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Brief Survey of our Missionary Activity in Oklahoma.

The mission work among the Indians in Oklahoma was our first missionary attempt at bringing the Gospel to a heathen people.

The Indians had been subdued by force of arms; the treaties exacted from them were written by the government, and force, fear, strategy and even bribe were not uncommon in securing the signatures of the Indians. As the Indians have themselves become educated and have had the assistance of well meaning whites they have demanded and in many ways received compensation for losses sustained. Much has been done for, and given to, the Indian by both the government and by Church and other societies. Unfortunately the latter has proven as detrimental to the physical and moral welfare of the Indian, as even more so, than the former. By overmuch care and coddling certain tribes have been made dependent, indolent, helpless and unreliable - individuals excepted. The situation of such tribes is quite unique, and offers problems to such who are intimately associated with them, which are unparalleled among backward people.

Our missionary activity among the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians was begun in 1880 by establishing boarding schools among them, at first at Darlington, and in 1883 at Cantonment. But missionary activity was not confined to the pupils in these schools. Both directly in gatherings where the Gospel was preached to them from time to time, as well as indirectly thru the pupils attending the schools, their parents and others were brought under the influence of the Gospel. After some years out-stations were opened here and there without schools but by the preaching of the Word on Sundays and otherwise in camp visitations. The imperative need of a knowledge of the native language was recognized from the beginning. The first attempts were made to acquire the Arapaho language but it was never mastered. In 1891 Rev. R. Petter undertook a thoro and systematic study of the Cheyenne language, mastering it after some years, ^{and} reducing it to writing and making extensive translations. He translated the whole of the New Testament and large portions of the Old, beside other linguistic work. This acquisition of the Cheyenne language was, no doubt, responsible for taking up more work among the Cheyennes and surrendering some of the work among the Arapahos to other denominations.

At the present time (1935) we have but one station among the Arapaho Indians and five among the Cheyenne Indians in Oklahoma.

The two boarding schools were each carried on 18 years and exerted a powerful influence for good - an influence still potent among both tribes. Owing to various conditions which were beyond our control, it became advisable to discontinue these mission schools. Time and change have greatly affected the method of missionary work among these people. In the earlier years of the work these Indians lived in camps, some of these camps being quite large. It was then comparatively easy to visit large numbers of these people in a short time, there was no difficulty in getting groups together in these camps. The Indians themselves were as yet comparatively free from the demoralizing influence of the low class of white people; there was more or less of inherent energy, selfrespect, selfreliance and ambition and above all a sense of honor in the people as a whole. Time and conditions have brot about very radical changes. These people were placed on allotments extending over many miles of territory. At first they lived more or less contiguously, but as deaths occurred among the original allottees their allotments were offered for sale and the white people purchased the land with avidity. Now, in the course of 40 years, there are very few of the original allotments still in the hands of the Indians, and the same are here and there, widely scattered over a large territory. To visit the Indians the missionary must drive many miles and frequently not find any one at home. The Indians, ^{too,} with but few exceptions, ~~again~~ have to drive a long way to come to the churches. Living more scattered now than they did in former times has had a tendency to break up their old tribal religion, but a new religious cult, more adapted to present conditions, has taken a very strong hold on them. It is a cult coming from Mexico, they have adopted this cult and each tribe is adapting it to its own individual likings and conditions. It is a conglomeration and adaptation of rites, customs and tenets of various religious beliefs even including certain phases of the Christian religion, but is based upon the use of the "peyote" - a cactus plant - either as deity itself or as a means of approach to the deity and of securing pleasure and health of the body. As this cult does not require the tribal gatherings as the old religion did, but is practiced in groups at individual homes, it is more feasible for the present conditions.

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Living right among white people and being in constant contact with them they are vitally influenced by them. They prove all things, but contrary to the Scriptural injunction, they are prone to hold fast to that which is not good.

Economically they were making some progress, the necessity of providing for future needs was beginning to be recognized by them and very commendable efforts were becoming apparent, however, the policy of the present administration has largely destroyed what progress had been made in the last 50 years. The present policy, with the ostensible purpose of making this people self-governing is in reality making it more dependent, and more reactionary. This condition in temporal affairs is reflected very strongly in the acceptance and adherence to the Gospel. It is true, of course, that such among them who have of this world's goods will give of the same very liberally to enhance their religious cult and their own glory. There is, however, a vast difference between giving to receive again and giving with no prospect of any selfish or material return. It takes special grace to do the latter. There are, however, some who are working towards independence in spite of the prevailing conditions; so there are some also in the religious field who realize the significance of taking up their cross daily and following the Master, in spite of adverse conditions.

As deplorable as these increasingly adverse conditions may be, there may yet some good come from them; they may serve the purpose of a refiner's fire that will separate the dross from the gold.

There are at the present time (1935) six church buildings (5 among the Cheyennes and one among the Arapahos) in which services are conducted every Sunday. Three missionary families and six natives, who assist more or less, take care of these six places in Sunday schools, preaching and house to house visitations. Besides this the missionaries conduct services at the Government boarding school and in the so-called work camps. In all more than 600 have been received into church membership, the present living membership on all the stations is about half that number.

For many years efforts have been made to develop native helpers, resulting in varied success. At present there are two who are intrusted with more or less ^{of the} responsibility ^{of a station} under direct supervision of the missionary in charge. The experience has been that a native among

these people must be pretty well along in years before he is sufficiently independent to stand against the opposition of his people.

What of the future? Under ordinary conditions these people should and would be able not only to take care of themselves, but they would be contributing towards the upbuilding of God's kingdom in other places. Conditions among these people have been and still are extraordinary, for that reason it is quite hazardous to attempt to make any statement as to the future. One thing seems quite certain and that is, unless the present policy is changed these people will continue on the downward course induced by the new policy. As far as the mission work is concerned this trying time will prove a time of testing of the professing Christians. Many will fall by the wayside, but others will come out of it stronger than before.

The next step ^{relative to} ~~in~~ the force of workers seems to be a reduction from three families to two, and placing more responsibility upon the native helpers. As to the financial support, that will have to continue to come largely from the churches at home. Generally speaking those of any means among this people are diligently sought and usually persuaded to join the peyote cult, and as long as their means last they give feasts and are lauded for it. When all is spent some of them, like the Prodigal, come to the Church expecting to be helped rather than to help. For that reason the financial support of the native Church among this people will have to come largely from elsewhere for some time to come yet. It is true of the members of these Churches ^{as it} ~~what~~ was said of the members of an earlier Church: The poor form the treasures of the Church.

G.A.Linscheid.

Canton, Okla. June 13th. 1935.

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