struck to the ground by the bayonet of a soldier as he stood with covered head watching a Papal procession. "In cases like this," Morse wrote in his journal that night, "there is no redress. The soldier receives his orders to see that all hats are off in this religion of force. . . . The blame lies after all not so much with the pitiful wretch who perpetrates this outrage, as it does with those who gave him such base and indiscriminate orders."<sup>13</sup> He continued to attend processions and ceremonies, but where before he had gone to admire as an artist, now he went only to scoff; a change clearly reflected in the pages of his journal.<sup>14</sup>

Upon his return to America two years later, Morse's attention was called to the activities of the Leopold Association through an exposé of the organization then appearing in the *New York Observer* and other religious papers.<sup>15</sup> Feeling that his European experience had qualified him to speak with authority on this so-called Catholic plot, he wrote twelve letters under the pen name of Brutus which were published in the *New York Observer* between August 30 and November 22, 1834, entitled "A Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States." The numerous reprintings in religious and nativistic magazines<sup>16</sup> and the ultimate publishing of the letters in book form in the same year indicated that his antipathies were shared by many readers.

In these articles, Morse envisaged the formation and operation of the Leopold Association as a conspiracy of the church

<sup>12</sup> Vernon Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati*, in *Columbia University Studies in History, Economics and Public Law* (New York, 1893-), LXXXII (1918), 279.

<sup>13</sup> Edward L. Morse, *Samuel F. B. Morse, His Life and Journals* (Boston, 1914), I, 353.

<sup>14</sup> See especially *ibid.*, I, 359.

<sup>15</sup> *New York Observer*, January 18, 1834 and ff.; *Protestant Magazine*, II (1834); *Christian Watchman*, January 17, 1834 and ff.

<sup>16</sup> *Downfall of Babylon*, May 30, 1834 and ff.; *Christian Spectator* (New Haven, 1819-38), VII (1835); *Christian Watchman*, September 19, 1834 and ff.; *Protestant Banner*, January 28, 1842. Extracts from the work were also printed in *Zion's Herald* and the *Boston Recorder*. Samuel F. B. Morse, *Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States* (5th edition, New York, 1841), i-ii.

against the republic. He pointed out<sup>17</sup> that Frederick Schlegel, an agent of the Austrian government, had given lectures in Vienna in 1828 in which monarchy and Catholicism were called interdependent and equally opposed to the republicanism of the United States.<sup>18</sup> In his eyes, it was no coincidence that the Leopold Association was formed in Vienna the following year, but rather a well organized attempt against American democracy. If the old monarchies of Europe, and especially Austria, were to survive, they must dam the stream of liberty at its source or be inundated by a flood of rebellion among their own people. He interpreted the Holy Alliance to have been but a league of European countries,<sup>19</sup> headed by Austria, for the one purpose of conquering the American continent. But, being no military match for the vigorous republic, it had enlisted the aid of the other great foe of liberty, the Catholic church. Together they were to force their beliefs upon the people of the United States, by means of the Leopold Association, until the West and finally the entire country had embraced the doctrines of popery and despotism.<sup>20</sup> Deriding the possibility of altruism behind Catholic missionary activity, Morse asked, "Is it credible that the manufacturers of chains for binding liberty in Europe should suddenly become benevolently concerned only for the *religious welfare* of this Republican people? If this society be solely for the propagation of the Catholic faith, one would think that *Rome*, and not *Vienna*, should be its headquarters; that the *Pope*, not the *Emperor of Austria*, should be its grand patron."<sup>21</sup> Whereupon he urged Protestants to abandon their religious differences and unite against Catholic schools, Catholic office holders, and lenient immigration laws.<sup>22</sup> "We must first stop this leak in the ship," he wrote, "through which the muddy waters from without threaten to sink us."<sup>23</sup>

Morse continued his nativistic propaganda by editing *The Proscribed German Student, being a Sketch of Some Interesting*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-17.

<sup>18</sup> F. Schlegel, *The Philosophy of History* (London, 1835), II, 298.

<sup>19</sup> Morse, *Foreign Conspiracy*, 43-46.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-41.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-68, 106, 74, 112-13, 71-73.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 143. The *Foreign Conspiracy* was received with such enthusiasm that a second edition was immediately printed and annual editions appeared for some time. See

*Incidents in the Life and Death of Lewis Clausing; to which is Added, a Treatise on the Jesuits, a posthumous Work of Lewis Clausing.*<sup>24</sup> This account, in which members of the Society of Jesus were branded as Rome's spies in her designs on the West,<sup>25</sup> was written by a mentally unbalanced German youth who committed suicide in New York in July, 1836.<sup>26</sup> The volume met with no more success than Morse's second contribution and in a last literary effort, *Confessions of a French Priest; to which are added Warnings to the People of the United States*,<sup>27</sup> his theme so closely approached Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Convent of Montreal*,<sup>28</sup> that a question remains whether his continued calumny against Catholicism was not directly influenced by the financial returns of his earlier writings.

Another leader in the field of nativistic progaganda was the Reverend Lyman Beecher, whose sincere fear of Catholic control of the Mississippi Valley dated back at least to 1830, when he evinced a desire to move to the West for the one purpose of personally combating Rome.<sup>29</sup> When in the same year, he was offered the presidency of the Lane Theological Seminary at Cincinnati, he accepted with enthusiasm because he felt that the position offered an opportunity to battle the Pope for possession of the garden spot of the world.<sup>30</sup>

Four years at Cincinnati only strengthened Beecher's earlier nativistic convictions. In 1835 he toured the East in a money-raising campaign for his college and delivered his *Plea for the West* before numerous audiences. In this powerful sermon he maintained that the entire Mississippi Valley had been mapped New York *Observer*, April 11, 1835. Capitalizing on this popular applause, Morse wrote another series of letters which were printed in the New York *Journal of Commerce* during 1835 under the title, "Imminent Dangers to the Free Institutions of the United States through Foreign Immigration." These letters were also published in book form in New York, 1835, but the theme was so similar to that of his earlier work that the public interest lagged and sales fell off proportionately. A second edition was not published until 1854.

<sup>24</sup> New York, 1836.

<sup>25</sup> Morse, *The Proscribed German Student*, 202-17, 233-36.

<sup>26</sup> New York *Observer*, July 23, 1836; *Downfall of Babylon*, July 23, 1836.

<sup>27</sup> The *Confessions* was published in New York in 1837.

<sup>28</sup> The *Awful Disclosures* was published in New York in 1836.

<sup>29</sup> Lyman Beecher, *Autobiography and Correspondence* (New York, 1865), II, 224-25.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 249.

and surveyed for conquest by the Vatican itself<sup>31</sup> and warned that immigrants served as "a train of powder between an enemy's camp and our own magazine, which, though laid by accident, may not long be expected to escape observation and use."<sup>32</sup> The *Plea for the West* met with such popular acclaim that it was made available in book form within the year.<sup>33</sup>

Up to this time the proselyting efforts of Catholic schools<sup>34</sup> had not entirely escaped the attention of the religious press<sup>35</sup> but it remained for the *Plea for the West* to popularize the issue. As Beecher was a prominent educator, his fear that the Catholic school system was but a popish wedge for the eventual control of the West, lent added weight to this nativistic premise. Maintaining that the Catholics established schools solely as a means of winning Protestant converts, he wrote: "Do they not . . . tax their own peoples and supplicate the royal munificence of Catholic Europe to rear schools and colleges for the cheap and even gratuitous education of Protestant children, high and low, — while thousands of Catholic children are utterly neglected and uncared for, and abandoned to ignorance and vice? Is all this without design?"<sup>36</sup> He asked his audience for sufficient funds to build more and better Protestant schools throughout the West in order to block Catholic inroads.<sup>37</sup>

Editors of nativistic and religious periodicals, impressed by the popular favor accorded Beecher<sup>38</sup> and Morse, further en-

<sup>31</sup> Lyman Beecher, *Plea for the West* (Cincinnati, 1835), 55-56.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>33</sup> Cincinnati, 1835.

<sup>34</sup> Bishop Edward D. Fenwick of the Cincinnati Diocese freely admitted the importance of Catholic schools in this connection. V. F. O'Daniel, *The Right Reverend Edward Dominic Fenwick, O. P., Founder of the Dominicans in the United States* (Washington, 1920), 393-94.

<sup>35</sup> *Episcopal Recorder*, October 25, 1834; *Downfall of Babylon*, March 28, 1835, August 29, 1835; *New York Observer*, May 2, 1829, December 19, 1829, March 10, 1832, April 28, 1832, July 26, 1834, February 28, 1835, March 14, 1835; *Western Christian Advocate*, February 27, 1835; *Christian Watchman*, February 19, 1830, June 2, 1832, June 27, 1834, August 1, 1834; *Protestant Vindicator*, October 15, 1834; *The Protestant*, January 9, 1830.

<sup>36</sup> Beecher, *Plea for the West*, 99.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>38</sup> For favorable reviews of the *Plea for the West* see *Christian Review* (Boston, 1836-63), I (1836), 248-63; *Christian Spectator*, VII (1835), 481-503; *New York Observer*, June 20, 1835; *Protestant Vindicator*, July 8, 1835. The editor of the *West-*

larged upon the so-called "Papal Plot." Annual reports of the Leopold Association were widely published in religious papers.<sup>39</sup> The editor of one of the most outspoken of the anti-Catholic publications, the *Downfall of Babylon or the Triumph of Truth over Popery*, contributed a pamphlet entitled *The Flight of Popery from Rome to the West*, describing the actual transplanting of the Vatican to the Mississippi Valley.<sup>40</sup>

Influenced by this propaganda, Protestants grew more Catholic conscious and gave closer scrutiny to all unusual forms of activity emanating from Rome. The establishment of foreign military companies in eastern cities was looked upon as an actual marshaling of papal forces for the armed conquest of the West.<sup>41</sup> The increased number of Europeans entering the country was envisaged as a planned migration of popish serfs.<sup>42</sup> In some cases even Protestant immigrants were labeled Jesuits in disguise.<sup>43</sup> Additional weight was given these accusations with the suppression of the Jesuit order in Spain in 1835. "Whither can they fly?" asked the editor of the *Downfall of Babylon*, "Whither but to our own devoted country?"<sup>44</sup> Similarly, anti-Catholic agitators saw in the large number of paupers and criminals

*Monthly Magazine* (Cincinnati, 1833-37), attacked Beecher's arguments in the May, 1835, issue and criticism was so great that he was forced to resign.

<sup>39</sup> *Downfall of Babylon*, February 20, 1836; *Protestant Vindicator*, April 15, 1835, November 4, 1835, May 3, 1837; *New York Observer*, January 23, 1836, November 25, 1837, June 26, 1847, July 3, 1847, March 25, 1848; *Christian Watchman*, March 3, 1843; *American Protestant Magazine* (New York, 1845-49), III (1847); *National Protestant* (New York, 1844-46), II (1845), III (1845).

<sup>40</sup> Samuel B. Smith, *The Flight of Popery from Rome to the West* (New York, 1836).

<sup>41</sup> *Spirit of '76*, September 8, 1835; *Downfall of Babylon*, September 19, 1835; Frederick Saunders and Thomas B. Thorpe, *A Voice to America; or, the Model Republic, Its Glory and Its Fall* (4th edition, New York, 1855), 229-36; Anna E. Carroll, *The Great American Battle; or, the Contest between Christianity and Political Romanism* (New York, 1856), 236.

<sup>42</sup> *Native American*, November 14, 1844, April 24, 1844, August 3, 1844, August 9, 1844, August 13, 1844, October 29, 1844; *National Protestant*, I (1845); *New York Observer*, January 4, 1845; *New York American Republican*, June 25, 1844; *New Orleans Native American* quoted in *ibid.*, October 3, 1844; *Native Eagle*, December 3, 1845; *The Crisis, an Appeal to Our Countrymen on the Subject of Foreign Influence in the United States* (New York, 1844), 3-4, 6, 24, 32, 44.

<sup>43</sup> *Spirit of '76*, August 4, 1835; *Congregationalist*, September 7, 1849.

<sup>44</sup> September 26, 1835. *New York Observer*, September 19, 1835; *National Protestant*, II (1845); *Protestant Vindicator*, December 25, 1834; *The Protestant*, March 3, 1832.

inals among the immigrants a deliberate attempt on the part of Rome to undermine and weaken the United States against the anticipated papal conquest.<sup>45</sup>

The efforts of German colonizing companies, such as the *Giesener Auswanderungs Gesellschaft*, formed in 1833 to people Missouri, and the *Adelsverein* with a similar design upon the new lands of Texas<sup>46</sup> were viewed with particular alarm by nativistic writers who decried these settlements as open evidence of Popish aggression.<sup>47</sup> A London firm, established to aid Irish immigrants in settling a great section of the Old Northwest and upper Canada<sup>48</sup> never materialized, but propagandists warned that here, too, was a project directly aimed at Republicanism.<sup>49</sup> They pointed out that the American democratic experiment depended upon the ability of the new nation to assimilate the migratory streams of the old. Therefore any attempt toward perpetuating European institutions through the establishment of racial colonies in America would inevitably lead to disaster.

The feeling engendered by this persistent propaganda is well depicted in a letter from a Massachusetts correspondent to the *Western Messenger*:

They tell us here, at least from some pulpits, that the West is fast becoming the Pope's heritage, and that it will soon be all under his thumb. Some preachers talk more vehemently against the "Man of Sin," as they call him, than against sin itself; indeed it seems to me that many are resolving the whole Christian character into a cordial hatred of Catholics.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *New York Observer*, August 3, 1839, January 25, 1845; *Downfall of Babylon*, June 11, 1836; *Protestant Vindicator*, December 1, 1841; *National Protestant*, I (1845); Beecher, *Plea for the West*, 54; *The Crisis*, 32-33, 43; *Massachusetts Yeoman*, July 9, 1831; *Niles' Register* (Philadelphia and Baltimore, 1811-49), XLIX (1835), 62; *Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine* (Baltimore, 1835-41), IV (1838); Morse, *Foreign Conspiracy*, 141-42.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas S. Baker, *Lenau and Young Germany in America* (Philadelphia, 1897), 54-55, 61-69.

<sup>47</sup> *Spirit of '76*, September 26, 1835; *Downfall of Babylon*, July 23, 1836.

<sup>48</sup> *Proposed New Plan of a General Emigration Society* (London, 1842).

<sup>49</sup> *Home Missionary* (New York, 1829-1909), XIV (1842), XV (1842), 55, 145-52, XX (1847); Edward Beecher, *The Papal Conspiracy Exposed and Protestantism Defended in the Light of Reason, History and Scripture* (Boston, 1855), 403-404; M. J. Gonsalves, *Testimony of a Convert from the Church of Rome* (Boston, 1859), 43-45; *Pope or President? Startling Disclosures of Romanism as Revealed by its Own Writers* (New York, 1859), 251-53.

<sup>50</sup> August, 1835.

It is small wonder that amidst such misgiving of Catholic and foreigner the House of Representatives of the United States was called upon by a group of ninety-seven petitioners from Washington County, New York, to decide whether there was not

a plan in operation, powerful and dangerous, under the management of the Leopold Foundation, for the subversion of our civil and religious liberties, to be effected by the emigration of Roman Catholics from Europe, and by their admission to the right of suffrage with us in our political institutions.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile the situation in Europe lent itself to the tales of continental intrigue which came from the nativistic press. The French Revolution of 1830 had fired American propagandists with the idea that the overthrow of despotism and popery in Europe would make doubly necessary a Catholic conquest of the West.<sup>52</sup> These warnings were revived with the outbreak of the liberal revolutions of 1848. America, nativistic editors maintained, had by her rebellious example precipitated the revolt of Europe's downtrodden masses and it was now more essential than ever for European despots to stamp out liberty by conquering those who gave it birth.<sup>53</sup> "We are the nest," wrote the editor of the *National Protestant*, "where is laid the egg of revolution for every despotic government in the world; and if the nest could only be destroyed, then tyrants might breathe free again."<sup>54</sup>

While some nativistic editors were of the opinion that the nation was about to be crushed by a wrathful hierarchy, others felt that the revolutions abroad would send the Pope and his cardinals to the Mississippi Valley for a last stand.<sup>55</sup> When the European uprisings met with failure these divergent fears were in no wise allayed. Propagandists pointed out that the French ac-

<sup>51</sup> *House Executive Documents*, 25 Cong., 2 Sess., no. 154. The petition was dated February 14, 1838. A similar petition from a group of Massachusetts residents had been forwarded on January 5, 1838. *House Executive Documents*, 25 Cong., 2 Sess., no. 70. Both petitions were referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

<sup>52</sup> *New York Observer*, October 9, 1830, September 20, 1834, January 23, 1836; *Episcopal Recorder*, May 28, 1831; *Christian Watchman*, September 10, 1830, January 24, 1834, January 31, 1834; *The Protestant*, January 1, 1831.

<sup>53</sup> *National Protestant*, II (1845); *Congregationalist*, August 17, 1849; Saunders and Thorpe, *Voice to America*, 373-76; *The Sons of the Sires* (Philadelphia, 1855), 35-36.

<sup>54</sup> III (1845), 3.

<sup>55</sup> American Protestant Society, *Sixth Annual Report* (New York, 1849), 3.

ceptance of a "despotic government" meant an end to the balance of power which had held the Holy Alliance in check and left England and America alone among the Protestant powers to combat the combined advance of popery and tyranny.<sup>56</sup> Such a grave situation in itself was further endangered by the Oxford movement in England which threatened to add the established church there to the ranks of Rome<sup>57</sup> and leave America unaided in her battle for democracy and Protestantism.

In consequence of this fear, Protestant publications throughout the 1850's upheld the earlier arguments of Morse and Beecher<sup>58</sup> and constantly reminded their readers of the danger underlying the rapid growth of Romanism through immigration and conversion.<sup>59</sup> Newly built Catholic churches in the West were suspected of being heavily fortified against Protestant attack<sup>60</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *New York Observer*, January 15, 1852; Pierce Connelly, *Reasons for Abjuring Allegiance to the See of Rome* (15th edition, London, 1852), 18-20.

<sup>57</sup> *Home Missionary*, XV (1842).

<sup>58</sup> Beecher, *Papal Conspiracy Exposed*, 29, 401-402; Carroll, *Great American Battle*, 35-36; Gonsalves, *Testimony of a Convert*, 42-43, 47-48; Saunders and Thorpe, *Voice to America*, 141-66; *Sons of the Sires*, 25-26; George Robertson, *The American Party* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1855), 15; John C. Pitrot, *Americans Warned of Jesuitism; or, the Jesuits Unveiled* (New York, 1851), 26; Nicholas Murray, *Romanism at Home; Letters to the Hon. Roger B. Taney, Chief Justice of the United States* (New York, 1852), 244-45; William H. Ryder, *Our Country; or, The American Parlor Keepsake* (Boston, 1854), 83; *The Know Nothing Almanac; or, the True American's Manual for 1855* (New York, 1855), 46-47; E. Hutchinson, *Startling Facts for Native Americans Called "Know Nothings"* (New York, 1855), 66; Joseph F. Berg, *The Jesuits; a Lecture Delivered in the Music Fund Hall* (Philadelphia, 1855), 15; William R. Alger, *An Oration Delivered before the Citizens of Boston, July 4, 1857* (Boston, 1857), 38; Herman Norton, *Signs of Danger and of Promise* (New York, 1844), 18-29; Rufus Clark, *Popery and the United States* (Boston, 1847), 11-12; *The Republic* (New York, 1851-52), I (1851); *American and Foreign Christian Union* (New York, 1850-61), I (1850); *Congregationalist*, July 19, 1850; Josephine M. Bunkley, *The Testimony of an Escaped Novice from the Sisterhood of St. Joseph* (New York, 1855), 195.

<sup>59</sup> *American Protestant Magazine*, III (1848), IV (1849); Rufus W. Clark, *Romanism in America* (Boston, 1855), 128; Thomas R. Whitney, *A Defense of American Policy* (New York, 1856), 115; *Pope or President*, 280-81. The census of 1850 showed that these fears were without foundation. At that time there were only 1,227 Catholic churches in the country, in contrast to 13,338 Methodist churches and 9,360 Baptist churches, to choose only the two most numerous of the Protestant sects. J. D. B. DeBow, *Compendium of the Seventh Census* (Washington, 1854), 134.

<sup>60</sup> *American Union*, October 15, 1853; Beecher, *Papal Conspiracy Exposed*, 389; *Know Nothing Almanac*, 33; *The Escaped Nun; or, Disclosures of Convent Life and the Confessions of a Sister of Charity* (New York, 1855), 197-98.

and catacombed with inquisitorial chambers.<sup>61</sup> The inflammatory Father Alessandro Gavazzi, who in 1853 lectured against popery in a tour of the United States, did much to revive the old fear of Jesuits.<sup>62</sup> Servants in Protestant families were branded as Jesuits in disguise who sought information against the day when the blow would be struck.<sup>63</sup> Other writers asserted that members of this order allied themselves with Protestant churches for the same reason<sup>64</sup> and that each Catholic mass, closed to Protestants, was given over to the plotting of the conquest of the United States.<sup>65</sup> Additional weight was given these accusations when the two national anti-Catholic societies, the American Protestant Society and the American and Foreign Christian Union, expressed the hope that the great need for Protestant activity in the West would soon be realized.<sup>66</sup>

Out of this background of propaganda had grown a popular demand for the salvation of the Mississippi Valley from Catholicism. The many Protestant missionary societies which originated between 1820 and 1860 numbered among their purposes this same determination. Leaders of these religious organizations, while sincerely sharing in the general fear of popish domination of the West, realized that such an issue could be played upon to the advantage and growth of their own societies. Consequently they gave credence to all tales of Catholic activity in the West and urgently solicited contributions for the purpose of furthering Protestantism in the new lands.

Among these missionary societies, the one destined to gain the greatest benefit from this anti-Catholic feeling was the American Home Missionary Society which was organized in 1826. One of the many forces leading to its formation was the fear that

<sup>61</sup> L. Giustiniani, *Intrigues of Jesuitism in the United States of America* (New York, 1846), 116-18; *Protestant Vindicator*, July 15, 1835.

<sup>62</sup> Alessandro Gavazzi, *The Lectures Complete of Father Gavazzi as Delivered in New York* (New York, 1853), 297.

<sup>63</sup> *New York Observer*, November 27, 1851, November 18, 1852; *American and Foreign Christian Union*, III (1852); Berg, *The Jesuits*, 13-14; Carroll, *Great American Battle*, 316.

<sup>64</sup> *Sons of the Sires*, 130.

<sup>65</sup> William Hogan, *High and Low Mass in the Catholic Church, with Comments* (Boston, 1846), 68-69.

<sup>66</sup> American Protestant Society, *Second Annual Report* (New York, 1845), 5-6; American and Foreign Christian Union, *Fifth Annual Report* (New York, 1854), 53-56.

Romanism would subdue the Protestant outposts unless organized support could be given them<sup>67</sup> and as early as 1829 the society, through its monthly publication, the *Home Missionary*, and its annual reports, expressed alarm at the increasing number of Catholics in the West,<sup>68</sup> declaring that "the Valley of the Mississippi has been no doubt mapped as well as surveyed by emissaries from the Vatican."<sup>69</sup>

Soon after Morse's *Foreign Conspiracy* was published, the *Home Missionary* took up the cry of the nativists and from 1834 to 1856 the publication was an outspoken organ of propaganda. Warning that the religious fate of the world hung in the balance and that the supremacy of Popery in the Mississippi Valley would ring the death knell of Protestantism everywhere<sup>70</sup> the editor wrote in 1839:

The cause is the cause of the *west*, for there the great battle is to be fought between truth and error, between law and anarchy, between Christianity with her Sabbaths, her ministry and her schools on the one hand, and the combined forces of Infidelity and Popery on the other.<sup>71</sup>

Reports corroborating these editorial fears were sent in by missionaries in widely separated communities of the West. In 1830 a Missouri agent reported: "It is by no means certain that the Jesuits are not to prevail to a great extent in this western country. Their priests are coming in upon us, and with a zeal that ought to make the Protestant Christian blush,— they are establishing their schools and their nunneries throughout the land."<sup>72</sup> A laborer in Wisconsin in 1843 came to the conclusion that Catholic cathedrals and convents were being built at strategic points and hinted darkly: "The ignorance of these Romanists is such, that this apparent design must have originated with some one who had more of [a] far-reaching plan than

<sup>67</sup> American Home Missionary Society, *Eighth Annual Report* (New York, 1834), 10-11.

<sup>68</sup> *Home Missionary*, II (1829), II (1830), 192, VI (1834); American Home Missionary Society, *Sixth Annual Report* (New York, 1832), 2.

<sup>69</sup> *Home Missionary*, V (1832), 35.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII (1844), XXV (1852), XXVI (1853); American Home Missionary Society, *Sixteenth Annual Report* (New York, 1842).

<sup>71</sup> *Home Missionary*, XII (1839), 73.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, II (1830), 192.

they.”<sup>73</sup> Four years later a letter from Missouri declared, “The line of Catholic ‘posts’ is fast being completed.”<sup>74</sup> Similarly, reports from evangelists to the society stressed the growing political majority of Catholics in community after community, the fraudulent means used by priests in luring immigrants into the papal fold and the burning of Protestant Bibles by emissaries of the “Man of Sin” in order to hinder Protestant workers.<sup>75</sup>

A decade of such alarming tales from the West aroused the society to frequent attacks on the entire American Catholic system, and readers of the *Home Missionary* were constantly reminded of the designs and “errors” of popery.<sup>76</sup> In addition to these exaggerated accounts from the western front, the paper constantly informed its members of the increasing number of immigrants entering the country<sup>77</sup> and correlated these accounts with the activities of the Leopold Association and the Society for the Propagation of the Faith,<sup>78</sup> especially dwelling upon the superior financial status of Rome’s missionaries in the West in contrast with that of their own.

The annual meetings of the American Home Missionary Society first expressed themselves on the Catholic danger in 1845 when the Reverend Joseph Thompson of New York City introduced a resolution which stated:

*Resolved*, That the influence which the Protestant Missionary exerts for the proper organization, regulation and general welfare of society at the West, entitles him to the confidence and support, not only of the Christian, but also of the Patriot.<sup>79</sup>

This resolution, aimed by obvious implication against the efforts of Catholicism in the Mississippi Valley, opened the meeting to an oratorical attack on popery led by the Reverend Thompson

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI (1843), 84.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, XX (1847), 177.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, XI (1839), XIV (1841), VII (1834), XV (1842), XVI (1842), XXI (1849).

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI (1843), XVIII (1845), XVIII (1846), XIX (1846), XXI (1848).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, XV (1842), 55-56, XVII (1845), XIX (1846), XXI (1848), XXIII (1851), XXIV (1851).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV (1841), XV (1843), XVI (1843), XVIII (1845), XXI (1848); American Home Missionary Society, *Twenty-First Annual Report* (New York, 1847), 110-11.

<sup>79</sup> American Home Missionary Society, *Nineteenth Annual Report* (New York, 1845), 3.

himself. Devoting his entire address to an attack upon Romanism and Romanists, he flayed Catholic moral character, dwelt upon their intellectual inferiority, and attested to their degrading influence, as did the other speakers at the same meeting — among whom was the Reverend Lyman Beecher.<sup>80</sup> A year later, three speakers again indicted popery,<sup>81</sup> one reiterating that immigrants were sent to strategic points by the Vatican itself.<sup>82</sup> With the single exception of the annual meeting in 1850, each convention was given over to at least one speaker who devoted his theme to the dangers of Romanism in the West and to the necessity of curbing its growth there in order to protect all mankind.

The fears held by these speakers were echoed by the clerical members of the society who were delegated to deliver annual sermons before eastern congregations on home missions, an activity which proved a fruitful source of financial support for the American Home Missionary Society. The first to touch on the dangers of Romanism was the Reverend Horace Bushnell, who delivered a sermon in 1847 on *Barbarism the First Danger*.<sup>83</sup> With few exceptions each sermon from that date until 1854 dealt at some length with the problem of defeating popery in the struggle for the West.<sup>84</sup> The Reverend Albert Barnes in 1849 pictured the Mississippi Valley as “the great battle field of the world — the place where probably more than anywhere else the destinies of the world are to be decided;”<sup>85</sup> the Reverend Henry Smith in 1854 asked:

Shall we accept the splendid trappings of the Papacy, its stupendous Cathedrals, its pealing organs, its scarlet robes, its genuflexions and images, and incense, and host and unction — and with them, let us

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-11.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, *Twentieth Annual Report* (New York, 1846), 103-20.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>83</sup> Horace Bushnell, *Barbarism the First Danger* (New York, 1847).

<sup>84</sup> E. N. Kirk, *The Church Essential to the Republic* (New York, 1848), 12, 21, 22; Albert Barnes, *Home Missions* (New York, 1849), 29-34; David N. Riddle, *Our Country for the Sake of the World* (New York, 1851), 24-25; Leonard Bacon, *The American Church* (New York, 1852); L. P. Hickok, *A Nation Saved from its Prosperity only by the Gospel* (New York, 1853), 9-13; Henry Smith, *The Truly Christian Pulpit our Strongest National Defense* (New York, 1854), 26; *Home Missionary*, XXI (1849), XXII (1849), XXVI (1853).

<sup>85</sup> Barnes, *Home Missions*, 34.

not forget, its chained Bible, its night of mind, its ecclesiastical despotism, its Papal interdicts, its annals, its indulgences, its inquisitorial dungeons and its auto-da-fe?

Without continued aid to the society which he represented, he concluded, such might be America's fate.<sup>86</sup>

The same fear of Catholicism which inspired these speeches was offered as a reason for each extension of operations by the American Home Missionary Society. When missionaries were sent into Oregon in 1846 the board of directors explained that the presence of sixteen priests in the region made this move necessary.<sup>87</sup> Similarly missionaries were prepared to enter Texas and the territory acquired from Mexico before "Jesuitism could lay its plots and weave its toils."<sup>88</sup>

The American Home Missionary Society was not alone in sharing the benefits of nativistic propaganda. A number of lesser domestic missionary societies, many of them auxiliaries of the larger society, placed equal stress on the need of wresting the Mississippi Valley from the emissaries of the Pope. Discussions of this question were heard by the members of the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society, the Franklin County (Massachusetts) Home Mission Society, the Maine Missionary Society, the Western Reserve Domestic Missionary Society, and the Missouri Home Missionary Society.<sup>89</sup> The fact that the latter society was established in St. Louis added particular weight to its observations. Impressing the importance of the struggle on Protestants in the East, its managers declared:

Popery, long since foresaw, that the principal city of this state was to be the centre — the commanding citadel, of the West; and she has occupied it, and in all the chief places of concourse — on every bluff, along the banks of the mighty rivers . . . and on its blooming prairies, spread out like the ocean, inexhaustible in their fertility — she has erected her banner, and bids defiance to Protestantism — to free intel-

<sup>86</sup> Smith, *Truly Christian Pulpit*, 27-28.

<sup>87</sup> American Home Missionary Society, *Twentieth Annual Report* (New York, 1846), 100; *Home Missionary*, XX (1847).

<sup>88</sup> American Home Missionary Society, *Twenty-First Annual Report* (New York, 1847), 75.

<sup>89</sup> *Home Missionary*, XVIII (1845), XIX (1846), XXIII (1850); American Home Missionary Society, *Sixteenth Annual Report* (New York, 1842), 71; *Seventeenth Annual Report* (New York, 1843), 82; *Home Missionary*, XVI (1843), XX (1847), VII (1834), XVII (1844).

ligence, equal rights, and a pure evangelical piety. And shall this fair land be abandoned, without a struggle, to the undisputed and perpetual dominion of the Man of Sin?"<sup>90</sup>

Another society interested in the Mississippi Valley was the Boston Ladies' Association for Evangelizing the West, formed in 1842 as an auxiliary of the American Tract Society. Its first report called attention to the need of converting Catholics if the West was to be saved.<sup>91</sup> In 1844 members of this society passed a resolution emphasizing the struggle with Romanism and the danger of the spread of Catholicism through "the aid of foreign gold and patronage and the zealous coöperation of their deluded victims."<sup>92</sup>

All these missionary societies were guilty of fostering anti-Catholic prejudice in their eagerness to raise funds for the evangelization of the West and while the religious and cultural benefits of their activities cannot be over-estimated, the fact remains that their rise and development may be partly ascribed to the propaganda of nativistic agitators.

During the period in which these missionary societies labored for the spiritual conversion of the valley, a number of educational societies were organized solely for the purpose of providing Protestant learning throughout the West. Their growth, like that of the missionary societies, was due in part to the propaganda disseminated by nativists. Particularly was Beecher's *Plea for the West* an important factor in the establishment of Protestant schools in western states and territories. This early piece of propaganda had stressed the necessity of matching church for church and school for school with Rome. Otherwise, the Catholic education of non-Catholics was destined to speed the conversion of Protestant pioneers to popery.

Beecher's early warning was corroborated by the reports of missionaries already in the West. They told of a rapidly expanding system of education under the guidance of priests and nuns to which Protestants were forced to subject their children be-

<sup>90</sup> American Home Missionary Society, *Seventeenth Annual Report* (New York, 1843), 82.

<sup>91</sup> Boston Ladies' Society for Evangelizing the West, *First Annual Report* (Boston, 1843), 4.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, *Second Annual Report* (Boston, 1844), 4. Before passing the resolution members listened to a violent anti-Catholic address by the Reverend E. N. Kirk.

cause of the lack of Protestant schools in many communities.<sup>93</sup> These reports from the West were made the basis of a number of sermons preached in eastern cities by clergymen interested in the cause.<sup>94</sup> The Reverend E. N. Kirk summed up the situation in his sermon on *The Church and the College*:

There, Brethern, there our great battle with the Jesuit, on Western soil, is to be waged. We must build College against College. If the musty atmosphere of a Jesuit School suits the freeborn western youth; if the repetition of scholastic modes of discipline can captivate the child of the prairies, then we may fail in the contest. But all experience has confirmed our anticipation, that America is a field on which the open, manly, Christian discipline of a Protestant College must annihilate the rival system of Jesuitical instruction.<sup>95</sup>

These warnings made it the obvious duty of eastern Protestants interested in their faith and its promulgation through education to provide means for establishing schools in the Mississippi Valley. As early as 1834 the Western Education Society, founded at Cincinnati for the preparation of ministerial laborers in the West, collected money for this purpose by pointing out the imminent dangers of Catholicism.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West, formed in 1843, stressed the necessity of founding western schools and staffing them with Protestant teachers. The following year women members of the Congregational church in Boston organized the Ladies' Society for the Promotion of Education at the West. This group differed from the others only in that it was devoted to the sending of Protestant women teachers into the controversial region.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>93</sup> American Home Missionary Society, *Sixteenth Annual Report* (New York, 1842), 98-99, *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report* (New York, 1853), 113-15, *Nineteenth Annual Report* (New York, 1845), 92; *Home Missionary*, VI (1833), VII (1834), XIV (1842), XXIV (1851).

<sup>94</sup> N. Porter, *A Plea for Libraries* (New York, 1848), 15, 22-28; John Todd, *Colleges Essential to the Church of God* (New York, 1848), 11-12; Absolem Peters, *Collegiate Religious Institutions* (New York, 1851), 25; Edwin Hall, *Colleges Essential to Home Missions* (New York, 1853), 6, 15, 23; E. N. Kirk, *The Church and the College* (Boston, 1856), 28-30; E. B. Smith, *An Argument for Christian Colleges* (New York, 1857), 26.

<sup>95</sup> Kirk, *Church and the College*, 29.

<sup>96</sup> Western Education Society, *Annual Report for 1835* (Cincinnati, 1835), 27.

<sup>97</sup> *History of the Formation of the Ladies' Society for the Promotion of Education*

Among these organizations, the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West was by far the most influential. From its inception, the society emphasized the need of Protestant schools to offset the work of the Jesuits in the West.<sup>98</sup> The value placed on the popular fear of Catholicism as a means of soliciting financial support was demonstrated in a public meeting held in Boston on May 28, 1845, which was opened with the adoption of a resolution:

*Resolved*, That the association of Catholics and Catholic potentates of Europe, united to secure the uncontrolled direction of education in the Western States, demands the prayerful attention, the sympathetic action, of our entire nation.<sup>99</sup>

Speeches in support of this resolution occupied the entire meeting and the whole story of the Catholic plot to subdue the West through the Leopold Association was revived and enlarged upon. Declaring that Rome could only undermine the Republic by shaping the minds which would some day govern it, the speakers reiterated that foreign gold was directed in untold sums toward building these schools; that in a single decade over a million dollars had been expended to this end in Cincinnati alone. One speaker declared:

The Jesuits are willing, nay, longing, nay, plotting and toiling, to become the educators of America. Let them have the privilege of possessing the seats of education in the west, and of moulding the leading minds of the millions that are to inhabit there, and we may give up all our efforts to produce in the west what Puritanism has produced here.<sup>100</sup>

These speeches met with such popular approval, that thereafter the public meetings of the society were largely anti-Catholic in their appeal for funds.<sup>101</sup>

*at the West; with Two Addresses Delivered at its Organization by the Rev. Edward Beecher, D. D., and the Rev. E. N. Kirk* (Boston, 1846), 1-6.

<sup>98</sup> Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West, *Second Annual Report* (New York, 1845), 23.

<sup>99</sup> *Proceedings of the Public Meeting in behalf of the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West, held in Park Street Church, Boston, May 28, 1845; Including the Addresses of Rev. Drs. Hopkins, E. Beecher, Bacon and L. Beecher* (New York, 1845), 11; *New York Observer*, June 7, 1845.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>101</sup> *National Protestant*, III (1845), *passim*.

The Ladies' Society for the Promotion of Education at the West followed a similar course by inviting two avowed nativists, the Reverend E. N. Kirk and the Reverend Edward Beecher, to address a meeting at a formative point in the organization of the society. Both speakers devoted their addresses for the most part to an attack on Catholicism and Catholic educational activity in the West. Kirk especially emphasized the need of strategic planning on the part of the society. "The Papists," he said, "have laid out the west with the experienced eye of generals. We can compete with them only by an equally judicious choice of position and designation of labors."<sup>102</sup>

The first teachers sent to the West by the society reported that these alarming statements were in no wise exaggerated and that every effort must be made to prevent priests and nuns from training the girls of the Great Valley to be "Romish Mothers" who would rear their children as papal disciples.<sup>103</sup> The same dangers claimed the attention of both speakers at the first annual meeting of the society.<sup>104</sup> In 1850 the directors of the organization conceived a new method of attacking Rome. In that year a "Discretionary Fund" was established, to care for the financial needs of Catholic children in the West who would be willing to attend Protestant schools if they could do so at no expense. Members of the society were urged to contribute separately to this fund, to "prevent the necessity of patronizing Papal seminaries at the West."<sup>105</sup>

During this period the Protestant churches, while not openly united against Catholicism, aided the nativist cause through subscribing to the many missionary organizations interested in saving the West from Rome. Both the Congregational and Presbyterian churches sponsored the American Home Missionary Society and this agency absorbed most of their domestic missionary activities. Individual associations of the Congregation-

<sup>102</sup> *History of the Formation of the Ladies' Society for the Promotion of Education at the West*, 16.

<sup>103</sup> Ladies' Society for the Promotion of Education at the West, *Second Annual Report* (Boston, 1848), 13-15; *Third Annual Report* (Boston, 1849), 28-29.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, *First Annual Report* (Boston, 1847), 29-38.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, *Fourth Annual Report* (Boston, 1850), 44. The response to the appeal for support for this fund was reported as gratifyingly large by the directors. *Ibid.*, *Fifth Annual Report* (Boston, 1851), 17.

al church confined their efforts to resolutions urging this society to spare no effort in its struggles against popery.<sup>106</sup> The Presbyterians similarly demanded increased activity through appeals of the Board of Missions to the General Assembly of the church.<sup>107</sup> The Lutheran and German Reformed churches also used the American Home Missionary Society as their chief missionary organ; in 1836 the Board of Missions of the German Reformed Church became auxiliaries of the larger society and from that time on directed their efforts through its channels.<sup>108</sup> The Dutch Reformed Church cared for its own missionary work in the West, dispatching agents into the Mississippi Valley first in 1848 under the impetus of the large Catholic migration from Europe at that time.<sup>109</sup>

The Methodist Church was slow in reaching a decision on the attitude it would take toward Romanism in the West. A special committee of the General Conference in 1840 indicated a growing interest in the subject when it recommended the establishment of religious magazines for western ladies, largely to offset Roman Catholic influence.<sup>110</sup> Four years later members of the General Conference indicated a readiness to ally themselves with the other churches in the struggle against popery in the Mississippi Valley by adopting a report which urged increased missionary activity as the only way to save the West from Romanists.<sup>111</sup> Before this report could be acted upon, however, the slavery issue divided their ranks and Catholic domination of the West became of minor importance.

The Baptists were by far the most active independent church

<sup>106</sup> *Home Missionary*, XVI (1843); *New York Observer*, July 5, 1834; William Allen, *Report on Popery Accepted by the General Association of Massachusetts, June, 1844* (Boston, 1844), 26-27.

<sup>107</sup> Board of Missions of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, *Annual Report for 1848* (Philadelphia, 1848), 45-46, *Annual Report for 1854* (Philadelphia, 1854), 21-22.

<sup>108</sup> American Home Missionary Society, *Tenth Annual Report* (New York, 1836), 72-73.

<sup>109</sup> *The Acts and Proceedings of the General Synod of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in North America convened at Kingston, N. Y., June, 1848* (New York, 1848), 280, 308-10; Board of Domestic Missions of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, *Nineteenth Annual Report* (New York, 1851), 14-15.

<sup>110</sup> *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1796-1856* (New York, 1856), II, 53-54.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 181-84.

group in the crusade against popery in the Mississippi Valley in spite of the slavery schism in that church in 1845. The machinery for this activity was created in 1832 with the formation of the American Baptist Home Mission Society and the Western Baptist Educational Association. Their early publications stressed the needs of concentrated effort to defeat the designs of Rome; the former by acknowledging that "Emissaries of the Man of Sin . . . labored to sow over the vacant field their own bitter and poisonous seeds";<sup>112</sup> the latter by stating that "in no other effectual way can Protestants rear a barrier to the prevalence of Romanism, in the West, than by the multiplication of schools under intelligent and pious instructors."<sup>113</sup>

The first appeal for public support issued by the American Baptist Home Mission Society in 1834 named Romanism as the gravest danger facing the evangelical churches in the West. It stated:

Popery is rapidly on the increase. It seeks to retrieve in America what it lost in Europe. While its nature is really and professedly immutable, its outward form is camelleon, and with Jesuitical cunning and adroitness, adopts itself to all changes of circumstances. It is a system of despotism exerted over the bodies and souls of its votaries, and can never be made to agree with Republicanism. Its ascendancy in this country would produce a change in the form of our government, effecting the demolition of our free institutions.<sup>114</sup>

A year later members of the society adopted a resolution urging missionaries to concentrate their efforts toward checking the spread of the "baleful influence of Romanism" and "the conversion of the souls of Catholics to Jesus Christ."<sup>115</sup> The growing number of immigrants after 1836 attracted the attention of members and repeated warnings were given that their conversion must be secured to insure the safety of the West.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>112</sup> *Proceedings of the Convention Held in the City of New York on the 27th of April, 1832, for the Formation of the American Baptist Home Mission Society with the Constitution of the Society and a list of its Officers* (New York, 1832), 14; *Christian Watchman*, March 30, 1832.

<sup>113</sup> Western Baptist Educational Association, *Second Annual Report* (Boston 1834), 20; *Christian Watchman*, September 27, 1833.

<sup>114</sup> American Baptist Home Mission Society, *Second Annual Report* (New York, 1834), 31.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, *Third Annual Report* (New York, 1835), 12.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, *Fourth Annual Report* (New York, 1836), 12, *Fifth Annual Report* (New

Despite the forboding expressed by the missionary societies and the churches in regard to Catholicism in the Mississippi Valley, an overtone of optimism could be detected throughout the period. As staunch defenders of their faiths, it was inconceivable to Protestants that the Divine Plan included their eventual defeat at the hands of Rome. So they believed God would one day rise in His wrath to wipe out Catholicism and thus create a pure and undefiled Christianity. The more far seeing of these enthusiasts envisaged the entire Catholic settlement of the Mississippi Valley as part of the Divine Plan to convert the world to Protestantism. Why else, they asked, had God prevented the colonizing of North America by turning the Spanish adventurers to more fertile fields until the Reformation had given the true Bible to man? Why had He allowed the lowly savage to hold the first settlers on the seaboard until they had developed and strengthened their religion and religious institutions? Why had He permitted the influx of Catholic foreigners into the country only after these preparations had been completed for their arrival?<sup>117</sup> The design was obvious. God had planned the entire settlement of America only as a means of luring Europe's priest-ridden peasants to a land where their conversion was possible.<sup>118</sup> The United States, they pointed out, is a land where

no racks nor tortures forestall the force of argument . . . where the benighted children of error will be surrounded and pervaded by the silent but resistless influence of our schools and presses . . . where every man of them may stand erect and feel that he is a man, and may assert his right to doubt as well as to believe — to discuss and judge as well as to listen and obey.<sup>119</sup>

York, 1837), 18-19, *Twelfth Annual Report* (New York, 1844), 13-14, *Thirteenth Annual Report* (New York, 1845), 15-16, *Fourteenth Annual Report* (New York, 1846), 17, *Fifteenth Annual Report* (New York, 1847), 18-19, *Twentieth Annual Report* (New York, 1852), 34.

<sup>117</sup> American Home Missionary Society, *Twenty-Fifth Annual Report* (New York, 1851), 109; *Home Missionary*, XX (1847), XXIV (1851).

<sup>118</sup> *Western Christian Advocate*, February 20, 1835; *Congregationalist*, November 30, 1849, August 9, 1850; American Home Missionary Society, *Sixteenth Annual Report* (New York, 1842), 83-85, *Seventeenth Annual Report* (New York, 1843), 99, *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report* (New York, 1853), 90-91; E. Beecher, *Papal Conspiracy Exposed*, 373.

<sup>119</sup> American Home Missionary Society, *Sixteenth Annual Report* (New York, 1842), 84-85.

If proof of such a plan were needed, the missionaries had only to point to California. For God had kept the gold of that region beneath the soil as long as popery dominated there, only to reveal its presence to man as soon as Protestantism had been established and the way opened for the conversion of seekers after wealth.<sup>120</sup>

There was little doubt in the minds of the leaders of the missionary societies but that their efforts would be successful. "If Protestantism cannot cope with Popery on this free soil," declared a speaker before the American Home Missionary Society in 1847, "in the midst of Bibles and Sabbaths and schools and seminaries; then I say let us give up the contest, and hasten back to Rome and get absolution as speedily as possible."<sup>121</sup> Hence, immigrants should be welcomed to American soil, regardless of their creed, and converted to Protestantism with all possible dispatch. This attitude on the part of leaders of the domestic missionary movement differed appreciably from that held by Samuel Morse, whose publications had precipitated such an avalanche of nativistic propaganda in the early 1830's.

Regardless of the view of the religious men of the day, it is obvious that Morse and his followers, spinning their tales of popish plots, had accomplished one good. The fear of Catholic aggression in the West, bred in the American people by their efforts, had led to a more enthusiastic support of Protestant domestic missionary societies than could otherwise have been attained. The valuable cultural and educational contributions of these societies may be partially ascribed to these nativistic agitators.

<sup>120</sup> *Home Missionary*, XXI (1849), XXIII (1850); *Congregationalist*, January 11, 1850.

<sup>121</sup> American Home Missionary Society, *Seventeenth Annual Report* (New York, 1843), 99.