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PRAIRIE: MILTONVALE WESLEYAN COLLEGE, 1909-1972

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This thesis studies the history of Miltonvale Wesleyan College, Miltonvale, Kansas, through its first year of operation, 1909-1910, to its closing and merger with Bartlesville Wesleyan College, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, in the fall of 1972. This study explores and analyzes the way Miltonvale Wesleyan College conducted itself as a "city on a hill" and "a fortress of righteousness," in so far as it was perpetuated in the "pure" rural environs of Miltonvale. Students at MWC received their education in preparation for service and life out in the "world" in a safe environment away from the "world."

This investigation discusses the religious and social context out of which the Wesleyan Methodist Connection developed with a particular emphasis on how this denomination's educational enterprises evolved within the contextual and ideological framework of Wesleyan Methodism. The founding and development of Miltonvale Wesleyan College is reviewed in light of Wesleyan Methodist educational ideology and Miltonvale Wesleyan's particular educational mission.

The financial and enrollment difficulties this school faced over the years will be analyzed along with the strategies the college's leaders and constituents used to cope with these impediments. The eventual closing of MWC is examined in light of the historic challenges the school faced (because of its isolated geographic setting and other hindrances), the means by which the Miltonvale/Bartlesville Board of Trustees came to its decision to close the Miltonvale campus, and the way those closest to the school responded, both in the short and long range, to the closing.

A
“FORTRESS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”
ON THE KANSAS PRAIRIE:
MILTONVALE WESLEYAN COLLEGE, 1909-1972

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by
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the course of its sixty-two years of operation, Miltonvale Wesleyan College became the locus of an extended family for its students, faculty, and supporters. The school generated loyalty among alumni and supporters out of proportion to its mere size. Some of the college's faculty and staff devoted most of their lives to this school and the educational project of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the West. The school, located in the rural village of Miltonvale, Kansas (in north-central Kansas, roughly 40 miles northwest of Manhattan, Kansas, thirty-five miles northeast of Salina, Kansas, and twenty miles southeast of Concordia, Kansas), graduated over four thousand students from 1910 to 1972. Students remembered their years spent at Miltonvale as a time of preparation for a life's work, a unique period in which they grew spiritually and made life-long contacts with friends, future spouses, and their teaching mentors. Students treasured their experience at Miltonvale as the source of inspiration for a life of dedication and service, whether within the church or in some other capacity.

In the Spring of 1972, memory, gratitude, and loyalty made the school's closing all the more painful. Although the school actually merged with Bartlesville Wesleyan College (Bartlesville, Oklahoma – located forty-five miles north of Tulsa) Miltonvale's loyal constituency did not initially recognize this merger. Perhaps the constituencies'

misgivings came from their high estimate of Miltonvale's distinctive vision and heritage, which many of MWC's supporters believed could not be transferred to another institution. Or, quite possibly, they could not let years of loyalty to both the town and the religious mission fade away. Regardless, a number of Miltonvale's alumni, students, and faculty were, at least initially, unable to see a continuity between Miltonvale Wesleyan College and Bartlesville Wesleyan College. Needless to say, the merger was difficult for all involved – for both the combined Board of Trustees of MWC/BWC and for the alumni, faculty, students, and townspeople of Miltonvale.

From the beginning in 1909, the Wesleyan Methodists couldn't overlook that maintaining such a school in a small, isolated farm community proved extremely difficult. But for many people throughout the school's history this task was a necessary one, requiring a great deal of personal sacrifice and allegiance to Miltonvale in order for this institution to survive. In some ways, Miltonvale Wesleyan College endured as a living testament to an ideological equation that made sanctity tantamount to geographic isolation and equated the city with carnality and worldliness. Although this arose as the prevailing educational ideology of the predominately rural Wesleyan Methodist Church at the turn of the nineteenth century, it existed most evidently and survived the longest at Miltonvale Wesleyan College. This formulation especially appeared with regard to MWC's goal of educating Christian youth in a protected environment, in order that they would become stronger servants to the world. They were training for the world in a climate relatively free from the corruptive influence of the world. For most who attended MWC, their days spent there were a time of concentration, meditation, and preparation

for the ministry, whether as a full time minister or as a committed Christian lay person.

The great irony of MWC's history unfolded as the original impetus for establishing the school as an isolated "Fortress of Righteousness," slowly financially handicapped the school over time, and was a key factor leading to the decision to close it and establish a unified program at Bartlesville Wesleyan College. Gradually it appeared that Miltonvale had cut itself off from certain basic economic and cultural resources deemed necessary for a college to thrive and attract students.

The history of Miltonvale Wesleyan College reveals the ways in which a religious body managed to maintain its distinctive identity through an educational institution, in training its youth as it sees fit, with minimal outside interference. Its history also shows the Wesleyans' dedication and loyalty to a "sacred space" and the problems and conflicts which come about when institutional history and religious identity are threatened by school closure.

This thesis investigates the unique cultural and religious context out of which the Wesleyan Methodists' educational philosophy developed and shows the importance of this philosophy for the establishment of Miltonvale Wesleyan College. An examination of the nineteenth century Wesleyan Methodist Church is done within the context of this denomination's social reform origins and in view of its later conservative transformation, showing the effects which this turnabout had on the denomination's educational institutions. Tracing Miltonvale Wesleyan College's history through its most difficult times, the worst of which were the Depression and dust bowl years, reveals how the school managed to survive and continue with its educational goals. Finally, this thesis

analyzes the factors surrounding the college's eventual closure (a deeply saddening event that affected all parties involved – the Board of Trustees, faculty, constituents, townspeople, and students), both in the short term, immediate responses to the closure, and in the long range outcome of merger and dispersal of assets.

CHAPTER 2
THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CONTEXT
AND THE ROOTS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISE
IN WESLEYAN METHODISM

The Wesleyan Methodists determined the place of higher education according to the interests and identity of the denomination as a whole. Established in 1843, the Wesleyan Methodist Connection's first schools promulgated their Christian perfectionist orientation and their revivalistic and radical reform ideology. For over one hundred years their headquarters were located in Syracuse, New York, amidst the wellspring of revivalism, the *burned-over district*. Shortly after the founding of the denomination, Wesleyan Methodists sought to educate their children and ministers free from the deleterious effects of proslavery influences. Their zeal for reform equally matched their ambitions to create Wesleyan-sponsored educational institutions. Intended to stand as bastions for reform these schools would be located in communities that would ensure the denomination's high moral standards. However, their first school efforts, marred by financial difficulties and a lack of centrally organized denominational support, fell short of this goal.

By the late nineteenth century the denomination developed a central organizational structure which facilitated the adequate financing of the schools.

Along with this change, another transition took place in the church as the more radical issues of the founding generation faded, making way for a transformation by which *evangelism* came to replace *reform* as the major denominational emphasis.¹ The schools established by the second generation of Wesleyans mirrored the fact that the Wesleyan Methodists developed into “a small conservative group, who adhered to the original Methodist doctrines as taught by John Wesley, [who] stressed the importance of personal religious experience of regeneration and sanctification, and advocated a carefully regulated life.”² In order to carry out the “carefully regulated life” the Wesleyans’ schools of higher education were often established in out-of-the-way places meant to protect students from the evils of large towns and cities. To some degree, in order to conserve their distinctive religious beliefs and moral codes, the Wesleyans, of both the founding generation and later generations, sought safe havens or *pure environments* as locations for their schools.

The origins of Wesleyan Methodism rest heavily in the antebellum radical reform movement. The Wesleyan Methodists responded to the demise of antislavery sentiment taking place within the Methodist Episcopal Church. John Wesley and the first generation of Methodist leaders vehemently opposed the slave institution. In his *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1774) Wesley advocated direct action against slavery. Shortly before Wesley’s death in 1791 he wrote a letter of encouragement to William Wilberforce, leader of the fight against the slave trade in Great Britain, who brought about its abolition in 1807. Wesley counselled Wilberforce with these words: “But if God be for you, who can be against you? . . . O be not weary of well doing! Go on, in

the name of His might till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away . . .”³

During the early nineteenth century American Methodists reversed their tradition’s initial antislavery stance. As Lee M. Haines pointed out, with the “mushrooming growth of the Methodist Episcopal Church,” especially in the southern states, an “intensified pressure on Methodism to be silent about slavery” soon developed.⁴ The shift on the slave issue took place as the Methodists were “faced with the alternative of growth into a national church or maintaining discipline on the slavery issue . . .” Confronting this ultimatum, “Methodism chose growth and prosperity.”⁵ Christianity experienced repeated internecine struggles over slavery, but the Methodist Episcopal Church underwent the greatest upheaval within American denominations. The Methodism’s large southern constituency and its growing ecclesiastical authoritarianism did not go unchallenged by the abolitionists in its ranks.⁶

Primarily, the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America formed in direct response to the Methodist Episcopal Church’s accommodationist stance. Founded in 1843, the Connection represented a protest against slavery and Methodist episcopacy. Two key factors precipitated the break with the Methodists: their parent denomination’s weak position on slavery, and the intransigent, anti-abolitionist stance of the Methodist episcopacy. These factors led to an exodus of approximately six thousand laymen and two hundred ministers who joined together to form the new church. In a new periodical entitled the *True Wesleyan* a few prominent ministers

initiated the break by announcing their withdrawal from the Methodist Episcopal Church. In the first issue, November 12, 1842, Rev. Orange Scott, Rev. Jotham Horton, and Rev. LaRoy Sunderland all proclaimed their separation from the Methodists. In two following issues Rev. Luther Lee and Rev. Lucius Matlack announced their withdrawals.⁷

The Wesleyan Methodist Connection officially formed at a convention held at Utica, New York, in late May and early June of 1843. As Willard Garfield Smith points out, the use of the term “Connection” indicates the unique “church polity of the Wesleyan group,” which amounted to, “a reaction against the episcopal form of church government under which they had suffered so much abuse, in the struggle over the abolition issue.”⁸ They rebelled against “the *episcopal power* in the [Methodist Episcopal] Church,” which “was employed to suppress freedom to speak and to write upon a subject [slavery] which thousands regarded as a moral evil.”⁹

The distinguishing characteristic of this new church grew out of its emphasis on radical reform and Wesleyan piety. This mixture of piety and reform is evident in the abolitionist reformer Orange Scott’s letter of advice addressing the new church in 1845:

We are organized . . . on the same common principles - principles that require us to stand out prominently before the world as a class of moral and religious reformers. And now if we believe, as we doubtless do, that the Lord’s design in raising us up is to *reform the nation and spread scriptural holiness over these lands*, we should study to be patterns of piety, and examples of good work.¹⁰

Besides abolitionism the new church stressed temperance, worldwide peace,

and opposition to secret societies. However, this last issue became a point of extreme contention within the connection. According to Lee M. Haines, in these early years, especially in light of their radical abolitionism, the “Wesleyan Methodists wore with pride the appellations of *radical*, *liberal*, *progressive*, and *aggressive*.” Naturally, they “were suspicious of *conservatism*, for this so often meant maintaining the status quo even if *principle* had to be sacrificed to *expediency* which to them was *compromise* or *accommodation*.”¹¹ The Wesleyan Methodists saw themselves as beacons to a darkened world. They were closely allied with the most radical reformers of their day. From the outset, the Wesleyans strongly advocated Christian perfection. Looking to Wesley as their model, they stressed the process which takes place after salvation. Accordingly, the believer experienced a “second work of grace,” namely “entire sanctification,” or,

that work of the Holy Spirit by which the child of God is cleansed from all inbred sin through faith in Jesus Christ. It is subsequent to regeneration, and is wrought when the believer presents himself a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, and is thus enabled through grace to love God with all the heart and to walk in His holy commandments blameless.¹²

For Wesleyan Methodists, as Daniel Steele aptly illustrated, holiness begins, “with the new birth,” gradually expanding, “as the believer grows in grace . . . till, by a final, all surrendering act of faith in Christ, it reaches an instantaneous completion through the act of the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier.”¹³

Their optimism of grace overflowed into how they perceived society. The reform impulse shows their desire for the perfection of a religiously and socially corrupt society. Concerning this matter, Melvin Dieter stated that

A reforming thrust more amenable to the Wesleyan concepts of perfectionism permeated the abolitionist's crusade against slavery. Abolitionism was absolutist or ultraist in its moral perceptions; it was most natural for perfectionism to head that way. In its religious expression perfectionism demanded complete consecration to the known will and purposes of God. This level of dedication provided a ready spring-board for insistence upon ultimate answers to moral and ethical questions. The relationship between perfectionism and the antislavery crusade therefore, was not coincidental.¹⁴

As Timothy Smith revealed, their radicalism endured as a by-product of their close association with perfectionism and "revival measures [which] being new, usually went hand in hand with progressive theology and humanitarian concern . . ." They "wished Christianity to become a dynamic force for the reformation of society."¹⁵

The founders of the connection sought to perpetuate and disseminate Wesleyan Methodist religious zeal and reform ideology. Logically, education played an essential role in the realization of this goal. From the beginning Wesleyans nurtured a strong desire to establish educational institutions which would be free from both Methodist episcopacy and proslavery influences. In light of their Methodist Episcopal Church background (their parent denomination was not well known for an emphasis on the life of the mind), and the meager formal education of some of the connection's founders, it is remarkable that the connection's educational aspirations were as high as they were. Often critical of education, a number of Methodist leaders believed that intellectual pursuits diluted the gospel message. For some Methodist preachers education had not been much of a priority.¹⁶ Furthermore, many Methodist leaders did not see education as an essential qualification for entry into the ministry.

The Wesleyan Methodists esteemed education as a vehicle for the true Christian reformer. The founders of the connection exhibited a hunger for learning even in the absence of formal education. Orange Scott and Luther Lee (both born in 1800) were, by and large, autodidacts. In his autobiography Lee explains his love of learning, which went unfeigned even in the most difficult circumstances. Growing up in upstate New York, he described his modest education:

I was undereducated and inexperienced, and I commenced my public life under disadvantages which cannot be understood by those who have been schooled from childhood, . . . I had an older brother, who had been schooled before . . . That brother cut the letters of the alphabet with his penknife upon a pine shingle, and thus I learned my letters, and that was the humble beginning of my education.¹⁷

Later in his youth, Lee obtained a copy of *Murray's Grammar* in exchange for three days' work clearing a wooded area. As he saw it, "those three days' work in time made me rich in grammar."¹⁸ Lee married a school teacher who greatly assisted him in his education, but mostly through his self-teaching did Lee facilitate his learning. Like Lee, Orange Scott had to blaze his own trail. With a scant thirteen months of formal education, spread over eight years, Scott applied himself to a rigorous regimen of study. Scott adopted a set of rules to make the most of his time. These rules "called for him to arise at five in the morning and retire at about ten at night..." but his "housekeeper reported that his light was never out until after midnight, and on two nights a week his bed was never slept in at all."¹⁹

La Roy Sunderland, called the *father of theological education* in the Methodist Church, also supported the cause of education in the new connection.

Sunderland's book *Essay on Theological Education* (1834), sparked a revolution in theological education in the Methodist Episcopal Church. A committed abolitionist, Rev. Sunderland's Methodist Annual Conference brought him to trial on six different occasions for his antislavery activities and his intractable stance against the presiding Bishop of his conference on the slave issue.²⁰ Sunderland's compelling argument for the urgent need of theological education free from the proslavery influence made a strong impact on the young Wesleyan Methodist Connection.

In October, 1844, at the first general conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America, Cleveland, Ohio, the founders expressed a concern to provide adequate education for their children and youth and for the church's ministers. The purpose of their educational endeavors was to "provide education . . . in a protected environment, to further the prosecution of abolition and reform, to provide a trained and loyal ministry, and to promote the welfare of the nation."²¹ Looming in the background of this ambitious goal stood both the Methodist Episcopal Church's ambivalence towards slavery and the somewhat anti-educational message of their Methodist predecessors. As Paul Leslie Kaufman pointed out, Methodist Bishop "Francis Asbury, the father of American Methodism, reflected," the latter attitude, "toward the education of the ministry in his words, *I have not spoken against learning. I have only said that it cannot be said to be an essential qualification to preach the gospel.*"²² Facing this lackadaisicalness, at their first general conference, the Wesleyans put forth resolutions to combat the denigration of an educated ministry:

4. Resolved, that the supposition that the Scriptures do not require Christians, and especially Christian ministers, to study and become truly learned . . . is a great and dangerous error.

5. Resolved, That the duties of the minister are such as demand of him to be well qualified in the great truths of the Bible, and the general principles of science . . .

6. Resolved, That the proper improvement of the minds of young men who are called of God to the ministry, in scientific and Biblical knowledge, is a subject of high importance, and as full of promise, as any which may be brought before our people; and the money [necessary for] its promotion, will ultimately do much toward the universal triumph of every benevolent enterprise. O. Scott, E. Smith, W.M. Sullivan, R. McMurdy, L.C. Matlack.²³

In favor of providing theological education from the beginning, the Wesleyans stood in the vanguard among their Methodist contemporaries. As mentioned above, their perfectionist zeal elevated their educational ambitions. In a series of 1857 articles in *The Wesleyan*, Luther Lee argued in favor of higher education. He directed his polemics against those who held that scripture condemns theological schools. These opponents believed that preparation for the ministry, just as some ministers prepare sermons, indicated a lack of true calling. “The scriptures, as a whole,” Lee wrote, “most clearly teach the duty of seeking a thorough theological education.” For Lee the scriptures, “teach the duty of acquiring such an education on the part of the ministry so far as it may be within reach.”²⁴

The founders of the connection saw it as their duty to provide an education, not only for ministerial preparation, but also for persons of other walks of life. In an 1845 issue of the *True Wesleyan* Lucius Matlack called on the church to complete its task of reform by providing for the cultivation of the mind.²⁵ Matlack described the

Wesleyans' role in education as follows:

As a religious community the Wesleyan Connexion is in advance of most of its contemporaries, in its moral character and religious philosophy. The highest ambition of the best reformers of our day, has been attained by them at a single step, by the terms of church membership which they have adopted; to wit prohibiting all use of intoxicating drinks, and all connection with slavery, besides affirming the most thorough peace principles, in their book of Discipline.

These positions identify us with the advanced and constantly advancing state of society around us . . .²⁶

In light of this vital history, Matlack goes on to urge the connection to invest itself in education:

It remains to say, . . . that the Wesleyan Church cannot keep pace with the impulse which brought it into being, unless the education of mind is one of the objects towards which its early energy is directed. Education deserves a first place among its special agencies, . . .²⁷

For a church just beginning, and without any educational institutions, the Wesleyans exhibited an elaborate brand of optimism. At the first general conference the committee on education laid out what types of institutions the denomination desired. This committee boldly suggested, "that each conference take . . . measures to establish . . . a seminary for both sexes within its limits, whose advantage shall extend equally to all colors and conditions."²⁸ They also suggested that the Wesleyans organize a college for the church at a central location. This school was to combine, "the advantages of literary and theological training . . . similar to the *Oberlin Institution*."²⁹

By the early 1890s the Wesleyan Methodists founded a total of seven schools.³⁰ Of these schools only Houghton survived into the present as a Wesleyan

institution. The others were either closed or turned over to other denominations who had the financial means to support them. In essence, the denomination's optimism and benevolence came crashing in upon them. Their loose affiliation, or connection, of churches was unable to sponsor a school *en masse*. The decentralized character of their denominational organization provided no means for church-wide sponsorship of schools. In this manner "a school project was dependent . . . upon the initiative and interest of a small group of church members within the bounds of an annual conference and of the citizens of a local community."³¹

The sale of scholarships acted as another great hindrance to the first schools. Intended to provide opportunities for impoverished students who could not otherwise afford an education, the schools sold scholarships which also raised money for their endowments and buildings. In some cases the scholarships were so cheap that it seemed that, "the most indigent who desires to educate himself [or his] children can procure one."³² In effect the scholarships deprived these schools of the tuition necessary for income to maintain them. The greatest problem was the inability of the denomination, as a whole, to support these schools. Each school's dependence on the insufficient means of their annual conferences, or the resources of the townspeople of the sponsoring city, was no match for the economic constraints of operating a school of higher education. The inability to form a cohesive central support for the early schools began with the loose governance of the first generation of Wesleyan Methodists. For them all church authority originated and rested with the local church societies.³³ Their political orientation was congregational. In part, the first

Wesleyans, who had come out of the Methodist Episcopal Church, were burned enough by the episcopacy of their parent body that they were very reactionary to centralized control of church agencies. In his *History of American Wesleyan Methodism* (1902), Rev. Arthur T. Jennings made note of the lack of cohesiveness in the denomination:

This is in part a heritage from the founders of the Connection. They were independent men and could not brook any interference with their liberties, and were not disposed to make a sacrifice of themselves for the good of an organization . . . The fact of radicalism also had much to do with the matter, for radical men can seldom agree among themselves.³⁴

The success of the denomination's educational enterprises after Houghton Seminary is indicative of a shift away from the lack of centralized organization of the first generation. "With the passing of the reformers . . . there began a gradual increase in central church authority."³⁵ In essence, the Wesleyans learned from their mistakes. They were able to apply their past errors to their future successes. They did this in the process of confronting what appeared to be a bleak record of disaster in educational management.³⁶

Schools founded in the first forty years of the denomination's history either completely ceased to exist, or were taken over by other denominations. Turning to those which eventually ceased to exist, it is apparent that a number of problems inhibited their continuance. The earliest school established by the Wesleyan Methodists barely saw the light of day. The Wesleyan Institute at Dracut, Massachusetts, lasted only for two years (1844-46). Its greatest obstacle being its location near Lowell, Massachusetts, which already had exceptional schools. This

prevented adequate local patronage. Lack of funds from tuition forced the Institute to close. The Wesleyan Methodist Seminary at Wasioja, Minnesota, (1875- 1891) was unable to finance itself through the small Minnesota Conference of the Wesleyan Methodists. "The Minnesota Conference membership, which was only 303 in 1887, was too small to carry the financial burden of the school"³⁷ Depending almost entirely on local support, the seminary had no other financial recourse. The school also became encumbered by the sale of scholarships, which when combined with its small tuition income amounted to insufficient financial support. The final blow to the school came about when the seminary's board failed to allow the new Wesleyan Educational Society (formed in 1881 to help centralize school management and funding) to take the title of the school out of the hands of the Minnesota Conference. Without this support, the operation of the school was not feasible.

Two of the Wesleyans' schools, the Illinois Institute and Adrian College, went respectively into the hands of the Congregationalists and the Methodists Protestant. The Illinois Institute, at Wheaton, opened in 1853, was sponsored by the Illinois Conference of the Wesleyan Methodists. For the most part, this institution solely depended upon local and state support for its preservation. This could neither cover the cost of operation nor the initial cost of the buildings. As with the other schools, the sale of scholarships intensified economic difficulties. The, "involved financial condition caused the trustees to seek the aid of other groups in keeping its doors open."³⁸ The Illinois Wesleyans handed this school over to the Congregationalists in 1860. They felt this the best decision because the Congregationalists were kindred

spirits with them on crucial reform issues. The Wesleyans were assured that the Congregationalists would carry on their work at the school, now called Wheaton College. Confirmed in their decision, the Wesleyans saw that the “change in management in the institution was accompanied by a covenant to hold and teach the reform principles held by the Wesleyans.”³⁹ The two denominations remained on good terms throughout the transfer. A second Wesleyan educational institution was begun at Wheaton in 1881 when the newly formed Wesleyan Educational Society signed an agreement with Wheaton College trustees to form a Wesleyan Seminary at Wheaton College. Beginning in 1881 Wheaton Theological Seminary operated on the campus of Wheaton College. Almost entirely dependent on the work of Rev. L.N. Stratton, who acted as a teacher, administrator, and fund raiser, the seminary operated under considerable strain. The Wesleyan Education Society informed Stratton that he could hire professors to assist in the teaching and work load of the seminary, but the Society offered no financial support for the salaries of these assistants. The inability of the nascent Educational Society to provide adequate funds for the school related directly to the seminary’s failure. When circumstances arose that led to the firing of Rev. Stratton, the school could no longer operate and closed in 1889.

Adrian College is an additional Wesleyan school taken over by another denomination, the Methodist Protestants. Adrian College’s origins lie in the Wesleyans’ Leoni Institute located in Leoni, Michigan. The Leoni Institute opened its doors to students around 1848. In 1853 its founders chartered it as Michigan Union College. The transfer of this school from Leoni to Adrian became surrounded by

heated debate and controversy. In the midst of a financial crisis, the trustees in Leoni began to consider removal of the college to some other community which could support the school. In 1857 the citizens of Leoni met with the trustees to discuss the fate of the school. At this meeting both parties agreed that Michigan Union College would remain permanently in Leoni if the community could raise eight thousand dollars to alleviate its financial burden. The citizens raised the money in the form of subscriptions which came in from Jackson County, Michigan, and from the township of Leoni. Regardless of this plan three college trustees, John McEldowney, John S. Watts, and Stillman P. Rice desired that the school be removed from Leoni.⁴⁰ The community's anger towards these men rose to such a level that after the college relocated to Adrian in early 1859 the library books from the old campus could only be removed by oxcart at night.⁴¹ These acts of duplicity on the part of these three men seemed to foreshadow the eventual loss of the newly established Adrian College to the Methodist Protestant Church.

By 1867 the relocated college at Adrian fell completely out of the hands of the Wesleyan Methodists. The Adrian College Board organized the new school with a provision that the capital stock of the school be increased to the amount of \$100,000 within the school's first five years. If the Board failed to raise this amount, then a majority of the Board of Trustees would be selected from a religious body that could meet this criteria. The Methodist Protestants stood waiting in the wings.

During the first years of the operation at Adrian the Wesleyan Methodists and the Methodist Protestants initiated a movement for church union. The vast majority

of Wesleyan Methodists were not behind union, in part because the Methodist Protestants would not take a definitive stand against both secret societies and the use and sale of liquor. The union, as a whole, was a failure. The union movement managed to cripple the Wesleyans by taking away some of their most dynamic leaders, including Luther Lee, Cyrus Prindle, L. C. Matlack, and John McEldowney. While the union still looked like it would be accomplished, the Wesleyan trustees at Adrian College asked the Methodist Protestants to join them in their efforts. The Wesleyan trustees asked for the Methodist Protestants' assistance because they were in desperate need for more adequate support than the Wesleyan Methodist Church provided.⁴² A bitter controversy soon erupted. Once the Methodist Protestants came in, they and prominent trustees from the town of Adrian cited the failure of the Wesleyans to meet the financial conditions of the charter. The Wesleyans denied this emphatically, saying they had met the \$100,000 mark. In 1867, the *American Wesleyan* summed up the crisis in these words:

And now at this late date, and after thousands of dollars have been contributed by Wesleyans in the faith authorized by the official declaration of the Board of Trustees that the \$100,000 had been raised within the time required we are gravely informed that it is all a mistake. We believe the transfer as illegitimate as it is obviously unjust.⁴³

The Wesleyan Methodists resigned themselves to the loss of Adrian College. This disparaging event made the Wesleyans cautious about the control and operation of their schools and pushed them closer towards centralizing control of denominational schools. Reflecting on the loss thirty-four years later, Rev. Jennings revealed the suspicion the Adrian debacle engendered:

A fearful sacrifice of money and confidence in mankind was a part of the price paid by the Wesleyans for the whole enterprise. Perhaps the lesson the Wesleyans had to learn was that if they wanted a school they must create it and support it without depending upon men of the world and men of other denominations to help them, particularly if by tendering such help it became possible for them to turn the school away from the Wesleyans.⁴⁴

At another point, Jennings expressed a similar sentiment,

Religious denominations may conduct enterprises with men from the world associated with them, but that method has proven a failure with Wesleyan Methodists, not because there are no honest and good men among those who might be found outside the denomination, but because what we want of a school is so radically different from what other people want that we cannot expect anyone outside of our number to conduct a school for us.⁴⁵

The Adrian College affair and the failed union movement marked a turning point for the Wesleyans. They now began to turn inward. They would no longer allow for the possibility of losing a school, whether that be into the hands of the *world* or another denomination.

With the founding of Houghton Seminary in 1883, the denomination embarked on a drive to secure its schools under strict Wesleyan control. At Houghton Seminary the charter provided that the faculty and trustees be members of the connection and “that the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification must be subscribed to in order to qualify anyone to give instruction in the work of the school.”⁴⁶ The Wesleyan Methodists now exercised doctrinal and denominational control of its schools much more deliberately. Subsequent schools they established bear witness to a type of post-Adrian College conservatism. They founded their new schools in areas of significant church membership concentration. They also deliberately established them in order to safeguard the students from the corruptive

influence of the *world*. There were four of these new institutions, all but one of them founded in the twentieth century: *Houghton College*, Houghton, New York (1883), *The Wesleyan Methodist College* (later to become Central Wesleyan College, now Southern Wesleyan University), Central, South Carolina (1906), *Miltonvale Wesleyan College*, Miltonvale, Kansas (1909), *Marion College* (later to become Indiana Wesleyan University), Marion, Indiana (1920). With the exception of Marion College the other three schools initially operated as private academies, only later adding college courses. Unlike the many bible schools established during this same period, Wesleyan Methodists meant for their schools to operate essentially as liberal arts institutions.⁴⁷ The success of these schools was the product of centralized denominational oversight and a more careful financial operation of each institution. Learning from previous mistakes, the denomination would no longer leave its schools to the maintenance of individual conferences, local communities, or other religious bodies.

A thread of continuity existed between the older and newer schools. Even though the denomination moved away from the older radical reform elements of the founders and more towards evangelism and alignment with the Holiness Movement, similarities endured from the old to new schools. In the founding and maintenance of both eras' schools the Wesleyan Methodists exhibited a conservative ideological program regarding their choice of locations for schools. The Wesleyan Methodist Church typically desired to set up schools in *pure/ non-worldly* environments. The first educational ventures sought environments free from the proslavery impulse and

free from worldly entertainments and alcohol. Dry towns provided an ideal environment. Wesleyan Methodists continued to be predominately rural and they often thought that moral standards and holy living would better be maintained by locating the colleges in relatively isolated places. Additionally, like other holiness groups, they believed that smaller towns in America provided better moral environments than did larger cities.⁴⁸

While the early Wesleyan Methodists sought educational alternatives to schools influenced by proslavery ideology, the desire for *pure environments* was not exclusive to Wesleyans. As editors David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal showed in their book *American Sacred Space*, frequently American educational “strategies have demanded a ritual control over embodied space in the interests of purity.”⁴⁹ This came into play even with certain colleges and universities in the South. Largely antithetical to abolitionism, Southerners also established their schools “in out-of-the-way places so as to shield the morals of the young people. Leaders [of these schools] generally believed that it was better so.”⁵⁰ Similarly, in his dissertation on “Fortresses of Faith: Design and Experience at Southern Evangelical Colleges, 1830-1900,” Ralph Reed revealed how evangelical schools in the South sought to, “create a refuge for Evangelical youth from a society that they condemned as wicked and wayward . . .” These schools, “protected and socialized [students] at the same time that it prepared them for effective service in the larger society.”⁵¹

For Wesleyan Methodists, although abolitionism was no longer an issue, there still existed a plethora of particulars which they considered moral imperatives

(temperance, shunning the use of tobacco, modesty in dress, and abstinence from worldly entertainments such as the theatre), which fuelled their strong adherence to establish schools in *pure environments*. This aspect grew in the late nineteenth century as Wesleyan Methodists became almost exclusively rural, both geographically and in outlook, and as they associated urbanization with immigrant populations, whose *weltanschauung* tended to contrast dramatically with the rural Wesleyans'.⁵²

As far back as the days of operating the school in Leoni, Michigan, the Wesleyans pushed for safeguarding the learning environment. As Willard Garfield Smith indicated, Leoni *had* been classified as a whiskey town, but the “Wesleyans, being ardent temperance advocates, proceeded to change this . . .” An agent of the school confirmed this venture in an 1855 statement: “We have bought out and driven the last rum seller from the place . . .”⁵³ Similarly, Illinois Wesleyans desired that Wheaton serve as a “healthful country village removed from the various temptations and corruptions of the influences of a populous city.”⁵⁴

Underpopulated communities were not always ideal locations for establishing Wesleyan Methodist schools. While the moral tone of Wasioja, Minnesota, for example, stood above average and the town had no saloons, the Wesleyans still considered it undesirable because of the lack of Wesleyans in the Minnesota Conference and because they viewed Wasioja as a shiftless, forlorn, hopeless-looking place.⁵⁵ Wesleyans did not consider the *pure environment* criteria as total. They determined a school’s location according to both the moral integrity of a

community and the local presence of a strong Wesleyan constituency. When these two elements came together in a community, the Wesleyans felt it the ideal locale for a school. In the community of Houghton, New York, both aspects were present: an isolated and morally upright community and strong, local denominational support.

Rev. Willard J. Houghton, the most prominent founder of Houghton Seminary, worked incessantly to bring Wesleyan families to Houghton, New York. He travelled to various conferences in the church, gaining support for the new school. He often gave such a description of Houghton and its future that he convinced “multitudes . . . that it was surely an Eden in which to live.” He also persuaded a number of Wesleyans to sell their homes and move to Houghton in order to help make the seminary a success.⁵⁶ The Rev. Houghton assured the school’s supporters that the new school in western New York would serve as “a central place where we could school our children away from the environment of the large towns and cities . . . [and] Houghton would be a good place since it was free from the evils of the larger towns and cities.”⁵⁷ Houghton, New York’s rural location appealed to Wesleyans who moved into town to help support the school. In 1884 the village consisted of a store where no tobacco was sold, a temperance hotel, a church, a cheese factory, a blacksmith shop, and fourteen dwelling houses.⁵⁸

Houghton College offers just one example of the four new schools. Ideally, the moral tone of the environment safeguarded the education of the students at each school. This element remained crucial for the Wesleyans, both in their first schools, which were intentionally founded to promote their brand of reform in an environment

free from proslavery, and in the latter schools, also set up in protected environments. Isolation from the corrupting influence of the city was not the only factor that determined the success of each school; the centralized denominational oversight and support of each school's financial management also became crucial for their survival. Likewise, Wesleyans felt it important that the regions the schools served contained a large enough number of Wesleyans to support them. However, in the initial establishment of each school, the moral character of the community was of fundamental importance.

NOTES

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2. *Ibid.*, 376.
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4. Lee M. Haines, "Radical Reform and Living Piety," in *Reformers and Revivalists: The History of the Wesleyan Church*, ed. Wayne E. Caldwell (Indianapolis, IN: Wesley Press, 1992), 33.
5. Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (USA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 74.
6. Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1978), 114.
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9. Rev. Arthur T. Jennings, *History of American Wesleyan Methodism* (Syracuse, NY: Wesleyan Methodist Publishers Association, 1902), 25.
10. Lucius C. Matlack, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 245.
11. Haines, "Radical Reform and Living Piety," 48.
12. *Discipline of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection (or Church) of America* (Syracuse, NY: Wesleyan Methodist Publishers Association, 1904), 12.
13. Daniel Steele, "Sanctification: Wesleyan Doctrine," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, vol. IV, 1915.
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15. Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1976), 60.

16. Paul Leslie Kaufman, "Logical Lee and the Methodist War Against Slavery" (PhD. diss., Kent State University, 1994), 22.
17. Rev. Luther Lee, *Autobiography of the Rev. Luther Lee* (NY and London: Garland Publishers, Inc., 1984), 25.
18. *Ibid.*, 26.
19. Lee M. Haines, "Wesleyan Theological Education: An Historical Perspective" (Paper presented at the Conference of Divisions of Religion, Colleges of the Wesleyan Church, Marion, IN, May 14, 1977), 6.
20. Ira Ford McLeister and Roy Stephen Nicholson, *Conscience and Commitment: The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America* (Marion, IN: The Wesley Press, 1976), 29.
21. Willard Garfield Smith, "The History of Church Controlled Colleges," 18.
22. Kaufman, "Logical Lee and the Methodist War Against Slavery," 22.
23. John P. Ragsdale and Wayne E. Caldwell, "Ministerial Training and Educational Institutions," in *Reformers and Revivalists: The History of the Wesleyan Church*, ed. Wayne E. Caldwell (Indianapolis, IN: Wesley Press, 1992), 375.
24. Luther Lee, "Theological Education," *The Wesleyan*, 25 Feb., 1857, 1.
25. Lucius C. Matlack, "Education," *The True Wesleyan*, 1 Nov., 1845, 173.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. Rev. Arthur T. Jennings, *History of American Wesleyan Methodism* (Syracuse, NY: Wesleyan Methodist Publishers Association, 1902), 83.
29. *Ibid.*
30. These included: *Dracut Seminary*, 1844, Dracut, MA, - *Leoni Institute*, 1848, Leoni, Michigan- *Illinois Institute*, 1853, Wheaton, IL - *Adrian College*, 1859, Adrian, Michigan- *Wesleyan Methodist Seminary*, 1875, Waisioja, Minnesota- *Wheaton Theological Seminary*, 1881, Wheaton, IL - *Houghton Seminary*, 1883, Houghton, New York.

31. Willard Garfield Smith, "The History of Church Controlled Colleges," 92.
32. *Ibid.*, 43.
33. *Ibid.*, 11.
34. Jennings, *History of American Wesleyan Methodism*, 191.
35. Willard Garfield Smith, "The History of Church Controlled Colleges," 11.
36. *Ibid.*, 91.
37. *Ibid.*, 89.
38. McLeister and Nicholson, *Conscience and Commitment*, 481.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Willard Garfield Smith, "The History of Church Controlled Colleges," 49.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, 91.
43. "Mode and Transfer of Adrian College," *American Wesleyan*, 13 March, 1867, 18.
44. Jennings, *History of American Wesleyan Methodism*, 79.
45. *Ibid.*, 91.
46. *Ibid.*, 89.
47. Willard Garfield Smith, "The History of Church Controlled Colleges," 392.
48. Dr. Ralph E. Owens, Mr. Delaton Voss, and Dr. George S. Benson, "The Comparative Merits of a Smaller City Versus a Larger City as a Location for a Christian College" (Committee report of the Board of Central Christian College, Bartlesville, OK, Summer, 1955), 3.
49. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, "Introduction," in *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 11.

50. Albea Godbold, *The Church College of the Old South* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1944), 107.

51. Ralph Eugene Reed, "Fortresses of Faith: Design and Experience at Southern Evangelical Colleges, 1830-1900" (PhD. diss., Emory University, 1991), 4.

52. Lee M. Haines, "The Grand, Nobler Work: Wesleyan Methodism's transition, 1867-1901," in *Reformers and Revivalists: The History of the Wesleyan Church*, ed. Wayne E. Caldwell (Indianapolis, IN: Wesley Press, 1992), 145. Timothy L. Smith alluded to this phenomenon in his analysis of Christian colleges of the Midwest: "A broader reaction to the secularizing influence of the city characterized the conservative religious movements which we can identify . . . with the term fundamentalist, and inspired the final phase of Christian college founding in the Midwest, illustrated best by Wheaton College." *Uncommon Schools: Christian Colleges and Social Idealism in Midwestern America, 1820-1950* (Printed by the Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 53.

53. Willard Garfield Smith, "The History of Church Controlled Colleges," 35.

54. *Ibid.*, 73.

55. *Ibid.*, 24.

56. McLeister and Nicholson, *Conscience and Commitment*, 486.

57. *Ibid.*, 485.

58. *Ibid.*, 486.

CHAPTER 3
MILTONVALE WESLEYAN COLLEGE:
AN OVERVIEW OF ITS HISTORY

The origins of Miltonvale Wesleyan College, Miltonvale, Kansas, lie in the desire of Wesleyans to establish a school to serve their western conferences. The Wesleyan's initial efforts for a western school were marked by almost complete failure. Serving an area west of Illinois and extending to the west coast, Miltonvale was the first school to achieve any lasting success. In some ways Miltonvale Wesleyan College succeeded because of the broad support it received from the western conferences, and because it captured the zealous allegiance and loyalty both of newcomers (mostly Wesleyans who moved to Miltonvale to offer the school their total support), and the original residents of Miltonvale. In view of previous failures, the Wesleyans felt affirmed when they proclaimed the school's successful operation as a feat of God's providence.

Through the years Miltonvale's faculty and administration adjusted the school's curriculum to meet its sharpening academic interests. It grew from being more or less an academy, in the first few years of operation, until eventually it focused its undivided attention on college level work. The school also modified and developed its physical plant, albeit quite slowly, with spurts of expansion here and there, to accommodate the changing academic goals and overall needs of the school. Persuaded by a desire to

achieve accreditation, the college's faculty was always in a process of attempting to meet the requirements necessary for accredited status. The school's officials sought after this status for most of its history.

In accordance with their general principles of conservatism, Wesleyans established the college in the early twentieth century as a place where students could receive an education far removed from the deleterious trappings of larger cities. This was one of the principal considerations that led the Wesleyans of the western conferences to establish their school in the rural atmosphere of Miltonvale rather than in a larger town. But this feature of the college did not come without a price. The vast area which the college served, sparsely populated by Wesleyans, made it somewhat difficult for the school to thrive in this provincial setting. This problem loomed in the background when in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as the Wesleyans merged with the Pilgrim Holiness Church, gaining another denominational school in Oklahoma (Bartlesville Wesleyan College), the combined Boards of these two schools decided that the town of Miltonvale could not financially support a western school as well as Bartlesville could. Ironically, and much to the chagrin of Miltonvale's loyal supporters, the Board chose Bartlesville, in part because it was not as secluded and isolated as Miltonvale. In essence, by the late 1960s the kind of location which a previous generation of church leaders esteemed appeared to the Board members of both Miltonvale and Bartlesville as financially impracticable as it was unwise.

In the mid-nineteenth century, at roughly the same time as the establishment of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, Americans began to seek out new life in the West.

They based their expansionist zeal on “mounting evidence that the *empire of freedom* was hurdling the barriers of the *Great American Desert* and the Rocky Mountains, reaching out toward the Pacific coast.”¹ Lured by the prospects of cheap land, untold riches, and the opportunity for a new life, American settlers rushed headlong into the West.

Within this drive there existed a strong religious element. Religious leaders lamented the lack of concern for the life of the church in the West. To a certain degree, Easterners considered the West untamed and morally degenerate. Historian Robert L. Griswold points out this feature in his analysis of the “uncivilized” West: “Men without families in mining camps and cowtowns had little interest in schools and even less in charity associations, benevolent societies, temperance reforms and churches.”² Many Christians were concerned about the missionary needs of the West. As American religious historian Sydney Ahlstrom points out, the antebellum struggle for the West, represented graphically in the Kansas Territory, was a struggle for the West’s soul:

Bleeding Kansas, . . . had its Christian history, for the churches in the East were active in defining the issue so as to lead men westward to save the Great Plains from slavery. Henry Ward Beecher raised money from his pulpit for rifles (Beecher’s Bibles) for the cause. Out of Kansas, too, came . . . John Brown . . . Part prophet, part adventurer, he made himself the symbol of the irrepressible conflict . . .³

Soon after the Wesleyan Methodist Connection was founded, some of its members began moving westward. Drawn by the economic possibilities of the West, they also migrated in response to the spiritual call of this unsettled territory.

Communities of Wesleyans organized churches and participated in new western

settlements. As Wayne Caldwell illustrated, “With the movement of the frontier, . . . small numbers of Wesleyan Methodists from the New England States joined the swelling ranks of migrants who went west to establish new homes and to take their chance at a new life of adventure and opportunity.”⁴ The denomination’s newspaper encouraged the pioneering spirit of these Wesleyans, but also warned them of the hazards they would face in the West. Disjointed as life on the frontier could be, denominational spokesmen urged these settlers not to break ties with the Wesleyans. Those who went off without regard to the denominational community were lost “so far as Wesleyanism is concerned. . . . Thousands start west without any definite idea where they are going.”⁵ The leaders of the denomination demanded order and advised Wesleyans to settle together in groups or colonies. To assist such groupings the denominational paper published advertisements for land available near other Wesleyans. Wesleyan Methodist leaders hoped that if Wesleyans settled in colonies they would not wander from or be lost to the young denomination.

By this same token the Wesleyans in the West sought a semblance of order and community in their attempts to set up schools. Besides offering an avowedly Christian education with a holiness emphasis, the school would provide cohesiveness to the westerners. In support of this project, Rev. F. J. Wilson (president of the Iowa Conference) voiced a common concern of Wesleyans on the Great Plains when he wrote, “There are many Wesleyans scattered over the United States without the bounds of any circuit. You will be glad to give this cause a noble subscription. . . . let everybody take hold and start the western school.”⁶ As detailed in chapter one, their first efforts in the

West ended in failure. All the western schools suffered from insufficient funds and a lack of support from the denomination as a whole. Regardless, their determination remained strong and these failures did not deter the western conference Wesleyan Methodists in their desire for a school.

As Wesleyans pushed further westward, church leaders sought to establish schools to serve Wesleyans in the Far West. In 1877, Elijah Osborne attempted to rally support for the establishment of a school in Billings, Missouri. This endeavor failed to come to fruition. At the thirteenth General Conference of the Connection, held in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1891, church officials proposed the creation of a school at Marengo, Iowa. This proposal failed to materialize and was probably half hearted from its inception.⁷ After the fruitless efforts of these schools, focus shifted on Kansas, which slowly became the new ideal location for a western school.

The Kansas Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection was organized in September 20, 1871, incorporating Wesleyans in Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. The denominational paper, persuaded by the State of Kansas' historic stance against slavery and its penchant for "dryness," touted Kansas as an ideal locale for reform-minded Wesleyans. As Historian Robert Smith Bader pointed out, in Kansas (a state often satirized by the late nineteenth century American press for its prudery) the earlier fight

against chattel slavery could readily be transformed into righteous protests against other specific forms of "slavery"-- for example, tobacco, alcohol, and gambling -- or, indeed, against any free-floating or "generic" sin. The so-called Puritan, or New England, conscience often came to find "a lodgement" in the laws of the prairie commonwealth. Thus Kansas came to be, or at least conceived itself to be, "the child of Plymouth Rock."⁸

Soon, western conference members felt it logical to suggest that a Wesleyan school be started in Kansas. At the twenty-fifth Annual Kansas Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, held at Topeka during September 3-7, 1895, a special committee dealt with the matter of establishing a school at North Branch, Kansas.⁸ This effort failed, but the school issue came up again two years later at the twenty-seventh Annual Conference. At this meeting R. A. French presented a report on a possible school site located in Lawrence, Kansas. An interested party in Lawrence offered a mansion to the Kansas Conference for use either as a school or a rescue home for delinquent youth. Close to the University of Kansas, the offer held an added incentive of forty acres of land for future campus expansion. Nonetheless, the Conference refused the offer.⁹ Wayne Caldwell pointed out the Kansas Conference's primary motivation for rejecting the Lawrence offer:

The thinking of church leaders in this era was to avoid the larger cities for school sites, in hopes that a purer environment would help hold the church young people in the particular teaching that characterized the reform principles of the denomination. Consequently, no further action was taken . . .¹⁰

After these initial plans failed to actualize, the Kansas Conference consecutively established two short-lived schools in small rural communities. In 1902 at Eskridge, Kansas, located about twenty miles southwest of Topeka, they founded a school with "a three year classical preparatory course, a four year collegiate course" as well as a course in theology.¹¹ The Eskridge Bible School, with a peak enrollment of sixty-eight, lasted only two years. In 1904 the Kansas Conference decided to re-charter the school on a better financial basis at Wakefield, Kansas, a rural town some ten miles west of

Manhattan. The Wakefield school continued for only one year. The closing of the re-chartered school prompted A. T. Jennings, the editor of *The Wesleyan Methodist*, to write that “a school not backed by connectional funds and under connectional management must fail.”¹² Both the Wakefield and Eskridge schools were rather provincial in character, never receiving the essential support of the denomination as a whole. The reasons for their inability to sustain themselves – feeble support from townspeople and only sporadic infusions of money from the Kansas Conference – is not dissimilar to the failures of the first Wesleyan schools.

The western school lobby received a new priority in the denomination at the 1903 General Conference when the Educational Society concluded that:

In studying the situation it was very soon discovered that the people called Wesleyan Methodists west of Chicago were awake to the necessity of a school within their own territory. From scores of persons came the statement, we will help endow Houghton[,] but we want a school of our own.¹³

In 1907 the Iowa Conference renewed efforts for a western school by considering a request for the school from the citizens of Diagonal, Iowa.. The community of Diagonal, with eight-hundred inhabitants, offered ten acres of land and \$25,000 for the school’s establishment. At Diagonal, enthusiasm for the school remained high throughout the town.¹⁴ However, this offer required immediate activity by the Wesleyans, and despite the Iowa Conference president’s entreaties calling for swift action, the denomination dragged its feet. So thoroughly discouraged over the delay, the people of Diagonal would promise no help as a town to start the school.¹⁵ The negotiations quickly fell apart through mistakes on both sides, causing only confusion and broken confidence.¹⁶

Under the leadership of Silas W. Bond, the Educational Society began looking for another offer which they hoped would include land and a building. Aware of this need, the president of the Kansas Conference, H. S. Abbot, met with the businessmen of Miltonvale, Kansas, in the spring of 1908 anticipating their interest in making a bid for the school. Milton Tootle platted Miltonvale, located near Clay Center in north-central Kansas, in 1881. Tootle, a prominent citizen of St. Joseph Missouri, made his fortune in the late 1840s and early 1850s by capitalizing on the waves of Forty-niners who stopped in St. Joseph on their way to California. At first, Miltonvale was little more than a paper town, but by 1882 it had already become the site for a terminal of the Kansas Central Railway. With less than five hundred inhabitants before the school's establishment, the town remained fairly small throughout its early history. Naturally, the prospect of the western school captured the attention of the townspeople.¹⁷ Eager to accommodate the proposed school, the Commercial Club of Miltonvale (made up of C. E. Sprague, Earl Emmick, Fred Koster, Chris Eye, G. C. R. Piersee, and George Palmer)¹⁸ offered the Wesleyans ten acres of land and twelve thousand dollars for the erection of a building. They also offered another ten acres of land to the Kansas Conference for the construction of a permanent camp meeting site. The camp meeting site would provide a gathering place for the annual conferences of the Kansas Conference of the Wesleyan Methodists. The Wesleyans accepted the offers on the condition that they establish a school to instruct students no lower than preparatory grades and that the denomination raise an endowment of \$75,000 within the first ten months of the school's operation. The Wesleyans entered this deal with the understanding that the majority of the endowment

would be paid by Kansas Conference Wesleyans.

To the school's founders, gaining financial support for the school looked like a daunting task, but support soon came from both the citizens of Miltonvale and in the massive aid that newcomers, mostly Wesleyan, brought to the small town. Both Wesleyans and the rest of Miltonvale's citizens pooled their money together to help pay the twelve thousand dollars necessary for the building program. Individual payments ranged from five dollars to five hundred dollars. In 1908 and 1909 Wesleyans from all over the West, Midwest, and East moved to Miltonvale in order to support the new school. As Bertha O. Emerson, a member of the founding faculty, recalled it, people came "From almost every part of the connection, even from far-off New York, came families to make this spot their new home."¹⁹ In these early years farmers came from Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Missouri, and South Dakota in order to purchase farms near Miltonvale. They came with a consuming interest to move where their children could live at home and attend the Wesleyan school.²⁰ Typically, they came with intentions like those of Dr. J. H. Moore, who wrote to the school wishing "to secure a house in Miltonvale by Sept 1 [1909] . . ." Like so many others, Dr. Moore wanted to locate in town "to give his family the benefit of the educational advantages that are to be had in" the midst of Miltonvale and to take training himself, to be a "more efficient serv[ant] in the Lord's vineyard."²¹

Leaving his post as Educational Society Secretary, Silas W. Bond, former president and instructor at Houghton Seminary, accepted the presidency of Miltonvale Wesleyan College. Bond became one of the contacts for the new families and students

moving to town. Surrounded by a whirlwind of newcomers, Bond wrote: “Letters are constantly coming in regard to houses, lots, farms, . . . [L]et me say to all prospective comers . . . it is now absolutely impossible to find a vacant house in town, and almost as impossible to find even rooms for housekeeping.”²² However, the town made room for the emigres as houses were built more rapidly than ever before in Miltonvale’s history. Bond said that he, “never witnessed anything that compared with the widely distributed interest and enthusiasm that the Western school is drawing to itself.”²³ The president knew that the western school, forever frustrated by past failures, had been an important dream for the western conferences. He attributed the tremendous support for and rallying around the school to the great need it fulfilled.

For the school to survive it needed to receive total allegiance from both the town and the Wesleyans of the western conferences. Realizing this, Bond and the other founders of the school urged families to move to Miltonvale. According to the president, even with the large numbers of incoming families, the task at hand looked difficult, since there were, “less than three thousand members in the Western conferences . . .” This meant that, “every man woman and child must feel a personal responsibility for [Miltonvale’s] highest success.”²⁴ The extraordinary growth of Miltonvale offered every indication that the school’s supporters felt this sense of responsibility. During the first year of the school’s operation newcomers built houses on an average of about one “every few days, and often two or more in a week.” In the second semester of the first year approximately sixty-eight new houses went up in Miltonvale.²⁵ Doubling the town’s population in about two years, Miltonvale Wesleyan College’s supporters deemed it an

immense success. Throughout Miltonvale all “during the summer of ‘09 the sound of the hammer was heard . . .” When Miltonvale Wesleyan College opened its doors for the first day of classes on September 6, 1909, the school building remained unfinished. But, as one founder put it, “nothing checked the enthusiasm of the teachers and the students, . . .” Students and faculty adapted easily to this setting in the first days,

and the home of Mrs. Hazelhurst [dean of women and prof. of Latin and Greek] was opened for the registration of students and the assignment of lessons. Even the first chapel exercise was held on the front veranda of her home. . . . At the close of the first day 60 students were enrolled, representing Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa, South Dakota, Wisconsin, California, Ohio, and New York.²⁶

The majority of the students were from Kansas.

Shortly after registration the school was in full swing. Within “two or three days” of its opening, “the recitation rooms were near enough completed so that the classes met regularly.”²⁷ Because these rooms initially had no chairs, the students stood during lectures. They also heard the constant “rap, rap, rap of the carpenter’s hammer in the very room where the class was being held . . .” In this inauspicious setting, inconvenience only added to the founder’s sense of being true pioneers of the institution.²⁸ After the first year, “144 names were on the register including both grade and high school pupils.”²⁹ In 1919, F. C. Hill, professor of theology, looked back on these first years, feeling assured that, “The Lord’s blessing was certainly upon the school . . .” The school’s supporters felt that something unique and providential was at work, since Miltonvale, unlike the earlier western schools, appeared a success. Hill estimated that its success came in part from the western conferences who “supported the work royally,” making it possible for the enrollment to climb in 1913 to the school’s all-time

high of 252 students.³⁰

The school enticed students from diverse locations to come and receive a Wesleyan education “under the tutorship of godly men and women, surrounded by the ideals and safeguards which will encourage and inspire them to holy living and godly consecration.”³¹ Though named Miltonvale Wesleyan College, initially it operated as a private academy. In 1912 the Wesleyan Educational Society authorized the school to offer the first year of college work. “In 1913 normal training was added, consisting of one semester of methods and management and one year of reviews in geography, grammar, and reading.”³² Because of overcrowding, Miltonvale Wesleyan dropped its grammar school program sometime before 1917. This allowed for the expansion of other programs such as the Academy, which the state of Kansas accredited in 1917.³³ Because the Academy depended on the enrollment of local students, the establishment of a Miltonvale public high school in 1920 alarmed the Miltonvale Wesleyan school officials. Before 1934 the majority of the Miltonvale Wesleyan’s students were enrolled in the academy.³⁴ The fear of competition with the public schools subsided slowly as Miltonvale Wesleyan became less dependent on the academy for the majority of its enrollment.

As the years went by, the school developed its college program, adding college curriculum as the high school program diminished. Miltonvale added a college sophomore year in 1915.³⁵ The school continued its seventh and eighth grades until about 1919.³⁶ In 1928 the newly organized junior college graduated its first student. After a long struggle, the junior college finally achieved accreditation from the state of

Kansas in 1952. A key condition for accreditation was that Miltonvale Wesleyan College have a gymnasium, which the school built in 1952. From 1928 until the 1960s the faculty and administration divided the school into four departments: junior college, academy, music, and theology.³⁷ They phased out their high school program through two major changes in the 1950s and 60s. In 1955 they eliminated the first two years of high school from the curriculum, and then in 1966 they dropped the last two years of high school.³⁸

The theology program soon replaced the academy in numbers of students enrolled, and continued to rise in prominence as a major emphasis throughout the history of the school. In 1946 the theology program began offering a four-year college course leading to a Bachelor of Religion degree. Shortly after its creation, the four-year theology course became so popular that during the 1948-49 year, out of 143 students above the high school level, ninety-two were registered in the theological department.³⁹ Throughout the school's history the goals of the theology department remained unequivocal. From the earliest years this department defined its goals as follows: "[the] theological course . . . is intended to fit all the young people for best service who feel the call of God upon them to preach in the home land or go as missionaries to the foreign field, or city mission work in our large cities."⁴⁰ Teaching also proved a common vocation of students who received the theology degree.

Over the years Miltonvale became more specific in its academic programs. In the early twentieth century the school offered everything from elementary to college level work. This feature was well represented in its opening year when Miltonvale Wesleyan's students ranged: "from First Graders to a Theolog of 60 years of age."⁴¹ But the school

slowly gravitated toward increased college level work, the academy program being pared down until, by the second half of the 1960s, all of the school's enrollment was "entirely made up of Junior College and theological students."⁴²

For the most part, the, "development of plant facilities at Miltonvale was slow."⁴³ In 1909 the College's physical plant consisted solely of the original building erected with the twelve thousand dollars supplied by subscriptions. At the time of its initial operation this three-story brick structure had an independent water source, pumped by a windmill, and was lighted by acetylene.⁴⁴ This one building basically made up the college in its entirety. It housed the president's office, a chapel, the library, and classrooms. As the school built other structures, it eventually became the administration building. Abbott Hall, the second building constructed, functioned as a girl's dorm and later as a boy's dorm. Built with approximately ten thousand dollars donated by the Wesleyan's Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society in 1914, it remained uninhabited until 1915 because of insufficient funds for room furnishings (thirty-five dollars per room).⁴⁵

After Abbott Hall's construction, the school halted plant expansion until the two-year period of 1947-1949. During these years President Rufus D. Reisdorph initiated a campus expansion plan, carried on by his successor, Rev. Warren S. Freeborn, that called for a total of more than ninety thousand dollars to be spent on new facilities, including: "a classroom annex, a college bookstore, and a girl's dormitory and dining hall . . ."⁴⁶

The history of these new buildings was somewhat peculiar. The annex came from three army barracks at Camp Phillips, a World War II prisoner-of-war camp located between Salina and Lindsborg, Kansas.⁴⁷ The college bookstore also came from this location.

The new girl's dormitory initially functioned as a nurses' quarters at a German prisoner-of-war camp near Concordia, Kansas.⁴⁸ Miltonvale completed its gymnasium in 1952, valued at approximately \$100,000 after its construction. Somewhat reminiscent of the multiple functions that the administration building once served, the college put the gym to extensive use, its versatility indicated by the multiple functions it served: as a physical education building, an industrial arts shop, the student health center, and an assembly place for public gatherings.⁴⁹

In the last years of the school's operation the administration and faculty made a concerted effort to attain the requirements for accreditation by the North Central Regional Accrediting Association.⁵⁰ Their efforts amounted to an expansion plan the scope of which covered both academic improvement and physical plant expansion. In 1962 the Miltonvale Wesleyan College Board of Trustees organized the campus expansion plan into three distinct phases. The first phase entailed the construction of Budensiek Hall, a new science building valued at \$200,000 upon its completion in 1964. The second phase of expansion provided for the building of Hester Hall, a sixty-four bed men's dormitory completed in 1968 at a cost of around \$200,000. With an initial projected cost of roughly \$175,000, phase three called for the construction of the O. G. Wilson Memorial Library.⁵¹

Along with the building plans, the college put into effect a new academic program in order to help achieve full accreditation. As part of this program Miltonvale's administrators pushed for upgrading the faculty's academic credentials, and in the 1960s the college was organized into four new areas of study: the Division of Religion and

Philosophy, the Division of Humanities, the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and the Division of Behavioral Sciences.⁵²

NOTES

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24. Ibid.
25. Silas W. Bond, "Miltonvale," *The Wesleyan Methodist*, 15 June, 1910, 5.
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28. Emerson, "Birdseye View of the College Hill," 37.
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Fig. 1. Built in 1909, the administration building functioned as the primary campus facility for the majority of Miltonvale Wesleyan's history (*Sunflower*, 1961, p. 107).



Fig. 2. Pictured here during the 1940s, the Tabernacle served as the site for the annual meetings of the Kansas Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church (*Sunflower*, 1948, p. 89).

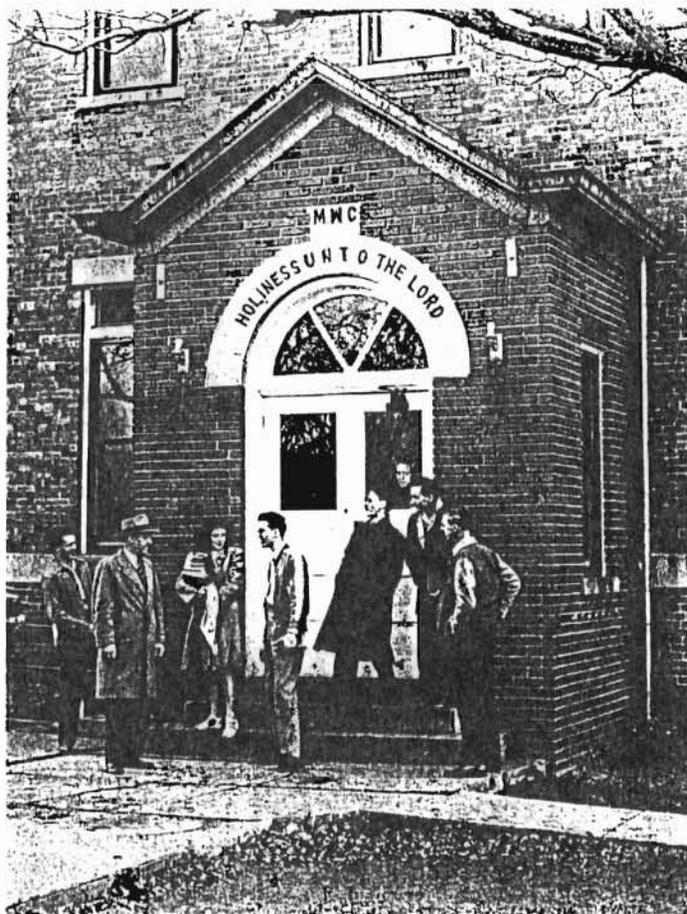


Fig. 3. Front view of the administration building (*Sunflower*, 1948, p. 19).



Fig. 4. Students, faculty, parents, and friends gather in front of the gymnasium building following MWC's fiftieth commencement exercises (*Sunflower*, 1959, p. 128).

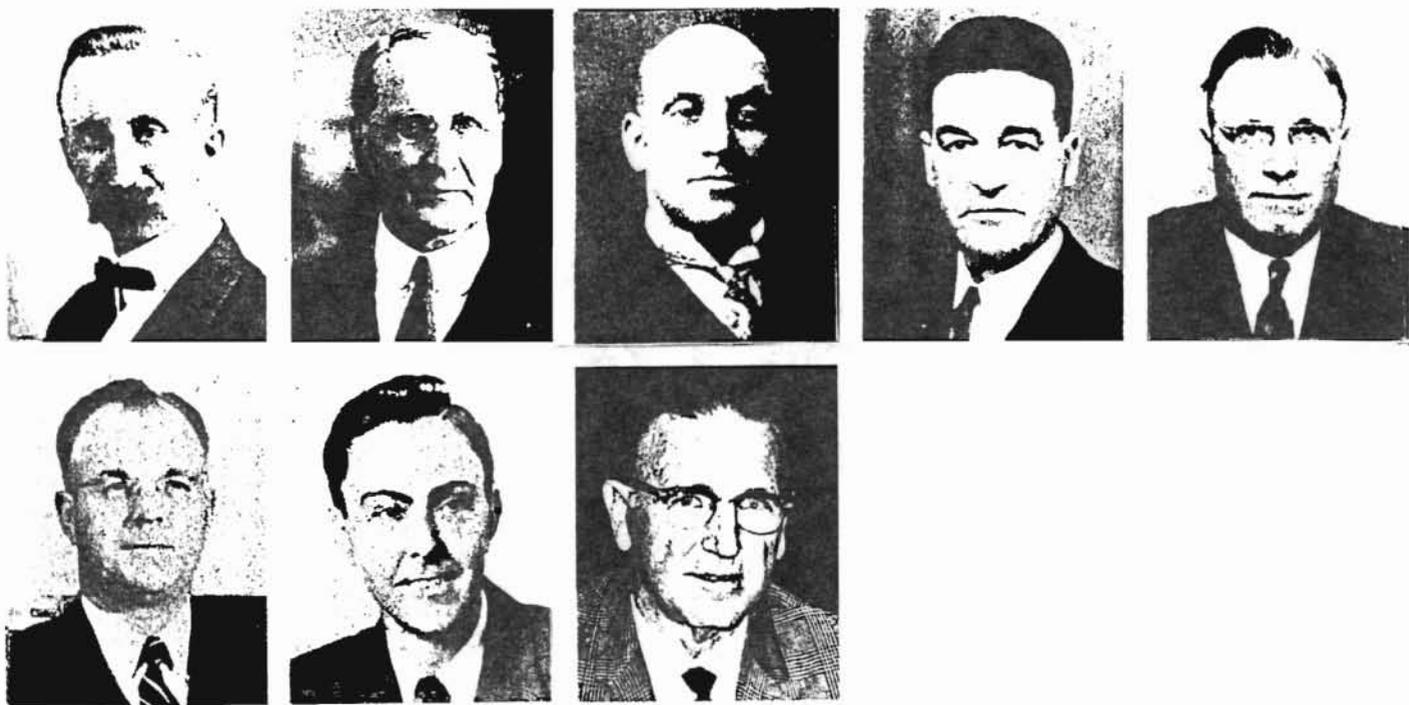


Fig. 5. Miltonvale Wesleyan College Presidents. Left to right: Silas Bond (1907-1916), Howard W. McDowell (1916-1924), William F. McConn (1924-1932), C. Floyd Hester (1932-1946), Rufus D. Reisdorph (1946-1948), Warren Freeborn (1948-1952) Wesley L. Knapp (1952-1969), Leo G. Cox (1969-1972). *Reflections* (Bartlesville Wesleyan College student yearbook, 1980): 31.

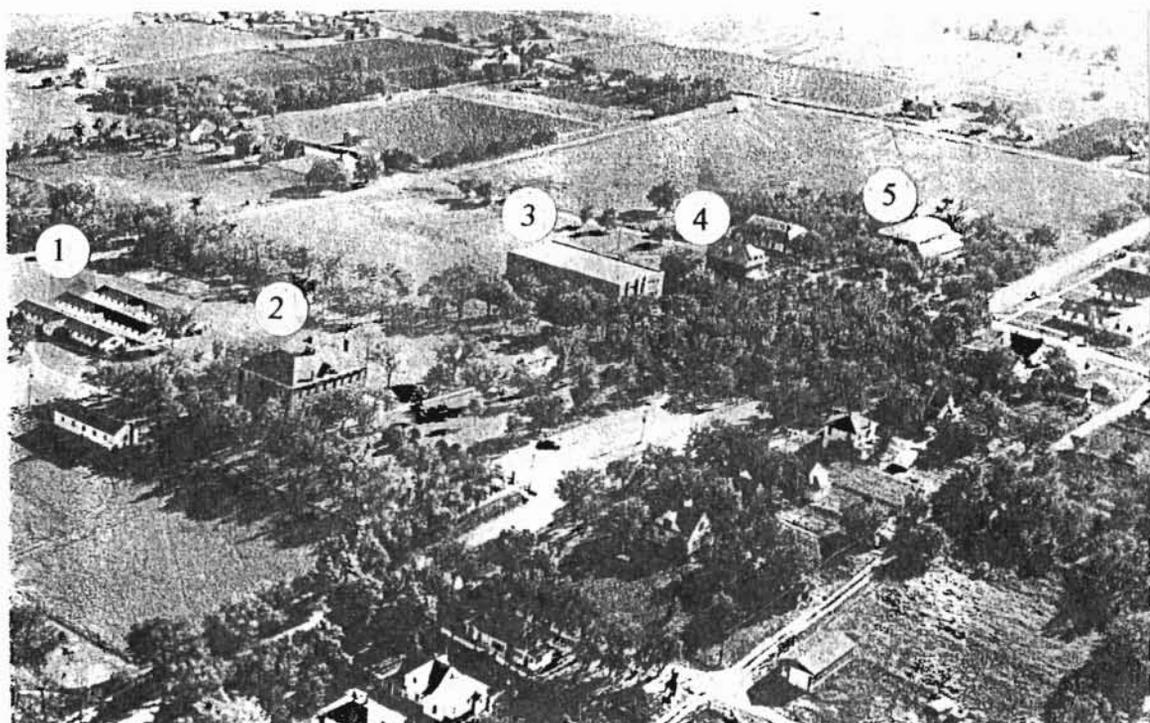


Fig. 6. Aerial view of the campus during the late 1950s. 1) The annex 2) The administration building 3) The gymnasium 4) Abbot Hall 5) The tabernacle (*Sunflower*, 1957, p. 5).

CHAPTER 4

MILTONVALE WESLEYAN COLLEGE AS A “CITY ON A HILL”

When the Wesleyan Methodists decided to locate both the Kansas Conference campground and the new western college of the Wesleyan Methodist Church at Miltonvale, Kansas, in 1908, church leaders thought the location would “meet with the hearty approval of all [Wesleyans] as soon as they become acquainted with the place . . .”¹ Wesleyans of the western conferences considered the quaint rural atmosphere of this agricultural community the ideal setting for both the school and the campground. The geographic isolation of Miltonvale Wesleyan College became a symbol for its moral, religious, social, and academic conservatism. The campus operated as a protected environment where students received a Christian education away from the perils of *worldliness*. However, at Miltonvale Wesleyan this ideology did not appear in a completely detached or isolated form. The leaders of the college thought that this isolation from the world would prepare students during the critical years of their youth for ministry out in the world and among the people. The prevailing view was that such preparation could best be accomplished in a controlled atmosphere, which MWC provided. For the founders of Miltonvale Wesleyan College, the importance of a controlled and pure environment became a crucial factor from the earliest date of the school’s life.

After plans with *Diagonal*, Iowa, failed to materialize, the members of the Wesleyan Educational Society were pleased to hear of Miltonvale's offer of twelve thousand dollars, ten acres for the campus, and ten acres for the camp meeting site. The town greeted the prospect of a new school with equal enthusiasm. The leading businessmen of Miltonvale advocated the school on the grounds that the moral and economic boost it would provide for the small community would be a great benefit. Before the school officially opened, the editor of the *Miltonvale Record* newspaper urged those who pledged to the school to pay up and reminded them of the

advantages that this school will bring to you and yours, [both] individually, and [with regard to] the community at large in a social and moral way: then estimate the resulting increase that is bound to come in the value of all property should we succeed in locating [the school] here; then go down into your pocket and show your public spirit and progressiveness by giving all you are able to give.²

The editor also affirmed the school's supporters in their commitment, saying,

It would be hard to overestimate the importance of the proposed improvement to this community. If we can bring this school here it means that the population of the city will double or triple itself within the next two or three years. Men who have money will come to Miltonvale and locate to be able to send their children to their own college. This means that the school will do for us . . . what the state institutions are doing for Lawrence, Emporia and Manhattan on a larger scale . . . It means better society and more of it . . . Twelve thousand dollars may seem a large sum . . . but when we consider the benefits [it is] well worth it . . .³

Miltonvale Wesleyan College had this progressive effect on the rural town of Miltonvale, Kansas. Before the Wesleyans accepted the Commercial Club's proposal in 1908, the town had a population of only 495, by 1910 Miltonvale had grown to around 998. The town grew phenomenally as Wesleyans gravitated to Miltonvale in support of the new school. Property values went up, and by 1913 the expanded

community of Miltonvale had an electric light plant and a water system, both voted in by city bonds amounting to \$35,000. As important as growth and communal renewal were to both the original townspeople and to those who located at Miltonvale, the Wesleyan Methodists did not base their primary decision for placing the school in Miltonvale on whether or not Miltonvale would boom because of the new school, but they based it on their view that this small town would provide the necessary moral tone required for a Wesleyan college. Of course, both the land offered for the new school and the twelve thousand dollar contribution were important factors, but Miltonvale's contribution was less than half of that originally offered in the Diagonal, Iowa, pledge. Initially, the moral rectitude of the town was possibly more important than whether or not the town could supply a great deal of financial support.

For its small size Miltonvale had its share of churches: the United Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, the Church of Christ, and the Catholic Church. Miltonvale was also frequently the site of revivals and camp meetings. The Kansas State Holiness Association established its Beulah Park Camp in Miltonvale (although it probably did not operate for very long at this location) under the leadership of Rev. Ira Putney, in 1888.⁴ Additionally, a couple of the earliest editors of the *Miltonvale Record* were staunch prohibitionists. In light of these and other factors, the Wesleyan Educational Society concluded that the village of Miltonvale had a history of conservative morality.

Because of Kansas's record of reform, Wesleyans who moved westward often viewed it as an ideal place to settle. The pre-Civil War generation of Wesleyans

looked to Kansas as a beacon of freedom and righteousness. The shift from abolitionism to prohibitionism was a common feature of reform-minded evangelicals (a transformation perhaps most graphically represented by Oberlin, Ohio, a town that became famous for its role in the antislavery crusade, which by 1893 became the birth place of the Anti-Saloon League, operating as a church-oriented political pressure organization.)⁵ In like manner, as the abolitionists transferred their reform activities to the cause of prohibitionism, Kansas again drew the Wesleyans' admiration. According to Robert Black, for the denomination, "Friends of Prohibition were friends of Wesleyan Methodism," so naturally "Carrie Nation was a friend." In a 1901 issue of *The Wesleyan Methodist*, editor A. T. Jennings "probably spoke for the Church as a whole when he wrote, *(She) may have our hatchet, and if need be, we will go along with her to wield it.*"⁶ As Robert Smith Bader points out, at a very early date, Wesleyans, like most Americans, automatically associated "temperance with the Free State cause," in part because the "northern press, both in Kansas and in the East, promoted that linkage, and the southerners did not often bother to deny it."⁷

Just as Kansas had been a hotbed of agitation regarding slavery, so it saw similar activity, if less truculent, regarding the prohibitionist cause. To a certain degree, Miltonvale participated in this general spirit of reform. Saloon raids were not an uncommon feature in Kansas both in the 1850s and at the turn of the century. Revivals, the perennial breeding ground for reform agitation, were prevalent in Miltonvale around the turn of the century and they brought with them the reform

drive. A few years before Carry Nation stepped onto the national scene, Miltonvale experienced a saloon raid equal to any other in the state in both violence and zeal. This raid occurred in September, 1898, and it bears witness to the existence of reform mindedness in Miltonvale even before the establishment of Miltonvale Wesleyan College. The impetus for the raid came in response to the preaching of an evangelist who was holding a protracted meeting at the Christian Church in town.

Words of the Evangelist aroused the enthusiasm of the good women of the town, and one morning a group of a dozen ladies met for prayer at the home of Mrs. John Squires. Feeling called upon to destroy the saloons in the city, they armed themselves with hatchets and axes of all sizes, went in a body and climbed the stairs to the nearest saloon . . . Hatchets and axes were heavy and floor length dresses impeded haste, but the women were enthusiastic . . . enroute [*sic*] to the second saloon a crowd followed . . . [Cora Neill] hit [the saloon door] with [an] axe and the door flew open. At that minute a shot was fired; [Cora] was blinded by the smoke, but the shot missed [her]. Frank Miller, an innocent bystander stepped up to see if [Cora] was hurt and received the second shot in the face.⁸

Miller recovered, but lost the use of his eye from the wound. Law officials arrested the bartender who served one year in the penitentiary. Although this event symbolizes the more extreme end of moral reform, it evidences the evangelical moral standards of the town at the turn of the century.

Kansas Wesleyans championed an abundance of reform issues ranging from the public (prohibition), to the private, (modesty in dress and home furnishings). With the exception of prohibitionism, by the late nineteenth century Wesleyans were less the avant-garde of reform than the conservators of tradition. Albeit, "Wesleyan Methodists still thought of themselves as reformers..."⁹ but, according to Robert Black, the "soul of the movement had shifted from," being essentially reform oriented

to placing greater emphasis on revivalism and aligning itself more with conservative evangelicalism.¹⁰ In the rural Midwest the appellation *conservative* is even more fitting than for the denomination as a whole. Recognizing the depravity and corruption of the world around them, the Kansas Conference of the Wesleyan Methodists declared that, “God has ordained the Church to be the conservator of Gospel morals in society . . .”¹¹ Along with the more or less radical prohibitionist cause, Kansas Conference Wesleyans advocated strict Sabbath observance, modesty in dress (the wearing of jewelry was forbidden), avoidance of “vulgar” entertainments such as the circus and the theater, and opposition to secret societies.

For those Wesleyans who helped establish the western school, Miltonvale seemed to provide them with an idyllic atmosphere of moral sanctity. In turn, the townsfolk of Miltonvale felt assured that the school would contribute to the moral improvement of the town. After the school had been in operation for about a year a local businessman commented that the, “moral tone of the young people [of Miltonvale] has been elevated by the coming into town of such a noble company of young men and women [students], and their influence is appreciated by the best people of the town.” Newcomers to Miltonvale commented with elation that they never “heard a man swear since they came to town.”¹²

In founding an “educational institution within its borders, the Kansas Conference,” and the town of Miltonvale, “became a center for the preservation of the conservative image and reform principles, so long a traditional feature of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.”¹³ In addition to the college the Wesleyans of the

Kansas Conference located their camp meeting site at Miltonvale. Campers came annually to the meeting site in the month of August, escaping the toil of their worldly labors and further committing themselves to the early motto of Miltonvale Wesleyan College: "Come thou with us and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."¹⁴ For these Wesleyans, Miltonvale was a holy refuge, removed from the evils of the city. As they set up the college and the camp meeting site under these conditions, the Wesleyans of the Kansas Conference harkened back to an already existing tradition within Methodism in which, according to Ellen Weiss, "Hebraic analogies for camp meetings," were frequent and the, "sense of the sacred *other* place," provided, "solace for the insecure."¹⁵

Defending the elevated status of Miltonvale, Lola Macy, a student of the young school, commented that "The moral conditions and influences are good, and they say much better than those of neighboring towns of like size."¹⁶ Others were more specific about the unique character of Miltonvale. The first president of the school, Silas Bond (1908-16), emphasized that in order to "maintain the best social conditions for the young people our city takes a most active interest. The [city] council prohibits every form of drinking place, gambling den, pool hall, and billiard table."¹⁷ In similar fashion a student remarked with satisfaction that,

Here [in Miltonvale] the smoking and chewing of tobacco, swearing and ribaldry, which are common to many schools of our lands are marked because of their absence. There are no poolrooms or other coarse places of amusement such as you will find in most towns of our size. You will not find the stores of our town blackened by tobacco smoke, nor find a gang of loafers seated around the stove, spitting at the legs of the . . . stove, making the store an undesirable place for ladies. And gentlemen too! . . . Take it altogether there is a differentness in the atmosphere here [than] that of an average town .

. . . While the writer was in [the Miltonvale] railway station preparing to take a journey he noticed a stranger who bore the marks of being a man of the world. The stranger boarded the same car with us and soon found some of his acquaintances. Upon being asked where he had been, he said sarcastically: "Oh, down to heaven." There is a subtle something in the atmosphere in which the underworld does not delight. We call it light.¹⁸

Although these are early accounts, the existence of this image of Miltonvale as uniquely set apart from the world runs throughout the history of the college. In part, the school's leaders advocated this fortressing of the college student's life away from the more or less *wanton* influences of the world. Miltonvale Wesleyan did not stand alone in these efforts. Coincidentally, in the same year that MWC opened its doors (1909), another holiness school, Oklahoma Holiness College (now Southern Nazarene University), began operation in the new town of Bethany, Oklahoma. Located west of Oklahoma City, Charles Edwin Jones shows how Bethany's founders hoped that, "the realization of holiness ideals and moral and civic righteousness," would be accomplished in this town.

[Bethany's] charter . . . forbade the sale of liquor . . . and tobacco in any form . . . town ordinances outlawed motion picture theatres, dance halls and pool halls, public swimming pools and merry-go-rounds, games of chance, possession of liquor, and most Sunday business.¹⁹

Just as the leaders of Oklahoma Holiness College made it a point to set the college and the town apart as an example, Miltonvale Wesleyan's supporters also dedicated its purpose to this task. Both students and staff repeatedly referred to Miltonvale Wesleyan College as "a city on a hill" or a "light amidst a darkened world." Although, as shown earlier, this religious philosophy involved the school's safeguarding the morality of the student population, it also meant shielding the

students from the infidelity of *liberal* academics. On the positive side, Miltonvale's leaders later made use of this ideology in order to promote the school's sense of mission to the world, but a mission that was not necessarily a retreat from the world. Accordingly, the faculty and staff of MWC desired that students, upon leaving Miltonvale, be a "light" unto the world. They would carry the gospel into a fallen and darkened world and the years spent at Miltonvale would be a time of careful preparation, a critical period in which students could be free from the temptations of the world.

In order to protect the moral life of its students, Miltonvale Wesleyan College took an active interest in what type of activities the students were participating in, and what kind of lifestyle they were living. Naturally the college's administrators subjected these rules and regulations to a certain degree of modification or loosening up as cultural mores changed, but the general tenor of the college's conservatism remained intact throughout the school's history. Miltonvale Wesleyan College was not the only school to employ stern disciplinarian tactics, although it was perhaps more conservative than the other three Wesleyan colleges, but in fact, as Willard Garfield Smith affirmed, it remained the policy of the Wesleyan Methodist Church "to maintain a protected and thoroughly regulated campus life. This included a campus environment which was free," from the harmful influences of America's urban areas.²⁰

In general, the church schools reflected the moral stance of the denomination as a whole. As the church began to position itself against various new forms of

popular amusements, the denomination's schools followed suit by prohibiting them. Almost as soon as motion pictures became a widespread form of entertainment in the United States, the Wesleyans were condemning the movie "business with show houses in practically every city, village, and hamlet in America conducting a business that trains in lust, vice and crime . . ."21 Miltonvale was the first Wesleyan college to issue a rule against motion pictures, banning students from attending them in 1917. Likewise, attendance at other places which promoted entertainments associated with "depravity," such as bowling alleys, dance halls, and roller rinks, was also prohibited. The Wesleyans at Miltonvale would have agreed with the denominational paper, which condemned dancing as "a worldly, sensuous affair, which belongs to the kingdom of Satan . . . The bait of the music, the attraction of the opposite sex," and "the sociability of the occasion, all seem to combine" making it a very unfitting activity for a people called apart from the world who were to be examples of true holiness.²²

These prohibitions were not a point of embarrassment for the school in its recruitment of new students, in fact the college's representatives held to these rules in a rather straightforward manner. For instance, a 1918 advertisement for the school read

Our aim is the development of symmetrical Christian character and thorough scholarship	
Accredited High School	NO TOBACCO
Accredited Normal Training School	NO CARDS
Three Years College	NO DANCING
Theological	NO FRATERNITIES
Music – Piano, Voice, Violin ²³	

Instructors placed limitations on associations between the sexes. They regulated dating, and prohibited marriage during the academic year. As with policies regarding student dress codes, modesty was the rule in terms of courtship. Willard Garfield Smith explained how the school's faculty "expressed their attitude in an introductory statement accompanying their association rules: *Couples are to conduct themselves in harmony with the highest in Christian culture and social propriety.*"²⁴ For the faculty to be more explicit than this would be considered immodest.

Students broke some of the rules, perhaps out of curiosity as with several boys suspended for smoking in January, 1934. Disobedience tended to occur more often with the younger academy students, especially among those sent to Miltonvale by their parents as a disciplinary measure.²⁵ Additionally, students at Miltonvale tended to be perennially reluctant or outright defiant when required to conform to certain *non-essentials* such as the dress code, the ban on intercollegiate sports, curfews, and other restrictions. However, throughout the school's history, most students who came to MWC were committed Christians with a conservative outlook.²⁶ During the late 1960s Miltonvale Wesleyan's campus remained nearly impervious to the social and political unrest occurring at other colleges and universities at this time. In the Fall of 1966, as tension mounted on many United States campuses, students at Miltonvale staged a mock, "*Demonstration for Progress,*" as a promotion for phase II of the campus expansion plan. Students marched through town waving placards and singing, and then "returned to the future site of" Hester Hall, "where Freshman and Sophomore men pitted their strength in a ground-breaking contest."²⁷

Needless to say, most of the core philosophies of Miltonvale's students and faculty deviated very little. In the school's earlier years students' often voluntarily participated in both religious and social reform activities. Before 1920, prohibitionism was still popularly associated with progressivism and social reform. Prohibitionism was, in fact, probably one of the last great reform issues that classified Wesleyan Methodists as "liberal" in any sense. In the early twentieth century Miltonvale championed prohibitionism with vigor. The Intercollegiate Prohibition League (IPA) flourished on campus and Miltonvale Wesleyan's chapter registered some of the largest turnouts at intercollegiate oratory competitions. In the 1914-15 school year, Miltonvale, with an enrollment of less than two hundred, boasted 115 students in the IPA.²⁸ Some of the students who participated in this organization vigorously committed themselves to the cause of prohibition. L. A. Johnson, a Swedish immigrant student who worked frequently with the prohibitionist party, delivered an oration entitled "The Way Out" at one of the competitions sponsored by the IPA. With a strong sense of mission, Johnson harkened back to the reform principles of the earliest Wesleyans, stressing the need for political action against the liquor trade. He asked if "God raised up men to unshackle the black man in America," then will He, "again bring forth heroes to work out another freedom, to burst another bondage that threatens all men, black and white?"²⁹ In a student oration delivered the following school year, Carl Dietrich echoed a similar concern, proclaiming that, "Like a never dying leech, the legalized saloon is sucking the very life blood from this nation, undermining our civilization, degenerating our progeny,

laying low, . . . and rapidly working our ultimate downfall.”³⁰ After the prohibition amendment, the Anti-Tobacco League replaced the IPA in prominence with about as heavy a student participation rate as the IPA had achieved. The MWC Anti-Tobacco League proclaimed that tobacco was the “next great evil to be fought and trodden under foot.”³¹ In orations delivered against tobacco the polemics were as vitriolic as those regarding liquor. One such oration declared that “The use of tobacco results in complete moral and religious degeneracy.”³²

Besides the prohibitionist and anti-tobacco causes, there were other ways that students participated in reform, albeit more typically associated with “religious reform.” The weekly “students’ Tuesday evening prayer meeting,” allowed the students to gather together in prayer for each other and for the “lost.” At these meetings, “new converts [were] given a chance to lead,” the meetings, and, “A note of victory [rang] in every testimony . . .” Over the years, the prayer meeting facilitated a number of students’ conversion and sanctification experiences. Rev. Dodd, pastor of Miltonvale’s College Church, declared that these meetings helped train students for missions to the world: “If these young people,” involved in the Tuesday evening prayer band, “keep true to the Lord the world will hear from them in the future.”³³

Because of the college’s strong Christian emphasis many of the students activities were religious in nature. This orientation was manifest in the various student, “outreach groups that [took] the form of a college choir, gospel teams, and visitation teams.”³⁴ All through the school’s history an assortment of student

missionary societies or religious life committees took an active role in sponsoring missionaries and providing financial assistance for missionary related activities in the United States and abroad. Students who participated in these organizations helped underwrite missionaries like Vera Macy, “the first missionary–alumnus,” who, “sailed for Sierra Leone, West Africa,” in 1919.³⁵ Missionary sponsorship continued into the last years of the college with Lois Sheridan, also a missionary in Sierra Leone, West Africa, receiving support from the Miltonvale students.

In addition to students’ voluntary participation in religious activities the college formed their religious lives through rules and regulations upheld to insure student involvement in a full range of religious activities. Miltonvale’s instructors expected students to attend Sunday worship services. Compared to the other Wesleyan colleges, Miltonvale maintained a more conservative record in this area. For example, throughout most of the school’s history, school officials required students to attend two church services on Sunday. Revival services (two per year, lasting typically between ten days to two weeks) were a regular feature on all the Wesleyan college campuses, but only “Miltonvale Wesleyan, specified that *every student is required to attend . . . all revival services.*”³⁶

Miltonvale Wesleyan’s leaders did not limit student participation to strictly *spiritual* activities, but rather they formed school policy so that no sharp or dichotomous distinction be made between the spiritual and mundane activities of the students. In Miltonvale’s rural setting more “student activities take place on the campus because of the relatively isolated geographical location of the college

compared to a college in an urban setting.³⁷ In this atmosphere the faculty at MWC put much stock in developing each student's character through activities and curriculum which would facilitate their spiritual lives. In this fashion, school officials designed all student activities, whether academic or extra curricular, to be done to the glory of God. Wesley Knapp, Miltonvale's president from 1952 to 1969, pointed out the *Christ-centered* educational goals of MWC, saying that,

It implies first and foremost that Christ is the center around which the school's philosophy is built . . . HE . . . [is] the chief motivating force in the life of each staff member. Then and only then will the curricular program and the out-of-class activities assume their proper role.³⁸

The school's religious economy prescribed that no trivial or non-religious activity be an end in itself. Miltonvale Wesleyan made a conscious effort to put Christ first and to emphasize evangelism to the world. Secularism seemed to be the most egregious antithesis to the school's intentions. Roy S. Nicholson, the denominational editor, aptly summed up this approach in a 1946 editorial on Wesleyan education:

. . . Wesleyan Methodism has sought to balance education and evangelism. Education has not been emphasized as an end, but as a means to an end. The evangelistic spirit, which makes the whole life a stewardship to be used for God's Glory and man's good, has been kept before our college youth steadily. It has been stressed as an essential factor in useful and happy living. In a word, our emphasis has been upon the spiritual instead of the secular values.³⁹

At times, the school's efforts to sanctify all activities, and its professed avoidance of *secularism* and *worldliness*, directly related to its protection of the student's environment. For instance, not until the 1956-57 school year did MWC allow any intercollegiate sports, and then only on a trial basis. Furthermore, MWC did not fully implement intercollegiate sports until the 1967-68 school year.

Miltonvale was the first Wesleyan College to make this concession. Before this time the MWC's administrators believed that the school's environment would be tainted by associating with schools that were perhaps not as socially, religiously, and culturally conservative as the Wesleyan Methodists. Administrators enforced this rule with severity. If "found to have engaged in a regular game of football," a student might "be allowed to continue in school only on probation and only after making" a statement of public apology in chapel.⁴⁰ Within this older context, one Miltonvale student commented on a baseball game played in the fall of 1921: "The ball game was one that we all enjoyed, as it was played in a straight forward christian-like manner."⁴¹

While Miltonvale Wesleyan College may have blazed the trail for other Wesleyan schools regarding the intercollegiate sports issue, MWC was perhaps the most conservative college when it came to protecting the school's academic environment. Early in the school's history the faculty took a conservative academic stance in order to preserve a more pure learning environment. This conservative orientation developed at MWC during a period in which American Christianity was experiencing a violent eruption of internecine activity. The new intellectual and religious climate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries appeared to pose a major threat to the more conservative religious bodies in the United States. As American religious historian Sydney Ahlstrom indicated, the second half of the nineteenth century saw a major paradigm shift, bringing with it this new anxiety:

... Darwin unquestionably became the nineteenth century's Newton . . . the struggle over the new geology was a vital rehearsal in which new conceptions

of time and process were observed. Historical research . . . posed very detailed questions about the Bible, the history of doctrine, and other world religions . . . In every discipline from physics to biblical criticism, myth and error were being dispelled, and the result of this activity was a world view which raised problems of the most fundamental sort . . . Are all moral standards and religious beliefs simply behavioral adaptations of the most intelligent vertebrates? Are the Bible, the Christian faith, and the Church to be understood as having their existence entirely within History?⁴²

As liberalism crossed the Atlantic and began to infiltrate churches, as well as denominational schools, such as the University of Chicago, Wesleyans began to think that liberals intended higher criticism, secularism, and evolutionism to undermine the foundations of Christianity by questioning the authenticity and historical reliability of the Bible.⁴³ They also perceived a threat in the Social Gospel movement, which, with its leanings toward philosophical pragmatism, tended to hold that the only satisfactory test of truth was action.⁴⁴ According to George Marsden, for a number of conservative evangelical groups Social Gospellers implied that “theological doctrine and affirmation of faith in Christ . . . were irrelevant, except as an inspiration to moral action,” and “more specifically social action.”⁴⁵ Some of the more vocal “exponents of the Social Gospel were specifically contrasting their own social views with the” older soul-saving approach of conservative evangelicals.⁴⁶

These challenges did not escape the notice of conservative Christians. A series of twelve booklets entitled *The Fundamentals*, written by conservative Christian scholars in Great Britain, the United States, and Canada, began appearing in print in 1910.⁴⁷ Most significantly these works defended the Bible’s literal inerrancy in the face of protestant liberalism. In 1920 Curtis Lee Laws, Baptist editor of the *Watchman Examiner*, coined the epithet, *Fundamentalist* indicating Christians

prepared to fight for the *fundamentals* of the faith. Made up primarily of a large body of *conservatives*, Fundamentalists endeavored to conserve and defend the integrity of the Christian faith. They soon became engaged in protracted skirmishes within their own denominations and within society at large.⁴⁸

Wesleyans, for the most part, were not directly involved in the fundamentalist controversy, but “were generally cheering from the sidelines.”⁴⁹ While the Wesleyans were enticed by the Fundamentalists’ rally as a bulwark against *liberal theology* and *evolutionary theory*, they were not in line with the general reformed theology which dominated the movement, and Wesleyans employed more ambiguity on their doctrine of end times than the avowedly dispensationalist⁵⁰ Fundamentalists. However, Miltonvale Wesleyan College, something of a conservative anomaly within the Wesleyan Church, developed a strong brand of *Wesleyan Fundamentalism*, through which the faculty, staff, and even students of the college lamented the reign of *infidelity* at other colleges and held that Miltonvale would remain strongly committed to the fundamentals of the faith.⁵¹ While still advocating certain types of political action and societal reform (in contrast to most Fundamentalists, who gave, “very little attention to specific ethical issues, either personal or social . . . [including] prohibition”)⁵² the faculty at Miltonvale became consumed with protecting the learning environment from modernism, evolutionism, and higher criticism, yet still held to some societal reforms that set them apart from their more conservative contemporaries. By this token, throughout the early twentieth century, students and faculty at MWC reflected a tinge of their denomination’s older liberal spirit through

their involvement with prohibitionism, the anti-tobacco crusade, and their moderate stance on women's rights (which was perhaps directly linked to the prohibition cause). As one representative of the college put it, "God gave women the vision of better and brighter things" and Miltonvale Wesleyan recognized that, "a woman should have an equal educational opportunity with man..."⁵³

However, perhaps viewing themselves as a *voice in the desert*, the students and faculty at Miltonvale intentionally removed themselves from society, infrequently interacting with it. They made their commentaries on society at large within the confines of their conservative rural environment. The geographic setting of the school in the Kansas Conference had much to do with this conservative outlook. As Wayne Caldwell indicated, although the "area of religion and reform" in the United States "following 1897 fairly bristled with problems" brought on, in part, by the new intellectual climate and the progressive spirit of social reform in the Social Gospel, "Wesleyan Methodism in the predominantly agricultural climate of Kansas was" not directly or positively affected by such, "social and religious pressures." Besides their rallying around the cause of prohibition, Kansas Conference Wesleyans paid little heed to the liberal and social reform impulse in American Protestantism, instead they "steadfastly maintain[ed] a conservative stance," and responded to the new climate by negating its major ideologies.⁵⁴

Rather than dialoguing with these new intellectual voices, Miltonvale Wesleyan College became engaged in open warfare with them. To a certain degree, the Wesleyan Methodists followed this course as well. Looking back on the *fall* from

true religion which occurred around the turn of the century in America's colleges and universities, Rev. F. R. Eddy, one of the denomination's prominent leaders, said there "came an age when men became proud of their own mental achievements and sought to separate religion from the early life training of youth."⁵⁵ In *The Wesleyan Methodist* from the 1920s to the 1940s, church leaders attacked Modernism as a monumental attempt to rewrite text books and secularize educational institutions. The denomination denigrated Modernism because it led to "fatalism and the terrible slump in morals of high schools and colleges."⁵⁶ In 1923 the Wesleyan Methodists adopted a statement, used in the church's *Discipline* until the 1960s, that accurately sums up the spirit of the church on this issue:

We are aware that most great moves away from the simplicity of the gospel and away from the fundamentals of the faith . . . have their beginnings in the school systems . . . General education should be a secondary matter, not the primary object of the Church. No school under Church patronage and support shall be allowed to call in question, much less deny, the position of the Church on any point of Church doctrine or Church polity . . . We require, therefore, that no person be employed to teach in our schools who does not thoroughly believe in and advocate the doctrine of entire sanctification as set forth in the articles of religion.⁵⁷

Wesleyan colleges committed themselves to standing firm against the possibility of turning from their original principles, and Miltonvale, in particular, was somewhat proud of its record against any form of *falling away*. They set themselves against a type of "Modernism" as defined by scholars such as Shailer Mathews, a professor of theology at the University of Chicago from 1908 to 1933, who held that Modernism properly employs "the use of methods of modern science to . . . [meet] the needs of [the] modern world. . . . Modernists endeavor to reach beliefs and their application in

the same way that chemists or historians reach and apply their conclusions.”⁵⁸

Needless to say, the methodological pragmatism of this approach seemed scandalous to most Wesleyans, and especially to those at MWC.

As MWC’s geographic isolation became a metaphor of its self-imposed moral conservatism it also symbolized the school’s deliberate academic conservatism. As early as the 1915-16 school year Miltonvale Wesleyan’s leaders extolled the school for its removal from *higher criticism* and *infidelity* which reigned at other colleges and universities. During this school year a student’s promotional article rhetorically asked

Now which do you prefer, to be educated . . . in a school where the old time gospel is taught, or in one where “Higher Criticism” holds sway; whose instructors and president believe everything supernatural exists in the superstitious mind alone; where the Bible is interpreted by men lacking the unction of the Holy Spirit . . .

The writer continues by proclaiming that,

Noted infidels hold that the religion of Jesus Christ makes man a better citizen . . . tak[ing] infinite pains to make the religion of Jesus Christ of no effect . . . We are sorry to say that Higher Criticism is gaining a strong foothold in many of the schools and colleges of our land . . . We maintain that there is enough unbelief in the heart of the average man without having it fostered and encouraged by his Alma Mater.

But what has this to do with the influence of M.W.C.? Nothing, except in the way of contrast . . . What do we stand for? We have not outgrown the old-fashioned idea that salvation comes through faith in the atonement made by Jesus Christ.⁵⁹

In 1919, Miltonvale’s leaders wrote a series of articles in *The Wesleyan Methodist* which more fully communicated the school’s conservative position. They championed Miltonvale Wesleyan College as a school that aggressively stood for *Godly education*, and as a place where both *new* and *liberal* theology held no sway.

In these articles President H. W. McDowell, who served from 1916 to 1924, stated that: “The intellectual pride and self-sufficiency of man has always made it difficult for him to acknowledge his natural and sinful position . . .” More ominously, McDowell reasoned that the evolutionary theory made no room for the miraculous and the supernatural by excluding them as mere fictions.⁶⁰ McDowell deduced that, “The prevalent teaching is diametrically opposed to the doctrines of grace and salvation which we as a church believe . . .” Just as Miltonvale Wesleyan College stood in opposition to the general *worldliness* through some of the reforms to which they were committed, so McDowell and those with a vested interest in the school felt it necessary to protect the learning environment from academic corruption. McDowell was aware that efforts to protect the learning environment would be condemned as narrow and bigoted.⁶⁰ American intellectuals such as H. L. Mencken satirized small religious schools as training camps for the narrow-minded: “But what a college! You will find one in every valley of the land, with its single building in its bare pasture lot, and its half-idiot pedagogues and broken down preachers.”⁶¹ McDowell, however, quickly insisted that as long as the school’s scholarship remained up to par, *narrowness* was not pejorative for the Christian, “After all,” he reasoned, “there are several people who are going this same *narrow* way and we shall have some splendid company.”⁶²

Since Miltonvale unconditionally rejected *infidelities* in order to safeguard its program, McDowell insisted that, “We know of but one . . . method by which we may make sure that our schools are teaching what the church stands for, that is by

employing only teachers who are . . . committed to the fundamentals of Christian doctrine and belief . . .” Keeping the school safe meant, “insisting upon a safe faculty . . .”⁶³ Likewise caution they exercised with regard to teaching materials, by, “careful selection of text-books, using those that contain the least that is objectionable . . .”⁶⁴

Miltonvale’s curriculum before the 1960s could best be described as liberal arts oriented with a caution more peculiar to a bible school. Although, unlike the bible schools’ curriculum, Miltonvale taught a fairly broad range of classic subjects, nonetheless administrators implored teachers to exercise academic caution in their choice of materials. This brief list of some course offerings from the early 1920s reveals the range of course work:

Table 1. Sampling of Course Offerings at MWC in the Early 1920s

Humanities	Religion	The Sciences
Geography	Bible	Trigonometry
Sociology	Miley I & II*	Plane Geometry
Civics	Perfect Love	Agriculture
Colonial History	Homiletics	Physiology
English I & II	Church History	Chemistry

*Course in systematic theology.⁶⁵

Not only were Miltonvale’s courses fairly general in these early years, partially because of the academy/junior college status, but the school also employed a pre-critical simplicity of interpretation, meaning, as Virginia Lieson Brereton points

out in her study of bible schools, that the academic climate at Miltonvale would have, “disparaged the critical, inquiring, speculative, and restless scholar who served as the model for most twentieth century intellectuals . . .”⁶⁶ In contradistinction to the curriculum at MWC, by the early 1920s religious subjects had become only a minute part of the mainstream of academic curriculum in the United States. What’s more, the majority of United States colleges and universities marginalized religious perspectives of their colleges courses. According to George Marsden, by the 1920s religion was not “regarded as one of the humanities and although often a topic of investigation by psychologists and sociologists” this scientific attention “had become hostile toward any belief in the supernatural.”⁶⁷ Miltonvale Wesleyan arranged courses so that the divine element not be removed or usurped by the subject matter. In this way science was not shunned, because students could learn it as *facts*, rather than as ideology, by not focussing on the contemporary, interpretive side as with evolutionary process theories.⁶⁸ In this atmosphere, Miltonvale denigrated the language of *gradual process* and *naturalistic* explanations for human events and activities.

To insure that the curriculum and teaching staff remain within these boundaries, President McDowell created a list of fundamentals for MWC’s teachers to agree to before they were allowed on faculty:

1. I believe in the unity and trinity of the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.
2. I believe in the deity of Jesus Christ; in the miraculous conception and the virgin birth; in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus

3. I believe in the fall of man and the consequent sinful nature of all mankind which necessitates a divine atonement.
4. I believe in the new birth as a miraculous and instantaneous work of the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ.
5. I believe in entire sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Ghost as a distinct work of grace subsequent to regeneration.
6. I believe that God created man and the entire universe by a direct and special operation of divine power.
7. I believe in a personal devil, hell, and the eternal punishment of the unregenerate.
8. I believe in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.⁶⁹

While this may seem like a colossal exercise in hairsplitting, McDowell only enacted it in response to the perceived threat from the contemporary secular academic atmosphere. Not too unlike other conservative religious groups of this period, the Wesleyans at MWC felt a rudimentary challenge, to their faith and their educational enterprise.

Miltonvale's conservatism was not a complete anomaly within the Wesleyan Methodist Church. In fact, later during the same month that *The Wesleyan Methodist* published McDowell's fundamentals, the educational board of the denomination adopted them, in slightly altered form, as a standard for prospective teachers, and in 1923 the general conference of the denomination accepted them as a "Reaffirmation of the Doctrines of our Faith . . ." ⁷⁰ However, the fact that the Wesleyan Fundamentals were issued from Miltonvale's campus is indicative of the historic conservative position of this school and of Wesleyans in the Kansas Conference in general.

Although MWC's officials purposefully insulated the school on more than one level, the college did not seek to shut itself off completely from the world. In fact, Miltonvale's supporters understood that the college fulfilled its goal of properly training its students for ministry unto the world. As stated in Miltonvale's 1923 yearbook, the school stood by its traditionalism for a specific reason: "No apology is made for the fact that the institution stands definitely for the fundamentals of Christianity [and for] the Bible as the inspired word of God." Ultimately, this facilitated the school's goal of preparing students for Christian service.⁷¹ Edward Angell, a student who attended Miltonvale in the 1930s, commented that, "Because I have been to MWC I feel better able to face and conquer life's problems" and "better able to go out into a darkened world to hold up the high standards of MWC, telling others, "of a Christ who can save from sin."⁷²

The students and faculty at Miltonvale took the passage from the Gospel of Matthew 5:14-16 to heart:

Ye are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven.

In view of these verses, the student body of 1944-45 pledged that, "We the students of M.W.C., are endeavoring to trim and mould our lives that they may be as a city that is set on a hill shedding forth its light to those in a world darkened by sin."⁷³ In a literal sense the campus at MWC was considered a *city on a hill*, standing, "at the top of College Hill, overlooking the city of Miltonvale . . . as a living inspiration forwarding those ideals and principles which have so enriched our lives . . .

“⁷⁴ The *City on a Hill* motif, long since a tradition in American Christianity, especially among Puritans, typically was employed by Christian groups with reference to their being called apart from the world by God, while they simultaneously acted as an example of righteousness to the world.”⁷⁵ Miltonvale students titled one of the school’s earliest yearbooks the *Kohinoor*, a name shared by the world’s most famous diamond, signifying “*Mountain of Light*,” indicating the fact that “Miltonvale Wesleyan was founded by our church in order to train young men and women” within the safe atmosphere of Miltonvale “for efficient work out in the world. Then when they go forth . . . they might have the true light in their own hearts and thereby brighten some dark corners of the earth.”⁷⁶ In a 1919 poem entitled *What Means Miltonvale to Me?*, Sadie B. Sinclair expressed the school’s mission alongside the general devotion students felt for the school:

. . . Is Miltonvale a guiding star,
 A shining Beacon Light
 To guide my footsteps from afar
 To God, and home and right?
 And have the lessons learned with her
 Become a part of me?
 And shall her good be measured e’er
 Throughout eternity?⁷⁷

This outlook continued throughout Miltonvale’s history, and during the school’s sixtieth anniversary a school representative remembered MWC as “a lighthouse” and “a *city on a hill*—an institution to give the youth of their day and our day an education with the plus factor which is Christ.”⁷⁸

Miltonvale Wesleyan College gained a remarkable amount of allegiance from its alumni, and students, who felt that they fulfilled an integral part of the school’s

great mission. For them, Miltonvale was more than just a small rural community in the middle of Kansas. Rather, it was a distinctive place to which they were drawn to complete their education in a thoroughly Christian context. The spiritual and moral image here made it, as a school catalogue stated, “not only an institution for higher learning, but a place to become established Christians for” twentieth century living.⁷⁹ Over the years, students gathered at Miltonvale from all over the western half of the United States in order to take part in the life of this small school. In the early 1940s a member of the Theological Department personified the perception that the “great need of the world today is instruction in righteousness. The human race is hopelessly dying” and “Because of this fact, Miltonvale Wesleyan College stands as a beacon light on the Kansas plains to guide youth in its [search] for better education today.”⁸⁰

Miltonvale’s supporters expressed the *light* coming from it in sharp contrast to the *darkness* of the world. As time passed, the message and mission of the school adapted to meet the challenge of each era. The exigency of the war years in the early 1940s provoked students to proclaim the “soul-winning” Gospel to the “millions of souls going to hell! What will keep them from this horrible destruction? Atheism?– Communism?– Fascism?– Nazism?– Modernism?– No! Christ is the only solution . . .” Because a number of Wesleyans believed that students from “worldly high schools and colleges,” were not expected to answer the call, Miltonvale Wesleyan College would, “raise up . . . sacrificing young men and women,” to spread the Gospel to the world.⁸¹ In a very concrete sense the war years marked active missions for a number of alumni and students at MWC who served in the United States armed forces, some

as chaplains, such as Martin Cox and Rufus D. Reisdorph. In the broader context students went out from Miltonvale to serve in a plethora of areas both secular and church-related. As Caldwell showed, because of the influence of the MWC environment, students left the school and became,

ministers, and other Christian workers, missionaries, teachers and administrative officials for the denomination, as well as . . . laymen . . . [By 1968] Miltonvale Wesleyan College [had] sent no less than 4,000 young people out into society and into various conferences of the Wesleyan Methodist Church better-fitted and prepared to serve their fellowmen.⁸²

Besides the ever important *moral elevation* aspect of MWC, less monumental elements also drew students to the school. A large percentage of students from the western conferences came to Miltonvale from small towns. Consequently, in some instances, these students' devotion to the school arose from a certain degree of sentimentality for the rural setting and the small college atmosphere. This penchant is represented in these panegyric lines which one student devoted to MWC:

I like colleges that nestle
In quiet little towns
And seem to offer something more
Than credits, caps and gowns . . .

A mammoth institution holds
Within its office space,
Along with proof of my degree,
A photo of my face.

The most it knows about me is
My city, birth and class,
I like my old church-college best;
She doesn't think en masse.⁸³

To students, the tight-knit communal, denominational, and familial interest which MWC represented, made the school an appealing to them. During the 1948-49

school year a survey showed that students travelled a total of 79,460 miles to come to Miltonvale. The survey also indicated that,

Many of our students have grown up in homes where the college has always been known. Thirty-seven different students [out of 242] have had either one or both parents who received their education here. Over sixty students have had brothers or sisters who have attended M.W.C. The fact that six or seven members of one family have chosen Miltonvale speaks of deep loyalty.⁸⁴

A great deal of the faculty, administration and staff who served at MWC also had a history of close relation and allegiance to the school. For instance, of the eight men who served as presidents of the institution, five were MWC alumni.⁸⁵

Perhaps the most important motivator for attendance at MWC was the spiritual atmosphere which was so crucial an element in students' choice to come to Miltonvale. The spiritual and pure atmosphere was one of the main dimensions which M.W.C. strove to provide for its students.⁸⁶ Some students selected MWC because it, "upheld the Bible and Christianity" and was a place where, "faith in God was fostered and cherished . . . for [at MWC] our spiritual welfare has been promoted through right teaching, weekly students' prayer meetings, and by a . . . Christian faculty."⁸⁷ Ben Finley, a student at Miltonvale in the late 1930s, addressed this aspect of the school, explicitly revealing the special status of the college and its missions in verse, which can be sung to Cornell's song: "High Above Cayuga's Waters:"

Far above the worldly standard
On a Bible Height,
Stands our noble Alma Mater
Bathed in God's own light

Far above the hum of battle
Of a world of strife,
Stands our beloved Alma Mater

Pointing to the way of life . . .⁸⁸

This view of Miltonvale Wesleyan College runs throughout the school's history.

During the 1960-61 school year an MWC representative expressed the uniqueness of the school's Christian mission with these words: "Miltonvale Wesleyan College is more than buildings and grounds, more than books and apparatus, more than even the faculty and students . . . Miltonvale is a symbol, a center of learning, a *fortress of righteousness*" (italics mine).⁸⁹

MWC acted as a refuge and fortress of righteousness in light of both the moral tone of the college and town communities, and with regard to the controlled academic condition of the college. MWC's founders placed the school in its rural setting for the explicit purpose of protecting the student population from the immoral conditions of larger towns and cities. They intentionally chose the site of Miltonvale for its elevated moral status. In connection with this, the townsfolk thought the college gave the town an even greater moral standing. Miltonvale Wesleyan's students faculty and staff often referred to the school as a *city on a hill* to indicate its standing firm as a Christian institution of learning in opposition to *worldliness*. But, as expressed above, this ideology was not an altogether inward turning one. Most involved with the school believed that safeguarding the environment would facilitate the proper training and preparation of students who would eventually serve as active agents both *to* and *in* the world.

NOTES

1. Silas W. Bond, "Miltonvale College," *The Wesleyan Methodist*, 21 Oct., 1908, 8.
2. *Miltonvale Record*, 17 April, 1908.
3. *Miltonvale Record*, 3 April, 1908.
4. Kenneth O. Brown, *Holy Ground: A Study of the American Camp Meeting* (New York and London: Garland Publishers, Incorporated, 1992), 173.
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6. Robert E. Black, "Becoming a Church: Wesleyan Methodism, 1899 - 1935," in *Reformers and Revivalists: The History of the Wesleyan Church*, ed. Wayne E. Caldwell (Indianapolis, IN: Wesley Press, 1992), 206.
7. Robert Smith Bader, *Prohibition in Kansas: A History* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 18.
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10. *Ibid.*, 186.
11. "Kansas Conference Minutes," 38th Annual Conference, 1908, II, 23 (the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America).
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13. Caldwell, "The History of the Kansas Conference," 188.
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15. Ellen Weiss, *City in the Woods: The Life and Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard* (NY, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 8. Charles Edwin Jones also focuses on this aspect of American Methodism, showing that "holiness writers used the camp meeting as a metaphor of the exuberance which characterized truly sanctified Christians. . . . Inhabited by fully sanctified believers alone," the camp meeting site became "a veritable heaven on earth." Holiness people made use of Biblical terminology (exodus from Egypt as salvation) and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (residence in the Promise Land, Canaan, or Beulah Land as a metaphor for entire sanctification) to express God's work in their lives at these camp

- meetings. Charles Edwin Jones, *Perfectionists Persuasion: The Holiness Movement and American Methodism, 1867-1936* (Metuchen NJ: The Scarecrow Press Incorporated, 1974) 35.
16. Lola Macy, "Miltonvale College Monitor," *Athena* (Miltonvale Wesleyan College student yearbook, 1914): 42.
 17. Silas W. Bond, "The Miltonvale Wesleyan College," *Aeonian* (Miltonvale Wesleyan College student yearbook, 1915): 41.
 18. Betzer, "The Influence of MWC," *Aeonian* (Miltonvale Wesleyan College student yearbook, 1915): 39.
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 22. Alfred C. Spencer, "Is it Wrong to Dance?," *The Wesleyan Methodist*, 22 May, 1929, 4.
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 25. "Faculty Minutes" (Miltonvale Wesleyan College, 1934-1945): 4.
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 31. "Anti-Tobacco League," *Sunflower*, 1919, 41.

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33. Pastor Dodd, "Religious Life at M.W.C.," *Sunflower*, 1919, 27.
34. "Status Study of Miltonvale Wesleyan College: Candidate for Membership to North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools" (unpublished report, May, 1967), 10.
35. "Religious Life Committee," *Sunflower*, 1959, 60.
36. Willard Garfield Smith, "The History of Church Controlled Colleges," 349.
37. "Status Study of Miltonvale Wesleyan College," 9.
38. Wesley L. Knapp, "President," *Sunflower*, 1958, 8.
39. Roy S. Nicholson, "Wesleyan Methodism and Education," *The Wesleyan Methodist*, 20 Feb., 1946, 1.
40. "Faculty Minutes of Miltonvale Wesleyan College" (Miltonvale Wesleyan College, 1916-1933): 36.
41. Rufus Reisdorph, "Harvest Home Day," *Sunflower*, 1922, 33.
42. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 764.
43. Black, "Becoming a Church," 202.
44. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870 - 1925* (Oxford, NY, Melbourne, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1980), 91.
45. Ibid., 92.
46. Ibid.
47. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 815.
48. Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America: An Historical Account of American Religious Life* (NY, London: Macmillan Publishers Co, Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1987), 340.
49. Black, "Becoming a Church," 203.

50. Dispensationalism has much in common with conservative Protestantism and Fundamentalism. It is an approach to Biblical interpretation which, "divides and interprets," the sacred history of the world, usually into seven epochs. God's covenant with humanity sets forth the required plan of salvation for each era. Dispensationalists strongly asserted that their interpretation was the "literal" rendering of the Bible and they rigidly insisted on verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible. They accepted premillennial teaching, believing that the present dispensation, the Church age, will end in judgement and the, "historical kingdom of Christ on earth will be established in a future millennium." C. Norman Kraus, "Dispensationalism," in *Eerdman's Handbook to Christianity in America*, ed. Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, George M. Marsden, David F. Wells, John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 327.; H. Ray Dunning, "Dispensationalism," in *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Richard S. Taylor (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of KC, 1983), 168.

51. Black, "Becoming a Church," 203.

52. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 120.

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54. Caldwell, "The History of the Kansas Conference," 187-88.

55. Rev. F.R. Eddy, "Education of the Wesleyan Youth," *Sunflower*, 1940.

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57. *Discipline of the Wesleyan Methodist Church* (Marion, IN: The Wesley Press, 1963), 148.

58. Shailer Mathews, "The Faith of Modernism," in *A Documentary History of Religion in America Since 1865*, Edwin S. Gaustad, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 398.

59. Betzer, "The Influence of MWC," 39.

60. "Miltonvale College," *The Wesleyan Methodist*, 1 Oct., 1919, 4.

61. Ibid.

62. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 916.

63. "Miltonvale College," *The Wesleyan Methodist*, 1 Oct., 1919, 5.

64. Ibid.

65. Compiled from data in, "Faculty Minutes of Miltonvale Wesleyan College" (Miltonvale Wesleyan College, 1916-1933).

66. Virginia Lieson Brereton, "Protestant Fundamentalist Bible Schools, 1882-1940" (PhD. dissertation, Columbia University, 1981), 87.

67. George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 333-34.

68. Brereton, "Protestant Fundamentalist Bible Schools, 1882-1940," 207.

69. "Miltonvale College," *The Wesleyan Methodist*, 1 Oct., 1919, 5.

70. Black, "Becoming a Church," 203.

71. "The Religious Life at M.W.C.," *Sunflower*, 1924.

72. *Miltonvale Record*, 13 June, 1935.

73. "Ye are the Light of the World," *Sunflower*, 1945, 6.

74. "College," *Sunflower*, 1928.

75. See Alan Simpson's chapter on "Salvation through Separation," in *Puritanism in Old and New England* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1955).

76. "The Miltonvale College Monitor," *Kohinoor*, 1913, 38.

77. "Miltonvale College," *The Wesleyan Methodist*, 1 Oct., 1919, 4.

78. *Sunflower*, 1969, 4.

79. *Images of Miltonvale Wesleyan College* (Miltonvale Wesleyan College catalogue, 1969): 13.

80. "Theological Undergrads," *Sunflower*, 1943, 26.

81. "The Theological Department," *Sunflower*, 1942, 23.

82. Caldwell, "The History of the Kansas Conference," 223.

83. Harriet Ruhenbrod, "The Church College," *Sunflower*, 1951, 63.
84. "M.W.C.'s Students," *Sunflower*, 1949, 145.
85. Caldwell, "The History of the Kansas Conference," 213.
86. *Images of Miltonvale Wesleyan College*, 13.
87. "What M.W.C. Has Meant to Me," *Sunflower*, 1924.
88. Ben Finley, "My Alma Mater," *Sunflower*, 1938, 61.
89. "Viewing Miltonvale," *Sunflower*, 1961, 9.

Holiness Unto the Lord

Mrs. C. H. M.

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Mrs. C. H. Morris

1. "Called un - to ho - li - ness," Church of our God, Pur - chase of
 2. "Called un - to ho - li - ness," chil - dren of light, Walk - ing with
 3. "Called un - to ho - li - ness," praise His dear name! This bless - ed
 4. "Called un - to ho - li - ness," glo - ri - ous thought! Up from its
 5. "Called un - to ho - li - ness," Bride of the Lamb, Wait - ing the

Je - sus, re - deem - ed by His blood; Called from the world and its
 Je - sus in gar - ments of white; Rai - ment un - sul - lied, nor
 se - cret to faith now made plain. Not our own right - eous - ness,
 wil - der - ness wan - der - ings brought, Out from the shad - ows and
 Bride - groom's re - turn - ing a - gain; Lift up your heads for the

i - dols to flee, Called from the bond - age of sin to be free.
 tar - nished with sin, God's Ho - ly Spir - it a - bid - ing with - in.
 but Christ with - in, Liv - ing, and reign - ing, and sav - ing from sin.
 dark - ness of night, In - to the Ca - naan of per - fect de - light.
 day draw - eth near When in His beau - ty the King shall ap - pear.

CHORUS

"Ho - li - ness un - to the Lord," is our watch - word and song, "Ho - li - ness un - to the Lord,"

as we're march - ing a - long; Sing "Ho - li - ness un - to the Lord," Sing

loud and long, "Ho - li - ness un - to the Lord," now and for - ev - er.
 "Ho - li - ness un - to the Lord,"

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The motto of our College is "Holiness Unto the Lord." Perhaps this is one of the reasons why this song has been our favorite school song. Not only does the song appropriately express our motto, but it also denotes the type of life we strive to live.

Fig. 7. From the 1937 *Sunflower*, p. 61.



Fig. 8. Miltonvale Wesleyan College Band, 1910-1911. President Bond is seated third from the right on the front row (*Sunflower*, 1959, p. 61).



Fig. 9. Miltonvale Wesleyan College's Anti-Tobacco Association officers, 1926-1927. Left to Right: W. Freeborn, G. Mitchell, B. Smith (*Sunflower*, 1927).



Fig. 10. 1938-1939 MWC College Quartet travelled throughout the Midwest and West, recruiting students and representing the college. From left to right: Orval Butcher - second tenor, Gordon Goodsell - first tenor, Myron Holloway - first bass, Kenneth Knapp - second bass (*Sunflower*, 1939, p. 53).



Fig. 11. Students studying in the library during the 1946-47 school year (*Sunflower* 1947, p. 15).



Fig. 12. In 1956, MWC's baseball team became the first intercollegiate sports team of Wesleyan Methodist colleges. Standing, left to right: Hubbard, Wagner, Worrell, Ming, Pankey, K. Dyer, McHenry, Co-Captain; Gooden, Coach Ashby. Seated: D. Dyer, Captain; Peabody, Co-Captain; Burkhalter, Ensign, Campbell, Stephens, Ernst (*Sunflower*, 1956, p. 47).



Fig. 13. Sapphonian Society cheerleaders, 1960-1961. Left to right: J. Garlow, W. Lippe, M. Cox, H. Mast, S. Kaufman (*Sunflower*, 1961, p. 5).



Fig. 14. Professor Martin E. Brandt, who later served as business manager, is seen here teaching a Social Sciences course (*Sunflower*, 1964, p. 19).

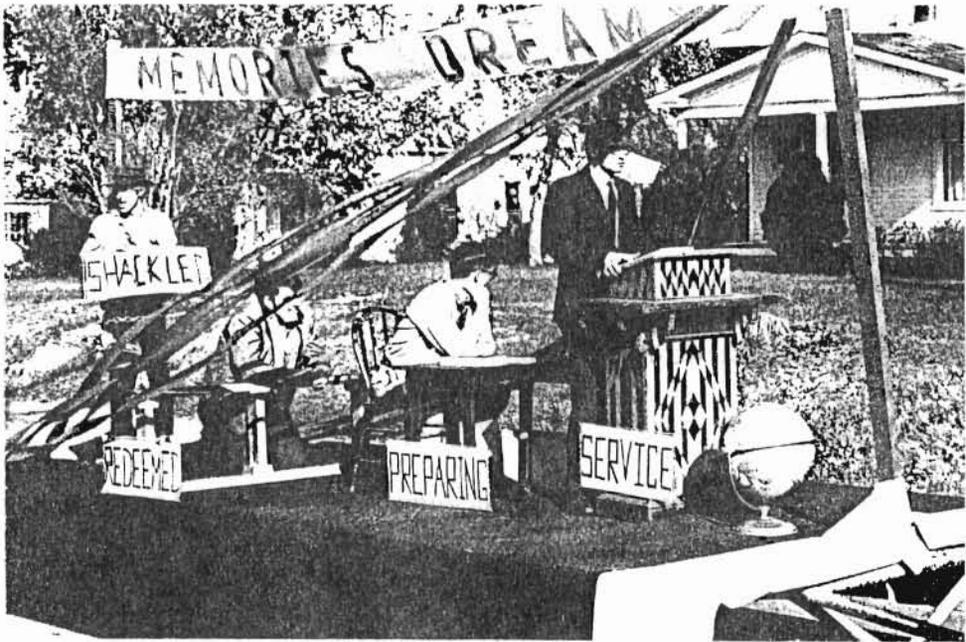


Fig. 15. The Theology Department's float for Homecoming, 1969, illustrates the life of a Christian from redemption to divine commission (*Sunflower*, 1970, p. 67).

CHAPTER 5

SIXTY-TWO YEARS OF STRUGGLE AND SACRIFICE:

MAJOR CHALLENGES TO

MILTONVALE WESLEYAN COLLEGE'S CONTINUED OPERATION

From the time of its founding in 1909, Miltonvale Wesleyan College was beset with a wide range of critical difficulties that tended to impair the school's ability to thrive. Operating the school to serve the vast area of the West was no easier than maintaining it in the geographically and economically isolated town of Miltonvale, Kansas. During its sixty-two year history, the school frequently became plagued with financial difficulties and repeated deficiencies in student numbers. The sheer distance students traveled in order to attend proved insurmountable for some who lived as far away as California, Oregon, and North Dakota. Employment opportunities for students in Miltonvale were negligible, making it difficult, if not impossible, for certain students to finance their education. Added to these obstacles was the fact that the school was somewhat hindered by both a lack of unity among the western conferences that it served and an inability of the Wesleyan Methodist Church to raise sufficient funds to conduct the college properly.¹ When combined, these elements impeded Miltonvale Wesleyan College's growth and progress, making its ongoing operation an almost constant struggle.

MWC's supporters tried to keep a positive outlook and recognized God as their deliverer from these afflictions. Times of severe turmoil, specifically the Depression and dust bowl years, were later looked back on by the school's supporters with solemn awe. They believed that God guided the school and gave strength to men and women of courage who tirelessly dedicated themselves to the school's mission. Their faith and allegiance to the school carried MWC through its most critical crises. Debt might build up and enrollment might plummet, but those closest to MWC continued onward, "With our feet on God's Word and our faith unshaken in the mighty atonement of Jesus Christ we are marching forward under the banner of *Holiness unto the Lord* with a firm belief that," the future will be brighter.²

From the beginning the leaders of the school intended that the school stay out of debt. In August, 1909, President Silas W. Bond declared in *The Wesleyan Methodist* that "We simply must keep the school going and out of debt from the very first day. If our people will act quickly and according to their ability there will not be the least difficulty."³ But these hopes were dashed as economic realities set in, making this goal all but impossible. The greatest financial encumbrance at Miltonvale Wesleyan College grew from the inability of its officials to raise sufficient and regular gifts for current expenses. For the first eight years of the school's history the school went behind on current expenses every year at a rate of approximately one thousand dollars per year. By 1917 its liabilities totaled \$8,364.85.⁴

The school took the debt in stride during the administration of President H. W. McDowell, who navigated it safely through the World War I "period when many small

colleges were forced to close their doors because of a lack of both money and students . . .⁵ McDowell's administration also saw, "gains . . . made in income over expenses, making possible a reduction of liabilities to \$2,752.12 in 1924." From this period until 1931 the school experienced a substantial deterioration of the financial condition, which by 1931 amounted to a total indebtedness of \$19,766.42 from the accumulation of current expense deficits.⁶

The Depression and dust bowl years proved particularly hard on the town of Miltonvale. During the 1930s, overproduction of wheat in Kansas exhausted the soil and devalued the price of wheat from ninety-nine cents a bushel in 1929 to a mere twenty-five cents in 1931-32. The price of corn grown in Kansas during these years also dropped to a low point of fifteen cents per bushel.⁷ According to Kansas historian Francis W. Schruben, the nadir of this cycle of over production and drought occurred in Kansas, "when corn became cheaper to burn than coal and a barrel of crude oil cost less than five gallons of purified drinking water."⁸

Even after the crash in 1929, and before the major calamities of the Depression and dust bowl hit Kansas, some of the citizens of Miltonvale remained optimistic. A commentary made in the *Miltonvale Record* in the spring of 1931 witnesses to this optimism, however naive:

We still refuse to be alarmed over the outcome of the recent business recession and the low price of farm products. In a drive around Miltonvale Sunday afternoon we noticed not less than half a dozen baseball games in progress . . . As long as the national pastime holds its interest on the people, we can be reasonably sure that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the country and we can look to the future with confidence.⁹

Besides the struggles of MWC, perhaps the most glaring toll the Depression took on the community of Miltonvale was the closing of its state bank in 1933. Bank closings in Kansas were a chronic problem with the number of state banks and trust companies shrinking from 790 in 1930, with holdings of \$238.6 million, to 648 in 1932, with holdings of \$166.7 million.¹⁰ After President Roosevelt prescribed an examination of the nation's banks in 1933, authorities decided that Miltonvale's bank failed to meet the criteria necessary for reopening. The community managed without a bank until the Citizens State Bank opened in 1946.¹¹

Miltonvale Wesleyan's significant debt made the school's perpetuation extremely precarious. In September, 1931, President William F. McConn, who held this office from 1924 to 1932, commented that in his eighth year of service to the school he saw Kansas with the largest wheat crop in its history, but with a worth of only twenty-five cents per bushel. Added to this, he lamented the general financial conditions of this period and the shortage of student employment opportunities which caused so many students to give up coming because they could not raise the necessary finances.¹²

All over Kansas both the state's population and educational institutions were affected by the negative turn of events. Through the 1930s the state sustained a five percent population reduction with a net loss of about 103,000 people, dropping the total population from 1,880,999 to 1,778,248.¹³ During the 1931-32 school year MWC registered only fifty-one students, which turned out to be its all-time lowest enrollment. In the same year that Miltonvale Wesleyan experienced its most severe drop in enrollment, a statewide decline of college students occurred, dropping from 18,691 to

17,879. At the college level Kansas's thirty-five institutions of 1930 dropped to thirty-two by 1932.¹⁴ In this year President McConn acknowledged that,

A number of schools in the middle west are closing their doors and others are cutting back curriculum in an endeavor to prevent closing. Miltonvale cut her curriculum offerings this year . . . but she purposes [*sic*] to carry on in her God-given task of training young people for Christian service.¹⁵

The events of the Depression years weighed heavily on the nation's psyche, and Wesleyans, in particular, were subject to the depression *Zeitgeist*. The denomination's newspaper bore witness to the theological pessimism of this period, running premillennialist articles throughout the 1930s which hypothesized this age was "beholding the stage all prepared for the last great drama of the Dispensation of the Holy Ghost."¹⁶ At MWC in the early thirties theology students frequently discussed, "the Lord's return to earth again." And a number of MWC students thought, "Surely the time is at hand, even at the door."¹⁷

God's providence provided comfort for MWC's supporters, and President McConn reflected that "This is a time when business men are going into bankruptcy," and others are suffering defeat, but under God's guidance Miltonvale would "go forward." In the fall of 1931, McConn preached a sermon of hope at Miltonvale that took as its text, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward . . ." (Exodus 14:28). McConn encouraged the congregation in this time of adversity saying, "Before" the Israelites, "stretched the sea . . ." on either side of them stood hills, and Pharaoh's army pressed behind them.

There was no avenue of escape before them . . . but the open sky and they had no airplanes, but the command was to go forward. The calamity-howlers and the

faint hearted . . . doubtless were crying that the end . . . had been reached and that they had as well have died in Egypt. But the divine command was to go forward!¹⁸

McConn proclaimed this word of hope as God's providential message for Miltonvale Wesleyan College.

The other Wesleyan Methodist schools also experienced hardship during the 1930s and 1940s. Marion College, Marion, Indiana, registered its lowest enrollment on record, dropping from 187 in 1931-32 to 143 in 1932-33.¹⁹ At Houghton College, Houghton, New York, under President Stephen W. Paine's able leadership, the school "met and solved the kaleidoscopic problems incident to operating a Church-controlled college during," the World War II period. In the 1942-43 school year, the Selective Service Act made such inroads on enrollment that one hundred students dropped out of Houghton.²⁰ With each school, the faith of its supporters and the dedicated work of the faculty enabled it to pull through times of difficulty. At Wesleyan Methodist College in Central, South Carolina, President J. Frank Childs steered the school through years of financial burden as liabilities rose to \$14,274.23.²¹ During his administration, at the end of certain months Childs could only pay the teachers twenty percent of their salary.²²

Miltonvale enacted similar cutbacks as the financial needs of the school grew. Because of depression in the Midwest and because Miltonvale Wesleyan College "failed to receive sufficient funds from the District to operate the school without incurring debt" the College Board offered a reductive plan of action to the denomination's Book Committee. Under this plan, proposed by the Miltonvale Board in early 1931, the school would do away with two teachers, and would discontinue either the College Department

or one year of college work as well as the Normal Training Department.²³ The Book Committee accepted a modified curtailment at MWC that amounted to offering only one year of college that would alternate years, switching from the freshman to sophomore year.

Likewise, to reduce expenditures teachers' salaries were on occasion left unpaid or the teachers were asked to give back up to one sixth of their pay for the operation of the school. In the denominational paper, McConn put forth pleas for money necessary for Miltonvale Wesleyan's preservation. In *The Wesleyan Methodist*, McConn explained that

Miltonvale needs money constantly, for bills always have to be met. Our operating expenses are being reduced somewhat in that a President has to be paid for only half time service . . . Our teachers must be paid, our buildings must be heated, lighted and maintained, and we have no outside source of dependence except the Educational Budget which amounts to less than one-half cent per day per member.²⁴

Prospects for the school's survival through this period looked bleak, and at one point the Miltonvale College Board asked whether, "it would not be well to close Miltonvale, sell all property . . . and use the money to apply on bills."²⁵ Rather than surrender to this fate, McConn appealed to the vital need for a western school and affirmed that MWC, though passing "through many trying experiences" saw the "guiding hand of Jehovah" enabling the school "to continue her work."²⁶ Others echoed these convictions. W. R. Emerson, secretary of the Miltonvale College Board, claimed that

The question which now confronts us is whether or not we will keep her [MWC's] doors open and allow her to continue the work of turning out workers of the church. Perhaps another pertinent question is, whether we can afford not to keep the school at work, doing its best for the church.²⁷

The rhetoric of other leaders in the West followed lines such as this, putting forth pleas for the western school, that the denomination “could not afford to close.”

These leaders appealed to the *providence of God*, which had carried the school thus far and would see it through the Depression as well. Just as in previous times of stress and strain, they urged the denomination to “Pray with” Miltonvale, “that we may have a gracious outpouring of Divine blessing” in these times when “human vision cannot see the way.”²⁸ Warren S. Freeborn, who later served as Miltonvale’s president from 1948 to 1952, exhorted the readers of *The Wesleyan Methodist* to seek the will of God and support Miltonvale by, “reenacting . . . the *Spirit of ’76* in the *Sanctified Spirit of ’32*.” In a detailed jeremiad, Freeborn warned that if Miltonvale Wesleyan College’s supporters abandoned it now they would soon be guilty of “wrecking the faith of our sons and daughters in institutions . . . where Modernism, Higher Criticism, Skepticism, and the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism” work together to “make our youth an easy prey to the devilish principle . . .”²⁹ These statements reveal the sense of critical urgency regarding the college’s conditional existence at this juncture.

C. Floyd Hester met and overcame the dire situation at Miltonvale while serving as its president from 1932 to 1946. By Hester’s frugal management and self-sacrifice MWC survived these challenging years.³⁰ Unmarried, Hester lived a life of complete devotion to the school, seeing it through its darkest days. Hester, raised in Jewel County, Kansas, completed his post-secondary education at Houghton and Oberlin Colleges. He served in the army during World War I and spent four and a half years traveling abroad while working for various relief agencies under the auspices of the YMCA.

The Hester family had a history of benevolence toward MWC. Floyd Hester's father, B. F. Hester, a pastor in the Wesleyan Methodist Church at the time of the school's founding, offered much support to the nascent college. While out soliciting for the new school in 1909 President Bond asked B. F. Hester to pledge a thousand dollars to Miltonvale Wesleyan.³¹ He made the pledge even though he was already pledging a similar amount to Houghton. From these life experiences, C. Floyd Hester came to value the kind of forbearance and sacrifice which would be so associated with his service as president at Miltonvale Wesleyan.

The 1939 Miltonvale College yearbook listed four reasons for the school's survival through the Depression years. Heading the list is C. Floyd Hester:

The first reason was that of securing for the office of Treasurer, our beloved President Hester. We sincerely believe that because of our President's exceptional powers [he has] been able to solve the Herculean financial problem.³²

The other reasons for successful survival included: the sacrificial devotion of the faculty, the renewed loyalty of the constituency, which now more than ever stood behind the school, and, "by far the most important . . . the Providence of God [at] M.W.C. . . ."³³ Hester recognized that the hand of God constantly led the school through the tumult. When the enrollment climbed from fifty-one to ninety-two from 1931 to 1932, Hester gave, "thanks to the Lord for the large enrollment . . ."³⁴ This trend continued under his leadership with steady gains being made each year until by the 1938-39 school year 228 students had enrolled.

Hester did extensive traveling and recruiting for the school during these years,

lending a great deal of support to campaigns for donations and gifts to the school. Hester provided new vigor to one of the school's long standing traditions, Harvest Home Day held in late October, which took in food supplies from Miltonvale's constituency, including fruits, vegetables, chickens, eggs, ducks, ground wheat, feed for the college cows, and other goods.³⁵ President Hester recounted the sacrificial giving of "four women, all above eighty years of age" who lived respectively in Oklahoma, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Nebraska. These women would often relate to Hester "the providential ways in which money came in so they could send their offering to M.W.C." Hester also heard of a mother "going without a much needed winter coat in order to save money to help keep her daughter in school at M.W.C."³⁶

To the school's constituency Hester served as a kind of model of both generosity and frugality. According to Rufus Reisdorph, Hester was known "All over the Miltonvale area . . . for his intimate association" with the community and his untiring support for the college.³⁷ One testament to his strict economizing, both during the Depression and World War II years, was the fact that almost all of his notes and records were written on the backs of letters he received.³⁸ When supervising the college books, President Hester made sure that they were balanced precisely, even if the discrepancy was as little as two cents he would stay in his office with his secretary and go over the books until the error was corrected.³⁹

Concerned with operating a tight ship, Hester believed that thrift and strict disciplinarian strategies would better the students' lives. Having no family life to distract him from his work, he supervised and scrutinized the students' activities. Hester made

the President's house into a dormitory for boys, enabling him to keep an even closer eye on them. He often helped finance students' education with his own money. Hester gave his student secretary, Vivian (Strang) Batman, college class of 1938, a great deal of assistance. Vivian, paid very little for her work, saw that her "bills kept piling up," but she was not able to pay in full. She and her fiancé Paul Batman hoped

that eventually we would get [our bills] payed off. We went ahead and got married and I got a letter from President Hester complimenting me on my work in the office . . . and . . . at the bottom of the letter he said my bill is paid in full . . . That was something [Hester] would do . . . in order to help students.⁴⁰

Under Hester's fastidious leadership Miltonvale Wesleyan College completely liquidated its debt. Through the thirties MWC had made gradual progress toward this goal, reducing its debt to about ten thousand dollars by 1939. Some twenty years of debt, reaching over twenty-one thousand dollars at its zenith, was paid off entirely in the spring of 1944. Roughly two years after the school overcame this great obstacle, Hester looked to the future of the college, hoping it would "dedicate new buildings to the memory of those who here gave their all that . . . [MWC] might live." Because of its financial problems the college could not undergo any serious plant expansion or building construction for nearly thirty-two years. In light of this, Hester emphasized that it was now necessary for Wesleyans to dedicate themselves to the great task of the school's expansion and the cause of Christian education so "that our forefathers shall not have toiled in vain;" that MWC shall have a greater field of usefulness; "and that . . . Christian schools like M.W.C. shall never perish from the earth."⁴¹ However, C. Floyd Hester did not make this journey into the future. Miltonvale Wesleyan's Local Board of Managers

relieved Hester of his presidency in late summer, 1946, and decided that “C. Floyd Hester had made his maximum contribution in fourteen years of service to the college.” Some of the college’s faculty and Board members were concerned that Hester’s somewhat archaic, rigid style of operating the college would not fare well in the post-war period. Hester realized this fact and retired to Jewell county, where he continued to support the school financially. Even after his death in 1957, Hester’s legacy lived on at MWC with the large sum of money and property which he bequeathed to her. When Hester stepped down the board recommended the appointment of a new man to struggle with the numerous post-war expansion problems.⁴² Rev. Rufus Reisdorph, an alumnus of MWC, was chosen as the new president.

Reisdorph’s administration initiated a long overdue expansion plan to improve the campus facilities. However, at the very same time the expansion plan began to take shape the Board also gave serious consideration to various proposals to relocate the school in a larger community which could more adequately support it. The initial moral reasoning that predicated the establishment of MWC in Miltonvale seemed less and less relevant when compared to both the pressing needs of student employment and the problem of geographic isolation. The problem of location was similar to what Wesleyan Methodist College experienced only a few years after its founding at Central, South Carolina, in 1906. This school considered closing more in response to its inadequate leadership which brought forth the “question concerning the relocation of the school in a larger center of population.”⁴³ Miltonvale Wesleyan, on the other hand, had a history of excellent leadership which despite the obstacles encountered enabled it to survive with

leaders of unique vision and courage.⁴⁴ Regardless, one obstacle would never go away; the problem of MWC's inadequate location.

The Board opened up the question of relocation in May, 1946, while Hester was still president. At this meeting the Board discussed the possibility of Miltonvale as a site for the building program and suggested that the presidents of each Conference be responsible investigating all desired locations for a Wesleyan Methodist College.⁴⁵ At this point the school's continuation at Miltonvale remained uncertain, and the Board committed itself to the real possibility of relocation. The Iowa committee proposed the Des Moines Ordnance Plant, a government facility to be auctioned off by the War Assets Administration during 1946, as a potential school site. On August 20, 1946, the Local Board of Managers met on the Des Moines plant's grounds, which included a few buildings and seventy acres of land, both to inspect the grounds and to make a bid for it.⁴⁶ They voted six to two in favor of making a token bid of one hundred dollars. However, the War Assets Administration deemed this amount too low. The Board continued to pursue this property, but in time their interest waned. The Miltonvale Local Board of Managers remained ambivalent on their decision to relocate and gave President Reisdorph the authority to begin negotiating with the government to buy and transport buildings from various military camps in Kansas for use as college facilities at the potential Miltonvale site. Whether the school stayed in Miltonvale or moved elsewhere, the Board sought to leave the door open for a wide range of possibilities.

The effort to consider MWC's removal caused a considerable degree of commotion both on campus and in town. At a meeting of the Local Board of Managers

held at MWC on February 5, 1947, the Board heard petitions to keep the college open at Miltonvale. A representative body of the businessmen from Miltonvale, together with Arthur Lavoie, the Mayor, came to relate their interest in the situation at hand. Mr. George Palmer, one of the members of the Commercial Club which originally brought the school to town was

the first speaker, voic[ing] appreciation of Miltonvale Wesleyan Methodist College, emphasizing the height of her spirituality and morality, stating by way of reminiscence that the city of Miltonvale had subscribed . . . \$12,000.00 plus 10 acres of land . . . [for use by the Western school].⁴⁷

Palmer went on to state that the city, upon hearing of the proposed building plan, considered issuing bonds between \$90,000 to \$180,000 to build a sewage disposal plant. The town completed this project in 1948-1949, and Palmer touted it as a major benefit to the college.⁴⁸ In essence, the petitioners engaged themselves in an attempt to re-sell the town to the college.

Others came forward like Mr. A. C. Belisle, district manager of the Kansas Power and Light Company, who answered the transportation and geographic isolation question, “stating that there were four buses daily, two train[s] on the Santa Fe, two daily on the Union Pacific,” and a landing strip for airplanes.⁴⁹ The Board expressed their concern that the streets nearest the campus be black-topped. In response, Mayor Lavoie commented that this would be done after the sewage system’s completion. In 1953 the town black-topped a number of its major streets in residential sections as well as those in front of the campus. Students and faculty submitted petitions as well, but probably the most promising or persuasive one came from George Palmer who expounded his ideas

about the problem of insufficient student employment opportunities. The Board asked Palmer about the feasibility of industries being brought into the city, and the applicability to students' financial needs. Palmer's answer became a superlative pitch for Miltonvale's future:

There is clay for making pottery, the finest in the United States; also there is found [that] the clay contains rich deposits of aluminum, so much so that the Government has in the past leased many acres of land, but . . . since . . . the war it had not been farther [*sic*] developed. Dairy products could also be developed as well as that of a broom factory . . .⁵⁰

After the Board heard the evidence two representatives of the faculty urged the Board to reach a decision quickly on the location question. One final proposal came before the board on February 5, 1947, raising the possibility of Clay Center, Kansas, as a prospective location for the college. Out of eight votes cast, the result was one vote to consider Clay Center, and seven against it. After this almost unanimous "yes" for Miltonvale the Local Board of Managers resolved to "begin construction at Miltonvale, Kansas, on the Wesleyan Methodist campus as soon as possible."⁵¹

Under the circumstances of this period, if the Board had had the opportunity to move the school to an already existing campus facility, predicated by low cost and job opportunities, it would have done so. The school continued in Miltonvale largely because the Board felt that the student employment question had been answered with some satisfaction. In the end, the prospect of greater employment opportunities in Miltonvale never really came to fruition.

Although George Palmer had mentioned the good possibility of exploiting the promising clay resources in the Miltonvale area, this endeavor turned out to be rather

short lived. While in 1948, Miltonvale Potteries Incorporated received a charter from the State Corporation Commission and Bill Schaefer, a graduate of Kansas University's Fine Arts Department, acted as manager of the plant, supervising the first molding the following year, problems arose with casting and glazing and the entire operation eventually closed by 1956. What might have become a thriving commercial venture for Miltonvale ended in failure and disappointment.⁵²

At Miltonvale Wesleyan College student enrollment in the mid-1950s was on the decline, and the school, operating in the red for several years during this period, was unable to increase its enrollment. The college's administrators still considered increased enrollment to be its greatest potential for additional income.⁵³ Even an increase in the amount of correspondence sent to prospective students for the 1955-56 school year could not turn the tide of enrollment, which continued to drop. This dilemma tightened the financial situation of the school, causing an indebtedness on current funds of \$17, 945.29 as of the winter of 1956.⁵⁴ In this same year school officials used \$38,552.66 of the college's endowment to fund internal operations. Milton Wirt, the school's treasurer, thought this action extremely unwise.⁵⁵

To the Board and the school's constituency the enrollment problem seemed as much a problem of lack of student employment. Ten years after George Palmer suggested a brighter future for Miltonvale's job market, Milton Wirt addressed this dilemma in his 1957 report to the Local Board of Trustees:

Student Employment is still a critical need in the matter of student enrollment. Many ambitious and promising students are obliged to seek other places for their education because of the limited work possibilities offered in Miltonvale. Some

type of light industry is desperately needed in the community to provide some work opportunities for students or parents. The school may need to take the initiative in attracting such an endeavor if we are to succeed in finding one.⁵⁶

As far as the job situation went, Miltonvale's condition was far more insecure than that of other Wesleyan Methodist schools. MWC could extend only a limited number of jobs for on campus work, and the town of Miltonvale could not offer much more. In contradistinction, Marion College consistently offered considerable self-help opportunities to its students. This was largely because of the many opportunities for part-time employment in the city of Marion, Indiana.⁵⁷ At Central College, although the need for student work opportunities continued to exist, Central attempted to make up for this short coming with on-campus work.⁵⁸ Even more than Central, Houghton College offered students a broad range of on-campus jobs. After 1935, Houghton's printing press regularly employed between twelve and eighteen students.⁵⁹ In some ways employment and enrollment remained closely related issues. In consequence of the employment problem, MWC had not experienced the kind of growth in enrollment which the other schools were seeing through the years. While MWC began with enrollments similar to the other schools, the other three eventually far surpassed Miltonvale.

In Cloud County, Kansas solutions to the employment problem were not easily attained. The Cloud County Economic Development Corporation, established in 1956 for the express purpose of soliciting various businesses and industries to come to Cloud County, sought to change this area's situation. The endeavors of this corporation met with little or no success. Consequently, attempts to bring more jobs to the Miltonvale area ended in disappointment.⁶¹

Table 2. Total Enrollments of the Four Wesleyan Methodist schools, 1910-11 to 1971-72

School Year	MWC	Houghton College	Marion College	Central College	School Year	MWC	Houghton College	Marion College	Central College
1910-11	194	167		91	1945-46	168	500	308	173
1915-16	164	183		145	1950-51	157	871	417	311
1920-21	94	182	252 ^a	159	1955-56	124	596 ^b	442	243
1925-26	133	230	449	198	1960-61	170	805	457	221
1930-31	60	335	314	66	1965-66	167	1092	574	303
1931-32	51	352	282	*	1966-67	163	1137	663	305
1932-33	92	313	264	91	1967-68	157	1162	740	273
1933-34	100	329	238	65	1968-69	182	1161	792	258
1934-35	107	352	248	64	1969-70	180	1170	848	296
1935-36	151	417	198	60	1970-71	165	1164	869	294
1940-41	213	468	215	104	1971-72	115 ^c	1209	829	361

^aFirst year of operation for Marion College. ^{*}Enrollment data was not available for this year. ^bFrom this year forward Houghton counted its college enrollment separate from its high school enrollment. ^c MWC's second and third years of the Ministerial program are moved to Bartlesville Campus. ⁶⁰

During the late 1950s and early 1960s MWC's general situation slightly improved. The college experienced a steady rise in enrollment, from 124 in 1955-56 to 185 in 1961-62. By December, 1963, the school managed to liquidate the debt on its gymnasium and the new science building was nearly complete. At the same time, however, the Board of Trustees understood that Miltonvale Wesleyan needed to progress in its recruitment of students in order to continue operation. In the 1962-63 Miltonvale's enrollment was 169, still well under its enrollment goal of 210.⁶² President Wesley Knapp, serving from 1952 to 1969, understood the considerable obstacles to this goal, such as the fact that, "Miltonvale College has the largest geographic area to serve, yet lists the smallest total constituency of any of our colleges . . ."⁶³ By the early 1960s the College Board began asking itself if the school's enrollment consisted "so largely of Wesleyans," totaling eighty-six percent of the school's enrollment in 1963, was "it realistic to expect growth of our school to be so greatly out of proportion to the," sluggish "growth of our denomination in this area?"⁶⁴ College officials made concerted efforts to entice non-Wesleyan students. They began to consider dropping some of the non-essentials, such as the ban on intercollegiate sports and some of the disciplines such as no make-up and no jewelry for female students.

The Board did agree that "enrollment must be increased if we [are] to operate within our income." The school's treasurer, Milton Wirt summed up this concern stating that, "It is both puzzling and disappointing that our facilities are not being used to a fuller capacity." Wirt, like others before him, argued that "the lack of employment" continued to hinder student recruitment, wreaking havoc on the school's enrollment numbers.⁶⁵

The Board favored further study and action on the job problem in order to hasten resolution.

In 1963 the Board of Trustees “called for an investigation into the possibilities of securing a small industry for Miltonvale to provide labor for students needing work.” They sent out questionnaires to more than four hundred Kansas industries, but very few responses were positive.⁶⁶ Vita-Kraft, a manufacturing and packaging firm in Kansas City, Kansas, considered farming work out to the Miltonvale area, but in time this company chose not to take the economic risk necessary for locating in Miltonvale. Other possibilities failed under similar circumstances. From the four hundred questionnaires sent out, not one company or business made any solid commitment.

Not easily defeated, the Board wanted to make progress on its three-phase development plan, but at the same time there was the looming question of numbers and whether or not the school would be able to raise its enrollment to the two hundred mark. In 1963 President Knapp said that the ten-year, three-phase plan would “encompass the expansion of the physical plant to more than double its size . . . [and] beyond the addition of new buildings will be a carefully planned expansion of the curriculum, the staff, and library to meet the needs of a larger student population.”⁶⁷ The school became locked in an effort to grow at all costs. Miltonvale Wesleyan began to operate on a *build first, gain numbers later* policy. In 1965 MWC, without the actual student enrollment necessary to finance and facilitate the expansion plan, initiated building on its new men’s dormitory, Hester Hall. The school funded this project by mortgaging the college campus, a venture that Milton Wirt concluded to be extremely risky. President Knapp continued to be

aware that MWC must grow for the plant and curricular expansion plan to be successful:

This slow growth rate is undoubtedly our greatest single cause for concern. In the face of rising operating costs it is increasingly obvious that the burden of subsidizing our program for such a limited enrollment may soon become more than our constituency can bear. Many secular and some Christian educators are accepting the figure of 1000 students as the minimum size for a small college to operate efficiently without sacrificing quality in the program. The “handwriting on the wall” plainly states, that we must grow!⁶⁸

Milton Wirt iterated this same concern when he urged the school’s Board that “We MUST grow numerically if we expect to soundly finance our proposed plant expansion.” He continued by emphasizing that “There MUST be so much of the presence of the Lord on campus” that the school will attract students as a place of spiritual opportunities unique to MWC.⁶⁹

During the 1960s growth became increasingly difficult at Miltonvale Wesleyan, which now competed with a growing number of junior colleges and state schools that received large sums from government educational funds. Even though baby-boomers, now reaching college age, caused an increase in the nation’s college enrollment, small private junior colleges like MWC could not easily draw students, especially non-Wesleyans, when their tuition rivaled or exceeded that of some state schools’.

Robert C. Girard, MWC’s Director of College Development, saw the critical nature of this situation. He asked the Board if MWC would be able to thrive in the ever-competitive atmosphere of higher education in America. At a Board meeting held on January 21, 1964, Girard stressed the utter sense of urgency, saying that “the changes that are predicted for the educational world during the next fifteen years could sweep Miltonvale Wesleyan College right out of existence if she continues to move at the

present pace, [hiding] . . . from some of her basic problems.” Girard then quoted Sidney Tickton, an educational specialist who wrote on the need for sound financial management of small colleges: “the chances are that some of the weaker colleges . . . will pass from the scene . . . during the next ten to twenty years. They will merge, become state institutions, public junior colleges or vocational schools, or will just close up!”⁷⁰ In a somewhat prophetic tone, Girard drove his point home by arguing that:

. . . we have sat at the Beautiful Gate of opportunity for years, paralyzed [*sic*]. Carried by a few faithful brothers, begging for alms, desperately in need of someone to grab us by the hand and shout “In the name of Jesus . . . rise up and walk!” I believe that the signs of the times reveal that unless we do rise up and walk, we may be dead before this decade is out.⁷¹

By the mid-1960s MWC’s situation became more precarious. With the near-certainty of merger between the Pilgrim Holiness and Wesleyan Methodist Churches, Wesleyans began to realize that a school merger would inevitably occur in the Midwest. The merger of the two churches, germinating since the Wesleyan Methodist General Conference of 1955, took place in the summer of 1968. Central Pilgrim College at Bartlesville, Oklahoma, had only been in existence since 1959 (before this it operated as Colorado Springs Bible College), and it did not have an adequate physical plant, as did MWC. On the other hand, with a population of thirty-five thousand and a number of heavy industries and local businesses, Bartlesville held opportunities which Miltonvale could not match. Most of MWC’s constituency assumed that if any merger were to occur between Central Pilgrim and Miltonvale Wesleyan, it most likely would take place on the Miltonvale campus. However, a few Wesleyans expected that the merged school would be located in a larger population center, which could offer a better setting for the

college, and would provide for lasting and consistent growth.

Milton Wirt, who worked at MWC since he felt the call to come there in the late forties, held the latter opinion. Seeing the financial situation of the college on a first hand basis, Wirt, by the mid 1960s, began to question whether the school could continue to survive in Miltonvale, Kansas, and he came to see that, “Basically we shouldn’t have been there in the first place,” but “we wanted to set ourselves apart from any temptation,” and in so doing, the school had also isolated itself from certain necessary economic resources.⁷² Although Wirt acknowledged the great service the school provided the Wesleyan Methodist Church and its constituency through the years, he also saw the critical nature of Miltonvale’s situation. As a member of the denomination’s Board of Administration, he knew the turn of events that preceded merger with the Pilgrims. To Wirt, it seemed curiously shortsighted to continue to come back to Miltonvale’s rural setting where there still was no employment opportunities.⁷³ Foreseeing the possibility of a heated confrontation on the horizon, Wirt resigned as business manager of MWC in 1966, feeling that the school would not be there in five years. In Wirt’s analysis, the merger meant that Wesleyans and Pilgrims needed “to give and take” and that “Miltonvale would be one of the places that we would have to give.”⁷⁴

NOTES

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4. Willard Garfield Smith, "The History of Church Controlled Colleges," 209.
5. W. F. McConn, "Miltonvale Wesleyan College," *Sunflower*, 1928.
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26. McConn, "Miltonvale College," *The Wesleyan Methodist*, 16 Sept., 1931, 10.
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28. William F. McConn, "Miltonvale College," *The Wesleyan Methodist*, 11 Feb., 1931, 10.
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30. McLeister and Nicholson, *Conscience and Commitment*, 511
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37. "Rev. R. D. Reisdorph New President of Miltonvale College, President C. Floyd Hester Resigns After a Long and Helpful Administration," *The Wesleyan Methodist*, 7 Aug., 1946, 7.

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39. Vivian and Paul Batman, interview by author, 9 Feb. 1998, at home of Paul Batman, tape recording, Independence, MO.
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CHAPTER 6
THE DISCONTINUATION OF THE WESTERN COLLEGE AT
MILTONVALE AND MERGER OF MWC AND BWC

The primary catalyst for merging Miltonvale Wesleyan College with Central Pilgrim College (Bartlesville Wesleyan College) came in response to the unification of the Pilgrim Holiness Church and the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the summer of 1968. Added to this merger a score of factors made the Bartlesville, Oklahoma, location a better choice for the western college. However, the situation seemed anything but clear to Miltonvale's alumni, students, and faculty. Likewise, residents of the town of Miltonvale could not understand why the school, which had operated for sixty years at the Miltonvale site, now must be moved to a campus that did not seem as equipped or able to accommodate the school as well as the MWC campus. The conflict that ensued between the Board of Trustees and the alumni, faculty, students, and townspeople proved particularly heated.

Long before the Pilgrim Holiness and Wesleyan Methodist merger, economic necessity drove Miltonvale Wesleyan and other evangelical private colleges in the Midwest to consider uniting. The Central Holiness Education Fellowship (CHEF), formed in 1960 to "explore areas of expanded fellowship and cooperation," among several interested colleges, including, Central Pilgrim College, Bartlesville Oklahoma;

Central College, McPherson, Kansas; Friends Bible College, Haviland, Kansas; Miltonvale Wesleyan College, Miltonvale Kansas; and Wessington Springs College, Wessington Springs, South Dakota.¹ This organization met annually throughout the 1960s in order to study various possible channels to merger. Virtually all of this group's studies indicated merger to be "the only feasible route to travel."² Another group, the Inter-Church Committee on Education (ICCE), formed at Chicago in 1966 with some of the same members from CHEF, decided to employ outside consultants to help these five schools determine which campuses would be best suited for the site of the merged college.

The plight of small colleges in the United States during this period drove these school's merger efforts. Although as a result of the influx of baby-boomers into the country's colleges and universities student enrollment soared for most higher educational institutions during the late 1960s and early 1970s, other competing factors contributed to the economic difficulties of the nation's institutions of higher education. In 1970, *U.S. News and World Report* revealed that at many schools across the country "Campus violence has tended to discourage private donations to strife-torn colleges . . ." Also, the economic slump of the late 1960s negatively affected the amount of donations coming into all of America's colleges and universities.³ Throughout the 1960s all the trends seemed to be pointing to rough waters ahead, particularly for private institutions. For these schools, financial problems arose as many students who would have normally entered private colleges were now finding it necessary to seek out public institutions with lower tuition fees.⁴ This proved the case at MWC, which lost a number of potential local

students with the establishment of Cloud County Community College, Concordia, Kansas, in 1965.

According to John A. Howard, who served as the head of the Association of Presidents of Independent Colleges and Universities, by the second half of the 1960s and on into the early 1970s a large portion of the nation's private colleges were in serious financial trouble, varying from "imminent collapse to worry about whether they will survive . . ."⁵ For these schools the problem boiled down to the fact that that the costs of operation were rising faster than revenues could be collected.⁶ As inflation began to affect America's educational institutions the hardest hit were private colleges which depended almost entirely on gifts and tuition charges for their livelihood.⁷ In the Midwest, CHEF accurately assessed these future trends and tried to find a means to cope in this new, decidedly more competitive market. The graph on the following page aptly illustrates the crunch which Miltonvale and the other CHEF schools experienced during this era.

In the Midwest alone, during this period, a significant number of small colleges closed. In 1970, Midwest College, Iowa; Mackinac College, Michigan; Midwest Institute, Kansas; and four private colleges in Texas all closed their doors. The U.S. Office of Education listed some twenty-one institutions of higher education which closed in the years 1969-70.⁹ Of the 141 private colleges that closed in the 1970s those with fewer than 500 students represented eighty-seven percent of the closings. Additionally, less selective colleges were the most vulnerable.¹⁰

**Table 3. Net Current Fund Surplus or Deficit
(In thousands) for the "Average" Institution
by Enrollment Categories, 1967-68 to 1970-71**

Enrollment Level	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71
All Institutions Combined	39	-20	-103	-115
500 and below*	-2	-2	-38	-41
501 to 1000	21	-19	-72	-73
1001 to 2000	18	-20	-68	-49
2001 to 4000	78	9	-45	-61
4001 and above	147	-65	-407	-558

*Enrollment bracket which majority of CHEF schools fell into.⁸

In addition to financial dilemmas that MWC had in common with other colleges, there was another pressure which necessitated merger with Central Pilgrim College. This was the above mentioned union of the Pilgrim Holiness and Wesleyan Methodist Churches into The Wesleyan Church. The Declaration of Union, enacted at Anderson, Indiana, on June 26, 1968, merged these two churches, both with fewer than 70,000 members each, into a body of 125,000.¹¹ The combined church had a total of eleven educational institutions, which could not be adequately supported. At the General Conference both church leaders and laity agreed that in order to, “increase the support to our colleges,” it would be necessary to reduce, “their number and thereby concentrat[e] total resources for renewed strength and quality in Wesleyan education.”¹² By the end of The Wesleyan Church’s first quadrennium Owosso College in Owosso, Michigan (a former Pilgrim school) merged with Marion College; Frankfort Pilgrim College, Frankfort, Indiana, Southern Pilgrim College, Kernersville, North Carolina, and Eastern Pilgrim College, Allentown, Pennsylvania, all merged in Allentown to become United Bible College; Miltonvale Wesleyan College merged with the former Central Pilgrim College (BWC) in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

According to the Second General Conference Minutes of The Wesleyan Church, the decisions to merge educational institutions and the sites chosen were all made under “their own particular[ly] difficult circumstances . . .” Each decision, “involved the deeply human concerns of faculty members who have had to move to merged locations, sell property, or even find new jobs because of reduced personnel . . .” Likewise, students and, “alumni of merging and moving institutions each had their own personal traumas in

such unusual circumstances.”¹³

Martin Cox, a Board member at MWC, made the first steps toward a united western school more than six months before The Wesleyan Church was formed. He put forth a resolution which called for the Central Pilgrim College and Miltonvale Wesleyan College Boards to “join in taking necessary steps to unite these two college boards, with equal representation from each school.”¹⁴ With both Boards working together, they initiated negotiations to pick a site for the merged college. The two Boards visited different locations and carefully reviewed each option. The key sites they considered were Miltonvale, Bartlesville, McPherson, Kansas (Free Methodist school - Central College), and Haysville (a neutral site near Wichita, Kansas where a high school campus was available). The Free Methodist option attracted the Boards because it seemed likely that The Wesleyan Church would merge with the Free Methodists at some point in the future, however, this site did not offer any improvement over the current schools. Another problem consisted of there being an already existing four-year accredited college in McPherson. The neutral Haysville option had the disadvantage of requiring too much campus development for a college facility. By February, 1969, the Boards thought the most practical decision to be for either Miltonvale Wesleyan College or Bartlesville Wesleyan College.

On the February 21, 1969, the combined Boards of MWC and BWC met to discuss the prospects of the merged college. The two schools served a total Wesleyan Church membership/constituency in the western districts of approximately 16,000, which, too small to support two colleges in the same region, placed additional pressure on the

Board to make a swift decision on location. The combined Board reviewed both locations with regard to their assets and liabilities. The Board felt that Miltonvale offered a well developed physical plant, favorable geographic proximity to the student population, a quiet, safe city, and a decent academic program. On the other hand, they realized that Miltonvale remained too far removed from the benefits of larger cities, that ministry opportunities and church internships were limited by Miltonvale's rural setting and the lack of churches in its immediate area, and that student employment opportunities were still lacking. The Board approved of Bartlesville for its potential strength from community backing and support, for its adequate city setting, and for its greater number of student employment opportunities. They criticized Bartlesville for being out of proximity of the majority of western district Wesleyans, for its cluttered campus, which they believed evidenced inadequate planning, for its poor academic facilities presently available, and for its restricted campus area which would hamper future expansion.¹⁵

In all, the most important element which swayed the combined Board of Trustees was the prospect of employment in Bartlesville, and the lack of it at Miltonvale. The potential for greater support from the Bartlesville community was also an important element for the combined Board. Bartlesville, roughly fifty times larger than Miltonvale, was the hub for several major corporations, one of which was Phillips Petroleum Company.

On February 21, after the Board considered these elements, they voted on whether the merger would be on the MWC or the BWC campus. The first vote failed to be

decisive because of a lack of a two-thirds majority: fifteen for BWC, eight for MWC. The following day, after further debate on the issues at hand, the Board reinitiated the vote, which this time amounted to a two-thirds majority: eighteen for BWC, seven for MWC.¹⁶ The Board then planned the implementation of the complete merger for the fall semester of 1969 on the Bartlesville campus. The combined Board issued that the merged college would provide, “a dual emphasis consisting of a Liberal Arts Junior College and a school of theology, offering a four year Christian ministries program.”¹⁷ Wesley L. Knapp promptly offered his resignation as President of MWC, clearing the way for a new president to be elected for the unified institution.

Soon after the decision, the combined Board of Trustees engaged in an effort to solicit loyalty for the unified school. Support of the decision had much to do with geographic proximity. Wesleyans in Miltonvale and the area immediately surrounding it were experiencing a considerable amount of unrest and division of loyalty. Simultaneously, those in more distant states were more likely to support any reasonable decision of the Board.¹⁸ Some constituents, initially outraged and shocked, soon realized the necessity of merger. Kansas Conference District Superintendent, Ron Brannon, at first thought that the decision was imprudent, but after much prayer and supplication he believed that God led him to understand that his loyalty and devotion should not be “for a geographic location, but rather a Spirit . . . a Principle . . . a Quality,” of education, regardless of location.¹⁹ The leaders of the Idaho-Washington District pledged their support stating that “it is our belief that the action should stand, and should be implemented as speedily as possible, and that any efforts to reverse . . . or circumvent it,

should cease.”²⁰

Most of Miltonvale’s constituents could not easily endure the abruptness of this decision. The newsletters of BWC/MWC issued a few indelicate entreaties for support of the merged college that did not set well with the disenchanted. The March, 1969, *Bartlesville Tower Newsletter* emphasized that:

Bartlesville and Miltonvale Wesleyan College must have in mind a goal of complete unity and brotherhood for all. In the merging of the two schools there will be no room for narrow-mindedness or littleness concerning loyalty to a previous school.

The merged college must be looked on as a totally new school no matter where the site is located. No one should be able to say, “This is my school,” just because he may have attended at this site previously . . . No one should feel left out unless they chose to put themselves in that position.²¹

Obviously, these words fell on deaf ears. Moreover, to those closest to Miltonvale, who were also vehemently opposed to merger, these words seemed to malign their abiding loyalty to MWC

Negative responses from the alumni, faculty, and student population at MWC came almost immediately. The blow delivered by the February decision overwhelmed a significant portion of MWC’s constituents. A number of Miltonvale residents “believed the Miltonvale site would be selected, since the physical plant was larger than the Bartlesville school’s.”²² Students at MWC, who still had more college work to complete, were not considering attending Bartlesville. Wesley L. Knapp expressed concern that because “most of the students here come from Kansas, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, and Montana, . . . out-of-staters will not wish to travel all the way to Bartlesville to go to school.”²³ Bob Maddox, a sophomore from Greeley, Colorado,

commented that the “general reaction, I think, was disbelief . . . At first we thought they were just kidding. It just hasn’t sunk in.”²⁴ Esther Karges, a secretary in admissions at Miltonvale, did not believe that Miltonvale would be the campus that would close. “It’s like a death in the family.” she said. “This school was always alive and it doesn’t strike you until you realize that soon no one will be returning to the dorms.”²⁵ In like manner, the college librarian, Francis Buel, who held a faculty position at Miltonvale for thirty-two years, remarked that, “It just doesn’t seem real. After all everyone has sacrificed to make this a good school, it seems such a waste.”²⁶

In the months following the decision some predicted that many Wesleyans would leave the church over this affair. In the spring of 1969, Miltonvale resident Wendell Buttermore commented that a “loyal church family for years, who have two children almost ready to send to Miltonvale, brokenly told me that they were seriously considering changing to another church . . .”²⁷ Rev. Harold Hotchkiss and Rev. Vivian Haun warned that closure would cause a decline in enrollment and a loss of support from ministers and laity.²⁸ Although at the time these scenarios appeared inevitable, for the most part, no great exodus occurred from The Wesleyan Church due to merger.²⁹

As those who opposed union on the BWC campus reflected on the Board’s decision, they began to voice concern over the procedure by which the decision came about. They accused the Board of carrying out undemocratic procedures. Responding to the Board’s rulings a concerned constituent commented that the “former Wesleyan Methodists were used to a democratic form of government. Therefore we are very unhappy . . . when a few men determine the procedures we are to follow.”³⁰ In fact, the

Board encompassed a fairly broad range of representatives, each serving a four-year term. In 1971 there were twenty-one Board members, including: seven district superintendents, three educators, three pastors, two bankers, two farmers, one college president, one county superintendent of public schools, one state college professor, one certified public accountant, one manager of a construction firm, one wholesale lumber dealer, and one real-estate developer.³¹ Melvin Snyder, General Superintendent of The Wesleyan Church, defended the Board, stating that “This is the constitutional process set up by our denomination and not to follow it, to say the least, is maladministration . . . we have pledged ourselves to follow those constitutional procedures.”³²

The townspeople, scandalized by the prospect of the Board’s decision to close Miltonvale Wesleyan, reacted as well. Shortly after the February, 1969, decision, Mayor Waine Turner pointed out that the Miltonvale community, “supported the college for 60 years through some pretty slim times. It was just impossible for it to slip through our hands and be gone so fast.” Turner, like others in Miltonvale, didn’t agree with the decision, but instead thought that “there isn’t any logical reason why the school should be moved down there.”³³ In 1968-69, Turner (who operated Turner Grocery) and several other businessmen in Miltonvale wrote letters to Miltonvale Wesleyan offering part-time employment for a limited number of college students. However, the Board of Trustees did not consider these offers substantial enough for continued operation at Miltonvale. Upon hearing of the decision to closing in 1969, George Palmer, now eighty-seven, appealed to the Board’s ethics, asking them to reconsider their decision on the grounds that “We [the town of Miltonvale] accepted the campus and money with the agreement

that a college would be *permanently* maintained” (italics mine). Palmer asked that The Wesleyan Church “fulfill its promise to permanently maintain the college in Miltonvale,” according to the 1908 agreement.³⁴ Although this had not been in any way legally binding, after sixty years of supporting MWC the citizens of Miltonvale felt betrayed by the merger action. Letters of concern written to the state government summoned a response from Governor Robert Docking’s office in which he urged the Board of Trustees “to consider all alternatives and to seek avenues by which you can keep this school in Miltonvale.”³⁵ The Board took these petitions into consideration, and made themselves open to other possibilities.

At an April, 1969, meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, the Board of Trustees unanimously nominated Leo G. Cox for the presidency of the merged school. Dr. Cox, an alumnus of MWC, was once a faculty member at Miltonvale, and had served as President of the Melbourne (Wesleyan) Bible College, Melbourne, Australia. At the time of his nomination he was serving as the Chairman of the Division of Religion at Marion College. At about the same time that Cox became President, the Board decided to extend the operation at Miltonvale, delaying total merger until the fall of 1970. In part, the Board’s delay came in response to public outcry, but primarily it allowed for better planning and development on the BWC campus, and provided time for the Board once again to consider all the options and more thoroughly explore each.

President Cox sent out correspondence “to our constituencies, both to pastors and alumni [to] solicit . . . loyalty and support for the merged program.” He urged the alumni to “trust God to lead” the Board “and then believe that He has. This way God’s will can

be accomplished.”³⁶ At the same time he acknowledged that “some . . . are not willing to commit themselves to stand by the merged college, whatever and wherever it is, but this reluctance is understandable.”³⁷ In the BWC/MWC newsletter, Cox wrote that

often God is leading when we cannot see; in fact He can be guiding events that His children disapprove . . . God is leading in the merger of these two colleges. It is His work and He leads on. He is working as fast as we let Him. Ultimately it will be seen that God has done a great work among us in establishing a strong college here in the great West.³⁸

The extension period did not placate all those opposed to merger. Delay provided the opposition time to act against the Board’s actions. Soon after he accepted the office of President, Dr. Cox found himself in the middle of an intense skirmish which previously had been between the protesters and the Board.

In May, 1969, at the sixtieth annual Alumni banquet, Eva Gilger, Academic Dean at MWC, delivered an address to the 350 alumni present in which she appealed to the sacrifice and sacred calling which made up Miltonvale Wesleyan’s History:

We pledge to those who have gone before us, that this college will not die during the years that its preservation and expansion are our direct and inescapable responsibility. . . . We believe that the traditions of this school are too deep, the investments . . . too heavy, the present . . . too productive, and the future . . . too promising for us to forsake it now. . . . I dare declare that this school will not die. We shall infuse it with our life blood, and it will live!³⁹

This kind of rhetoric appeared to be a direct affront to the Board of Trustees’ previous decision to merge the institutions at BWC. The Board decided that Gilger’s contract for the position of Academic Dean should not be renewed for the coming school year. In the Board’s opinion it was their duty to chose and hire administrators who would actively support the goals set by the official action of the Church.⁴⁰ Likewise, outright conflict

with these goals would not in any way be accepted. This decision drew the ire of the MWC faculty, alumni, and students. Perhaps because he was the most visible figure, Dr. Cox received the brunt of criticism on both the merger issue and on Gilger's firing. One malcontent accused Cox of being one-sided, saying, "You *canned* one of the most brilliant and . . . loved members of the faculty [Eva Gilger]." In a bitter vituperation the writer speculated: "Could it be that you as president could not stand to have one of greater intellect," and more unselfish Christian devotion, "under you?"⁴¹ Looking back on the events surrounding Eva Gilger's firing, Dr. Cox commented that as she became the leader of the opposition, the Board saw that, "She was very able to influence people in her talks and letters," and was rather mesmerizing in her persuasive powers.⁴² At the time of Gilger's termination, Ron Brannon, the Secretary of the Board, said that while the Board "does recognize the right," of faculty members, "to exercise . . . *academic freedom*," when abuse of this right causes, "a schismatic situation on campus or within the church," the Board will take definitive action to remedy the situation.⁴³

The Alumni Association sent out petitions which lobbied against the Board's decision on both Eva Gilger's contract and the merger. Approximately three hundred petitions, with a total of roughly 765 signatures, were sent to various Board representatives.⁴⁴ However, a number of these petitions came to the Board with letters indicating disagreement with the protesters. Upon receiving the Alumni Association's petition, Rev. Edward L. Eddy, commented: "I deplore such action as this, and the attendant disregard for constituted authority."⁴⁵ Similarly, Rev. Don A. Glenn, First Wesleyan Church, Waterloo, Iowa, said that, "I did not and shall not submit any such

petition to my congregation” and “I accept any decision which has been constitutionally derived . . .”⁴⁶ Others, like Pastor C. W. Dunbar of the First Wesleyan Church of Wichita expressed concern that such protest activity caused more dissension in the church, grieving the Holy Spirit and hindering “the work and testimony of the church . . .”⁴⁷ Most of the sixteen thousand persons who made up the MWC/BWC constituency, although they may not have agreed entirely with the Board of Trustees, would, nevertheless, support its final decision. However, the opposition, being more adamant about their position, dominated the discussion.

The opposition proved most unequivocal in its negative appraisal of the new President. Some made *ad hominem* attacks on Cox, calling him a Judas Iscariot, one of the school’s own turning against it. Others responded to President Cox’s exhortations by charging that “You ask us to pray for you. We reply, God help you to see some real light and gain some business sense.”⁴⁸ For the most part, the Board and Dr. Cox remained open to discussion during this extension period, even responding to some of the more vitriolic criticisms. Others in positions of church leadership also tried to answer the questions of the disenchanted. In a letter written in response to a disillusioned MWC alumnus, Robert McIntyre, the denomination’s General Editor, offered some poignant insights into the religious ramifications of the merger conflict: “Now what? What happens when people pray about the same thing and receive contradictory answers? Who is qualified to say that the other person is wrong? What would Jesus do?” And, as an alumnus himself, McIntyre wondered, “what would C. Floyd Hester do or O. G. Wilson . . . ?”⁴⁹ McIntyre suggested that in all things Wesleyans must uphold a Christian

spirit and that they give these issues to God in prayer.

The situation proved not entirely clouded by the tumultuous atmosphere created by the merger decision. In fact, during the period of delay the Board looked more clearly at the feasibility and practicality of merger on the BWC campus. In February, 1970, the Board decided the school would best serve the area as a four-year regionally accredited liberal arts school. The Board resolved to employ two capable outside consultants who would look at the problems surrounding the merger and give a unique and hopefully more objective view of the situation. Both the Alumni Association (which had become the center of opposition) and the Board agreed that this renewed investigation would help clear up the ambiguities surrounding the problem of location.

The Board employed Dr. Roger Voskuyl, Executive Director of the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges, and Dr. Herbert Wood, President of the Kansas City Regional Commission on Higher Education, as consultants on the location decision. Throughout 1970 some of the Board members and the two consultants revisited and analyzed the previous locations, which included Haysville and McPherson. The consultants' study failed to offer any definitive solutions to their problems, but did shed new light upon them. Looking at both the decline in enrollment and the deficit budgets, Voskuyl announced that merger into one campus still seemed to be the only viable option. In October, 1970, both Voskuyl and Wood reiterated some of the same points of concern that the combined Boards had discussed in February, 1969. They eliminated Haysville and McPherson as less desirable locales than Miltonvale and Bartlesville. Even though the Miltonvale site had the better developed campus, Bartlesville offered,

“A city of 35,000 with all advantages in . . . community services, jobs,” as well as the possibility of greater financial support from the city.⁵⁰ Both schools had roughly the same size enrollment. If the school located in Bartlesville, Miltonvale would be cut off with no assurance that BWC would thrive, and if they chose to locate in Miltonvale the decision would seem easier at first, but its limitations would hinder future possibilities. After the consultants provided their analysis Ron Brannon stated that “All factors considered, the choice between the two is nearly a 50-50 proposition. However, looking to the future, the likelihood [*sic*] of perpetuating a viable institution [brought] the pendulum of favor toward Bartlesville.”⁵¹

While the Board placed considerable emphasis on the employment and small town issues, those opposed to the move did not think these were critical factors. In fact, they believed that the size of Miltonvale was one of the perennial benefits which should support keeping the school at its original location. Alumni supporter, and physician for the Miltonvale campus, Dr. Warren S. Freeborn Jr. pointed out that,

The worst we have ever heard said of M.W.C. is that it is located in a small town. This we feel is a tremendous asset in view of the strife and unrest of the larger cities. Dr. Dieter [General Secretary of Educational Institutions for The Wesleyan Church] stated that young people have to face this sometime. True-but it helps to go wading before one tries to swim.⁵²

Others, like Glenn Hoerner, were concerned with the particulars which favored the Miltonvale location, such as the fact that “liquor cannot be purchased at Miltonvale . . .”⁵³ Even though most of the students were not interested in this *vice*, some thought it possible that Bartlesville’s influence might be corruptive. President Cox recognized that a number of Miltonvale’s constituents preferred “a small college in a more isolated

community where the students are held in retreat.” Accordingly, he saw that “With this kind of college there would be less involvement in the community, less support from the community, but a more controlled climate . . .”⁵⁴

Some imagined other ways the Christian environment would be diluted if the merger went as scheduled. One student at MWC wondered if the curriculum wouldn’t inevitably be watered down at BWC, claiming that “as most of the students will be from . . . the city, and the city will be financing most of the expenses . . . The added influence of the *world* on BWC will bring it down spiritually, and the church leaders turned out [by] the theology department will not be as strong . . .”(italics mine)⁵⁵ Cox answered such criticism by emphasizing that:

A Christian school with a relationship . . . to a strong community is more assured of resources for a successful academic program. By our maintaining a truly committed Christian faculty, and a majority of evangelical students, we can be assured of a truly Christian atmosphere.⁵⁶

The larger city had another beneficial aspect for the success of the Western school. This was the issue of student enrollment diversity. MWC had long tried to increase its enrollment by recruiting non-Wesleyan students (since the Wesleyans’ constituency was numerically limited). During the 1969-70 school year only eighteen percent of MWC’s students were non-Wesleyan. Bartlesville, on the other hand, boasted forty-three percent non-Wesleyan students for this same year.⁵⁷

Regardless of these factors, many remained steadfast in their dedication to the continuation of the Miltonvale program. Some Miltonvale supporters employed biblical parallels to boost their polemics. Accused of worshipping a geographic location, one

protester tried to show that “Location [or] *Place* meant a great deal to the people of Israel.” He went on to suggest that perhaps “God has promised a geographical location” at Miltonvale, Kansas. If nothing else, the protesters thought that the *promise* seemed evidenced by Miltonvale’s sixty year operation at this single location.⁵⁸ Other Biblical analogies were decidedly more dramatic. With hyperbolic flare, the Rev. Warren S. Freeborn (former president of MWC) warned that Bartlesville,

is statistically listed as the second most wicked city in the United States, exceeded only by Las Vegas. We have a pretty good spiritual parallel in the Bible. Abraham gave Lot his choice of country that controversy might be avoided among their herdsman. “Lot lifted up his eyes and looked to the well watered plains of Jordan - And Lot chose [for himself] all the plain of Jordan, before the Lord destroyed Sodom. And the Lord said to Abraham, turn look in all directions now, and the land which thou seest to thee will I give it.”
I think that this is a situation for which God will hold us accountable for sending our young people to a Sodom, Bartlesville City.⁵⁹

Rev. Freeborn believed that “One does not just walk out on the promises of God, move several times, and keep the blessing of God.” He also asserted that “The results of the big city choice WILL show up – sometime!” Rev. Freeborn implied the form in which this retribution would come when he argued that “In the event of nuclear war the enemy could not care less about Miltonvale [while] Tulsa (oil capitol of the world), Bartlesville and Oklahoma City, which make a nice complex but not so large but what three Hydrogen bombs could easily take care of them.”⁶⁰

In October, 1970, as opposition to the merger became stronger than expected and as the Board of Trustees came to realize that it was shortsighted to close Miltonvale when there still were inadequate facilities on the new campus, the Board again decided to put off merger. Unification now awaited the further development of future events.⁶¹

The Board stated that the two-year program at MWC would continue for an indefinite period, so long as the campus remained fiscally solvent and enrollment high enough for continued operation. The Board of Trustees slated the third and fourth year Ministerial Programs for removal to the BWC campus in the fall of 1971.

With both schools' gift income decreasing, and enrollment dropping, delay proved more problematic than first expected. By mid-1970 MWC held an indebtedness of \$184,557 and BWC's indebtedness reached \$102,010.⁶² The Board expressed its dilemma as follows:

Even though we desired to effect full merger on [the Bartlesville] campus with the cooperation of all our people, it has been very evident to us that many who have supported Miltonvale through the years believed strongly that the campus should not be abandoned. It is clear to us that all our consultants have advised against the continuance of two campuses and that many of our people believe that we should unite on one campus to effect a strong college. It is our judgement that . . . continuing both campuses without resources is not [a] wise procedure economically or educationally . . .⁶³

At an April, 1971, meeting Board members added an extremely important addendum to the previous action for extending operation at MWC. This addendum required that the Board give an eighteen month notice before consummation of total merger on one campus. But if either campus experienced serious enrollment losses or a significant loss of financial support then the Board could exercise an "emergency action" clause to effect immediate merger without the eighteen month notice.⁶⁴

For the most part, the Board of Trustees was reluctant about delay. They were torn between the fact that a number of their constituency had expressed grief over complete merger, while others wanted expeditious action taken to implement unification.

The Board desperately wanted to establish a stable academic institution with a viable future. It believed that continued operation of two campuses was detrimental to this educational goal.

By December, 1972, the MWC/BWC Board of Trustees determined the future of Miltonvale Wesleyan College when the Board felt it necessary to exercise the “emergency action” option of the April, 1971, meeting. This came in response to a developing financial crisis, that the Board believed, without immediate corrective action, would jeopardize the possibility of providing quality Christian education for The Wesleyan Church in the West.⁶⁵ This “crisis” referred to the fact that the total accumulated deficit, for the past two years on both campuses, had reached eighty thousand dollars, with an estimated fifty thousand more for the current year.⁶⁶ Added to this, the Board believed that “It is impossible to operate the MWC campus with 115 students and keep the budget in balance since there was a deficit last year with 167.”⁶⁷ It argued that “The expense of operating both campuses [in this fashion] would soon bring both schools into bankruptcy, and the Western Area would be without a college.”⁶⁸

Furthermore, the Board painstakingly concluded that:

There is no hope of getting new students for the MWC campus for next year for these reasons:

- a. Bartlesville needs 50 new students to make the program there adequate
- b. Actions and attitudes of [the] MWC Alumni board, [and] of some . . . community people make recruitment for MWC nearly impossible by our recruitment men.
- c. Students are hesitant to come to a campus which will be closed in the future.⁶⁹

The Board also thought that continuation of the two campuses only polarized Wesleyans in the West, and offered no hope for a smooth merger in the future. As a result, on December 7, 1971, the Board planned for complete merger on one campus by the fall of 1972.⁷⁰

In early 1972 President Leo G. Cox urged the constituency to share in this decision and make an effort to support the new school. In an issue of the BWC/MWC newsletter, Cox chose Exodus 14:15 to elaborate on the situation at hand:

“Speak unto [the children of Israel] that they go forward.” There is much in life to cause delay. It is necessary for us at times to review our course, take stock of our resources and adjust directions. However, the time comes when [a] decision is made and it is time to move ahead. We are at that point in our educational work here in the West. There is no direction now but forward. . . . As we listen to God’s voice He speaks clearly, “Go forward.”⁷¹

Forty-one years before Cox wrote this, President McConn had used this same text to encourage greater support and dedication to Miltonvale Wesleyan during the Depression years. However, circumstances were now very different, and the school at Miltonvale had an opportunity to move to a location more fit to support the Western school. Cox and the Board hoped that the alumni, students and faculty would get behind this decision and offer their support. On the contrary, the immediate response of these groups was anything but supportive.

Although the majority of MWC’s faculty members were offered teaching positions at BWC, none chose to accept an offer. Wesley Knapp declined a teaching position in history, feeling that his “presence on the staff [at BWC] could cause some embarrassment . . . particularly in view of my past relationship to MWC and the fact that

I have not been in full agreement with” the Board of Trustee’s decision and the subsequent policies. Knapp expressed disappointment that after thirty-one years at Miltonvale the only way he could be part of Wesleyan education in the West was to go to Bartlesville.⁷² Wayne Caldwell, Executive Vice President and Professor of Theology, declined an offer at BWC. Caldwell sensed that the divisive spirit created by the merger debacle would hinder efforts at Bartlesville. Other MWC professors expressed similar views which inhibited their acceptance of teaching contracts at BWC.

Like the faculty, but perhaps more vociferously, the MWC Alumni Association reacted strongly to the closure decision. The Alumni Association achieved incorporation status, thus making itself autonomous from the Board of Trustees. Some of the school’s long-time supporters made threats to withdraw scholarship funds originally established for MWC students. A few alumni declared they would in no way support the college in Bartlesville. In the spring of 1972, the Rev. Lorin Miller, President of the Alumni Association Inc., pledged that legal recourse would be sought to right some of the grievances which the alumni had against the Board. To a large degree, as the Alumni Association moved for legal action, their support from the majority of MWC alumni began to wane.

The more agitated alumni felt that the Board had slowly allowed the college to die with little aid from the Board of Trustees. They also expressed bitterness over the fact that a new college recruiter had never been hired to help the enrollment rise, and that the President spent less time at Miltonvale than Bartlesville. However, the Board responded by reminding the Alumni Association Inc. that from the beginning there had

been a set plan to merge the campuses at Bartlesville, the time for such merger being the only uncertainty. The Alumni Assoc. Inc. also expressed aggravation over the “alleged” financial condition of MWC, which Miller believed was in decent shape. Miller estimated the Miltonvale campus to be conservatively valued at two million dollars, but in actuality MWC’s business manager placed a book value of \$635,870.40 on land and buildings.⁷³

The Alumni Association Incorporated took legal action against the MWC/BWC Board of Trustees on May 25, 1972, in the Federal Court at Wichita, Kansas. The formal action called for a Temporary Restraining Order against the Board prohibiting them “from removing, selling, leasing, or entering into negotiations in connection with the disposition of any . . . real or personal property identified as Miltonvale Wesleyan College.”⁷⁴ Judge Frank G. Theis briefly heard the grievances of the Alumni Assoc. and then dismissed the case on grounds that it did not come under the jurisdiction of the Federal Court. Theis issued a restraining order until this matter could be adjudicated by a State Court. In June, 1972, a hearing in the Sedgwick County Court dissolved the restraining order.

Another issue of contention developed in March, 1972, when the Alumni Association Inc. withdrew from Miltonvale Wesleyan College’s Book Endowment Fund ten thousand dollars earmarked for the purchase of books for MWC’s library. Still unwilling to recognize the legitimacy of the unification at BWC, the Alumni Association Inc. withdrew this amount intending to use it for purposes other than for the Bartlesville program. Legal rights to the fund were ambiguous, but the Board of Trustees requested

the money back, first seeking legal council and then submitting the issue to The Wesleyan General Board of Administration. The General Board ruled that “The Wesleyan Church does not regard [the Alumni Association Inc] as the rightful successors of the Miltonvale Alumni Association, and . . . they shall redeposit said funds in the Wesleyan Investment Foundation . . .” (where the fund initially resided).⁷⁵ However, the Alumni Association Inc. never heeded this request, and the Board of Trustees eventually dropped the matter of the ten thousand dollars.

At first the Board’s decision to close MWC seemed to throw the town of Miltonvale’s whole future into abeyance. Several businessmen in Miltonvale feared that the closure would seriously jeopardize the town’s economic prospects. In the *Miltonvale Record*, Dick Phelps wrote that, “Miltonvale has been declining slowly for the past few years and this will add fuel to the fire . . .” Phelps believed that unless the community showed more interest in the town, “Miltonvale will join the many ghost towns in America.”⁷⁶ To some degree, Miltonvale’s census reports reveal this decline. The population dropped from 718 in 1970 to 588 in 1980, and then to 484 in 1990.⁷⁷ Like others in town, Phelps thought that the Board of Trustees had not been perfectly up front with Miltonvale, but had led the town to believe that it could keep the school alive. Phelps also believed that in the years following the closure Miltonvale experienced a “moral decline,” no longer reaping the spiritual and moral benefits of the Wesleyan college.⁷⁸

A number of Miltonvale residents feared that property values would plummet. Ex-MWC faculty members believed that if they decided to sell their homes they would

lose out on their investments. While the Board of Trustees initially considered compensating the faculty for this potential loss, by the mid-1970s fear of property loss did not prove as prophetic as initially thought. In part this was because during the 1970s and 1980s a number of older farmers began to retire in Miltonvale, and sought homes to buy. Kansas District Superintendent, Ron Brannon, placed in charge of selling some of the faculty member's homes, managed to sell many of them at prices close to top market value for a village the size of Miltonvale.⁷⁹

The students who had attended MWC for the 1971-72 school year were perhaps the most disillusioned group in the school's history. Nearly unanimous in their decision not to attend BWC, those constituents who had prophesied that merger would mean the loss of MWC students were correct. Only one student, Paul Hoerner, made the trip to BWC for the fall of 1972. He soon left when he realized that he had already completed most of the courses being offered at BWC. From here Hoerner went to Marion College, as did the majority of ex-MWC students. Others went to MidAmerica Nazarene College in Olathe, Kansas; Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas; and Bethany Nazarene College in Bethany, Oklahoma.⁸⁰

However, after a couple of years, freshmen from the pre-merger, MWC constituency began to matriculate into Bartlesville Wesleyan. By the late 1970s BWC had more Miltonvale constituents represented at Bartlesville Wesleyan than Bartlesville constituents. Dr. Leo Cox believed that this turn-around revealed a breakthrough of the Holy Spirit, who put His seal on the merger and opened the minds of those who were so staunchly loyal to MWC.⁸¹ Likewise, reconciliation, although gradual, was relatively

thorough as those who formerly protested merger now came to accept and even support BWC. District Superintendent Brannon, who resided in Miltonvale in the years following closure, indicates that for some of the most adamant of MWC's alumni,

reconciliation began in the late 70s. What was first a grudging willingness to attend ministerial conventions or alumni events on the Oklahoma campus soon began to give way to guarded enthusiasm. Some people likely never changed their attitude, but they became the minority . . . Pastors [in the old MWC zone] once again welcomed representative groups or persons from the [Western] college to speak/sing in their churches. Some persons initiated the needed actions to change estate plans so that BWC was remembered – where formerly deferred gifts had been intended. By the early 80s a significant percentage had transferred their loyalties [to BWC].⁸²

The Rev. Warren S. Freeborn eventually made amends with Dr. Cox, asking for Cox's forgiveness for some of his actions during the merger conflict. Moreover, Freeborn, one of the more fiery protesters, actually offered financial support to BWC.⁸³ Although some alumni would never sense any personal loyalty or ownership of BWC, many were able to wish, as a former MWC student did, "that the [new] students at BWC have the opportunity to appreciate their school in the same way that [Miltonvale alumni appreciated] MWC—for both her academic excellence and her spiritual leadership."⁸⁴

Bartlesville Wesleyan burgeoned in the 1970s. In May, 1972, Phillips Petroleum Company pledged \$75,000 towards the community goal of \$350,000 to help with the Bartlesville Wesleyan building program. BWC constructed four new buildings in the 1970s, including a campus center in the fall of 1973, a science building and a mens' dormitory in 1974, and a long-awaited performance center in 1979. By 1980 BWC had grown to twice the combined size of MWC/BWC for the 1971-72 school year. In the spring of 1979 the Oklahoma State Regents report showed that Bartlesville Wesleyan had

the largest five year enrollment increase of any four-year private or public college in the state.⁸⁵ Finally, what had previously eluded both schools was now achieved when on April 12, 1978, the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools granted Bartlesville Wesleyan College full accreditation status as a four-year liberal arts institution.

Soon after total merger, Ron Brannon, acting as a representative of the BWC/MWC Board of Trustees, entered into negotiations to sell the Miltonvale campus. After several unsuccessful bids for the school, two of which were made by small denominations, the Miltonvale School District obtained four campus buildings for \$152,000 from a city bond issue vote. The Miltonvale High School used the science building and the gymnasium for its main facilities. They also acquired the old administration building and the snack shop, but did not immediately use them. The administration building fell into such disrepair that it was condemned and eventually leveled. The Alumni Association Inc., although disheartened that the campus was not sold to another denomination for the operation of a Christian College, felt that “Our disappointments may turn out to be *His appointments* as we seek His guidance in serving the youth of this and succeeding generations.” Additionally, they believed that “we see no better way for the [MWC] buildings to be utilized than for the youth of the community to get their high school education here.”⁸⁶ In 1975, the Kansas District of The Wesleyan Church purchased the rest of the campus, including the tabernacle, Hester Hall, and Abbott Hall, for approximately fifty thousand dollars for use as a district campground. By the late 1980s the Kansas District decided it could no longer afford to maintain this

property and it subsequently sold it in 1988 to the United Pentecostal Church's Kansas District, Junction City, Kansas, for approximately \$200,000. This church continues to use these facilities, operating three camp meetings per summer on their portion of the old campus.

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CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The MWC/BWC Board of Trustees' decision to close Miltonvale Wesleyan College in 1972, merging it with Bartlesville Wesleyan College, was predicated on the fact that the founder's initial vision to establish MWC as a kind of fortress of righteousness on the prairie was no longer a sustainable justification for the school's continued operation in economic isolation. Unlike Wesleyan leaders of previous eras, by the late 1960s members of the BWC/MWC Board of Trustees no longer thought that a larger urban environment necessarily would have a pernicious effect on the moral atmosphere of the college. Miltonvale's constituents and alumni who still opted for the *pure environment* rationale were, for the most part, in the minority.

Over the years, the Board of Trustees, the faculty, and Miltonvale's western constituency became painfully aware that maintaining the college in its rural environment came only at considerable economic cost. MWC's history had taught that if the college were to continue at its Miltonvale location, then toil and sacrifice would be forever the school's lot. The Depression and dust bowl years were particularly difficult, the economic situation of this era requiring the school to operate on the barest of essentials. The growing sense among the school's supporters that God's providence had carried MWC through its most trying times fueled their allegiance to the ongoing mission

of the school at Miltonvale. However, this positive outlook was not total, nor were all of MWC's leaders and supporters blind to the lack of economic resources in rural Miltonvale, Kansas.

Even though the school completely liquidated its debt by 1944, the Miltonvale College Board was slowly beginning to see the precarious future of MWC if it were to continue at Miltonvale. The Board's review of a possible relocation of the western school in 1946-47 evidenced this situation. In the years following the decision to stay at Miltonvale the Board and faculty began to realize that greater enrollment was crucial for Miltonvale Wesleyan's success. If the town of Miltonvale had ever been able to attract a major industry, which could have employed students and drawn more of them to the area, then perhaps the school could have defrayed its operating costs. Likewise, if MWC could have increased its enrollment over the two hundred mark for any extended period, then maybe the school's stability would have been secured. Nonetheless, low student enrollment was a perennial impediment for the school, which depended so heavily on student tuition income for its operating costs. With these and other factors in mind, the Miltonvale/Bartlesville Board of Trustees came to the conclusion that the long range potential of the western school at Bartlesville seemed more likely to provide the economic and urban resources deemed necessary for the school's optimum enrollment. The leaders of MWC had always desired that the school "go forward" under divine guidance, but by the late 1960s "going forward" meant responding to God's call to move in a new direction, to a new campus and to a more viable future.

The range of opposition among the church's western constituents, alumni,

students, and faculty was the most difficult barrier to the immediate, successful enactment of the merger decision. The Board met this response by provisionally delaying final merger on one campus until economic circumstances made it necessary. But, for the most part, this delay tended to further the debts of both schools, and allowed for the opposition to solidify its protest and pursue activities to try to keep the school permanently at Miltonvale. When the Board finally closed Miltonvale Wesleyan, merging it completely with Bartlesville, those affected most directly by its closing were the most disenchanted. Both faculty and student unwillingness to transfer to BWC was concrete evidence of this estrangement. After 1972 as students from the old MWC zone began attending BWC the Miltonvale constituency's initial obstinacy soon transformed into willing support. In similar fashion, before many years had passed, some of the alumni and western constituents who adamantly opposed merger on the Bartlesville campus began transferring their loyalties and offering financial support to BWC. Reconciliation, although not total, seemed miraculous to a number of Wesleyans considering the long history of MWC's operation at Miltonvale, the undying loyalty of its alumni, and the bitter responses which surrounded the Board's December, 1971, decision to close MWC.

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