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EARLY RELIGIOUS BEGINNINGS IN ILLINOIS.

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DELIVERED AT THE STATE CONVENTION OF THE DISCIPLES
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To write the history of any state that has made an impression for good upon the world is to recount the deeds of the moral leaders who were its first settlers. If we go backward through the centuries, where shall we find a great commonwealth, that was not founded by a moral teacher? Abraham, the founder of the Hebrew commonwealth, a moral leader; Moses, accomplishing the redemption of Israel and establishing the theocracy in the Promised Land, a moral leader; the Greek Cities trace their beginnings back to men who stand for wisdom and morals; Martin Luther stands back of modern Germany; religious teachers back of Holland; back of the Pilgrim Fathers we behold the form of the preacher, John Robinson. In the settlement of the great West, a minister led the first group of pilgrims across the Alleghanies. The history of Iowa, Illinois and other western states is one story. Twenty-five home missionaries led twenty-five different bands of colonists out of New England, to settle these middle states. They were men who believed in God, in Jesus and in the Bible. Like Abram of old, they were led by the unseen hand out from the eastern land into a new, to establish a great country with institutions that would bless the world. These were men of faith, not infidels or sceptics; not those in search of the golden fleece, but impelled with a holy desire to advance the Kingdom of God.

In these days of materialism, with its rush for preferment, glory and wealth, we do well to recount the deeds of our fathers, that we may pledge ourselves to live nobly for those institutions for which they nobly died. Our generation makes much of the men who equip the state, who clothe the state, and feed the state; it is in danger of overlooking those who instruct the state, who inspire, exalt and refine the moral sentiments of all the people. John Mason Peck, one of the first protestant missionaries to enter Illinois, represents in sentiment all those early religious and moral leaders: "I have put my hand to the plow! O Lord, may I never turn back, never regret this step. It is my desire to live, to labor, to die as a kind of pioneer in advancing the gospel. I feel a most heavenly joy when my heart is engaged in this work." These men toiled for the regeneration of the individual citizen. They sought with their whole strength, as the tide of humanity moved westward, to lift men steadily upward in moral and spiritual aspiration and achievement. They labored with scant praise of men, to the end that moral and spiritual progress might keep pace with material advancement. Verily, there were giants in those days.

Then New England grew great men. Great in soul and heart. University men and at the same time religious to the centre. When in the isolation of New England, they had developed their message and were ready as evangelists to the great west, then in 1789 the barriers went down, and our fathers on foot and horseback started for the Mississippi Valley. It was a strange procession that formed that morning in front of the church at Ipswich, Mass. It was led by Manasseh Cutler. Men in hunter's garb, boys carrying their guns, woodsmen with axes, pack-horses heavily laden—all these made up a strange procession when they marched away. Some of them came to Illinois and founded Illinois College, Knox and Lake Forest and Shurtleff Colleges. Some went to Iowa and founded Iowa College, Tabor and two acad-

emies. Groups of theological students banded themselves together. They determined to take the west for higher education. These were picked men, the finest scholars of their era. They were statesmen; witness the fight that they and their sons made for liberty. The Christian home, the Christian Church, the Christian College and the free school were the instruments they fitted for the development of manhood. On their way to this new State one day they paused on the summit of the Alleghanies, and the leader placed his hand to his ear and stood in the attitude of an eager listener. "What do you hear?" whispered one of his companions, fearing an ambush of Indians. Uncovering his head, the leader answered, "I hear the tramp of coming millions." He might have dreamed what an English manufacturer has lately said, that the Mississippi Valley is to become the Birmingham and the Sheffield of the future. On this procession came and founded here the institutions we love. Enemies have arisen to take from us the free school, and demoralize the Christian home. Unless we oppose every influence that would heathenize us, we shall be false to our Fathers and our God.

And now passing back beyond the coming of Puritan influences to Illinois, we will notice briefly the work of missionaries of the Roman Catholic faith. With the French there came to Illinois Jesuit and Recollect priests, whose names are familiar to all who have read the history of our State. They moved along together, the explorer and voyager giving protection to the missionary, and the latter in return aiding them to conciliate and make friends with the natives. Of the missionaries connected with Illinois, Fathers Marquette, Allouez, Gravier, Rasle, Marest were Jesuits; Fathers Membre, Douay and Hennepin belonged to the Recollects. These two sects were at war with each other, which very much hindered the spread of catholicism. To the Recollect Monks of St. Francis was first assigned the care of the missions, but

subsequently Cardinal Richelieu superseded this order and confided the spiritual welfare of the people to the priests of the Society of Jesus, the disciples of Loyola. The former felt very keenly their exclusion from the field and left no means untried to regain their supremacy.

Father Marquette was a native of Laon, France, born in 1637. He was the first in the company of Joliet, to make a journey down the Mississippi, coming first in contact with the Indians, a tribe named the "Illini;" meaning the "Men." This was in 1673. Down the Mississippi these intrepid men went in their frail canoe as far as the mouth of the Arkansas river; and then after four weeks on the unknown river, forced their way against the swift current, toiling by day under a July sun and sleeping by night amid mosquitoes and the deadly vapors of stagnant marshes, on and up until several weeks of hard labor brought them to the mouth of the Illinois; here they were informed by the Indians that this stream furnished a near route back to Wisconsin. Acting upon this information, they entered the river. Their journals tell in picturesque language the beauty of the country they passed through. They tell of prairies spread out before them beyond the reach of vision, covered with tall grass and undulating like the waves of a sea. The surface was studded with clumps of timber. Flowers, surpassing in the delicacy of their tints the pampered products of civilization, were profusely sprinkled over the grassy landscape. Immense herds of buffalo and deer grazed on their rich pastures; the river, as now, swarmed with fish, great quantities of wild fruit grew in the forest and prairies and so numerous were the birds and waterfowl that the heavens were frequently obscured by their flight. These explorers spoke of the land as a terrestrial paradise, in which earth, air and water, unbidden by labor, contributed the most copious supplies.

Passing far up the river, they stopped at a town of the Illinois, called Kaskaskia, whose name afterwards trans-

ferred to a different locality, has become famous in the history of the country. They proceeded further to Lake Michigan by way of the rivers Illinois, Desplaines and Chicago. Following the western shore of the lake, they entered Green Bay the latter part of September, having been absent about four months and traveled a distance of 2,500 miles.

Joliet hastened on to Quebec to report his discoveries, while Marquette remained to repair his shattered health, and then the following year established a mission on the plain between the Illinois river and the site of the present town of Utica. Here he preached to some 500 chiefs and a great concourse of warriors, women and children. He spoke to them with great earnestness on the duties of Christianity and the necessity of making their conduct conform to its teachings; the audience was deeply impressed with the sermon, and eagerly besought him to remain with them, a request which his fast wearing strength rendered it impossible to grant.

On his return home he passed to his reward. His companions buried his body on the shore of Lake Michigan. Three years afterward, a party of Ottawas, opened the grave and carried the bones to St. Ignace across from Mackinaw, where they lie buried under the floor of a rude chapel. The piety, energy and self-denial of this noble man gives him a high place in the affections of religious people. He is a type of a multitude of Roman Catholic missionaries the world over, who have shown great zeal and heroism in the propagation of their faith. Whatever may be said in regard to their methods, it must be admitted that the world today is better because of their existence and work.

More than 100 years before we have any account of any protestant minister within the bounds of the territory of Illinois, Marquette, LaSalle, Joliet and Hennepin traversed the long distance from the Atlantic communities through the unbroken wilderness to minister to the

scattered French settlements and Indians. As early as 1700 they had established missions at Kaskaskia, Cahokia and Peoria, and other points on the Mississippi.

Father Claude Jean Allouez arrived at the Kaskaskia village of the Illinois on April 27, 1677. Here he erected a cross twenty-five feet high, and preached to eight tribes there congregated. He made frequent visits to this mission until 1687, when he returned to Wisconsin, dying in 1690. The Peoria station was established by Father Gravier.

With the coming of English control the French priests gradually withdrew from Illinois territory and few results of their labors remained. But for the victory of Wolfe on the heights of Quebec in 1759, our country would have been French Catholic instead of English Protestant. The question of the dominant religion of Illinois and the whole of America was settled of God and English bullets in this famous battle. The rule of Louis, the Fourteenth, meant the rule of despotism. The English gave us the Puritan foundation in Illinois upon which is built our cherished institutions.

The first Protestant minister to enter Illinois was James Smith, a Baptist. He came from Kentucky in 1787 and in fellowship with David Badgely and Joseph Chance, Baptist ministers, formed the first Protestant church at New Design; the first association of *five* churches, four ministers, with 111 members, was formed in 1807. A division growing out of the slavery question, occurred in these churches in 1809. Other causes of difference resulted in the formation of three parties of Baptists, which existed for ten years and two of them much longer. The most numerous branch of the church, is denominated the Regular or Missionary Baptists. Of this church John M. Peck was the great missionary and organizer in Illinois from 1822 until his death in March, 1858. Worthy successors in central Illinois were Justus

Bulkley, D. Read, Washington Leverett, Alvin Bailey, James Lemen and B. B. Hamilton.

The first Presbyterian minister who visited the Illinois country was John Evans Finley. He landed in Kaskaskia in 1797. The next ministers of that faith to come were Samuel T. Mills and Daniel Smith, who had been sent from the Massachusetts Missionary Society to the west. They came in 1814, but no church was formed until 1816, when James McGready of Kentucky came into White county and formed a church at Sharon. The members were mostly from Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky, whose families were of Scotch-Irish extraction. The second church was organized in Illinois at Shoal Creek, Bond county in 1819; and the third at Edwardsville the same year. Long pastorates among this people seem to be the rule. Albert Hale was pastor at Springfield twenty-seven years. Livingston M. Glover at Jackson-ville thirty-two years; while that of Robert W. Patterson was maintained in Chicago, that city of marvelous changes, for thirty years. The controversy between the old and new school branches culminated in a division into two separate organizations in 1837, but happily at Pittsburg in May, 1870, measures were adopted which resulted in unity.

The first Methodist minister who visited the State was Joseph Lillard, a local preacher of Kentucky, who gathered a few scattered Methodists into a class and appointed Capt. Joseph Ogle as their leader. This was in 1793. Four or five years later John Clark visited the settlements of Illinois. He was a Scotchman. In the same year that Mr. Clark came, Hosea Rigg, the first resident local preacher, settled in the American Bottom in St. Clair county. In 1807 Jesse Walker held the first camp meeting ever held in the State, about three miles south of Edwardsville. The meeting was a powerful one, and many present were affected with that strange movement, "the jerks." Among the powerful preachers of Method-

ism in Illinois was Peter Cartwright. His career is without parallel among his people. He was a man of great physical power, great energy, superior mental force and remarkable organizing and executive ability. Much of his life, after coming from Kentucky, was spent at Pleasant Plains, in Sangamon county. He was a fighter for what he believed to be the truth. He was a type of many of that day, who contended earnestly for the faith. Announcing the text, "they went everywhere preaching the word." Their preaching was largely doctrinal, polemical and hortatory. They had deep and clear convictions concerning the great truths they proclaimed.

Among the early preachers were some noted for various eccentricities. William Stribling was an illustration of this. He was a very able and eloquent preacher. His command of language was most extraordinary. The following specimens will show his love of the larger and more profound words of the dictionary. Being violently opposed to the use of tobacco, he administered the following reproof to an old slave of the weed: "Venerable sir, the deleterious effluvia emanating from your tobacconistic reservoir so overshadows our ocular optics and so obfuscates our sensorium, that our respirable apparatus must shortly be obtunded, unless, through your abundant suavity and pre-eminent politeness, you will disembogue that illuministic tube from the stimulating and sternutatory ingredient, which replenishes the rotundity of the vastness of its concavity." The proverb, "You can't make a money purse out of a sow's ear," he refined in this manner: "At the present era of the world it has been found impracticable to fabricate a sufficiently convenient pecuniary receptacle from the auricular organ of the genus suo."

The first Congregational church was organized at Mendon, Adams county, in 1833, followed by others the same year at Naperville, Jacksonville and Quincy. Among the pioneer preachers were Jabez Porter, also a

teacher in Quincy, Asa Turner, Julian M. Sturtevant, Truman N. Post, Edward Beecher and Horatio Foot. The leading spirits in the organization of Illinois and Knox colleges were Congregationalists.

The pioneer Episcopal leader was Philander Chase, coming in 1833. In 1834, three churches were organized. At Jacksonville, Rushville and Galena.

The pioneers in the movement for the restoration of Apostolic Christianity were on the ground early. They came from Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia. They were of rugged type and believing in Christian education. Early in the century colleges were established at Eureka, Abingdon and Jacksonville. The Bible was the text book in religious training. Various parts of the State today religiously bear the mark of the early religious impressions. Draw a line east from Rock Island to Joliet. North of that line in Illinois the Congregationalists and Presbyterians are numerous, while south of that line the Disciples of Christ have the larger number of their seven hundred churches in Illinois. The religious divisions of the State today are determined by the religious opinions of the early comers. Many churches known as simply "Christian" or "Churches of Christ" were organized before 1830. They were called in derision "Campbellites" by the outside world and often by their religious neighbors. They contended for the simple name "Christian," and said that they were "Christians only" and not the "only Christians." Feeble was the beginning of this now powerful and influential body of Christians. They now number 116,954 in Illinois, with 746 churches, and are at the forefront of every movement for good. Sometime in the early twenties the church now known as the Christian church at Cantrall, Sangamon county, was organized as a Baptist church by Stephen England and later on joined in with the Disciples. This is believed to be one of our oldest congregations. In 1828, a group was organized at Hittle's Grove, under the leadership of

Wm. Miller. The church at Armington grew out of this movement. There is still a congregation at Little Grove, near Paris, Edgar county, which was established in 1826. On Sept. 27, 1824, Ebenezer Rhodes effected an organization at Blooming Grove, south of the present city of Bloomington.

The church at Jacksonville was organized in Oct. 1832. Among the leaders are the names of Barton W. Stone, Josephus Hewett, Wm. Happy, Jonathan Atkinson, the first president of Berea college, A. J. Kane, John Eads, Matthew Elder, Harrison W. Osborne, D. Pat Henderson and Enos Campbell. Here in 1832 took place the union of the early church and a similar religious organization, known as Stoneites.

The church at Springfield was constituted in 1833. Josephus Hewitt, Alexander Graham, Jerry P. Lancaster, Wm. Brown, and A. J. Kane are familiar names with the older members of this congregation. The Sangamon Journal published at Springfield, Ill., in its issue of March 16, 1833, made this announcement: "Rev. Josephus Hewitt, of Jacksonville, will preach in the court house in this town today and tomorrow. Services to commence at 11 A. M." How he had the courage to announce himself as "Rev." I am not quite able to understand. However, no damage seems to be done as I find no record of reproof editorials or heresy trial. Chas. P. Kane describes Mr. Hewitt in the following language: "Mr. Hewitt was a remarkable man. He had qualities that would have distinguished him in any society, in any age. Large of stature, dignified of mien, he at once impressed individual or assemblage. As a speaker he was effective and forcible; I have heard many persons describe him as a great preacher." Thus is described for us a type of that heroic body of men who stood for "the faith once for all delivered to the Saints," often misunderstood and the very nature of their message calling out bitter opposition, yet in the love of the truth they crossed these prairies,

proclaiming the watchword, "Where the bible speaks, we speak; where the bible is silent, we are silent." All honors to them. We have entered into the enjoyment of the fruit of their labors.

Julian M. Sturtevant records in his Autobiography an incident illustrative of the opposition to the Disciples in an early day: "From a very early period in the history of Jacksonville the people known as "Disciples," the followers of Alexander Campbell of Bethany, Virginia, were very active. They were then regarded with much distrust by other denominations, and in fact were scarcely considered an evangelical body. Having occasion to spend a night a few miles from Jacksonville, at a house of entertainment kept by a prominent member of this body, I was invited by him to preach on some Sabbath before long, in the church near his house. As it was my practice to embrace every opportunity to preach the gospel I accepted the invitation, leaving it to him to fix the day. After some delay the appointment was announced. On reaching the place on the appointed day I found a large meeting of the Disciples in progress and several of their prominent preachers in attendance. The great congregation gave close attention to my discourse. It would appear that my utterances on that occasion were orthodox, since Dr. Beecher after listening to the same sermon, delivered two or three years later in his church in Cincinnati, cheered me at its close by exclaiming in his characteristic manner, "That's right!"

When I promised to preach for the Disciples it did not occur to me that the question of joining with them in the communion service was also involved. But since it is the invariable custom of that denomination to follow the Sabbath morning discourse with the observance of the Supper, I perceived the moment I entered the church that I must face that question. There was not much time to think. Nor did I see much reason to hesitate. These people had been listening with profound and reverential

attention to what I believed to be the gospel. I saw no reason to doubt that they received it intelligently and sincerely, and I could not refuse to join with them in breaking bread in the name of the Lord. And I am bound to say that I have seldom witnessed a more reverent and devout observance of that rite. At the close of the service strong men with whom I was acquainted in business relations but whom I had never before met in Christian worship, sang "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me," with tears rolling down their cheeks. I could say with Peter, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." God taught me that day to beware how I called any body of professed Christians "common or unclean."

The report of my doings on that Sabbath startled the community, the story could not have been circulated with greater rapidity or repeated with more emphasis had I committed an infamous crime. A few defended my action, but most of my good neighbors were shocked."

In 1860 this large hearted man wrote of the Disciples in Jacksonville: "It is my belief that no portion of the religious community around us has grown in grace more rapidly than that denomination. If my efforts have in any degree contributed to that end I am thankful. I ascribe their remarkable progress to the fact that from the beginning they have constantly held that, "The Word of God only is the rule of our faith."

In Danville and vicinity the work began in 1835. In that year Dr. W. Walters, a physician, settled in Danville. The nearest body of the Disciples was eighteen miles away. He went there to worship regularly until the church was constituted in the city of Danville. Time would fail me to tell the whole story of this powerful people in Illinois. Their early labors were characterized with heroism, sacrifice and a devotion to the truth, which won the admiration of many. The Illinois Christian Missionary Society, constituted in 1850 has organized over 300 churches in the State. Among them the churches at

Quincy, Peoria, Gibson City and Champaign. Among the many who served as president of the society, I find the the honored names of Happy, Jones, Enos Campbell, Allen, Hobbs, Gilbert, Hardin and many others, some of whom are still living. My own recollection calls out the names of N. S. Haynes and J. Fred Jones, who have accomplished mighty things as the secretaries of the society during late years. Every strong church in Illinois should be linked in the support of some needy field in our own State.

And now, may a double portion of the spirit of our fathers rest upon the sons of the present. We have mighty problems in Illinois, which can only be solved by the principles of the gospel. This is no time for rest, compromise or soft words. Shall Illinois be Christian? We must help in the solution of that question. The best that is in us must be used without stint for the King. We need even yet the spirit of the mighty Luther. The appearance of Luther before the Emperor of Germany at the Diet of Worms is a picture to be burned upon the soul of every preacher in Illinois. The evening has come. The torches have been lighted and cast a flickering glare over the faces of the earnest men who have come together to hear this monk from Wittenberg. As Luther goes through the door, the greatest general of Germany taps him on the shoulder and says: "My poor monk, my poor monk, you are on the way to make such a stand as I have never made in my toughest battle." And what the general said was true. A great company of electors and princes are there and on the table the books Luther has written. As a student he has learned that church councils can make mistakes. He has said so openly. The question now is—will he recant? The emperor tells him haughtily that he is not there to question matters which have been settled in church councils long ago, and that what he wants is a plain answer without horns, whether he will retract what he has said contradicting the de-

cisions of the Council of Constance. Luther rises to reply and this is what he says: "Since your Imperial Majesty requires a plain answer, I will give one without horns and hoofs. It is this, that I must be convinced either by the testimony of Scripture or by clear argument. I can not trust the pope or councils by themselves, for both have erred. I can not, I will not retract." A profound silence falls upon them all. And then the Augustinian Monk continues: "I can do nothing else. Here I stand. So help me God. Amen." And as Luther passed out the door some Spaniards who were present hissed him. Spain was at that time the leading Nation in the world, and God heard those hisses, and he laid his hand on Spain and led her slowly to the rear of the procession of European Nations, and God laid hold of Germany, then one of the most belated nations, and told her to go higher, and she today stands in the forefront of all the nations of Europe, because she followed Luther.

Our blessings are many! Our perils are mighty! Mammonism, the liquor traffic, the problem of the city, corrupt rulers, rear their mighty heads to devour all who oppose. Men are needed now with the spirit of Luther, yea, with the courage of the men of the early days in Illinois—"to stand for the faith once for all delivered to the saints," and also with open minds and the courage to receive all new and tested truth which God shall break out of his World and Word.

"He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call
retreat,
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His Judgment
seat.
Be swift my soul to answer Him; be jubilant my feet,
Our God is marching on!"