



Nebraska History posts materials online for your personal use. Please remember that the contents of *Nebraska History* are copyrighted by the Nebraska State Historical Society (except for materials credited to other institutions). The NSHS retains its copyrights even to materials it posts on the web.

For permission to re-use materials or for photo ordering information, please see:

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/magazine/permission.htm>

Nebraska State Historical Society members receive four issues of *Nebraska History* and four issues of *Nebraska History News* annually. For membership information, see:

<http://nebraskahistory.org/admin/members/index.htm>

Article Title: Episcopal Reformers and Affairs at Red Cloud Agency, 1870-1876

Full Citation: Robert H Keller, Jr, "Episcopal Reformers and Affairs at Red Cloud Agency, 1870-1876," *Nebraska History* 68 (1987): 116-126

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1987Reformers.pdf>

Date: 12/20/2011

Article Summary: When President Ulysses S Grant put the Protestant Episcopal church in charge of Nebraska and Dakota Territory Indian agencies, he charged its agents with reforming the Bureau of Indian Affairs, educating Indian tribes and halting bloodshed on the western frontier. Despite some improvements at the agencies, Indians and others continually criticized the churchmen who attempted to carry out Grant's peace policy.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Ulysses S Grant, Henry Benjamin Whipple, William Welsh, Felix R Brunot, William Hobart Hare, Jacob D Cox, Columbus Delano, Jared Daniels, John J Saville, Samuel Walker, JW Wham, Samuel Hinman, OC Marsh, Edward P Smith

Nebraska agencies assigned to the Protestant Episcopal church: Ponca Agency, Sod Agency (later called Red Cloud Agency)

Dakota Territory agencies assigned to the Protestant Episcopal church: Crow Creek Agency, Whetstone Agency (later called Spotted Tail Agency), Cheyenne River Agency

Keywords: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Grant's peace policy (Quaker policy), Oglala Sioux, Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, Ulysses S Grant, Henry Benjamin Whipple, William Welsh, Felix R Brunot, William Hobart Hare, Jared Daniels, John J Saville, Samuel Walker, JW Wham, Samuel Hinman, OC Marsh, Jacob D Cox, Columbus Delano, Edward P Smith

Photographs / Images: Western Sioux delegation in Washington, DC, 1875: Sitting Bull (Oglala), Swift Bear (Brule), Spotted Tail (Brule), Julius Meyer (interpreter), and Red Cloud (Oglala); Episcopal Bishop Henry B Whipple of Minnesota about 1871; Felix R Brunot, chairman of the Board of Indian Commissioners; Jacob D Cox, Secretary of the Interior, 1869-70; Dr Jared W Daniels, Minnesota physician and Indian agent, about 1865; Bishop William H Hare about 1880; the Reverend Samuel D Hinman, Dakota missionary, translator, and treaty negotiator, 1867; William Welsh, Philadelphia merchant and critic of the Bureau of Indian Affairs; Dr JJ Saville, physician and Indian agent; distributing goods at Red Cloud Agency (*Harper's Weekly* illustration, May 13, 1876); Columbus Delano, US Secretary of the Interior, 1870-75; Dakota drawing of an 1874 occurrence at Red Cloud Agency when the Oglala cut to pieces a flag staff Saville planned to erect (Garrick Mallery, *The Corbusier Winter Counts, 1860-1875*, Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution); Professor OC Marsh and Chief Red Cloud, circa 1871-1875 (Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1907-1908)



Western Sioux delegation in Washington D.C., 1875: Sitting Bull, Oglala (sitting at left); Swift Bear, Brule; Spotted Tail, Brule; Julius Meyer, interpreter (standing at left); and Red Cloud, Oglala. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

EPISCOPAL REFORMERS AND AFFAIRS AT RED CLOUD AGENCY, 1870-1876

By Robert H. Keller, Jr.

In 1870 the President of the United States invited the Christian churches to help him reform the Bureau of Indian Affairs, educate Indian tribes, and halt bloodshed on the western frontier. Among the Protestant denominations, Episcopalians of all manner responded to the challenge: bishops and busi-

nessmen, priests and philanthropists, missionaries, merchants, and imposers. The reform, known as Grant's peace policy, or Quaker policy, still ranks as one of the most extensive examples of official Church-State cooperation in American history.¹

The peace policy officially began with Ulysses S. Grant's inaugural address in March 1869. Grant had been elected at the end of an extremely violent decade of Indian-white conflict west of the Mississippi River, with the previous ten years witnessing the Spirit Lake massacre, warfare with the

Cheyenne and Arapaho in Kansas and Colorado, a Sioux uprising in Minnesota, the Sand Creek massacre, the Fetterman defeat, closure of the Bozeman Trail, war with the Comanche and Kiowa in Texas, and violence along the overland trails. Upon taking office, Grant surprised the nation by appointing either Quakers or Army officers to supervise all of the nation's seventy Indian reservations. One year later, in June 1870, a Congress angry over loss of patronage refused to reconfirm the military appointments. The President and the Secretary of the Interior, Jacob

Robert H. Keller Jr. of Western Washington University at Bellingham is now a visiting faculty member at the University of Maine. The author of two books and a number of articles, he is currently writing a history of relations between Indian tribes and the National Park Service.

Episcopal Reformers

D. Cox, then turned to other denominations, including the Protestant Episcopal church, asking them to join the Friends in the Indian service and to nominate church members to replace Army officers. Most denominations responded eagerly.

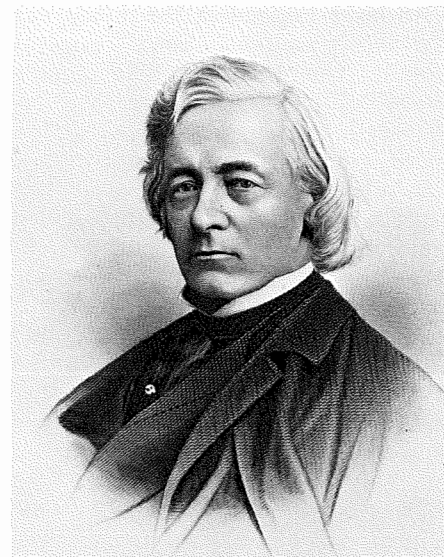
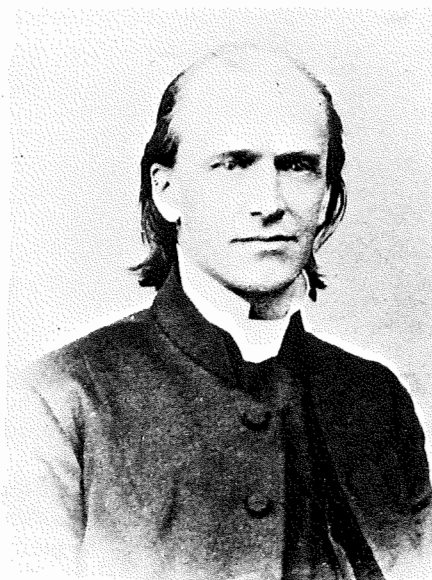
Prior to the peace policy, an evangelical segment of the Episcopal church had already been involved both with Indian reform and with efforts to promote stronger ties between Church and State. The church's, and probably the nation's, most powerful voice for justice to Indians was that of Henry Benjamin Whipple, Episcopal bishop of Minnesota. Whipple had risked his career and perhaps his life in 1862 when he defended native people after a Sioux uprising. Originally from New York, Whipple was a frontier clergyman with powerful friends in the east, including Lincoln and Grant.²

Equally as important as Henry Whipple in initiating Grant's peace policy was William Welsh, a Philadelphia merchant who likewise possessed influence in Washington and who would soon become one of the most controversial critics of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in that department's history. No one ever doubted Welsh's tenacity; many questioned his motives and judgment. Another Episcopalian recruited for the new program was Felix R. Brunot, a Pittsburgh industrialist, leader in the Christian Nation movement, and first chairman of the Board of Indian Commissioners. In the west, William Hobart Hare, bishop of Niobrara, served as the church's first missionary bishop to Indian tribes. Hare supposedly possessed such political influence, locally and nationally, that rumors spread of an "Episcopal Ring" that controlled the economy of Dakota Territory. Jacob D. Cox, Grant's first Secretary of the Interior, and Columbus Delano, who succeeded Cox, were both Episcopalians. Other churchmen active in the reform included Vincent Colyer, New York artist, humanitarian, and the first secretary of the Board of Indian Commissioners (BIC); Samuel

Hinman, Dakota missionary, translator, and treaty negotiator; Edward Kemble, an inspector for the Indian office; and Jared Daniels, Minnesota physician and Indian agent. No other Protestant body provided so much leadership of such high quality.

If the Episcopal church contributed outstanding leaders to the peace policy, it also responded positively in accepting the everyday practical responsibilities expected of churches by the government. First, each denomination had to appoint and supervise Indian agents on the reservation allocated to it.³ This new method of appointment and removal of agents replaced a congressional and executive patronage system that had dominated the Indian service since 1840. Second, churches were expected to send out missionaries and school teachers who would "civilize" and Christianize native people. The government would provide land, buildings, salaries, and money; the churches would provide manpower.⁴ Most churches initially understood that this gave them an exclusive right to evangelize their res-

Episcopal Bishop Henry B. Whipple of Minnesota about 1871. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.



Felix R. Brunot, chairman of the Board of Indian Commissioners, 1870-74. Courtesy of State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

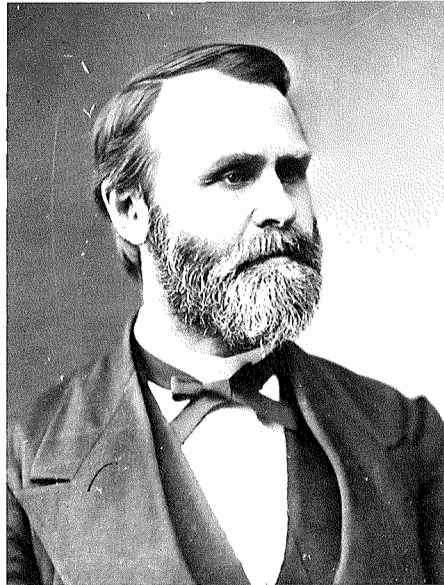
pective tribes. In the third step of his program, Grant created a Board of Indian Commissioners to supervise reservations, churches, and the government itself. Ten Indian commissioners, who were Christian businessmen and philanthropists nominated by the participating denominations, would inspect annuity goods, investigate charges of corruption both on reservations and in the Indian Office, recommend changes in federal policy, and provide a podium for the nation's religious conscience to speak on behalf of Indians.

The peace policy was a civil service reform that replaced politicians with mission boards, patronage with morality. It gave fourteen religious organizations the power to hire and fire government employees, to spend tax funds, to appropriate land for chapels and schools, and to recommend official national policy. Such power posed potential dilemmas, almost all of these dilemmas coming to pass during the next thirteen years until the program finally expired in 1882. During this period no religious body would escape unscathed.

An issue implicit in the policy was whether Christians could appoint morally trustworthy Indian agents where politicians had failed. The reformers had assumed that a mission board or church hierarchy could readily find honest men. Grant believed they could, enough Congressmen believed they could, and certainly most churchmen believed they could. Given these assumptions, the peace policy stood for the ethical superiority of Christianity. Conversely, though few persons at the time stopped to reflect on it, joining the policy also risked ethical failure and public embarrassment.⁵ As it turned out, every denomination which took part in the policy met with at least some failure and disappointment. This included the Society of Friends, who, when it came to Indians, were idealized by others almost as frequently as the Friends idealized themselves. It included the Roman Catholic church, which though discriminated against and forced on the defensive, succeeded more consistently under the peace policy than any other group.⁶

In June of 1870 the government of the United States assigned several reservations on the Great Plains to the Protestant Episcopal church: the Ponca and soon to be designated Red Cloud agencies in Nebraska; and the Crow Creek, Whetstone, and Cheyenne River agencies in Dakota Territory.⁷ Of these reservations, agents and missionaries at Crow Creek, Whetstone (later called Spotted Tail), and Cheyenne River would have relatively little trouble beyond their reservation borders. At the Ponca and Red Cloud agencies, however, the church would suffer humiliating scandals which compromised any claim to moral superiority. And of these, the problems at Red Cloud agency proved to be the most persistent and damaging.

Difficulties encountered by Quaker, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Methodist agents under the peace policy seldom attracted prolonged public attention. The Episcopal church, on the other



Jacob D. Cox, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, 1869-70. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

hand, suffered the misfortune of sensational headlines and exposes. Episcopal leaders, for their part, praised the policy and reported in their monthly missionary journal, the *Spirit of Missions*, that their agents were especially devoted Christians who had effectively stopped the corruption of the old system. Such self congratulation neglected to mention the Episcopal Indian Commission's dismissal of six agents for reasons ranging from fraud and extortion to fornication and drunkenness.⁸ Episcopal officials promoted a positive public image, a goal which at times left them overeager to avoid obliquity and predisposed to believe rumors about their agents. The problem of publicity and failure – the “burden of disgrace” as church official Robert Rogers called it – proved especially damaging at Red Cloud agency.

Of all Episcopal agencies, this one on the arid, inhospitable plains of western Nebraska just beyond the 100th meridian brought the most difficulty, the

most exposure, and received the least support from the church. Here, under Episcopal care, were the Oglala Sioux. Removed more than eight times between 1863 and 1880, the Oglala would not see an Episcopal mission or school until 1877. During the winter months, other Sioux bands from Yellowstone and Powder River country filled the reservation, unhappy over eviction from hunting grounds south of the Platte and fearing an imminent invasion of their last sanctuary to the north, *Paha Sapa*, the Black Hills. Their chiefs quarreled as much among themselves as with the whites.⁹

Under the terms of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the Sioux agency was to be located on the Missouri River near Fort Randall. Red Cloud, however, wanted to trade and receive his annuities at Fort Laramie and refused to move north. The first Episcopal agent to the Oglala, J.W. Wham, withheld annuity payments and rations in an effort to force the Indians to move. While negotiations dragged on, Red Cloud's band took up residence on the North Platte River slightly west of the present Nebraska-Wyoming border. Here at the “Sod Agency” (the forerunner of Red Cloud agency) the Oglala seemed bound to remain.¹⁰

The Indians bewildered Wham, a man appointed through, but not selected by, the church.¹¹ Episcopalians charged that the agent was a heretic, and in 1872, after an investigation by Francis A. Walker revealed the agency in chaos, the church replaced Wham with one of Bishop Whipple's closest friends, physician Jared Daniels.¹²

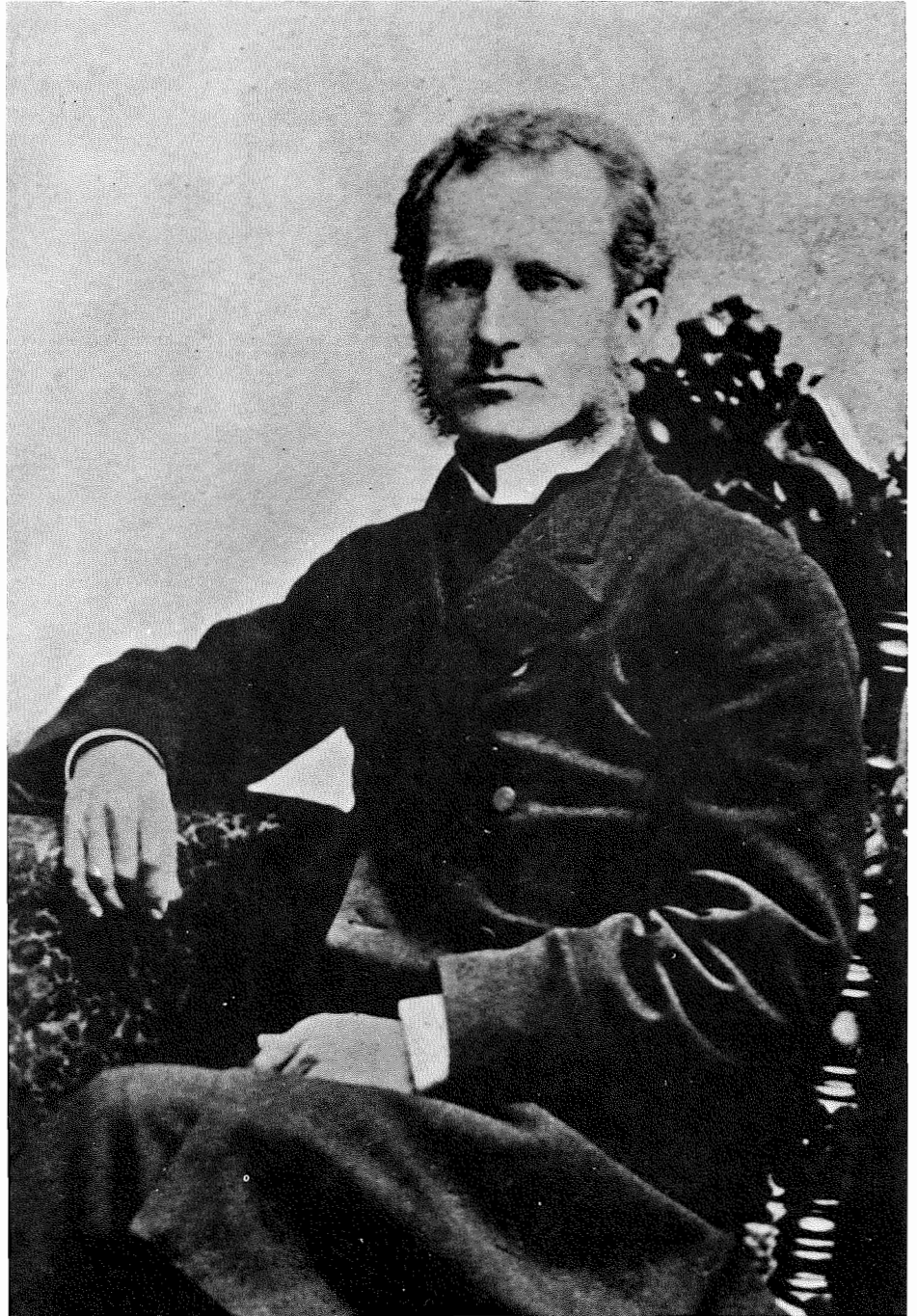
When Daniels first arrived at the sod house office on the Platte River, January 12, 1872, his immediate task was to try to persuade 7,000 Sioux to move to the Missouri River. Daniels had also been ordered to stop the Sioux from hunting south of the Platte and to conduct a census. The tribe resented both measures.¹³ Realizing that Sioux warriors believed that the government fed and bribed them out of fear, Daniels concluded that the young



Dr. Jared W. Daniels, Minnesota physician and Indian agent, about 1865. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

braves needed a sound thrashing: "Let them feel the full force of powder and the day of meek submission on the part of the Govt. will be at an end and their advancement will commence."¹⁴ As government rations were distributed, he observed that the tribes showed "as little gratitude as hogs." By the summer of 1872 the agency slipped into chaos again when the Sioux refused to be counted; young warriors once more rode against the Pawnee, a traditional enemy to the east; and other bands hunted south of the Platte in search of buffalo. From time to time they threatened to kill the agent.

Faced with the Sioux refusal to move to an agency on the Missouri, the Indian Office decided to relocate Red Cloud agency some seventy-five miles north to the White River to get it away from the Platte. It sent freighter D.J. McCann to help Daniels transport supplies and equipment. The agent-doctor decided that McCann was the pawn of Nebraska politicians and ignored the teamster. Charges of neglect of office



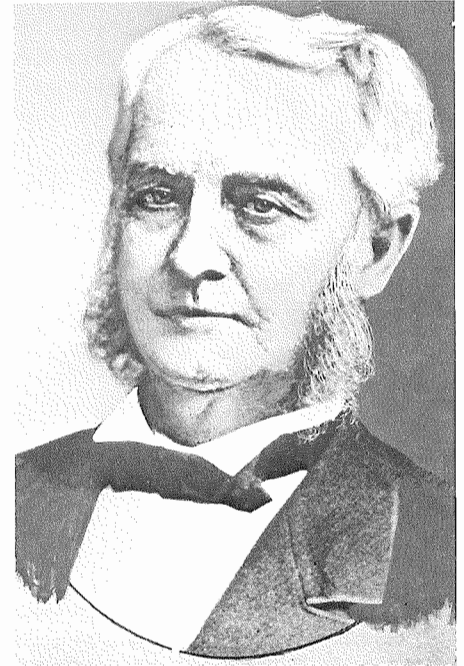
*Bishop William H. Hare, about 1880. From M.A. DeWolfe's *The Life and Labors of Bishop Hare* (New York: Sturgis and Walton Company, 1913), opp. 52.*



The Reverend Samuel D. Hinman, Dakota missionary, translator, and treaty negotiator, 1867. Courtesy of the South Dakota State Historical Society.

were brought against Daniels within four months, and by November of 1872 the Indian Office told the church to request the agent's resignation. The official reason was not dishonesty but that Daniels was weak and lacked nerve. Henry Whipple protested to the

Secretary of the Interior, Columbus Delano, that if Jared Daniels could not control the Oglala, no one could; and the bishop defended his friend by insisting that an "Indian Ring" or conspiracy to defraud the government had duped the new Commissioner of Indian



William Welsh, Philadelphia merchant and critic of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Affairs, Francis Walker. Thanks to Whipple's intervention, Daniels remained at the agency.

The following spring, after some Oglala Sioux had killed three white settlers and again threatened the agent's life, Daniels vowed he was finished with Indians unless the government began to protect its agents. Informed persons, he told Whipple, sneered at the peace policy, and a public backlash would soon place the Indians in a worse position than they had occupied in 1869. In the meantime William Welsh in Philadelphia and the Board of Indian Commissioners in Washington D.C. had accused Daniels of falsifying accounts and of fraudulent beef purchases. Welsh, a constant critic of the Indian Office, at first hoped that a lecture from Whipple would reform the agent and convince Daniels of the harm he had done to the reform cause. Believing rumors from a BIC private investigator and fearing that the Epis-

copal church would be embarrassed before Congress, Welsh told Whipple that the doctor not only had yielded to temptation himself but had tried to cover up another agent's misdeeds. Whipple conceded that Daniels had made errors, yet despite Welsh's charges the bishop insisted nothing had been done corruptly, and he refused to believe that Daniels was anything but a man "of personal purity, of irreproachable character, of deep conscience."¹⁵

Exhausted by trying to calm the Sioux and exasperated with constantly having to vindicate himself, Daniels resigned in 1873 to take a post as an Indian inspector for the federal government. The Episcopal church replaced him with Dr. John J. Saville, a Sioux City physician nominated by Bishop William Hare and highly praised by Welsh.

Saville, a small, waspish, nervous man racked by splitting headaches, found the Oglala vicious and insolent when he arrived to take over the agency in August 1873. The new location on the White River was more accessible to the troublesome northern bands, and for the first time white ranchers in this region were able to move north of the Platte. With Northern Pacific Railroad survey crews working on the Yellowstone River to the north, distrust and tension among the Indians mounted rapidly.

For months the Sioux controlled Saville's movements and kept him confined to agency buildings "day after day with my life at stake." Early one February morning in 1874 a brave from Lone Horn's camp attempted to kill Saville and by mistake murdered the agent's nephew, Frank Appleton. Saville's appeal for troops from Fort Laramie and the establishment of Camp Robinson nearby made the Indians even more hostile.

At the same time, several members of the BIC suspected fraud at the western Sioux agencies. The board now instructed one of its clerks, Samuel Walker, to conduct a special inves-



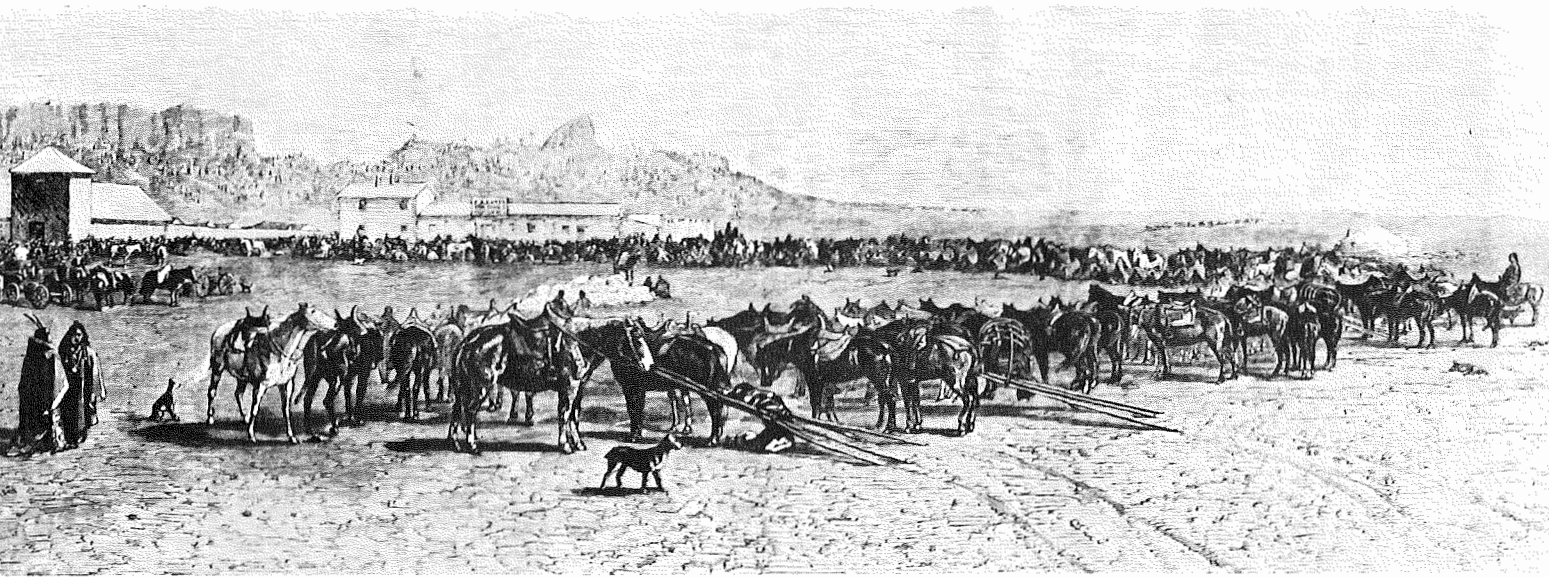
Dr. J.J. Saville, physician and Indian agent.

tigation.¹⁶ It is not clear exactly who authorized Walker's visit to Dakota, but obviously he collaborated with William Welsh.¹⁷ Like Welsh, he expected to find plundering everywhere. Before leaving Washington, Walker was convinced that the peace policy's enemy, "the Indian Ring," planned to expose itself in order to embarrass the churches. The major trouble spots in this conspiracy would be the Sioux agencies, where agents had conspired with speculators associated with the Interior Department. "There is no doubt," warned Nathan Bishop of the BIC, "that hundreds of thousands of dollars have been stolen in Dakota last year and that every agent sent there *has been bought*." Jared Daniels, according to Walker, had suppressed evidence against the ring because he had been bribed.¹⁸

Thus predisposed, Walker examined the Red Cloud agency for six days and Whetstone agency for four more days, then rushed back to Washington. What he searched for, he found. Freightier McCann had overcharged the government, cheated the Indians, and

smuggled liquor onto the reservation; Saville had issued false receipts for beef and supplies and had overpaid his brother-in-law, Amos Appleton. The BIC had already, Walker noted, rejected the Bosler and Wilder Company's vouchers for corn, flour, and 1,900 barrels of pork.¹⁹ Walker's report also went to the Episcopal Indian Commission,²⁰ which responded in January by placing all the Dakota agents directly under the control of William Hare. The church commission recommended that no action be taken against Saville.²¹ Like many other documents from Red Cloud agency, the Walker report mysteriously disappeared, causing the BIC to neglect sending a copy to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Secretary of the Interior. In February an enraged Columbus Delano learned of the report. As Secretary of the Interior he demanded a copy, got one, and after reading it, ordered Inspector J.D. Bevier, Bishop Hare, and Samuel Hinman, the Episcopal missionary, to inspect the agency once more.²²

In the fourth investigation of Red Cloud agency in less than a year, Hinman and Hare exonerated the agent and found Samuel Walker's report a "culpable *suppresio veri*." Walker had been at Red Cloud while Saville was absent and had accepted evidence from a known thief. Waste of flour and overissue of beef had occurred, but with confusing instructions from the Indian Office partly to blame, these difficulties were not the fault of Saville. Bishop Hare also advised military action against the root of trouble - violent and rowdy Oglala, Brule, and white bandits on the reserve - "thieves, gamblers, whiskey peddlers, cut-throats, and jailbirds of every sort."²³ Previous investigator Samuel Walker defended himself by accusing Hare of ignoring evidence and of lying to save the church's agent. Walker asked Felix Brunot, BIC chairman, for a fair hearing against the Hinman-Hare commission's "disgraceful attack [and] glaring blunders. . . It is a bad day for the public morals when churchmen



Distributing goods at Red Cloud Agency. From Harper's Weekly, May 13, 1876, 393.

[call] 'fraud and theft' 'excusable irregularities.'"²⁴ Less than a month later, led by Brunot, all the original members of the troubled BIC resigned en masse.²⁵

Vindication by the Hare commission did not end the trials of J.J. Saville. Missionary Samuel Hinman met with federal inspector J.D. Bevier during the summer of 1874 and soon announced that he had undergone a complete change of heart. Hinman now became convinced that Saville had fooled the Hare commission and that the agent was a scoundrel. Bevier investigated. He discovered that Saville, in granting his brother-in-law a supply contract for agency timber, had excluded all competition and paid exorbitant prices. In October Bevier and Hinman wrote to Bishop Hare requesting Saville's removal, but Hare, then in New York, refused to act until he heard directly from the agent.²⁶ When the bishop told Saville of the latest charges, the doctor protested to the Indian Office that Bevier, Hinman, and the Army conspired to disgrace him:

It would seem my good friend Mr. Hinman has permitted his ambition to get the better of his

friendship, and if what has been reported to me be true, even worse than that. . . there is no doubt that there is a deep political scheme. . . It appears to me that it must have crept into the Board of Missions. . . Nothing could be more inimical to the work of the Church.²⁷

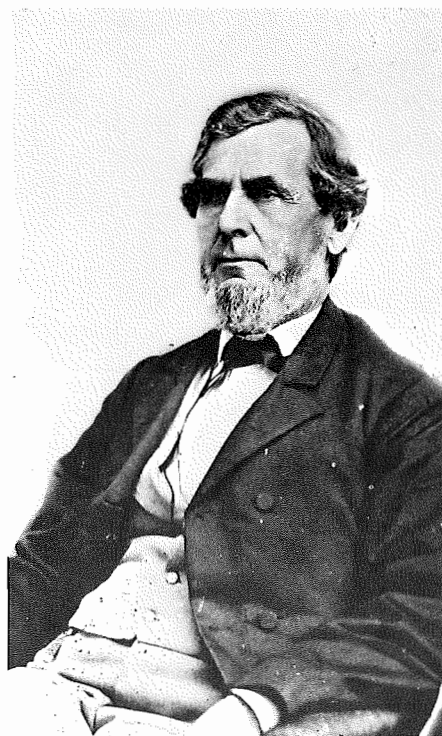
Having already survived more serious charges, Saville did not seem worried. He expected further accusations, yet felt confident that they too would evaporate: "Red Cloud Agency is pregnant with coming events, and seems on the eve of going into the throes of labor, though it is very possible like the fabled mountain, a mouse will be the result." But Saville apparently had forgotten an earlier visit of still another group to his reservation.

In the fall of 1874 Professor O.C. Marsh had led a Yale paleontological expedition onto the Sioux reserve. When Chief Red Cloud and the agent refused to allow a search for fossils in the Badlands, Marsh evaded both of them, excavated two tons of bones, and returned to the agency. As he conferred again with Red Cloud, the chief now complained to the Yale professor about Saville. Nine months later, long after he returned to the East, Marsh launched an expose. He displayed samples of moldy plug tobacco, rotten pork, and

sand-filled flour which, he said, the agent had issued to starving Oglala. Marsh informed the *New York Tribune* that Saville fraternized with contractors and freighters, was "wholly unfitted. . . guilty of gross frauds. . . incompetent, weak and fascillating." The Yale scholar predicted that the Indian Office and the Board of Indian Commissioners would deny his charges, but that missionary Hinman and the Army could amply confirm them. The *Tribune*, an arch-critic of the Grant administration, gloated. Affairs at Red Cloud, it editorialized, illustrated the consequences of letting superannuated, incompetent clergy scramble for Indian agencies.²⁸ This brought William Welsh storming out of Philadelphia. He accused the Interior of rigged investigations and he anathematized his erstwhile friend Saville for succumbing to evil.²⁹ In a public letter to Marsh, Welsh maintained that Samuel Walker had been correct all along and that Secretary Delano had completely duped Bishop Hare. The Indian Office responded that Welsh, Marsh, and the *Tribune* were grasping at any opportunity to embarrass Grant. O.C. Marsh, the

office retorted, was a gullible academic who hid behind the *Tribune* and refused to present any evidence to the government.³⁰ This noisy scandal evoked platitudes from other newspapers. *Harper's Weekly* warned that if Welsh and Marsh were right, both Columbus Delano and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Edward P. Smith must be fired. The *Nation* elevated Marsh to the status of a lonely knight fighting a powerful Indian Ring led by a conniving Delano and the pious Smith.³¹ The *Christian Intelligencer* (Congregational) chided Welsh and challenged the *Tribune* to prove its "malignant insinuations," while *Advance* (Methodist) wrote that Marsh fabricated wicked slander. The controversy alarmed Grant, who demanded another investigation.³²

The President assigned this task to his new Board of Indian Commissioners, in office less than a month. After reading 500 applications, "not one of whom I would name," Board Chairman Clinton Fisk, a Methodist, finally selected five men to visit the agency. After listening to endless contradictions³³ and finding it impossible to force William Welsh to testify, the new Red Cloud Commission reached a number of conclusions. It judged Saville unfit and recommended his immediate dismissal. He was not actually guilty, they reported, but rather had a "literary and scientific. . . nervous and irritable temperament, inordinate loquacity, undignified bearing and manners, a want of coolness and. . . of firmness and decision of character." As for O.C. Marsh, the Red Cloud Commission said that the Yale professor mistook his own opinions for facts and assumed that bookkeeping errors proved deliberate fraud. In expressing its innocuous decisions, the Red Cloud Commission engaged in such a smokescreen of loquacity that one suspects J.J. Saville probably was both innocent and competent. The investigation found no evidence of theft, but only that the agent had made mistakes which left him a poorer man

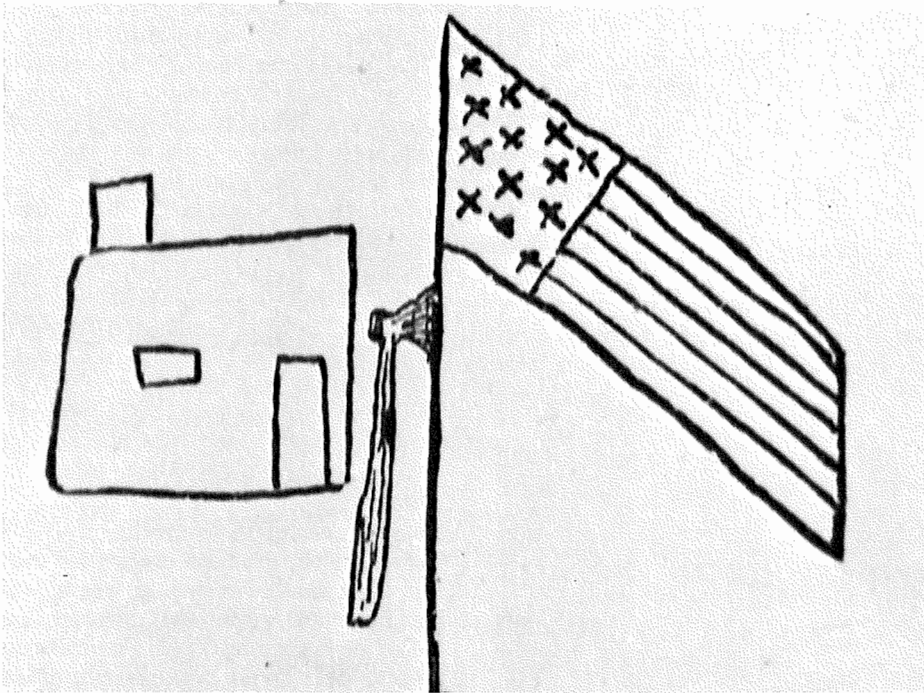


Columbus Delano, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, 1870-75. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

than when he entered the Indian service. The commissioners admitted that it was impossible for Saville or anyone else to overcome the Sioux's distrust. Saville's bookkeeping was badly disordered, but the commission blamed this on procedures in the Indian Office at Washington and on the lack of clerks at the agency. Saville had distributed annuity goods fairly. In short, the agent had become entangled in a system which offered everyone an open invitation to cheat and steal. No man, the five investigators concluded, should be exposed to such temptation, nor should be placed in a position where, however he may resist temptation, and however honestly he may serve. . . he may still be suspected, and run the risk of retiring from his position at last with empty pockets and impaired reputation. . . accusation has fallen upon [Dr. Saville] not because he has stolen, but because it was thought that he had the opportunity to steal.³⁴

Men and women could read whatever they desired into the Red Cloud Commission's ambiguous report. *Harper's* continued to praise Marsh and thought that the commission had vindicated the Yale scholar. The *Nation* made sarcastic comments about "Great Father Grant," who allowed an odious Indian Office to investigate itself.³⁵ Religious journalists claimed for the most part that the report vindicated Saville. Marsh's intrigue, the *Independent* editorialized, had failed pitifully. The editor added that since "Mr. William Welsh has once more refused to testify, the public ought to take that meddler at something less than his own valuation." *Advance* attacked Welsh for "all his buzzing in open letters" and noted that the Philadelphia reformer would not testify even when the commission called at his home. "The Commission passed him by in the contemptuous silence which he deserves, and where all others can afford to leave him."³⁶ The tragedy of the peace policy, the editor declared, was that the Indian Ring could manipulate crusaders such as Marsh and Welsh to destroy good Christians like J.J. Saville.

The Red Cloud Commission of 1875 produced much data but no solid evidence of fraud. Its equivocal statements and its description of hardships at the Sioux agency can only increase one's respect for the agent. Saville had to pacify up to 12,000 Indians with just grievances. He was obliged to feed them using reduced appropriations during the Panic of 1873, and for help he had to rely upon Army officers at Fort Laramie and Camp Robinson, jealous men who hoped to benefit from his failures and gain control of the reservations.³⁷ During six investigations conducted by the government and his church, amid intriguing officers, businessmen and missionaries, and with Indians threatening his life, Saville somehow managed to improve conditions at Red Cloud agency. According to George Hyde, the Sioux slowly began to res-



This Dakota drawing represents an 1874 occurrence at Red Cloud Agency in which the Oglala cut to pieces a flag staff Saville planned to erect. From Garrick Mallery's "The Corbusier Winter Counts, 1860-1875," Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, vol. 4 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1886), opp. 145.

pect this agent. At a hearing in Washington, an Oglala shouted out that "we have no one to blame but ourselves. Our father [Dr. Saville] is a good man. He is a brave true man. We tried to break him down and we could not. He is the man we ought to take back with us and keep."³⁸

Regardless of Indian opinion, Saville was judged incompetent and unfit by the Red Cloud Commission and the BIC. He submitted a letter of resignation in June, regretting that false charges had destroyed his influence and embarrassed the Episcopal church. The agent was correct about an embarrassed church. A vexed Bishop Hare was ready to drop all agent nominations: "The responsibility. . . is seen with each year's experience to be graver and graver."³⁹ Hare had requested a new agent even before the

Red Cloud Commission began its work. The Episcopal church soon sent James Hastings to replace Saville, and Hastings remained at his post until the next summer when, after General George Custer's failure to demolish the Sioux on the Little Big Horn, the military assumed full command of the Red Cloud agency.

Even at the Quaker agencies located on the relatively calm and comfortable reservations of eastern Nebraska, sincere and honest Christian agents with the best of intentions, could not solve the "Indian Problem" of the 1860s and 1870s. Episcopalians at the isolated western Sioux agencies faced an even harder task. These men had to deal with Indians still independent, and they struggled with longer transportation routes and with delayed communications. They lived in a harsher

climate under more primitive conditions. The Episcopal agents inherited problems and attitudes from the past that included the victory of the Sioux in closing the Bozeman Trail and the hostility created during decades of overland migration along the Platte. They inherited the assumption that Indian agents were always corrupt. Government procedures, including poor bookkeeping and inept investigations, often made that assumption prove true.

Grant's peace policy may have eased the displacement of native cultures on the Great Plains, but it did not stop that process. Even when Grant and the reformers sympathized with the Nez Perce in the Wallowa Valley of Oregon or the Sioux in the Black Hills, the interest of settlers and miners, the desire to expand into and occupy the West, came first. Although the Protestant Episcopal church provided exceptional leadership in Indian affairs during the 1870s, its agents in the field struggled with the same temptations and limitations under the peace policy as did the Friends in Kansas, the Methodists in Montana, the Presbyterians in New Mexico, or the Unitarians in Colorado. A combination of the press, Congress, critics, reformers, politicians, merchants, Indians, bureaucrats, and frontier boosters could wear down the strongest of Christians. Edward P. Smith, the Congregational minister who served for three years as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, said in his own defense before a congressional committee in 1875:

I have had but one desire or ambition as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and that is to do something to lift 275,000 people out of a barbarous and semi-barbarous condition into Christian civilizations. . . up to the present I have enjoyed the reputation among a large circle of acquaintances of being an honest man; that reputation is all that I have which is of any value to me. Professor Marsh has. . . done all that a man in his high position could do to destroy my name and take from me that which I prize above all earthly things, the good opinion of good men. He has done this by sweeping assertions, which have been made without any proper inquiry as to the facts.⁴⁰

Within a few months Edward P. Smith resigned at Grant's request. He left the Indian Office feeling that many of his friends considered him a thief and a scoundrel:

When it came over me yesterday at my desk that I should probably be out from under this terrible burden within a few weeks you can have no idea of the sense of relief I felt. I could have walked on eggs without breaking them. What next?... I find that I have made such poor use of the \$500,000 which I have stolen, that I shall be obliged to borrow about \$500 to pay my debts and get out of town.⁴¹

The Episcopal experience at Red Cloud was not unique.

NOTES

¹For comprehensive overviews of government, church, and Indian relations, see Henry Warner Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); and R. Pierce Beaver, *Church, State, and the American Indians* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966). By far the best general book on the late 1800s is Francis Paul Prucha's *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976). Peter Rahill in *The Catholic Indian Missions and Grant's Peace Policy: 1870-1884* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1953) describes that denomination's involvement, and R.H. Keller, *American Protestantism and U.S. Indian Policy, 1869-1882* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983) does the same for Protestant churches. The latter book provides a current bibliography for further study. William H. Armstrong's biography of Edward P. Smith will provide much intimate detail when published. Original research for my book, cited above, and for this article was funded in part by the Indian Advisory Committee of the Protestant Episcopal church. I greatly appreciated Dr. Clifford Samuelson's support and encouragement.

²See Henry B. Whipple, *Lights and Shadows of a Long Episcopate* (New York: Macmillan, 1900). A recent assessment of his work is by Martin N. Zanger, "Straight Tongue's Heathen Wards: Bishop Whipple and the Episcopal Mission to the Chippewas," in Clyde A. Milner II and Floyd A. O'Neil, *Churchmen and the Western Indians, 1820-1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985).

³In this period the federal Indian agent had virtual autonomy on his reserve. He did the bookkeeping, enforced laws and government policy, supervised annuity goods and payments, hired all agency employees, dealt with local white communities, and acted as liaison with the Army. Except for treaty-making purposes no one recognized that tribal government existed. Prior to Grant, agents secured appointment through political friends. Each agent reported to a superintendent, who reported to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, who in turn answered to the Secretary of the Interior. Far removed from any watchful eye, an agent's opportunity for graft and corruption seemed boundless. How much



Professor O.C. Marsh and Chief Red Cloud, ca. 1871-75. From Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1907-1908, vol. 10 (Topeka, 1908), 294.

and how often Indian agents abused their trust remains a matter of historical controversy, but few dispute that their public reputation stank in the 1850s and 1860s.

⁴All of this, including missionaries acting as Indian agents, had precedent in the previous century and in British, French, and Spanish colonial practice. See Beaver, *Church, State, and the American Indians*.

⁵A fair assessment of church performance poses difficult problems in method and comparison. Most attempts, including those made in the 1870s, have been naive or inadequate. The dependable evaluations involve single tribes or specific areas, with the best of these being Clyde Milner's book on the Hicksite Friends in Nebraska, *With Good Intentions* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982). Other solid assessments are William Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) concerning the Orthodox Friends in Indian Territory; John Bret Harte, "The San Carlos Indian Reservations, 1872-1886: An Administrative History" (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, Tucson, 1972); and Donald J. Berthrong's *The Cheyenne and Arapaho Ordeal: Reservation and Agency Life in the Indian Territory, 1875-1907* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), also on the Orthodox Quakers.

⁶Raynard Kelsey's *Friends and the Indians, 1655-1917* (Philadelphia: Executive Committee of Friends, 1917) conveys typical Quaker self-satisfaction. For less rosy views, see Milner, *With Good Intentions*, and Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations*. On Roman Catholics, Rahill needs to be balanced against John Fahey, *The*

Flathead Indians (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974) and Howard L. Harrod, *Mission Among the Blackfeet* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971). The tense struggle between Catholics and Bishop Whipple at White Earth, Minnesota, is briefly mentioned in *American Protestantism, 178-79*; that episode deserves fuller analysis.

⁷This list grew when Yankton (Dakota), Wind River (Wyoming), and White Earth (Minnesota) were added later. The rationale behind the allocation system is explained in *American Protestantism*, chapter 2. It seems likely that the influence of Bishops Hare and Whipple, aided by William Welsh, in many cases secured tribes for which the Episcopal church did not legitimately qualify.

⁸*Spirit of Missions* 36(1871):404-405, 37(1872):536-37; Protestant Episcopal church, *Proceedings of the Board of Missions*, 1874, 152-53. S. Walker to N. Bishop, September 9, 1873; Cree to Brunot, January 2, 1872, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), Record Group 75, Board of Indian Commissioners: Letters Sent (hereafter BIC:LS). R. Grimes to Cree, October 20, 1872; Irwin to Brunot, October 20, 1872; Irwin to Cree, December 9, 1872; NARA, Record Group 75, Board of Indian Commissioners: Letters Received (hereafter BIC:LR). Twing to Delano, August 1, 1871; Ponca Chiefs to Grant, September 18, 1871, NARA, Record Group 48, Secretary of the Interior: Letters Received (hereafter SI:LR). Red Cloud Commission, *Report of the Special Commission Appointed to Investigate the Affairs of the Red Cloud Indian Agency, July 1875; Together with the Testimony and Accompanying Documents* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875), lxxvi; R. Rogers to SI, September 2, 1875; Rogers to Hare, October 2, 1875, Epis. Sem. of the SW, Protestant Episcopal Church Archives, Austin, Texas, Episcopal Indian Commission Letter books (EIC:LS). March 11, 1873, Ibid., Minutes of the Indian Commission.

⁹Chapters XI-XVI of George Hyde's *Red Cloud's Folk* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937) contain a detailed account of affairs at the agency. Hyde's story is marred by an animus toward eastern reformers, Episcopalians, and the Indian Office; by his false assumption that the peace policy was a pacifist reform; and by his insufficient knowledge of each agent's relationship with the church; e.g., Hyde assumed that J.W. Wham was an Episcopalian. Hyde's book has been superseded by James C. Olson's *Red Cloud and the Sioux Problem* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), an excellent, careful account of Indian politics, trade, the Army, and removal. Olson, unlike many historians, describes the complex psychology of the native response to white intrusion and gives due weight to the influence of the trivial in human affairs. He also clearly demonstrates that the peace policy did not create but rather inherited most of its problems and difficulties.

¹⁰Olson, *Red Cloud*, chapter 8, provides a full discussion of the problems involved in locating the agency.

¹¹Episcopalian church officials tried to appoint Jared Daniels in 1870 but were bypassed by Columbus Delano, who preferred Wham; BIC:LR. Brunot to Colyer, February 2, 15, 1871; SI:LR, Dyer to Delano, October 14, 1871. Wham was a former Army agent to the Shoshone, Ban-

nock, and Nez Perce. Carol A. Ripich's "Joseph W. Wham and the Red Cloud Agency, 1871," *Arizona and the West* 12 (Winter 1970):325-38, is superficial and inaccurate.

¹²Wham had been overruled by Commissioner of Indian Affairs E.S. Parker regarding the location of the agency and the issuing of rifles to the Sioux. Olson describes Wham as trapped among Parker, local traders, the Army, Red Cloud, and hostile agency employees - an honest, uncertain, confused man incapable of meeting an extremely tense situation. Olson, *Red Cloud*, 141-43.

¹³The purpose of the census was twofold: (1) to determine the supplies needed, and (2) to break the power of chiefs by distributing goods directly to families.

¹⁴"Red Cloud Agency" by Jared Daniels; *Journal*, March 2, 23, 29, 30, 1872; Daniels Family Papers, Mrs. Karen Daniels Petersen, St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁵BIC:LS: Cree to Welsh, April 7, 1872. F. Walker to Delano, November 26, 1872, NARA, Record Group 75, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent (hereafter OIA:LS). S.R. Hosmer to E.P. Smith, September 8, 1873, NARA, Record Group 75, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received (hereafter OIA:LR). SI:LR: Whipple to Delano, December 13, 1872. J. Daniels to Whipple, April 18, 1873; Welsh to Whipple, September 11, December 22, 1873; Whipple to Welsh, August 19, 1874, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Henry Benjamin Whipple Papers and Letterbooks (WP). Olson, *Red Cloud*, chapter 9, praises Daniels as a very capable agent.

¹⁶The third in the series of investigations. During the spring of 1873 Edward Kemble and Henry Alvord had examined Red Cloud and Spotted Tail agencies on behalf of the Indian Office. Kemble, an Episcopalian, placed much blame on the press for its sensationalism; he also urged his church to send a missionary to Red Cloud at once. Alvord later claimed that he had found Daniels to be corrupt but did not say so at the time (*Spirit of Missions*, 1873, 432ff; *Red Cloud Commission, Report*, 764). In July the Episcopal Indian Commission sent a special advisor to help the new agents at Red Cloud and Spotted Tail avoid the problems of other peace policy agents. In September the Episcopal Commission warned its agents that they must resist constant efforts to corrupt them, because fraud would disgrace the church even when the charges were false (EIC: Minutes: July 15, September 2, 12, 1873).

¹⁷BIC:LS: S. Walker to Welsh, September 8, 1873. Walker had been left in charge of the BIC office while secretary Thomas Cree and chairman Brunot traveled in the West.

¹⁸BIC:LS:S. Walker to N. Bishop, September 9, 11, 1873; Walker to Cree, September 12, 1873.

¹⁹BIC:LS:S. Walker to Brunot, December 6, 1873 (30 pp. MS); Cree to Stuart, November 3, 1873.

²⁰A special commission within the church established in 1870 to oversee and administer the peace policy. It reported to the House of Bishops.

²¹EIC: Minutes: January 13, February 10, 1874. Hare felt that Walker's report was "most unfair, and in its mode of inquiry, contemptible"; *Red Cloud Commission, Report*, 613.

²²House Report 778, 43rd Cong., 1st Sess., 64-67, 76.

²³M.A. DeWolfe Howe, *The Life and Labors of Bishop Hare* (New York: Sturgis and Walton, 1913), 110ff; William H. Hare, "Further Enlargement of the Work," *The Church and the Indians*, 1874 pamphlet. The formal report of the Hinman-Hare commission is in the BIC, *Annual Report*, 1874, 60-72.

²⁴BIC:LS:S. Walker to Brunot, May 5, 1874; Walker to Cree, May 19, 1874; Walker to the BIC, May 19, 1874.

²⁵The board resigned because it felt that politicians in the Interior Department, including Delano, had conspired against the BIC and denied that it possessed any power over them. See Keller, *American Protestantism*, chapter 4.

²⁶OIA: Inspectors' Reports: J.D. Bevier to E.P. Smith, October 23, 1874; Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1874, 96; *Red Cloud Commission, Report*, 728ff.

²⁷OIA:LR: Saville to C.C. Cox, December 16, 1874.

²⁸O.C. Marsh, *A Statement of Affairs at Red Cloud Agency* (n. p., 1875); *New York Tribune*, April 30, June 2, 1875.

²⁹Earlier Welsh had forced the resignation of Commissioner of Indian Affairs Ely S. Parker, and later he would accomplish the same for Commissioner Edward P. Smith.

³⁰Welsh to Marsh, n.d. (BIC Scrapbook, newspaper clipping, NARA Record Group 75, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, *Documents Relating to the Charges of Professor O.C. Marsh of Fraud and Mismanagement of the Red Cloud Agency* (c. 1875).

³¹*Harper's*, September 4, 1875, 714; *Nation*, April 22, 29, 1875. The *Nation* played both ends: It later reported that Welsh talked in "a licentious and unbridled manner about the worthy Delano" and reported H.B. Cowen's comment that Welsh was "a thorough scoundrel and falsifier, engaged in a damnable conspiracy." *Nation*, July 22, August 19, 1875. Edward P. Smith was a Congregational minister.

³²*Christian Intelligencer*, May 13, 1875; *Independent*, May 13, July 22, August 12, 1875; *Advance*, May 13, June 22, September 30, 1875; Grant to Delano, July 16, 1875; Grant to Marsh, July 16, 1875, U.S. Library of Congress Manuscripts Division, Ulysses S. Grant Papers, 1869-77.

³³George Hyde commented that "the facts were smothered in a fog of false testimony. Probably more lying was done at Red Cloud Agency during this investigation than at any other place during a similar period of the nation's history." *Red Cloud's Folk*, 239.

³⁴*Red Cloud Commission, Report*, xvii, xx, xxiii, xiv-xvii.

³⁵*Harper's Weekly*, November 6, 1875; *Nation*, October 28, 1875.

³⁶*Advance*, October 28, 1876; *Independent*, September 16, 1875.

³⁷Bishop Hare claimed that "hot and indiscreet officers" in Cheyenne opposed the church agents: the Interior Department, fighting to prevent transfer of the BIA to the Army, reported that young officers at Fort Laramie used every opportunity to "disparage, misrepresent, and embarrass" the peace policy. Lt. J.M. Lee, taking control of the Spotted Tail agency after 1876, smugly wrote that church "sentimentalism" had failed. Hare, "Further Enlargement"; Dept. of the Interior, *Documents . . . Red Cloud Agency*, 4; Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1876, 68.

³⁸Hyde, *Red Cloud's Folk*, 232. Olson, *Red Cloud and the Sioux Problem*, argues that Marsh's charges against Saville were very thin, unsupported, and irrelevant (184, 189-98). The successors to Daniels and Saville would struggle with the same impossible problems at the agency. See Olson, chapter 13.

³⁹Episcopal Board of Missions, *Proceedings*, 1875, 136.

⁴⁰*Red Cloud Commission, Report*, 668.

⁴¹Edward P. Smith to H.M. Tenney, Oct. 29, 1875, quoted in William H. Armstrong, "A Friend to God's Poor: Edward Parmalee Smith," 394, unpublished MS.