

#### VIII. THE LESSER REALITY: THE AMERICAN AND FOREIGN CHRISTIAN UNION

The Evangelical Alliance, Robert Baird's grand vision and favorite cause, failed in America, partly because of the slavery issue and partly because it had no dramatic work to do--no "object" to inspire American evangelicals. Baird was active in another movement throughout his mature years, however, and that movement did call forth the energies and financial support of a major segment of the Protestant community. In full confidence of the righteousness of their cause, American Protestants set out to bring all the peoples of the world under their standard. Roman Catholics at home and abroad did not escape the thrust of evangelical missionary expansionism. Perhaps the most vigorous of the organizations involved in the crusade to convert Rome was the American and Foreign Christian Union. Baird had been active in its antecedents from their inception: after the Evangelical Alliance failed, he spent several years in its full time service.

The standard historical interpretation places major responsibility for nineteenth century outbreaks of anti-Catholic and nativist activity with evangelical Protestantism of the period. The seminal work in this field is Ray Allen Billington's The Protestant Crusade: 1800-1860, first published in 1938. Almost all of Billington's chapter, "Organizing for Victory, 1850-1854," is devoted to a discussion of the American and Foreign Christian Union and its

antecedents, the Foreign Evangelical Society, founded in 1839, the Christian Alliance, founded in 1842, and the American Protestant Society, founded in 1844. The two major emphases of Billington's book are the outbreaks of anti-Catholic violence during the 1830s and 1840s and the development and progress of political nativism culminating in the "know-nothing" movement of the 1850s. Although a major portion of the book is devoted to organized Protestant activity among the Catholics and immigrants of America, it does not investigate the organizations or their programs in any great detail; rather, Billington seems to consider them as little more than way stations on the road from one evidence of American illiberality to the other.<sup>1</sup>

Billington's data fits his conclusions partly because he does not take the claims of the Protestant organizations seriously. For example, the direct antecedent of the American Protestant Society was the Protestant Reformation Society, organized and led by the Rev. W. C. Brownlee, a rabid anti-Catholic. Brownlee, his aims and his methods were expressly repudiated when the reorganization process gave birth to the American Protestant Society. Yet Billington cites expediency as the only motive for the repudiation, never allowing the possibility that the Protestant community might have sincerely wished to pursue a moderate course in their dealings with Roman Catholics, nor even investigating in any detail what factors in

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<sup>1</sup>I have used the Quadrangle Paperback Edition (Chicago, 1964) throughout this paper. The chapter in question covers pages 262 through 288.

evangelical Protestant thought made appeals of the Brownlee type unacceptable and "inexpedient."<sup>2</sup>

C. S. Griffin follows Billington's hypothesis very closely in his book, Their Brothers' Keepers. His hostility to the benevolence movement, coupled with his abridgement of Billington's main arguments, makes his analysis even less complimentary. In two paragraphs, he managed to tie the American and Foreign Christian Union to both the Native American Party of the 1840<sup>s</sup> and the "Know-Nothings" of the 1850<sup>s</sup>. He claimed that the officers of the benevolent societies "hastened to stir up the waters of hatred," after the failure of the first wave of political nativism, and that in order "to give increased vigor to American antiforeignism," they founded the American and Foreign Christian Union. Griffin's analysis is grossly oversimplified and basically wrong.<sup>3</sup>

No one can reasonably deny that evangelicals inside and outside the sphere of the American and Foreign Christian Union at times said and did things hostile to immigrants and Roman Catholics. But extending the argument to the point of accusing evangelicals of participating "in a great national campaign of abuse and invective cast at foreigners and especially at Catholics" requires hyperbole bordering on poetic license.<sup>4</sup> Some historians have produced evidence in the course of their investigations which indicates Griffin's

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>3</sup>Griffin, Their Brothers' Keepers, pp. 216-17.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 213.

thesis may be faulty. Ted C. Hinckley, for example, investigated anti-Catholicism during the period of the Mexican War. He expected to find within it strong elements of a religious crusade. Granting the fact that the "Protestant Crusade" was in full flower, he was rather surprised to find that "throughout the conflict there never materialized a national Protestant sentiment directed at transforming the struggle into a Protestant jihad south of the border."<sup>5</sup>

During the middle period of the nineteenth century American Protestantism was in perhaps its most vigorous stage, commanding attention for its counsel in every public arena; yet during this period political nativism and anti-Catholicism achieved at best local and transient successes. One explanation of this phenomenon might be that the counsels of American evangelicals were ignored. Another, which might be equally as likely, is that they have been misstated and misinterpreted. Examining the attitudes of Robert Baird and the American and Foreign Christian Union might provide some tentative answers to this question.

The American and Foreign Christian Union was a hybrid organization, formed by the merger of three smaller societies with different, though complementary "objects."<sup>6</sup> The oldest of the three was

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<sup>5</sup>Ted C. Hinckley, "American Anti-Catholicism during the Mexican War," Pacific Historical Review, XXI (May, 1962), p. 121.

<sup>6</sup>In his previously cited article, Henry W. Bowden states that Robert Baird "made his initial voyage [to Europe] in February of 1835 as an agent of the American and Foreign Christian Union," citing as references for this statement various pages in Henry M. Baird's biography of his father. Bowden went on to state that "those pages document various changes in the name of the association, but the intent of the organization remained substantially the

the Foreign Evangelical Society, organized under that name in 1839. The roots of the Foreign Evangelical Society extended back to the "French Association" which sent Robert Baird to Europe in 1835. Finding the Christian public receptive to its appeals, the French Association enlarged its arena of activity, becoming the Foreign Evangelical Association in 1836.<sup>7</sup> Success bred success, and the society gained strength and permanence as the years went on. In 1839 it underwent further reorganization and emerged as the Foreign Evangelical Society. Robert Baird was appointed Corresponding Secretary and General Agent in that year, and served in those posts until the Society was merged into the American and Foreign Christian Union.<sup>8</sup>

The Foreign Evangelical Society's primary objective was the spreading of evangelical Protestantism on the American plan throughout Europe. To the extent that its efforts were directed toward the conversion of Roman Catholics it could be called an anti-Catholic

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same." Journal of Presbyterian History, XLVII, p. 150. It is easy to sympathize with a desire to simplify the tortuous history of the American and Foreign Christian Union in a paper which only touches upon it tangentially. Yet Bowden's statement misleads the reader on at least two counts. First, the Union was formed from three organizations, each of which occupied separate, but complementary spheres of activity. The men of the day took their constitutional limitations seriously--historians of today should at least recognize their existence. Second, the attitudes and intents of the three composite parts of the American and Foreign Christian Union were not exactly the same, nor, in the case of the American Protestant Society, one of the parent organizations, did the "intent" remain the same throughout the course of its development.

<sup>7</sup>H. M. Baird, Robert Baird, pp. 165-66.

<sup>8</sup>ibid., pp. 169-70.

organization, but its efforts were never exclusively confined to Catholic countries. It sporadically supported missionaries and missionary enterprises in Orthodox Russia, the "Unitarian" Cantons of Switzerland, and Lutheran Scandinavia as well.<sup>9</sup> Looking at Protestant missionary enterprises throughout the world, its founders noted that great efforts were being made in civilization's hinterlands, but practically nothing was being done at its center:

We are called to aid, not men, just recovering from

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<sup>9</sup>Robert Baird and Edward N. Kirk, [Letter of appeal for support, sent to prospective contributors], New York: Office of the Foreign Evangelical Society, July, 1841. p. [1]. An example might be given which not only illustrates support to missionaries in non-Catholic countries provided by the Foreign Evangelical Society, but also illumines a strange twist in Protestant church history on both sides of the Atlantic. The Foreign Evangelical Society partially supported two missionaries in Sweden, Carl Olof Rosenius and Oscar Ahnfelt. These men were among the most influential in the Swedish Free Church movement. Karl A. Olsson, By One Spirit, *passim*. Baird was instrumental in assuring that support for these men continued after the Foreign Evangelical Society merged into the American and Foreign Christian Union. Robert Baird to Mortimer De Motte, Boston, March 26, 1849. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Throughout the years of Baird's connection with the American and Foreign Christian Union he transmitted substantial sums to the two men. Swedes of the Free Church tradition emigrated to America in the latter part of the nineteenth century, where they established a strongly pietist denomination separate from both Swedish and American Lutheranism. That denomination, the Evangelical Covenant Church of America, now numbers over 60,000 members, and supports a wide range of benevolent agencies at home and missionaries in countries in Africa, Asia, and South America. Thus the wheel turns full circle: An American Presbyterian minister in the employ of a supposedly exclusively "anti-Catholic" society actively solicited and transmitted funds to a group seeking to break away from the established Lutheran Church in Sweden. Members of that group emigrated to America and established a denomination which soon added its weight to the American benevolence and mission impulse. To complete the story: the writer of this paper was brought up in the Evangelical Covenant Church of America, and is at present a member. He was completely unaware of the influence of Robert Baird on his heritage until well into research into Baird's activities!

barbarism, who have no literature, no science, no educational institutions, but men at the head of civilization; and who, having felt the power of the Gospel, are now possessed of every facility but the pecuniary means, for spreading that Gospel through nominal Christendom, and for applying it to the very heart of civilized Europe. To us it seems that the mere possibility of re-introducing the Gospel, to the countries from which it has been banished for ages, by superstition, atheism and indifference, should arouse our favoured Churches, and call them to put forth every energy, and seize the favourable opportunity.<sup>10</sup>

The Society sought to capture civilization for Protestant Christianity and then, enlisting its power, proceed with capturing the world.

The Society prosecuted its ends indirectly, boasting "we send no Missionaries, but employ natives; we erect no fixtures, but aid in sustaining those which others have made." It argued this approach was the most expeditious and frugal.<sup>11</sup> The American public evidently agreed with this assessment, for the society received quite generous support, especially after Baird became general agent. In 1839, donations amounted to 6,000 dollars. Annual support had quadrupled by 1849.<sup>12</sup> It was in the most sound financial position of the three societies at the time of the merger.

The second most active of the societies was the American Protestant Society, founded in 1844. It was the only one of the three with explicitly nativist antecedents, the Protestant Reformation Society. In Billington's book, the evolution of the Protestant

<sup>10</sup>R. Baird and E. N. Kirk, [Letter of Appeal], p. [1].

<sup>11</sup>ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Christian Union and Religious Memorial, II (June, 1849), p. 363.

Reformation Society into the American Protestant Society was treated as a somewhat reluctant change forced upon the men involved by hostile opinion in the churches and the general public. While the officers of the Society freely admitted that the policies of its parent organization "did not recommend it to the churches, on account of the severe tone, and controversial spirit which characterized its operations,"<sup>13</sup> the way they described the change hints more toward a palace revolution than a reluctant retreat in the face of hostile criticism. They attributed the removal of the Rev. W. C. Brownlee, a vituperative nativist, to "Divine Providence," for example, and upon achieving control, instituted a thorough housecleaning: three of the four agents of the old society, "too deeply imbued with that hostility to the Papal system, which rather tended to strengthen existing prejudices in the Roman Catholic mind against Protestantism," were dismissed.<sup>14</sup>

The American Protestant Society thus disassociated itself from the attitudes and practices of its nativist forebear, recognizing, albeit belatedly, that the application of the American voluntary

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<sup>13</sup>American Protestant Society, Circular, To Christians and Citizens in the United States (New York: The Society, 1847), pp. [ ]-2. In his early career Baird was apparently affected with the virus of anti-Catholicism of the Brownlee strain. He was rebuffed by more experienced church leaders--men like the Rev. Alexander T. McGill, who warned him that blatant attacks on Catholicism and Roman Catholics would only cause the general public to shun him and others like him as "priests of Americanism." Baird took the hint. Seldom if ever was he found on the side of immoderation thereafter. Alexander T. McGill to Robert Baird, Princeton, December 11, 1834. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>14</sup>American Protestant Society, Circular, p. 4.

principle held the greatest promise for the satisfaction of its ends. The Constitution of the new society proclaimed the principle under which it was to operate: "Believing coercion in religious opinion, and the spirit of denunciation, to be inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, the means to be employed to secure the objects of the Society are Light and Love."<sup>15</sup> The Society attempted to live according to the ideal established in its Constitution, and claimed that one result of the benevolent approach was that "a more kindly feeling towards Romanists sprang up in the minds of Protestants."<sup>16</sup> Like the Foreign Evangelical Society, the American Protestant Society was mission-oriented. To the extent that its end was the conversion of Catholics it too was an anti-Catholic organization, but at no time in its career did it seek to suppress the propagation or practice of Roman Catholicism, nor did it encourage the political or social isolation of Roman Catholics.

The third society, the Christian Alliance, was the least significant. It began in 1842 as the Philo-Italian Society, with the "object" of promoting the cause of "Truth" in the States of the Italian Peninsula. The following year, the founders of the organization reorganized it, gave it the name, Christian Alliance, and set forth its specific work as the promotion of freedom of conscience and of worship "wherever it did not exist, especially in Papal Europe." The society specialized in behind-the-scenes operations in countries

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

where Protestant services were not tolerated, but its objectives were so close to those of the Foreign Evangelical Society that merger with the stronger organization seemed almost inevitable.<sup>17</sup>

The three societies existed side by side for several years. In an era captivated by the ideal of evangelical union it was only natural that societies with such closely related goals should consider merger. They drew their support from the same segment of the Christian community, although they were not directed by the same groups of men. The two stronger societies each had something to offer the other. The Foreign Evangelical Society had a strong financial position and well established ties with European evangelicals. The American Protestant Society had a well developed system of Agents and Missionaries operating in the American Field. Together they might accomplish great things.

Talk of merger began in earnest in 1849, and Baird was in the midst of it, representing the interests of the Foreign Evangelical Society. While he was unable to attend the first formal committee meeting on the proposed merger, he sent a list of his suggestions to Mortimer De Motte, who represented the American Protestant Association. In his memorandum Baird covered the ground thoroughly. He suggested that the Constitution of the new organization be kept as simple as possible, in order that any opportunities for action which might arise might not fall outside the "objects" of the society. He made suggestions on the nature of the governing bodies for the new society,

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<sup>17</sup>Christian Union and Religious Memorial, II (July, 1849), p. 286.

carefully insuring that board members of the groups being merged would be able to continue governing the Society. He made suggestions concerning missions, agencies, and publications as well--he even discussed at length the problem of determining an appropriate name for the united societies:

As to the title of the Society, I know not what to say. I prefer "American & Foreign Evangelical Society," or, if it would not be too long, "American & Foreign Evangelical Society, & Protestant Alliance." This latter has however but six important words--& is about as long as the "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions" when you estimate the syllables & letters! Besides, it would be abridged in common parlance, to quite a convenient length. But I am no way tenacious about the matter. How would Am. & For. Evangl. Protestant Alliance do? It sounds harshly. "Evangelical Protestant Alliance of the United States"--that does not include the foreign field. "American & Foreign Evangelical Society" or "Alliance" or "Union" would not be too long. [The problem of a name for the society evidently bothered Baird. He returned to the issue later in the letter, writing in the margin] upon the whole, I greatly prefer "American & Foreign Evangelical Union" or "Alliance."<sup>18</sup>

Negotiations went fairly smoothly, and arrangements completed during the "religious anniversaries" in May, 1849. By July the society was in operation, sharing the building of the American Tract Society in New York City.<sup>19</sup> Those responsible for the merger expected that it would "give simplicity, union, and energy" to the cause. Less of the resources of the societies would be expended on "incidental expenses," and one appeal, instead of three, would focus

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<sup>18</sup>R. Baird to Mortimer De Motte, Boston, March 26, 1849. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>19</sup>Christian Union and Religious Memorial, II (July, 1849), p. 385.

church attention more acutely. It was their wish that the Union would "rally around it a great host of supporters, from the ranks of all the evangelical churches . . . and soon have the means to do a mighty work in behalf of Papal and other nominally Christian portions of the human race . . ."20

The American and Foreign Christian Union was organized and operated along the same general lines as the other benevolent agencies of the time. In comparison with other benevolences, the operations of the Union were quite extensive. The budget for the first year was \$58,885.98, and substantially above that sum in many following years.<sup>21</sup>

The Union claimed that the sums donated to it were larger than those donated to any comparable missionary organization. The nationwide network of agents and solicitors sent out by the directors was largely responsible for its financial success. The men so employed must have been very busy indeed: the 1852 Annual Report announced that during the previous year more than one thousand sermons were given by "Secretaries, Agents, and Friends of the Society," and that publicity totalling more than five million pages had been distributed.<sup>22</sup>

The money raised was spent supporting missionaries at home and abroad. As had been the case during the years of the Foreign Evangelical Society, foreign missionaries were not directly employed

<sup>20</sup>Christian Union and Religious Memorial, II (June, 1849), p. 322.

<sup>21</sup>American and Foreign Christian Union, I (July, 1850), p. 317.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., III (June, 1852), p. 182.

by the American and Foreign Christian Union. Men already in the field received contributions as their needs were presented to its directors. Domestic missionaries were directly employed by the American and Foreign Christian Union, however, and again, the operation was quite large and sophisticated. In 1852 the Union had no less than eighty-five missionaries operating in fifteen states of the union. Missionaries were chosen for their ability to reach the foreign-born, as well as for their piety. Among the missionaries were men fluent in five foreign languages--German, French, Spanish, Italian, and Gaelic.<sup>23</sup>

Another important aspect of the American and Foreign Christian Union's work was the monthly journal it published. The journal, which bore the same name as the parent society, was filled with accounts of the successes of the society, notices of opportunities for further "service," and news of events of interest in the general Protestant community. Published at the relatively low subscription rate of one dollar per year, the journal reached a circulation of 13,000 by 1853.<sup>24</sup> This number seems small by modern standards, but it was indicative of moderate success by standards of the time. More important than gross circulation figures was the audience towards which a significant portion of the circulation was directed. Out of those thirteen thousand copies, more than two thousand were placed in the hands of Protestant ministers.<sup>25</sup> This meant that in about

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<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 182-83.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, IV (June, 1853), p. 257.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, (February, 1853), p. [49].

two thousand American churches, the spiritual leaders were reading, absorbing, and passing on to their congregations a continual stream of American and Foreign Christian Union propaganda.

Robert Baird considered the publication of a monthly journal a matter of great importance. Rather than leave such a matter to the whim of the directors, he sought to make publication mandatory by including it in the society's constitution. He knew that a properly presented magazine could be of "incalculable benefit" to the society's efforts to present its claims upon the Christian public. It was only natural that the responsibility for editing the magazine should fall upon him, its greatest supporter.

Baird took his editing duties very seriously. Much of the magazine he wrote or compiled himself. The rest he always attempted to read and correct in proof, in order that the American and Foreign Christian Union might be spared any harm from errors of printers or indiscretions of would-be contributors.<sup>26</sup> Although Baird's many duties often took him out of New York City, he refused to let such circumstances absolve him of responsibility for the minutest details, as far as the journal was concerned. This often created complicated situations for him and his co-Corresponding Secretary the Rev. Dr. E. R. Fairchild. In one instance, Baird was required to be in Philadelphia at the time the magazine was due to go to press. Not content to trust Fairchild, or his own son, Charles, with preparing the

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<sup>26</sup>See, for example, letters of Robert Baird to Dr. E. R. Fairchild dated Pittsburgh, September 24, 1852, Pittsburgh, September 26, 1852, and Pittsburgh, October 16, 1852. All three letters are in the Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

proofs, he wrote,

I hardly know what to say about the remaining proofs. I should like to see them, & yet I know not how it can be done. If they would be ready on Wednesday in time for you to send them to the clerk of Mr. John Porter before 2 o'clock, & ask him to give them to the conductor of the train at South Amboy, I would meet him at Camden, read them right off, & send them by the midnight train (if not right), so that you would have them Thursday morning. Let me know whether this will be done--by dropping me a note by to-morrow's mail, so that I may know Wednesday morning what to do.<sup>27</sup>

Such was the life of a travelling editor in the mid-nineteenth century. As was customary at the time, very few of the articles bore the name of the author. The meticulous care Baird lavished on the smallest detail, together with the zeal with which he prosecuted the American and Foreign Christian Union's best interests, would seem to assure that the articles in the journal represent Baird's thought, if not his actual words.

Notwithstanding the amount of time and effort Baird devoted to the monthly journal, editing it was not his only responsibility, nor indeed his major one. Baird held the title of Corresponding Secretary and General Agent, primarily responsible for the society's domestic concerns. Yet he never felt restrained to limit himself to his ascribed assignments. He kept a watchful eye on Protestant interests in Europe as well. He was extremely pleased when General Lewis Cass, American Minister at Rome, took the Protestant services "to his own house" when the authorities forced the closing of the

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<sup>27</sup>R. Baird to E. R. Fairchild, Philadelphia, May 3, 1852. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

American Protestant Chapel.<sup>28</sup> Looking forward to a change of administration in the national elections in 1852, Baird wrote General Franklin S. Pierce, the democratic candidate, seeking him to appoint "the right man at Rome as Charge d'affaires" in order that the relationship established under Cass might continue.<sup>29</sup>

It was not so much that Baird overstepped his authority in intervening in the society's European affairs as it was that he recognized that domestic and international concerns influenced each other. Thus, he worked tirelessly to organize American opinion in order that its weight might be felt on the other side of the Atlantic. For example, when notice came that a Protestant couple had been imprisoned in Tuscany for distributing Bibles and tracts, Baird organized a mass meeting in their behalf, circulated petitions to Congress asking it to do what it could to secure their release, and personally enlisted the aid of Secretary of State Everett, and perhaps President Fillmore as well.<sup>30</sup>

Within the more narrow confines of the domestic field Baird kept exceedingly busy. He knew that an efficiently organized and managed "home field" was the key success for the Union as a whole. Immediately after the merger went into effect he began to perfect

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<sup>28</sup>R. Baird to E. R. Fairchild, Milan, Italy, October 21, 1851. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>29</sup>R. Baird to E. R. Fairchild, Dansville, New York, June 16, 1852. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>30</sup>R. Baird to Nicholas Murray, Washington, D. C., January 3, 1853. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. R. Baird to John Maclean, New York, January 22, 1853. Maclean Papers, Princeton University Archives.

the society's organization and personnel. At the heart of success lay an effective agency system. Baird felt that it had to be enlarged: "It is clear that we must have more agencies in all directions.... . We cannot do without a wide-spread & effective agency. Every church in New England, & among our New School people, Dutch Ref., & such others as will help us, must be visited."<sup>31</sup>

Mere size was not the key to an effective agency system. Baird proposed one all-important hiring criteria: no district agent should be employed who did not "raise something like \$3000 per annum-- certainly not in any important part of the country." He assured Mortimer De Motte that "We can get competent men, & we must not be plagued with incompetent ones."<sup>32</sup> Too often pious incompetents had "run [the] cause into the ground."<sup>33</sup>

One of the keys to a successful agency was matching the man with the field of labor, and Baird poured over each case with his usual care. Baird placed Dr. Dickinson in New England, because "his rough manner, iron face, strong masculine sense, thorough perseverance, & heavy style" fit perfectly "those old puritan churches."<sup>34</sup> Dickinson could never have succeeded as well in Maryland or Pennsylvania

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<sup>31</sup>R. Baird to E. R. Fairchild, Pittsburgh, September 21, 1852. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>32</sup>R. Baird to Mortimer De Motte, Bangor, Maine, June 6, 1849. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>33</sup>R. Baird to E. R. Fairchild, Rochester, March 26, 1852. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>34</sup>R. Baird to Mortimer De Motte, Bangor, Maine, June 6, 1849. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

where another type of man was needed.

"Worthless" missionaries were no more welcome than worthless agents. The American Protestant Society had sought to purge such men from their employment, but Baird thought that Mortimer De Motte's kindness had kept him from doing a thorough job. Baird, for one, was not disposed to be plagued with them much longer.<sup>35</sup> He proposed to rid the Union of "queer fellows" and "dangerous" men, and replace them with "good, simple hearted & faithful men--no Jesuits."<sup>36</sup> When he found such men he used all his influence to secure their services and smooth any obstacles which might lay in their way. In one instance, having secured a missionary for the Valparaiso, Chile, station, he arranged for a special meeting of the New Brunswick Presbytery, in

<sup>35</sup>R. Baird to Herman Norton, New York, July 22, 1850. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>36</sup>R. Baird to E. R. Fairchild, Rochester, March 26, 1852. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Baird was constantly on the lookout for good missionaries and agents, even as he had been when he was General Agent for the American Sunday School Union. One difference complicated his task as far as the American and Foreign Christian Union was concerned, however. Much of the society's work was directed to the immigrant population, and it prided itself on employing men who could reach immigrants on friendly and familiar terms--which meant men who could speak their languages. Baird fully approved of this principle--it was the same one he introduced while serving the Sunday school cause, sending Methodist agents among Methodists, etc.

The difficulty was that there were few Americans qualified to approach the task in this way. Consequently Baird sought, at the request of the Board of Directors, qualified men abroad. When he prepared for his 1851 journey, the Board charged "That when you shall have arrived in Europe, you shall secure, if practicable, in various places, such arrangements as will enable the Board hereafter to obtain, as they may need them, pious, talented, competent, and worthy ministers and laymen to labor as missionaries in this country, among the immigrant or native population." American and Foreign Christian Union, II (August, 1851), p. [242].

order that the man might be ordained in time to catch the boat. He even chose the text for the ordination sermon!<sup>37</sup>

The future of the American and Foreign Christian Union looked bright in 1850. Only one cloud cast a shadow on its prospects-- the heavy debt it inherited from the American Protestant Society. Baird had to lessen the burden if the society was not to founder.

The task was not easy. The American Protestant Society had been in more serious financial condition than anyone had supposed. Its debts, instead of being \$6,000, had turned out to be closer to \$15,000. Baird worried about the effect a disclosure of its near bankruptcy might have: "if the public only knew what was the state of our affairs a few months ago, & even now, & the loose way in which every thing had been done, the Society would be blown to atoms." Baird found the irresponsibility shocking, and vowed that no organization which he helped to administer would be run in such a slipshod fashion.<sup>38</sup>

In order to accomplish what he promised, Baird set out on the circuit of the churches, applying the fund raising arts he had so well perfected throughout his career. Climbing on to surer financial ground was a task which was not accomplished overnight. The debt of the American Protestant Society and its "Portuguese project"<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>R. Baird to the Rev. Eli F. Cooley, New York, October 15, 1849. Papers of the New Brunswick Presbytery, Presbyterian Historical Society.

<sup>38</sup>R. Baird to [?] New York, March 11, 1850. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>39</sup>A Portuguese Protestant colony had been established at

remained for several years a 'millstone which hangs around the neck

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Madeira through the ministrations of one Dr. Kally. Kally went to Madeira for the benefit of his wife's health. While there, he established a hospital and dispensary, and dispensed Bibles and well and medicine, to the discomfit of the Portuguese authorities. Kally and his followers were imprisoned in 1843. Shortly thereafter they were exiled, about one thousand of them, to the West Indies. American and Foreign Christian Union I (July, 1840), p. [30].

While in the West Indies, their plight came to the attention of the American Protestant Society, which resolved to help them settle in the United States. As was all too often the case, the will to do good exceeded the means. The project was hanging in mid-air when the merger was accomplished. The newly formed American and Foreign Christian Union found themselves with just under five hundred Portuguese exiles to care for. Baird was vexed to discover just what to do with them. He pondered placing them on lands of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company in New Jersey, or, alternately, on lands in Western Virginia. While the climate at the latter place was better, the former offered several advantages. The Portuguese would be where their concerns could be more easily looked after, and their presence near the centers of New York and Philadelphia would have certain propaganda value. R. Baird to Mortimer De Motte, September 26, 1849. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

As it turned out, neither plan was put into effect. Public meetings in behalf of the Portuguese exiles awakened sympathy in the hearts of American Protestants, and land was donated for their settling around the towns of Jacksonville, Springfield, and Waverly, Illinois. American and Foreign Christian Union, I (November, 1850), p. 507. Baird was against the idea at first, preferring to keep them out east where their Americanization could be more closely supervised. R. Baird to [?] New York, March 11, 1850. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. It was finally decided that the Illinois offer was the most attractive alternative, however.

Once their point of location was settled it remained a problem getting them there. Baird finally arranged to send them via the Great Lakes route, with the aid of Erastus Corning and John T. Norton, at the bargain rate of seven dollars a head--children under twelve free. R. Baird to Erastus Corning, New Haven, November 3, 1849. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Even at such bargain rates the expense nearly overwhelmed the fledgling society. In the fiscal year ending May 1, 1850 the society spent \$12,506.27 ministering to the needs of the Portuguese. This was three thousand dollars more than special appeals in their behalf brought in. American and Foreign Christian Union, I (June, 1850), p. 281.

In spite of all the difficulties the project ended happily. In 1851 the Union was able to report that "the entire number in the west now falls but little short of 500. It is gratifying to know that they are doing well in every respect, industrious, patient, frugal, spiritually-minded, humble, and in a good degree contented. They are

of the Society."<sup>40</sup> In order to lighten expenses, the program of the Union had to be cut back. Responsibility for certain mission stations was transferred to the Evangelical Society of France, and Baird found to his disgust that some of his beloved foreign projects were at least temporarily being sacrificed to rescue the American Protestant Society, faction from its previous indiscretions. At one point he was upset enough to threaten resigning. He felt that the foreign work had been "crippled" since the merger, and was tired of hearing himself "abused for not fulfilling promises" that he had made in good faith.<sup>41</sup>

Fairchild must have successfully soothed Baird's ruffled feelings, for he did not resign as he had threatened to do. The "objects" of the organization were too close to Baird's heart to allow him to resign in a fit of pique. Rather, he rode out the period of difficulty and watched the society grow stronger from year to year.

Had the American and Foreign Christian Union been formed on narrowly anti-Catholic principles Baird might well have left; but it was not exclusively, or perhaps even primarily, a product of Protestant anti-Catholic phobias. Its inspiration was far more positive.

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acquiring, whilst laboring in the service of their employers, the English language, and the knowledge of western life and modes of agriculture, etc. which will in no distant day fit them to undertake to cultivate lands of their own." *Ibid.*, II (June, 1851), p. 186. Over the next few years the Union did actually settle many on donated and purchased lands.

<sup>40</sup>R. Baird to Theodore Dwight, Baltimore, April 2, 1850. Robert Baird Miscellaneous Papers, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library.

<sup>41</sup>R. Baird to E. R. Fairchild, Rochester, March 22, 1852. Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

It was part of the contemporary world-wide Protestant missionary movement. Baird thought it was the key part.

As Baird looked across the mid-nineteenth century world he drew considerable satisfaction from the expansion of western civilization. Yet he was concerned that Christendom's progress was more material than physical. "We bless God for the success of the Gospel in turning men unto God, wherever it has been preached during the last fifty years," he wrote. Yet he was forced to ask, "with the deepest sorrow, why has it not had greater success? Why are so few interested, awakened, convinced, converted, and saved by all the efforts which the churches are making?"<sup>42</sup> Baird could never blame missionary failures on a fickle Providence. Christians had to look to themselves to find the cause.

Robert Baird felt that greater success eluded the Protestant community because its priorities were not in order. He was convinced "that until pure Christianity be restored in nominal Christendom, the conversion of the heathen world can hardly be looked for. There are millions of Protestants, and ten millions of Romanists, so manifestly ignorant of the great doctrines of the gospel, as to prove by their lives that they are little better than baptised heathen."<sup>43</sup> Christendom was Protestantism's home mission field.<sup>44</sup> The American and Foreign Christian Union was to be Protestantism's agent, working "to save men, to bring men--ignorant, sinful, dying men--to the

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<sup>42</sup>R. Baird, Christian Retrospect and Register, p. 395.

<sup>43</sup>R. Baird, Religion in America, p. 714.

<sup>44</sup>American and Foreign Christian Union, 1 (September, 1850), p. 438.

knowledge of Christ and his salvation."<sup>45</sup>

All of the benevolence movement means and methods were employed by the American and Foreign Christian Union in prosecuting its great end. Sunday Schools, tracts, Bible distribution, colporteurage and missionary activities, temperance agitation, and charitable enterprises all had parts to play. All evangelical Protestants were invited to participate in the "spirit of brotherly love among all the children of God, to what branch so ever of the true Church they may belong."<sup>46</sup> The Evangelical Alliance ideal permeated this microcosmic representation of Protestant non-denominational benevolence. It was to represent Christian union in action. The Evangelical Alliance had "no great outward work to do." For those Protestant Christians who wished "to do some good work in order to develop or to promote Christian union," and who were not satisfied with the "simple, subtle, spiritual, ethereal," and "heavenly" work of the Alliance, Baird offered a simple solution: "let them without delay fall into the ranks of the American and Foreign Christian Union."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup>ibid., II (August, 1851), p. 253.

<sup>46</sup>ibid., I (January, 1850), p. 2.

<sup>47</sup>Christian Union and Religious Memorial, II (June, 1849), p. 323. While Robert Baird may have considered the American and Foreign Christian Union the working arm of the Evangelical Alliance other workers in the Alliance movement were less disposed to look favorably on the new society. Samuel Hueston, publisher of the Christian Union and Religious Memorial seemed distinctly unhappy with the new society, especially in its choice of a name: "It is generally known that within the past year, three religious associations in this city [New York] . . . have united under the name of the 'American and Foreign Christian Union.' The avowed object of this new Society, is the promotion of evangelical religion among nominal Christians, at home and abroad. Between this institution and the Evangelical

Thus the Union, like the Alliance, was designed to further the cause of "pure Christianity" organized on the voluntary system. It labored earnestly among the "deluded" followers of an "impure Christianity" wherever it found them. At home, the sons and daughters of Rome were the chief recipients of its favors. The Roman Catholic Church, after all, was the only major religious organization which denied both the sufficiency of the "simple gospel" and the superiority of the voluntary system.<sup>48</sup>

The Church of Rome received the lion's share of attention abroad, as well; but the situation was more complex there, however. Believing firmly that pure Christianity was only possible in an environment conditioned by religious freedom, Robert Baird protested strongly wherever he saw the rights of conscience being violated. He protested the persecution of Baptists in Denmark as vigorously as he protested the persecution of Protestants in Roman Catholic countries.<sup>49</sup>

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Alliance there exists no connection at all. The one is a missionary organization; the other has for its object the promotion of union among Christians. It would seem unfortunate that the new Society should have adopted an appellation which in some degree confounds its object with that of the Alliance. But without entering upon this subject we desire to have it understood that the Christian Union magazine has no connection whatever with the American and Foreign Christian Union, or with the periodical published by it; their design and purpose being entirely different from our own." Christian Union and Religious Memorial III (January, 1850), p. 4. Hueston perhaps feared competition from a journal backed by a society which "did something," and well he might. The Christian Union and Religious Memorial ceased publishing within the year.

<sup>48</sup>Even at home, Catholicism was not considered the greatest of evils. Unbelief was far more worrisome. As Baird wrote, "German infidelity, and German neology and rationalism give us much trouble; whilst the poor Irish, whatever else they may be, are not infidels. If they have not true religion, they have at least some religiosity." State and Prospects of Christianity . . ., p. 52.

<sup>49</sup>H. M. Baird, Robert Baird, p. 184.

Nor was it only the persecution of evangelicals which concerned him. He organized relief for Maronite Christians in Lebanon when they experienced a "savage massacre" at the hands of the Druses.<sup>50</sup> He even memorialized in behalf of Roman Catholics deprived of civil and property rights in Sweden!<sup>51</sup> He was convinced of nothing more firmly than that evangelical Protestantism should not want, did not need, and could not benefit from state intervention on its behalf. His conception of the nature of the Church of Rome and its followers demanded other approaches.

Robert Baird and the society he served were part of the militantly expansionist evangelical branch of American Protestantism. Neither Baird nor his associates would have tried to deny that they opposed Catholicism. They might well have resented being called "anti-Catholic," given the modern connotations of the term. They would have denied that there was anything uncivil or oppressive in their attitude, or that their position arose from any other source than their ideological commitment. They were "anti-Catholic" in the same sense that missionaries to Africa were "anti-animist," or Catholics were "anti-Protestant," for that matter. Opposing belief systems must in some sense be "anti" each other.

Robert Baird and others like him recognized that Roman

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<sup>50</sup>ibid., p. 308.

<sup>51</sup>ibid., pp. 282-83. For a more complete account of American Protestant activities in Scandinavia during the mid-nineteenth century see Franklin D. Scott, "American Influences in Norway and Sweden," Journal of Modern History, XVIII (March, 1946), pp. 37-47, passim.

Catholicism was a spiritual and cultural threat to the Protestant moral order. But at the same time they were stimulated by its potential as a source of converts. They were surprised at its rapid growth in America. The Rev. Herman Norton, an itinerant evangelist and Baird's fellow Corresponding Secretary in the American and Foreign Christian Union until his death, mused that no Protestant in 1830 would have dreamed that in twenty short years Protestant citadel America would harbor 27 bishops, 30 dioceses, 1081 priests, 1073 churches, 17 colleges, 29 ecclesiastical seminaries, 91 female academies, besides numerous orphan schools and asylums. Yet such was the case in 1850.<sup>52</sup>

Such a potentially powerful institution threatened evangelical Protestantism's emerging ideological hegemony. A half-century's progress could disappear, should the Roman Catholic Church achieve social acceptability among America's middle classes. In many ways, therefore, the American and Foreign Christian Union seemed far more worried about the impact of Catholic institutions upon the Protestant community than it did about their impact on the Catholics themselves! Norton wrote that in the South especially, daughters of wealthy Protestants were entering female seminaries operated under Catholic auspices, and that this was leading many of them into the Romish Church.<sup>53</sup> Equally dangerous were the "finishing schools" operated by Catholics. It was not the ignorant Irish immigrant that especially

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<sup>52</sup>American and Foreign Christian Union, 1 (July, 1850), pp. 318-19.

<sup>53</sup>ibid., p. 178.

worried Robert Baird. Rather, it was the cultured French Catholic, polished and socially respectable, that posed the threat. Elements within America's respectable classes were becoming culture-hungry. Having gained a portion of economic security, they sought to enhance their status through an acquaintance with the "accomplishments"--arts, music, and foreign languages. Catholics were offering to tutor this rising social elite in these graces, and the offer was all too often being accepted. Baird feared that such social contacts would lead to intermarriage and conversion to Rome. When it came to his attention that a "very polished, active, insinuating, and thorough jesuitical French priest" had been hired by several Protestant families to teach their children French, he protested that Protestants should prefer that their children remain ignorant rather than that they acquire the language "under such tuition."<sup>54</sup>

Catholicism offered enticements which Protestantism would be hard put to match, and Baird's warnings indicate that he was at least subconsciously aware of the danger those enticements threatened. Catholicism, with its mysteries, ritual, and centralized administration seemed exotically foreign. With the possible exception of the revival meeting, Protestantism could offer nothing to match the impressiveness of its drama. Protestant leaders such as Robert Baird were justified in their apprehension of its attractiveness. In their writings they sought to combat it with the strongest words in their vocabulary. Baird was as guilty as the rest in allowing his

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., II (February, 1851), pp. 65-66.

rhetoric to exceed the bounds of good taste. He exhibited as much gullibility as bigotry when he passed on the most lurid tales of women being kidnapped, or kept against their wills by the minions of Rome.<sup>55</sup>

Protestant anti-Catholic rhetoric was to a large degree inexcusable. Granting this, it must be remembered that it was a product of an age of rhetorical excess. Some Protestants denounced each other in no less severe terms. Democrats did not appeal primarily to reason in their attacks on Whiggery, nor, for that matter, were Catholic spokesmen such as Orestes Brownson and Archbishop John Hughes gentle in their analyses of Protestant failings.

The rhetoric emerging from the responsible center of American Protestantism was never meant to call forth repression upon the heads of Roman Catholics. Immoderate action was denounced, no matter from which corner it arose.<sup>56</sup> Men like Robert Baird might be made

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, V (May, 1855), p. 223.

<sup>56</sup>When the anti-Catholic Massachusetts State Legislature sent a committee of inspection around to Catholic convents and boarding schools Baird protested that the legislature had overstepped the bounds of decency, sending "too large a committee; one which . . . was composed of men who were far from being as discreet as those should be who go on so delicate an errand." *Ibid.*, p. 224. Baird was too much a victim of the national paranoia on the subject of secret societies and institutions to suggest that Catholics ought to be allowed to carry out their business in peace, but as David B. Davis has shown in his article, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature," [*Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLVII (September, 1850), pp. 205-24.] such fears were endemic in American Society, and were generated by religious and fraternal organizations alike.

The furthest any responsible Protestant spokesman wished to go was to suggest that Americans guard against subversive activity. They never encouraged or condoned violence. Lyman Beecher, whose name appears wherever the sins of anti-Catholic excess are enumerated,

apprehensive by Catholic advances: they never panicked at the thought of its ultimate success. It was highly unlikely that Protestantism would "decline." A far more likely prospect was that it would "continue to increase, and to extend its influences in all directions."<sup>57</sup> The apparent contradiction between the gloomily hysterical rhetoric on the one hand and the optimistic prognosis for success on the other can be resolved through a proper understanding of the rhetoric's purpose. Baird understood what many critics of nineteenth century evangelicalism have forgotten--that the primary purpose of rhetoric is not to intimidate the out-group: rather, it is to stimulate those already convinced to further efforts in behalf of the cause. As Baird explained,

the representations made on this subject by some of our societies are often calculated, though undesignedly, to mislead a stranger. That there is much real destitution to warrant strong appeals is, no doubt, true; but one is apt to forget that there is much that is hypothetical in what is said of the danger that threatens if this destitution be not supplied. This danger is eminent; still, it is as yet but a contingency. If the required efforts be not made, error and irreligion will overspread the country--if the Protestants be not on the alert, Romanism will conquer for itself. But it is precisely to prevent

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condemned "with regret and abhorrence" in the name of "the Protestants and patriots throughout the land" the "late violence done to Catholic property at Charlestown," and protested that "the excitement which produced it had no relation whatever to religious opinions, and no connection with any religious denomination of Christians." Plea for the West, p. 65. Beecher no doubt protested too much. Yet Douglas Branch came somewhere near the truth when he stated that "the sporadic outbreaks of anti-Catholic violence in the Atlantic cities were secondarily moral bludgeonings of the dreadful Vatican; but primarily the riots were protests of other factions against the Irish fingers in the political pie." The Sentimental Years, p. 385.

<sup>57</sup>R. Baird, Christian Retrospect and Register, p. 200.

such results that these appeals are made.<sup>58</sup>

That such "pep talks" sometimes resulted in overt persecution of Roman Catholics is no doubt true: that this was the intended result is certainly false.

As Timothy Smith has said, evangelicals "believed the churches' task was to save Catholics, not scorn them."<sup>59</sup> The American and Foreign Christian Union sought to promote "a pure Christianity amongst those, at home and abroad, who know only a corrupted one, and especially that which is called Papal."<sup>60</sup> Robert Baird challenged Roman Catholicism to "holy competition"--to war "not . . . of violence and blood, but of love and truth."<sup>61</sup> The war often showed little enough of either of those qualities, but in general it was fair. No quarter was to be asked and none given. But no privileges were to be given to one side which were denied to the other.<sup>62</sup> Robert Baird's anti-Catholicism was not without scruples--throughout the contest he sought to remain within their boundaries.

<sup>58</sup>R. Baird, Religion in America, pp. 726-27.

<sup>59</sup>T. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform, p. 168.

<sup>60</sup>American and Foreign Christian Union, I (January, 1850), p. 1.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., (March, 1850), p. 108.

<sup>62</sup>Lyman Beecher established the ground rules for the battle fifteen years earlier: "'But have not the Catholics just as good a right to their religion as other denominations have to theirs?' I have said so. I not only admit their equal rights, but insist upon them; and am prepared to defend their rights as I am those of my own and other Protestant denominations. The Catholics have a perfect right to proselyte the nation to their faith if they are able to do it. But I too have the right of preventing it if I am able." Plea for the West, p. 91.

Baird may have been an exponent of anti-Catholicism and guilty of excesses in its name. By no stretch of the imagination could he or the segment of the Protestant community he represented be accused of nativism. He held some stereotypes of the immigrant which were common to his age, it is true. For instance, he did believe that "much of the crime committed in America, from that of the honourable merchant who scruples not to defraud the custom-house if he can, down to the outrages of the man who disturbs the streets with his riots, is the work of foreigners."<sup>63</sup> Yet he did not attribute crime to any innate racial or religious characteristics the immigrant possessed. Rather, the social disruption which accompanied immigration lay at the root of the problem:

Colonization is ever a time of exposure to temptation and to remissness in the spiritual life. Under the most favorable circumstances, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to maintain a healthy tone of piety among immigrants of even more than ordinary excellence of religious character.<sup>64</sup>

Spiritual laxness made crime and vice inevitable.

Far from being prejudiced against the immigrant, most of Baird's sentiments ran the other way--especially in the case of the much-maligned Irish Catholic. He charged that anti-Irish sentiments were "unwise," "unpatriotic," and "unchristian." More than that, they were just plain wrong:

The Irish heart is a noble, affectionate, and confiding one. It is both warm and strong in its

<sup>63</sup>R. Baird, Religion in America, p. 83.

<sup>64</sup>American and Foreign Christian Union, I (November, 1850), p. 525.

affections, and beyond that of any of the other branches of the Celtic race, it is steadfast and tenacious in its attachments; and considering what they have gone through, I do not wonder that the Irish Romanists are attached to the Papal faith. It was the religious creed of their ancestors, they themselves were born in it, and they are ready to die for it. I honor them for cleaving to it with such firmness.<sup>65</sup>

Baird well recognized that the annual migration of "some two hundred thousand, and more, of foreigners, speaking eight or ten languages" threatened to swamp America's religious resources, but the challenge was one that could be met, through "much laboring, giving, and praying."<sup>66</sup> His sentiments were echoed by the American and Foreign Christian Union. It had no doubt that if the Protestant churches would only "take courage" in their efforts to "impart the truth to them whenever they take their abode" within the churches' reach, "vast numbers" of immigrants would "'fall away'--not to infidelity as has been greatly the case, but to true Christianity."<sup>67</sup>

The attitudes of the American and Foreign Christian Union left it diametrically opposed to political nativism. "Know-Nothingism" disconcerted the Union. While Baird professed to be "not surprised" at its development, considering the "abuses" of American institutions

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., (August, 1850), p. 360. Baird was more kindly disposed to immigrants than some notable American Catholics--Orestes Brownson, for example. Perhaps an even more striking example of Catholic nativism is the case of the French Abbe Adrien Rouquette of Louisiana, whose opposition to Irish immigrants "led him to associate with the American Party." Thomas T. McAvoy, "The Formation of the Catholic Minority in the United States, 1820-1860," The Review of Politics, X (January, 1848), p. 27.

<sup>66</sup>Christian Union and Religious Memorial, I (July, 1848), p. 39.

<sup>67</sup>American and Foreign Christian Union, III (July, 1852), p. 23.

perpetrated at the hand of Rome, he questioned the wisdom of using political tools in a spiritual battle. He saw the nativist movement as something strangely alien, "contrary to the spirit of our noble institutions, the laws of the land, [and] the injunctions of the glorious Gospel of Christ." He thought it hardly reasonable to reply to the "subverting of happy institutions" by priest-ridden Catholics in a manner which would destroy that which was being defended. Persuasion was more effective than coercion: "The weapons of our warfare with Rome should be 'spiritual'--powerful; not 'carnal'--and weak."<sup>68</sup>

Over and above the professed attachment to American political ideals, Baird and the Union had concrete and pragmatic reasons for unhappiness with the resurgence of political nativism. First, the funds and energies available for combatting Popish Error were limited. Any political action would tend to siphon off contributions which might otherwise go to the Union--contributions the society sorely needed. Second, missionaries in the field noted that increases in political nativism increased Catholic resistance to their proselytizing efforts. The missionary to the Catholics of Dubuque, Iowa, wrote a letter to the Board of Directors of the American and Foreign Christian Union in which he recounted some of the difficulties he encountered:

Many of the Catholics call me into the shops where they work, or invite me into their houses to speak with them on the subject of my mission. But in some parts I meet strong opposition from the political party that is opposed to the "Know-Nothings." That party, and the Catholics connected with them,

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<sup>68</sup>ibid., V (July, 1854), pp. 332-33.

think that "Anti-Popery" means "Know-Nothingism," and in order to be consistent they must be in some degree "Pro-Popery" as well as "anti-Know-Nothing."<sup>69</sup>

Faced with this sort of problem on the mission field, the Union was forced to reiterate that its mission was moral and religious, not political. Through the pages of its journal it protested "against being mixed up with any of the political parties of the nation, and thus placed in a false position, and consequently hindered our work."<sup>70</sup>

Robert Baird was convinced that moral and religious suasion would work if only the churches took the missionary work seriously. Certain Protestants, "especially those of Scotch and Scotch-Irish origin," had "little or almost no confidence in the conversion of Roman Catholics, and especially of priests."<sup>71</sup> The "once a Catholic, always a Catholic" attitude doomed the mission to failure from the start. Cautioning such men to remember that their own ancestors were converts from the Church of Rome, he urged them to expect great things. If they approached the task in the proper way, failure was highly unlikely.

The "proper way" to treat Roman Catholics seemed self-evident to Robert Baird. Religion and common sense both suggested a "golden rule" approach. One could denounce the evils of Roman Catholicism. One should do so. Yet believing in a false system did not turn individuals into something less than human beings; nor could one

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<sup>69</sup>ibid., VI (September, 1855), p. 437.

<sup>70</sup>ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Robert Baird, The French Canadian Mission in Illinois, (n.p., dated Yonkers, New York, April 26, 1860), p. 3.

expect to successfully convert them by treating them as such. Baird assured his readers that "kindness in all the social intercourse and business transactions of life" would succeed where intemperate personal attacks were bound to fail. Protestants had to convince Catholics that they could "be their friends--their best friends--and still be Protestants." Once friendship had been won, efforts directed toward conversion could be begun--"not by controversy, but by a simple and kind presentation of the Gospel . . . from time to time, as we may have proper occasion."<sup>72</sup> Had all elements of the American community practiced what Baird preached Catholics might have found their lot less precarious.

The approach Baird recommended was not only humane and proper; it was functional as well. He knew that violent attacks begat violent defenses. Those who attacked Roman Catholicism with raillery and abuse deserved the "reprobation of all good men." Such conduct hindered the cause of good. Protestants of Baird's type detested religious demagogues no less than they did their political cousins: "All attempts on the part of such creatures intentionally to provoke Roman Catholics, or others, by using insulting and approbrious language, and that too in the very streets where they reside, ought to be deemed an outrage by all good men."<sup>73</sup> "Argument and ridicule" never drove men to the truth. Even if it succeeded in separating Catholics from their Church, all it was likely to leave

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<sup>72</sup>American and Foreign Christian Union, I (August, 1850), p. 362.

<sup>73</sup>ibid., V (July, 1854), pp. 334-35.

them with was a "cold and cheerless, and often a malignant, infidelity," and Baird preferred that persons believed in a corrupted religion rather than in none at all.<sup>74</sup>

Thus from time to time the American and Foreign Christian Union felt called upon to defend the rights of their adversaries, the Catholics. When a Roman Catholic Priest in Maine was tarred and feathered by a mob for protesting the use of the Protestant Bible in the public schools, the Union denounced the outrage in the strongest of terms, and praised the Catholics when they rose to his defense.<sup>75</sup> Protestantism had far more to fear from immoderation than it did from prudence. Baird was certain that "if the Roman Catholic people in the United States continue to be treated with kindness, their rights be duly maintained, their conscientious convictions properly respected, and the gospel be presented to them clearly, prudently, and in the spirit of Christian love, Protestantism . . . can have nothing to fear in the future."<sup>76</sup>

Baird's confidence came from an understanding of the potent force of American socializing institutions, which were firmly in Protestant control. He did not expect to win adult Catholic immigrants in large numbers, but he did have great expectations of success among

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<sup>74</sup>ibid., II (August, 1851), p. 253.

<sup>75</sup>ibid., V (December, 1854), pp. 547-48.

<sup>76</sup>Robert Baird, "The Influence of Civil and Religious Liberty on Roman Catholicism in the United States of America," Proceedings of the Geneva Conference of the Evangelical Alliance, Held in September, 1861, ed. Gavin Carlyle. (Edinburgh: Published for the Alliance by Alexander Strahan & Co., 1862), p. 200.

their children. "These grow up speaking the language and breathing the spirit of their adopted country, and thus the process of assimilation goes steadily on."<sup>77</sup>

Evangelical Protestantism had so firmly captured American popular thought by 1850 that assimilation essentially meant assenting to the Protestant world view. The atmosphere of public institutions such as common schools was so imbued with Protestant spiritual and moral ideas that they could be counted upon for aid in "Americanizing" the foreigner and "Protestantizing" the Catholic.

Roman Catholic clergymen were well aware of the threat. Common schools were not consciously designed to seduce Catholic children: in the milieu of the mid-nineteenth century it was impossible to construct an educational system in which Catholic doctrine could be treated fairly. The metaphysics of Roman Catholicism were too foreign for even the most well-intentioned American Protestants to comprehend, much less appreciate. The dogmas of Rome were looked upon as mere superstitions which could and should be demolished. They were so clearly "wrong," that attacking them in the schools was only proclaiming the Truth, not acting in a prejudiced and bigotted fashion. When the New-York Observer announced "You cannot persuade a half grown boy who has been five years to a New-York school, that a piece of bread is a piece of God,"<sup>78</sup> it was unconsciously proclaiming why nineteenth century American common schools could not be

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<sup>77</sup>R. Baird, Religion in America, p. 82.

<sup>78</sup>Cited in American and Foreign Christian Union, III (August, 1852), p. 253.

tolerated by the Roman Catholic Church. Protestant beliefs fit under its wide umbrella with ease, while the Roman Church could not in all conscience expose its young to the attacks of Protestants who little comprehended their own narrowness.<sup>79</sup>

"Let [their] people become well instructed, even in what are the elements of an ordinary education, and they will read, then think, then inquire, then doubt, and then abandon Rome," boasted Robert Baird.<sup>80</sup> But neither Baird nor the American and Foreign Christian Union were about to leave the responsibility for converting Roman Catholics in the hands of public institutions--not when they had the resources and experience of organized benevolence at their command.<sup>81</sup> All the

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<sup>79</sup>By the 1850s Americanism had become so closely identified with the "common core Christianity" preached by American evangelicals that attacking the inclusion of the latter in the common school curriculum could easily be construed as attacking the former. Protestants simply couldn't conceive of a system of social ethics resting upon any other foundation. "What a system of education, what a lesson of freedom for the young, in which even Christian teachers dare not repeat, in the hearing of their pupils, a passage from the Scriptures, nor offer the Lord's prayer . . .," wailed the New York Independent. Cited in the American and Foreign Christian Union, IV (September, 1853), pp. 387-88. Schools which didn't preach religion (specifically Christianity) were felt to preach atheism. The controversy has not yet been put to rest, even though recent Supreme Court decisions have dealt severe blows to those who would include Bible reading and prayer in the common schools. Congressional proponents of the so-called "Prayer Amendment" have added no new arguments to those presented by Robert Baird and other pre-Civil War evangelicals.

<sup>80</sup>American and Foreign Christian Union, III (November, 1852), pp. [364]-65.

<sup>81</sup>"It may be noticed that the philanthropists most liberal in supporting the cities' organized-charity agencies included those who maintained three societies (merged into one, the American and Foreign Christian Union, in 1849) whose object was the spreading of Protestant doctrines and practices in the benighted countries that persisted in the errors of Roman Catholicism." Branch, Sentimental Years, p. 198.

techniques and agencies which had been developed over the past quarter century had their part to play in the well coordinated conversion campaign:

The pious and humble colporteur goes in advance and distributes the Word of God, accompanying it with simple and faithful remarks. This prepares the way for the evangelist, who continues the holding of little meetings in hired rooms, or in private houses--the pious schoolmaster and colporteur helping him in their respective spheres. In due time the missionary, or ordained minister, comes and organizes a Church, composed of those who have "believed." What can, I repeat it, be more simple, or more beautiful than this?"<sup>82</sup>

The missionary efforts of the American and Foreign Christian Union stretched from northern Vermont to southernmost Texas. In every location where they operated, the missionaries sought to reach Catholics through preaching, lecturing, home visitation, colportage, and two different forms of educational institutions--Sabbath or Sunday schools, and daily missionary schools.

Considering that Baird began his career in common school and Sunday School campaigns, it is not surprising that the organization he directed placed great confidence in educational agencies. Almost every missionary beachhead established by the American and Foreign Christian Union included a Sunday school. These institutions were most successful in German Catholic communities, indicating perhaps, the traditional respect for education found among the German people, as well as a lesser degree of clerical control over German than Irish Catholics. The station at Rochester, New York, had

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<sup>82</sup>American and Foreign Christian Union, 1 (July, 1850), pp. 302-03.

two Sunday schools, one conducted in English, and the other in German. Adults as well as children participated in them, for they offered not only religious instruction, but language instruction as well.<sup>83</sup>

The Sunday schools were often quite large. The ones at Rochester reached a minimum of two hundred and fifty scholars each Sunday, according to a report submitted in 1850. The teachers were volunteers from the Protestant community, and the students provided their own books.<sup>84</sup> Often the schools helped the scholars with their temporal as well as spiritual needs. This may help to account for what successes they enjoyed. A missionary to the Irish in Philadelphia reported that he collected clothes for thirty to forty poor children, who had not been able to attend school previously because their parents had not been able to clothe them suitably.<sup>85</sup>

More ambitious in scope were the daily schools established by some of the more vigorous missionaries. The Rev. C. Doppenschmidt, German missionary in Buffalo, New York, reported that he had twenty-eight scholars in the school which met in his house, and that the children were making good progress and were also starting to attend Sabbath services.<sup>86</sup>

The missionary schools, like the Sunday schools, operated as charity institutions. Mr. Fennel, the missionary to the Irish in

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., (August, 1850), p. 467.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., (March, 1850), p. 128.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., II (February, 1851), p. 50.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., IV (June, 1853), pp. 266-67.

Chicago, rejoiced that he was able to reach "from 60 to 70 children, who were growing up in ignorance and vice, and from whom in a few years most fearful things might proceed." Taken off the streets, those children were "receiving daily instruction, calculated to make them useful members of Society, and to promote their spiritual welfare. As in Buffalo, the physical wants of the pupils were ministered to as well, clothes being collected for them by women interested in the work.<sup>87</sup>

The American and Foreign Christian Union's direct successes should not have worried the Roman Catholic Church excessively. The missionary to the Irish in St. Louis reported that he visited 1200 families in the year preceding June, 1855. For all his efforts he could only claim seven Catholics "converted to Protestantism," and two "hopefully converted to Christ." Only one hundred Roman Catholic children had been persuaded to attend the Sunday schools he conducted.<sup>88</sup> The missionary working in Hampden County, Massachusetts could report only slightly better results. He paid 2,260 visits to 300 Roman Catholic families, passing out 1460 tracts. For all his persistence, he was able to induce only twenty persons to accept Bibles and another forty to accept New Testaments. Forty-three "Romanists" attended the Sunday school he conducted for them, and twenty-three had forsaken their faith.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>ibid., V (June, 1854), p. 267.

<sup>88</sup>ibid., VI (June, 1855), p. 270.

<sup>89</sup>ibid., p. 272.

Robert Baird was not at all discouraged by such limited success. He had no illusions about the ease of the task. The "corruptions of a thousand years" could hardly be defeated in five. Besides, he felt that the missionary campaign, together with the beneficent influence of the American voluntary system, was causing unexpected changes to occur within the Catholic community itself.

Baird felt sure that time was proving that American institutions were stronger than any threats Catholicism might raise against them. Catholics themselves were coming to recognize the merits of religious toleration and the "wickedness and unreasonableness of persecution."<sup>90</sup> America was turning Catholics into good republicans. While aligning themselves with the aristocracy in Europe, on this side of the Atlantic they "almost invariably joined the ranks of the party which is considered the most favourable to the largest political liberty."<sup>91</sup>

Baird thought that American Catholicism was coming to bear "a considerable resemblance to Protestantism."<sup>92</sup> The most objectionable features of "Romanism"--the confessional, "Mariolatry," praying for the dead, absolution, etc.,--were not "well received by the more intelligent Romanists." In America one found "few Romish miracles--if there were any. There were almost no shrines, holy wells, and no pilgrimages. There were no relics of saints reported in the

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<sup>90</sup>R. Baird, "Influence of Civil and Religious Liberty on Roman Catholicism in the United States of America," pp. 192-93.

<sup>91</sup>ibid., p. 194.

<sup>92</sup>ibid., p. 197.

churches."<sup>93</sup>

Catholic priests in America were a far better class of men than their European counterparts. They preached almost evangelical sermons in decidedly evangelical fashions. Consequently, "the Roman Catholic Church is a far better church--exerts a far better influence on the community. . . .It does incomparably more for the elevation of the people, and their moral instruction, than in any Papal country."<sup>94</sup> Baird sounded almost ready to welcome the Roman Catholic church into the evangelical community!

In his last years Baird seemed almost complacent about a "Protestantized" Roman Catholic Church operating within the boundaries of a Protestant moral order. Had he noticed another result of the evangelical missionary campaign he might have been less pleased with future prospects for an American society unified under the banner of evnagelicalism.

Roman Catholics were well aware of the potential threat that the alliance between missionary and benevolence interests presented them. The Catholic World, the journal of the Paulist Fathers, recognized that benevolent institutions were " 'powerful engines of proselytism.' " It called on Catholics to take care of their own, lest Protestants assume charge of their souls, as well as their bodies.<sup>95</sup> Catholics rose to the call, and established their own

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., pp. 197-98.

<sup>95</sup> Aaron I. Abell, "The Catholic Factor in Urban Welfare: The Early Period, 1850-1880," Review of Politics, XIV (July, 1952), p. 304.

benevolent and educational institutions, as fast as the limits of their resources allowed. Thomas McAvoy described the evangelical mission movement as "the hammer and the anvil" against which a distinctive Catholic culture was formed.<sup>96</sup> The Roman Catholic Church, facing a hostile religious system which ideologically controlled America's moral, intellectual, philanthropic, and educational institutions, established a parallel and largely autonomous social and intellectual community--a Catholic counter-culture.

Even if Robert Baird and men like him in the American and Foreign Christian Union had been able to foresee the ultimate result of their efforts, it is unlikely that they would have changed their tactics to any great degree. Their beliefs compelled them to make some sort of approach to Catholics and Catholicism. Their beliefs also limited the kinds of approaches available to them. The methods used by the American and Foreign Christian Union represent the limits beyond which anti-Catholicism could not go and still retain the support of the greater Protestant community. Mid-nineteenth century America was anti-Catholic; but for most Americans opposition to

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<sup>96</sup> Thomas T. McAvoy, "The Formation of the Catholic Minority in the United States, 1820-1860," Review of Politics, X (January, 1948), pp. 14-15. The establishment of Catholic benevolent agencies should not be thought of as entirely a reaction to the pressure of Protestant proselytism. To some extent, Catholics had also become inspired by the benevolence ideal. "The desire to convince native American Protestants that the Catholic Church was a truly beneficent institution partly accounted for its attempts to manifest and extend its reforming power," according to Aaron Abell. Review of Politics, XIV, p. 324.

To the extent that the battle between American Catholics and Protestants took the form of "I can do more good than you can" it probably benefitted society as a whole; especially in an age when secular social service agencies were practically unheard of.

Catholicism was largely symbolical. They were willing to repeat the derogatory cliches concerning Rome and its Pope, and they were willing to put a dollar in the anti-Catholic collection plate, but they were certainly not about to embark upon any holy crusade to abolish Catholicism from the face of the land. The Union considered itself fortunate that many were willing to go even that far, for, alas, many Protestants had "no discriminating views on the subject of religion." Such men thought "anything in the shape of Christianity" would do, providing that those who professed it were "kind neighbors, honest in their dealings, and tolerably moral in their deportment."<sup>97</sup> Americans had learned their lessons in toleration almost too well.

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<sup>97</sup>American and Foreign Christian Union, IV (August, 1853), pp. 360-61.