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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

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CHRISTIAN MISSIONS AMONG THE CHICKASAWS

A THESIS

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS AMONG THE CHICKASAWS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

BY
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BY

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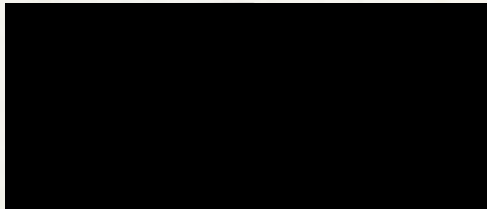
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CHRISTIAN MISSIONS AMONG THE CHICKASAW

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For fertile valleys lay between the bold ridges of the watershed of the Mississippi and Tennessee rivers. This tract of 25,000 square miles of virgin territory with its western flooding rivers, its vast white alluvial, and its steady soil and river alluvial bottom lands covered with forests of giant oak, ash, poplar and cypress made a perfect setting for the Indian who lived there.²

²James H. Wilson, *Life among the Chickasaw Indians East of the Mississippi*, 41.

³James H. Wilson, *Impressions of East Tennessee*, 91.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS AMONG THE CHICKASAWS

CHAPTER I

CHICKASAW MISSIONS EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

The Chickasaw country of Mississippi was one of forest crowned hills, peaceful valleys, and gently flowing streams. The mountains made a perfect background for the low country with its ponds covered with water plants; its lagoons, called cypress brakes; and its streams bordered by thickets of plum and hazel nut bushes festooned with the luscious miscadine.¹

The precipitous bluffs and highlands, stretching back from the Mississippi River like a fan, were covered with a primeval forest. Narrow fertile valleys lay between the bold ridges of the watershed of the Mississippi and Tennessee rivers. This region of 10,700 square miles of virgin territory with its westward flowing rivers, its warm moist climate, and its sandy soil and rich alluvial bottom lands covered with forests of giant oaks, ash, poplar and cypress made a perfect setting for the Indians who lived there.²

¹ James H. Malone, Life Among the Chickasaw Indians East of the Mississippi, 61.

² Samuel C. Williams, Beginnings of West Tennessee, 95.

In this hunter's paradise the Chickasaw Indians made their homes near the source of the Tombigbee River and a few miles eastward on the headwaters of the Tallahache River.³ Their homes were usually small log cabins surrounded by fields of corn, pumpkins, and potatoes. The furnishings consisted of a few cooking utensils, earthenware vessels, and beautifully finished furs used as bedding.

The men wore four or five bright tin or silver crescents suspended on their breast and one around their head. Their leather clothes were intricately embroidered with small beads. When they painted their faces with vermilion,⁴ their tall, erect, well-shaped, copper colored bodies, their regular features, open countenance and dignified expression, and their lustrous, raven black hair combined to make pictures of typical Indian warriors.⁵

The women who did the dressing of the skins, also wore clothes made of leather, ornamented with beads. They adorned themselves with such jewelry as earrings, bracelets and necklaces.⁶ They were small and well formed with finely chiseled features, lustrous dark eyes, flowing black hair, and soft, winning ways.⁷

The Chickasaw Indians were deeply religious but unlike most other tribes they were not superstitious. They believed in the Beloved One who

³Charles DeWolf Brownell, Indian Races of North and South America, 383.

⁴W. B. Cushman, History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians, 383.

⁵Malone, op. cit., 175.

⁶Cushman, op. cit., 485.

⁷Malone, op. cit., 174.

governed all things and gave his children all of the good things their merits deserved. The belief in a future life, where they would be rewarded for their deeds on earth, was firmly fixed. Comets, earthquakes, and eclipses brought them no terror as they realized these were merely manifestations of nature.⁸

The tribe was small but brave and resourceful. Their imperious and warlike manner caused early travelers to characterize them as overbearing and aggressive. They were a self-reliant, self-respecting people who required all other people to respect them.⁹ They had been the implacable foe of the Spanish and the French, but it was their boast that they had never harmed an Englishman.¹⁰

While visiting in Savannah soon after they had defeated the French under Bienville and D'Artaquette, five Chickasaw chiefs called on John Wesley. He questioned them about their religious beliefs. During the interview Chief Paustoabe was converted. Wesley, feeling that the religious welfare of these people should be looked after, offered to send a missionary among them. The Indians courteously declined the offer, saying that they did not have time to learn now as they were engaged in a war which might result in their extinction; but when peace came, if they survived, they would be glad to be taught.¹¹

The first missionary actually to preach in the Chickasaw country was Joseph Bullen of Worcester, Massachusetts, who was sent out by the

⁸Ibid., 219.

⁹Ibid., 37.

¹⁰Cushman, op. cit., 39

¹¹Malone, op. cit., 219.

Presbyterian Missionary Board of New York, in 1779, to serve for only one year. When his commission expired, he returned home. In 1800 he was again commissioned to preach to the Chickasaws, this time for three years. About the middle of March, 1800, he set out from Windham County, Vermont, accompanied by his family. After experiencing many difficulties they arrived at Bedford, Pennsylvania, where they were delayed for some time by illness of the family and the death of the daughter. As soon as their health would permit them, the Bullens resumed their journey and arrived in the Chickasaw Nation where he preached until his commission was finished. Although he worked among the Indians, there is no record of any mission established by him.¹²

In 1820 Reverend Jedidiah Morse was commissioned by the president to make a tour of the country to find out the actual conditions existing among the Indian tribes. In his report to the Secretary of War he said: "The Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw are in situations and circumstances very favorable to be educated where they are, raised to the rank and privileges of citizens and merged into the mass of the nation."¹³

In discussing the conditions existing among the Indians Morse wrote:

Chickasaws have always been warm friends of the United States. Some of the chiefs are half-breeds, men of sense, possess numerous slaves, and annually sell several hundred cattle and hogs. The nation resides in eight towns and like their neighbors are considerably advanced in civilization. The American Board of Foreign Missions contemplates the establishment of missions. One of the synods of Carolina is engaged in education.¹⁴

¹²Malone, op. cit., 504.

¹³Reverend Jedidiah Morse, A Report to the Secretary of War, 32.

¹⁴Ibid., appendix, 201.

On November 3, 1819, the Secretary of the American Board of Foreign Missions reported to the Secretary of War that "The Chickasaws particularly engage our earnest attention. We intend as soon as possible to commence establishment in two other districts of the Choctaw Nation and one in the Chickasaw country."¹⁵

Mr. Bullen's statement, that the Chickasaws "gave earnest attention and appeared much afflicted under preaching ... they are anxious to have their children educated, and that will prove the most effectual way to introduce Christianity,"¹⁶ led to a renewal of effort to establish missions among these eager Indians.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had appointed a committee to start a mission school "for the purpose of educating youths of heathen nations, with a view to their being useful in their respective countries." The school was located at Cornwall, Connecticut, in May, 1817. It was called the Foreign Mission School and boys from all native tribes and many from foreign countries were enrolled.¹⁷ In commenting on the progress of the boys, John Smith of Boston after a visit to the school wrote: "It is really charming to see Indian youths of different tribes and languages in pure English reading the word of God and speaking with such exactness and accuracy on all points . . . especially to see this done with at least a seeming mixture of obedience to

¹⁵ Ibid., 164.

¹⁶ E. T. Winston, Father Stuart and the Monroe Mission, 13.

¹⁷ Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "The Foreign Mission School at Cornwall," Chronicles of Oklahoma, VII (September, 1929), 242.

God, a filial love and reverence to Mr. Wheelock, yet with great ambition to excel each other."¹⁸

This school had a great influence on nearly all of the tribes as it trained the boys who later became their leaders and preachers. Its exact influence on the Chickasaw tribe is not known as we do not know which Chickasaws attended. We do know that some of them did go to this northern school, as in complaint to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs they said that their boys who attended the school in Connecticut were unable to stand the climate and several of them had died. The school was closed in 1827.¹⁹

Charity Hall was established near Cotton Gin Port, Mississippi, as a mission and school. Reverend Robert Bell was in charge of the station under the direction of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Reverend Bell started the mission in 1822²⁰ and in a report to the Secretary of War on the progress of the school said that in 1823 the mission owned a building and twenty-three acres of improved land. Thirty-one pupils were attending the school and there were fourteen in the mission family.²¹

In 1821 the Methodists began their work among the Chickasaws by sending Reverend Alexander Deavers to work with them. He visited them and preached by using an interpreter. As the usual policy of his church was to have evangelistic missionaries who spent all of their time in preaching

39. ¹⁸Mary Gay Humphries, Missionary Explorers Among American Indians,

¹⁹C. F. Foreman, op. cit., 258.

²⁰Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "An Early Chickasaw School," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XI. (September, 1933), 912.

²¹Ibid., 913.

rather than establishing schools, Deavers never built a station. He continued to preach to these Indians even after their removal to the West.²²

Reverend Haynes, a Methodist minister, opened a school in the Chickasaw Nation in 1821. He located it near the southern lines of the Cherokee Nation and George Colbert established a boarding house for it. Reverend Haynes's son married a Chickasaw girl and he migrated west with them.²³

The Mississippi conference of the Methodist Church decided to organize a mission among the Choctaws and Chickasaws in 1827 and sent Reverend Alexander Talley out as a missionary. Taking a tent and an interpreter, he started his work. As his interpreter shrank from speaking before large crowds, Talley pitched his tent and invited small groups to hear him. In 1828 he took a delegation to the annual conference at Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Bishop McGeire said of the work among the Chickasaws "Their evangelization was like a nation born in a day."²⁵

The Baptist Board of Foreign Missions established Choctaw Academy and Mission Station under the direction of Reverend Thomas Henderson in 1825.²⁶ This school attracted boys from all of the tribes and the name, Indian Academy, would have been more appropriate. It was not until 1834

²²S. H. Babcock and J. Y. Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 13.

²³Cushman, op. cit., 420.

²⁴Horace Jewell, History of Methodism in Arkansas, 391.

²⁵Ibid., 387.

²⁶Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "Choctaw Academy and Mission Station," Chronicles of Oklahoma, IX (December, 1931), 383.

that any Chickasaws were listed among its scholars. In that year there were nine boys enrolled and by 1839 there were fifty-seven attending the school. In addition to starting this school the Baptists in 1828 sent a Reverend J. A. Ware to preach to the Chickasaws and he located his mission two miles east of Tokshish.²⁷

The most active of the denominations in the work of Christianizing the Chickasaw Indians was the Presbyterian Church. The South Carolina and Georgia Synod resolved to start a mission among the Indians and in 1819 sent Reverend T. C. Stuart and Reverend David Humphries on a four months tour to find a suitable field. They started out on November 1, 1819, to visit the Creeks. When they arrived they found the tribe in a state of great unrest. Nevertheless, they had a council called and offered to establish a mission among them. The Creeks rejected the offer so the missionaries continued their tour to the West.²⁸

On arriving in the Chickasaw country they found the Indians on the eve of holding a council of the nation to elect a king. The council granted permission for the mission and gave the missionaries a charter signed by the new king, on June 22, 1820. A site was chosen for the station and the two men returned home to report their success.

Reverend Stuart was firmly resolved to return to the station but Humphries had no desire to do so. The Board was glad to accept the volunteer's services; therefore, he immediately began his preparations for the life of a missionary in the wilderness of Mississippi.²⁹

²⁷Winston, op. cit., 60.

²⁸Ibid., 19.

²⁹Ibid., 20.

It was in January, 1821, that he arrived at the site of his new work and named the station "Monroe" in honor of the President of the United States. He was accompanied by his family, a Mr. Pickens, a farmer, a Mr. Vernon, a mechanic, and their families.³⁰

During the first two years much of the time was spent in erecting buildings and clearing land. The first church was a small room about sixteen feet square, built of poles. The one east window was a hole cut in the logs and closed with a clapboard hung on leather hinges. There was a dirt and stick chimney. In the winter the worshippers warmed their fingers at the open fireplace. A brush arbor served as a church in the summer.³¹

In the spring of 1822 Reverend Hugh Wilson of South Carolina, Reverend William C. Blair of Ohio, and their wives joined the mission family. A day school was started and in 1823 the boarding school was opened with fifty scholars.³²

A mission was opened at Tokshish by Reverend Wilson in 1823. The next year the chiefs of the council appropriated five thousand dollars to build two mission schools and two thousand five hundred dollars to maintain them. The one called Martyn was located near Holly Springs under the direction of Reverend Blair and the other at Caney Creek under Reverend Wilson. Mr. Helms of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, was sent to Tokshish to relieve Mr. Wilson.

The Chickasaws thought it a favor for these missionaries to teach

³⁰ Ibid., 22.

³¹ Ibid., 23.

³² Ibid., 70.

their children so it was necessary to increase the size of the schools. Intercourse with the whites had convinced them that they must change their way of life and they eagerly took advantage of the opportunity to receive instruction in agriculture and mechanical arts.³³

On every Sunday regular gospel meetings were held at Monroe, and at Tokahish there was a weekly lecture in addition to the midweek prayer meeting. Reverend Holmes now devoted all of his time to the religious instruction of the full bloods while his assistant carried on the work of the school.³⁴

The meetings were attended regularly by large crowds of Indians who came many miles to listen. There was no noise or confusion among the congregation but a deep feeling pervaded the services. "The haughty Chickasaw in not a few instances traveled ten miles to an evening meeting returning by torch light in footpaths full of mud and water," was one report of the interest of the Chickasaws and Reverend Holmes said, "I have never seen a people so hungry for the bread of life."³⁵

During the revival which started at Monroe in 1827 and spread out over the neighboring stations many conversions occurred³⁶ especially among the young men. These young Indians established and conducted a Sabbath school for Indians.³⁷

Not only the full bloods were reached but the whites who had come to live among them were converted in the meetings. Concerning these

³³ Missionary Herald, XX (April, 1824), 131.

³⁴ Sarah Tuttle, Letters on the Chickasaw and Osage Missions, 11.

³⁵ S. C. Bartlett, Sketches of Missions of the American Board, 185.

³⁶ Sarah Tuttle, op. cit., 14.

³⁷ Ibid., 16.

Cornelia Phelan wrote: "During the spring and summer of 1827 a season of revival was enjoyed at Monroe and during this season there were many striking instances of the power of the Gospel displayed in the conversion of many who had been exceedingly vile. It was truly interesting to see the mercy of God following abandoned white men in their flights from the restraints of a civilized and Christian community and overtaking them there, transforming them and making them a blessing to a people, to whom they were before a curse."³⁸

Not long after the meeting in which the young men were converted, a council met near Tokshish and Holmes invited the chiefs to assemble the people for religious services following supper on the first day.³⁹ When it was time for the services, one of the chiefs shouted that the missionary was ready to give them a talk. In a few moments everyone was quietly seated. The chiefs occupied chairs while the warriors sat in a semi-circle on the grass.

When Holmes had finished his talk he called upon William Barr who arose from among the Indians and made an eloquent talk, giving an account of his conversion. All during the talk, which lasted three-quarters of an hour, the assembly was very still and attentive. As soon as Barr sat down, Reverend Holmes made a closing prayer, but the interest was so great that the men continued the meeting until after midnight.⁴⁰

Because the interest was so great, a religious council was called

³⁸ Ibid., 36.

³⁹ Ibid., 16

⁴⁰ Ibid., 17.

and some people came as many as sixty miles to attend. No building was large enough to accommodate the gathering so a brush arbor big enough for a thousand people was built in the woods.⁴¹

In a letter describing the meeting Cornelia Phelon wrote:

The next morning Mr. Woods and Mr. Caldwell from the Choctaw Mission arrived; and soon after, Major Colbert, Captain McGilvery, and Captain Sealy, three of the highest Chickasaw chiefs, besides several other men of high standing with their families Reverend Mr. Byington came in the evening with two Choctaw converts The meeting commenced on Thursday and continued until the Monday following. On the Sabbath, the Lord's Supper was administered to nearly a hundred of his professing disciples gathered from six different nations united by ties of Christian affection. Mr. Byington preached often with peculiar acceptance

The concluding service was held on Monday morning, upon which occasion multitudes assembled. After a solemn exhortation and fervent prayer, the meeting was dissolved, and the friends and servants of Christ returned to their respective fields of labor encouraged and comforted, as well as strengthened by this long joyful meeting in the Indian wilderness.⁴²

The missions and schools of the Chickasaw mission field were transferred from the synod of South Carolina and Georgia to the American Board in 1828 so that the missionaries to the Chickasaws and Choctaws could work together more easily, and supply their needs with more regularity at less expense.⁴³

A church had been organized at Monroe in 1823, and in 1828 there were fifty-eight members of the congregation exclusive of the mission family. The Reverend Kingsbury and the Reverend Gleason attended the quarterly communion service at Monroe Church the first Sunday in April, 1828, and the next Sunday when the Reverend Byington visited the church

⁴¹ Ibid., 18.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 19ff.

⁴³ Missionary Herald, XXIV (February, 1828), 56.

and preached in both Choctaw and English a solemn stillness pervaded the meeting.⁴⁴

Because of the scarcity of teachers it was necessary to suspend school at Monroe for one year in 1828. The other mission lacked teachers also, but they continued their work. In 1829 Monroe resumed its school with fewer teachers. The report to the Board during that year showed that the missions had already become a blessing to the Chickasaws because it had influenced them enough to pass laws against intoxicating liquor, theft, and other crimes, which the chiefs vigorously enforced.⁴⁵

The Martyn station was established because the Chickasaws wanted it and appropriated a part of their annuities to support it. The Indian name for Martyn was Pacha Neema, or Pigeon Roost, but it was called Love Village by the neighboring Indians because so many families of this name lived in the vicinity. In fact, at one time ten out of twenty-four of the scholars were named Love. This mission in charge of Reverend Blair was located in a district in which there were many mixed bloods who had been educated at Monroe.

The houses were built of hewn logs and had brick chimneys. There were convenient outhouses and a well fenced garden. The station had thirty pupils in school but no church.⁴⁶

While the Reverend Stuart and Holmes traveled through the country preaching, by using an interpreter, Reverend Wilson was busy at Caney Creek

⁴⁴ Ibid., (September, 1828), 284.

⁴⁵ Ibid., XXV (January, 1829), 10.

⁴⁶ Sarah Tuttle, op. cit., p.24f.

putting up buildings and preparing farms at the expense of the nation. When this mission opened January 15, 1827, the number of scholars was limited to twenty-five. Of this number fifteen were unable to speak English. In order to overcome the language difficulties of his pupils, Reverend Wilson sent a number of scholars to Tennessee to school and kept some in his own home where they would have to speak English.⁴⁷

In explaining the necessity of such a procedure, Cornelia Phelon wrote:

The missionaries have always found it an arduous task to teach Indian children English, while they have lived together, for they are unwilling to use any language but their own, unless compelled to do so from necessity. To remedy this, Mr. Wilson placed five of his native boys in pious families in Tennessee, one in a family where they boarded and attended a good school in the neighborhood at the expense of the mission.⁴⁸

The experiment worked and the boys learned to speak English rapidly.

The Choctaws and Chickasaws banded together to form a Presbytery under the Presbyterian General Assembly, which erected the new synod of Mississippi in May, 1829. The first meeting of the Presbytery was held at Mayhew in the Choctaw Nation on the second Wednesday in November.

The work of the church was going steadily forward. The Chickasaws were so anxious to hear the gospel that they often traveled twenty or thirty miles on foot to hear it preached. It was not uncommon for them to travel seven miles to and from prayer meeting at Tokshish. One old woman traveled this far through swamps where at times she had to wade through water which was two feet deep.⁴⁹ In speaking of one of these wall

⁴⁷ Missionary Herald, XXV (February, 1829), 151.

⁴⁸ Sarah Tuttle, op. cit., 28.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 22.

attended meetings, the Reverend Holmes said: "In the evening a considerable number of Indians had arrived; some of them had come sixty miles."⁵⁰

In 1830, due to ill health, the Reverend Stuart had to leave Monroe Mission. The property was transferred to Tokshish which was now the only church in the Chickasaw country. The number of members had increased. The conditions of the Chickasaws had improved, but they had become lax in the use of intoxicating liquors due to the unrest over the discussion of removal to the west. The chiefs were in favor of the missions and the strict enforcement of the laws, but now that the laws of Mississippi had been extended over the nation, they could do nothing to control the sale and use of whiskey.⁵¹

In spite of the continued success of the mission schools, the church attendance became smaller and smaller. The whiskey merchants had become very popular and the white men were at the council. Drinking, gambling, and dancing were the amusements of the people. In an attempt to meet this increased drunkenness, a temperance society was formed but it grew very slowly.

The opposition to the missionaries had been latent, but it now became active as the Chickasaws realized that they would have to move. The converts were much abused and the missionaries were accused of preaching when they should have been teaching.⁵²

The Reverend Holmes visited with the Indians and found them very disturbed over removal. They were almost uniformly against it. Only

⁵⁰The Story of American Missions to the Heathens, 191.

⁵¹Missionary Herald, XXVI (January, 1930), 11.

⁵²Ibid., (December, 1930), 383.

the half-breeds and chiefs were disposed to sell. Levi Colbert and a Mr. McClish who were in the delegation seeking lands in the West found those which had been suggested were unsatisfactory and were unwilling to exchange, but in August the chiefs and Secretary of War Franklin formed a treaty ceding all lands and agreeing to move west.⁵³

The minds of the Indians were diverted by the agitation over removal so they withdrew from spiritual things and developed a spiritual coldness toward the work of the church. The usual routine of the church continued to be the same. They held services twice on Sunday, weekly lecture and prayer meeting, a concert prayer meeting, and other occasional meetings. In spite of the redoubled effort of the missionaries the church spirit declined, and they were met by apathy and intemperance.⁵⁴

The Reverend Blair had been forced to resign because of ill health and the Reverend Stuart had returned to take over the work at Tokshish. The Reverend Holmes had returned from a six month absence to take over Martyn.⁵⁵

Then for a brief period the picture seemed brighter. The Indians being convinced that the removal treaty would never be signed, began to attend church in such numbers that the missionaries were encouraged and the hope grew that the Indians would now be loyal Christians.⁵⁶

The Reverend Mr. Blair had been welcomed back by the Indians and preached to large congregations in the open air, although it was October.

⁵³ Ibid., (April, 1830), 115.

⁵⁴ Ibid., XVIII (April, 1832), 831.

⁵⁵ Ibid., XVIII (February, 1832), 84.

⁵⁶ Ibid., (August, 1832), 259.

In spite of the chilling winds and damp ground, which made worshipping difficult at this time of the year, the people gathered and listened to the "Word" of God because they had not had a sermon except on communion days in over a year.

There were many wishing to attend school, but it was not thought advisable to increase the number of scholars under the existing conditions.⁵⁷

During 1833 the question of removal again agitated the people as they now realized that it was almost inevitable that they would have to leave their homes. The missionaries worked hard to overcome the evil influences of the whites who had come into the country, but the meetings were thinly attended as the people were cold to spiritual things.⁵⁸

This confusion and wickedness that prevailed in the nation, together with the inability to get proper teachers, seriously affected the missionary work. When the chiefs requested the withdrawal of the annuity which had been given to the mission, it was felt that the Indians no longer desired the schools. In 1836 the Presbyterian Missions were abandoned, and the missionaries transferred to other stations. At his request the Reverend Stuart was allowed to remain in the Chickasaw country where he maintained himself and preached at every opportunity. The mission property was sold and the Presbyterian missionary effort was ended.⁵⁹

These missionaries had worked under great difficulties as they had had to travel on horseback over uncertain trails, across unbridged

⁵⁷Ibid., XXVIII (April, 1832), 117.

⁵⁸Ibid., (April, 1833), 132f.

⁵⁹Ibid., XXXI (January, 1835), 22.

streams, in a sparsely settled country during all kinds of weather and had had to contend with miserable living conditions. Their life was one of loneliness due to the lack of communication.⁶⁰ Besides these physical handicaps they had to overcome the Chickasaws' fondness for gambling, whiskey, dancing, and lack of civilization.⁶¹

The Indians owe a definite debt of gratitude to the brave and unselfish men who came among them and helped them become adjusted to both civilization and removal to their new homes in the West.

⁶⁰ Colin Bremitt Goodkoonts, Home Missions on the American Frontier,

⁶¹ Cushman, op. cit., 493.

CHAPTER II

AMONG THE CHOCTAWS, 1838-1855

When the treaty with the Choctaws was concluded the president appointed A. M. M. Upshaw as Superintendent of Chickasaw removal. He at once began to urge these Indians to move as soon as they could make the necessary arrangements. Although the chiefs agreed to meet at the rendezvous arranged by Upshaw on June 7, 1838, only three hundred Chickasaws had gathered by July 13. Realizing that opposition to removal was strong, he set out with the three hundred and traveled slowly through the nation enrolling families who lived near the line of march.¹

By the time Upshaw turned the well-mounted caravan over to his assistants at Memphis, there were five hundred Indians in the party. This group crossed the Mississippi River and waited three days for their rations to arrive. It then moved very slowly toward the Choctaw Nation because of delays occasioned by sickness, indolence, and searches for stolen horses.²

As the Indians were paying their own expenses they insisted on taking many of their possessions with them. One party of eight hundred Indians had thirty-eight wagons and one thousand one hundred ponies,

¹ Grant Foreman, Indian Removal, 204.

² Ibid., 209.

while in another group one man required eight wagons to carry his baggage.³

They arrived at Fort Coffee anxious to get settled in their new homes but fear of depredations of the nomadic tribes already living in the Chickasaw district prevented their moving into it at once. As the treaty gave them the privilege, they settled generally throughout the Choctaw Nation rather than wait until they could go safely to their own district. The largest body of Chickasaws settled on Blue River and Boggy Creek.⁴

These emigrants arrived at their new homes with highly excited feelings against the government and a distrust for everything around them.⁵ In migrating they became infected with smallpox and when they settled among the Choctaws the disease was spread throughout the Nation causing crops to be neglected and schools to be closed.⁶

A few of the wealthier Chickasaws of mixed blood settled around Fort Towson where they planned to raise cotton. Colonel Colbert who had one hundred fifty slaves intended to plant between three and five hundred acres. The Choctaw agent, Armstrong, wrote, "The Chickasaws are well pleased with the country and with their wealth, which is greater than any other tribe; they will be enabled to live comfortably."⁷

³ Ibid., 216f.

⁴ Ibid., 220.

⁵ Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1838. (Hereafter referred to as R.C.I.A.), 510.

⁶ Ibid., 507f.

⁷ Ibid., 510.

By the time of the westward migration three thousand Chickasaws and Choctaws had been added to the Methodist Church, principally through the efforts of the Reverend Mr. Alexander Talley who gained such an influence over the red men that they were willing to receive Christian baptism.⁸

Talley had been appointed Superintendent of the Choctaw Mission and had moved west before the Choctaws started in order to be in the territory to receive them when they arrived in their new homes. Having worked among the Chickasaws in Mississippi, he had gained their trust. They were glad to find their friend waiting to welcome them when they came to the Choctaw Nation. Reverend Talley was both a physician and a preacher and he was trusted by the agents as well as the Indians. Moses Peery and William Winans Odaehiak, the first itinerant native preachers, assisted him while he served as the mission superintendent under the direction of the Mississippi Conference.⁹

Cyrus Kingsbury and Cyrus Byington were carrying on the work of the Presbyterians under the direction of the American Board of Foreign Missions. They had worked among the Choctaws when they lived east of the Mississippi and had moved west with their charges. While still in Mississippi they had often visited and preached to the Chickasaws. The Indians affectionately called Kingsbury, a cripple, "Limping Wolf." In spite of his frail health he spent most of his time riding from station to station meeting every kind of problem. The Indians respected and loved him so much that he kept his influence over them through every trial they had.

⁸ J. M. Dixon, J. W. Lee, N. Leacock, *The Illustrated History of Methodism*.

⁹ Babcock and Bryce, *op. cit.*, I, 25.

In his spare moments he wrote articles for the church papers concerning his charges. "Sounding Horn" was the name which the Indians used in speaking of Cyrus Byington who was an eloquent preacher. Besides attending to his regular tasks, Byington had written a Choctaw dictionary containing three thousand words.¹⁰

As Cyrus Kingsbury lived on Boggy and maintained a neighborhood school, the Chickasaws who settled on that creek and on Blue were much under his influence. The Presbyterians stressed learning so their evangelistic work among the Indians was dependent on school work. According to one of their missionaries, the purpose of the government was to make them intelligent but "the aim of the church is to make them happy, hopeful Christians as well as good citizens."¹¹

The missionaries found that the work after the removal to Indian Territory was like beginning a new enterprise with more difficulties because they had moved away from civilization. This lack of civilization and poor traveling conditions discouraged the unsettled, homesick Indians among whom sickness prevailed.¹²

The daily life of a missionary to the Indians was a busy one as most of the men supplied several churches besides their home station. All journeys were made either on horseback or on foot. Even when there were no roads or bridges a missionary would travel twenty miles to inspect

¹⁰ W. B. Morrison, "The Choctaw Mission," Chronicles of Oklahoma, IV (June, 1926), 171.

¹¹ E. E. Flickinger, The Choctaw Freedman, 16.

¹² Mrs. G. T. Ralls (Ed.), Oklahoma Trails, 77.

a school, comfort and encourage a fellow missionary, hold a service, or confer with a prominent Indian about church affairs.¹³

Time and environment forced the Presbyterians to make adjustments in their ideas and practices. These missionaries found the frontier uncongenial but remained because they were convinced that the West needed their doctrine.¹⁴

Most of the Methodist missionaries were itinerant preachers who worked by house to house visitation and gave education little attention.¹⁵ They had little time to devote to school as an appointment or station usually meant a district containing twenty or more preaching places. These missionaries were able to adjust themselves to frontier life. Their evangelistic effort and the camp meeting appealed to the Indians who loved to assemble.¹⁶

In 1836 Indian Territory had been made a part of the Arkansas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and was called the South Indian Mission and Schools. John Harrell, Burwell Lee, Charles I. Carney, John L. Irwin, Thomas Bertoff, Moses Peery, and A. D. Smith, all attended the conference of that year. Although they encountered deep water, mud, and pony holes in the swamp through which they had to travel, they reached the meeting on time. In the meeting, John Harrell was appointed superintendent of the Indian Missions. J. W. P. McKenzie and Moses Peery were

¹³W. B. Morrison, The Red Man's Trail, 65.

¹⁴Colin B. Geodykoontz, Home Missions on the American Frontier, 127.

¹⁵Joseph B. Thoburn, History of Oklahoma, I, 186.

¹⁶Ibid., 153f.

assigned to assist him in his work.¹⁷

Another missionary was added to this group when the next year the conference made Harrell the presiding elder of the missionary district and appointed McKemie, Peery and S. Allen to work as circuit riders under his supervision.

In the 1838 conference, the Choctaw Nation was made a part of the Red River District. Robert Gregory became the presiding elder and the circuit riders continued their same work under his direction. These same workers opened up a new station at Blue Bayou the next year and placed a native preacher in charge.¹⁸

When Reverend E. B. Ames, the secretary of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, visited the Indian missions in 1840 he ended his tour at Skullyville, Choctaw Agency. Major William Armstrong, the Choctaw agent, introduced him to the Choctaw chief and other tribal leaders. He discussed the educational policy of the nation with them. Then Ames together with the leading men of the tribe drew up plans whereby the Nation was to be divided into three districts in each of which there would be a school established. The United States Indian Agency and the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church were to be jointly responsible for the schools.¹⁹

The agreement reached at this time served as a pattern for all other agreements between a church and the Chickasaws or Choctaws when a

¹⁷ Babcock and Bryce, op. cit., 32.

¹⁸ Ibid., 33f.

¹⁹ Ibid., 35ff.

school was established. Besides providing for the responsibility for the running of the school the agreement stipulated that the tribal council would provide five-sixths of the money necessary to run the schools and the church would provide the other one-sixth.

The school was to use as much land as it needed for cultivation and pasturage. It was given the right to all the rock, stone, coal, timber, or other material on the public domain which they ^{were} needed for the school. The Methodist Missionary Society was to provide teachers who were to be paid not more than four hundred dollars a year and furnished room and board. The Society was to contribute one thousand dollars per year for the life of the twenty-year charter. The Choctaws provided that one-tenth of the pupils were to be orphans. The charter granted by the legislature had to be approved by the United States so it was not until 1842 that the Methodists could begin the schools.²⁰

Although the Chickasaws had settled among the Choctaws, they refused to invest any money in the schools and displayed a reluctance to unite with the Choctaws.²¹ The people of the Eastern states seemed to lose interest in the Indian Missions during this time and Reverend Mr. Wright, a Presbyterian whose station was at Wheelock, was so discouraged by this apathy and indifference of the people that he wrote:

Why should the unwarranted impression that the Indians are destined to dwindle away cool the sympathies or restrain the prayers and efforts of the American Churches in their behalf? They have been obliged to leave the land of their birth and seek a residence in a strange land, where many have fallen victims to the unhealthiness of the climate and where they have suffered

²⁰ Ibid., 36f.

²¹ B. C. I. A., 1840, 312.

privation and hardship incident to an unsettled state of things. But these evils are in a measure overcome . . . and could the gospel exert its saving influence, no reason can be given why they should not become a numerous, enlightened, and Christian people."²²

From his station at Pine Ridge, Cyrus Kingsbury, Dean of the Presbyterian Indian Missionaries, reported that there had been much during 1840 to discourage the missionaries. But seven members had been added to the church when he, Byington, and Wright had held a meeting at Mountain Fork. In order to reach the Chickasaws who had formerly attended Monroe Mission in Mississippi, Reverend Kingsbury held a three-day meeting at Mayhew, then traveled thirty-five miles northwest to Chickasaw Depot, thence to Blue which was twenty miles farther.²³

Both Kingsbury and Hotchkiss whose station was Goodwater preached at Mayhew where there was much interest among the children at school and the people who came from over a wide area to listen to the preacher. Each of these men preached one Sunday out of four to the Chickasaws and Kingsbury wrote that such calls for preaching at long distances from home at all seasons of the year caused him much fatigue.²⁴

By 1840 the Presbyterian missionaries in Indian Territory had set up Indian Presbytery as a part of the Synod of Memphis. At first all the preachers in this district were white missionaries but soon there were licentiate and ordained native preachers.²⁵

²² Missionary Herald, XXXVI (October, 1840), 483.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Morrison, op. cit., 66.

²⁵ R. G. I. A., 1842-45, 447.

Baptist missionaries' principal work in Indian Territory was not among the Chickasaws but they were active among the Choctaws so that Reverend Joseph Smedley and his wife came in contact with and worked among those Chickasaws living in the Choctaws part of the country.²⁶

By 1841 the Baptist board had nine missions and twenty-four missionaries in Indian Territory including those in the Choctaw Nation.²⁷ Reverend Ramsey D. Potts had established a school with twenty-two pupils, eleven of whom boarded with him. As only four of them could pay he boarded the others without charge. There had been twenty-five conversions as the result of his efforts. William Wilson, who worked under Baptist supervision, also established a school in which a few pupils were boarded at their own expense.²⁸

The evangelistic labor of the Presbyterians extended from Arkansas to Blue and when the Indian Presbytery was formed there were six churches with a membership of two hundred seventy-one. During the following year, 1841, forty-three persons were added to the church. The Presbytery contributed \$408.31 during the year which ended in April. They maintained five schools under the direction and at the expense of the American Board of Missions. The Sabbath Schools reported a larger attendance than the day schools.²⁹

As soon as they settled among the Choctaws the Chickasaws realized

²⁶ Walter N. Wyeth, Isaac McCoy, 201.

²⁷ William Gannell, A History of American Baptist Missions, 337.

²⁸ R. G. I. A., 1841, 324.

²⁹ Ibid., 328.

that though they still controlled their tribal funds the fact that there were so many more Choctaws prevented their having a voice in the government. This caused them to be dissatisfied. They began to slowly move into their own district in spite of fear of Indian raids from the west and horse thieves from Texas. In response to their demand for an agent of their own, A. M. M. Uphaw was appointed. In his first report he praised the efforts of the missionaries to the Choctaws in their work with the Chickasaws but felt that missionaries should be appointed to work with them and establish schools among them. In reporting the need in the Chickasaw district he wrote:

They have no school nor missionaries among them and no nation can become enlightened without schools and the Bible They should have two good missionaries who would teach them Bible and its blessed truths and not meddle with their national affairs, nor preach abolitionism to their negroes.³⁰

Although they had settled throughout the Choctaw Nation, the Chickasaws still refused to appropriate any part of their tribal funds to establish or help defray the expenses of schools located in the Choctaw country. When Fort Washita was established the fear of raids was lessened to the extent that more of them moved to their own district.³¹

Although they had no missionaries living within their district there was a decrease in intemperance during 1842 and there was less liquor brought over the border from Texas to be sold to them illegally.³²

The Methodist Missionary Society had been active and was ready to establish mission schools in the Choctaw country and the missionaries who

³⁰ R. Q. I. A., 1842, 329.

³¹ Ibid., 447ff.

³² Ibid., 459.

were to take charge of them preached to the Indians. It was in 1843 while living near Fort Towson that Reverend Robert Gregory under the direction of Reverend Jacob Custer, Presiding Elder, started the Chickasaw Mission. Up to this time there had been no schools in the Chickasaw district and the children of the Chickasaw breeds had attended mission schools in the Choctaw Nation. The Methodists were doing a good work and reaching many of the Indians.³³

Pleasant Grove Methodist Mission was established and Reverend Duncan worked hard to keep it open on meager funds, as it was the only school operating in the Chickasaw district. It was in December, 1844, that the members of the tribe gathered to receive their annuity. While the council was assembled, the plan for a Chickasaw academy was placed before it. The council appropriated six thousand dollars for the school. The agreement between the church and the Chickasaw Nation had to be ratified by the War Department so work could not be started immediately.

Duncan was well received by the Chickasaws and he wrote of them:

They are generally intelligent, mild, and interesting, and with the domestic skill of their slaves, they live comfortably. I am always pleased, when traveling, to know I am to lodge with a Chickasaw family.

There are few professors of Christianity among them . . . Still the people receive the gospel willingly, treat the missionaries with kindness and are anxious for schools.³⁴

Reverend Sidney Dyer who had worked among the Chickasaws and Choctaws under the direction of the Baptist Home Mission Society was forced to resign because of ill health. He had worked among these Indians

³³ Babcock and Bryce, *op. cit.*, 42.

³⁴ William H. Goode, Outposts of Zion, 209.

before they moved to the West. In 1844 he and his family returned to Kentucky. His place was taken by Joseph Smedley who had also worked among the Creeks. In his first report to the Board he writes of having observed the Lord's Supper with nearly a hundred Chickasaws.³⁵

There was a feeling of rivalry among the different denominations working with the Indians so they never grew weary of pointing out each others' defects. The Presbyterians and Congregationalists always pointed out the mistakes of the Methodists and Baptists. They accused the latter of appealing entirely to the emotions and of using camp meetings to gather in souls thus fostering an unhealthy mental atmosphere. Of course the extent of the error was measured by the degree of difference between the supposed delusion and their orthodox Calvinism.³⁶

Henry C. Benson was a teacher at Fort Coffee Academy in the Choctaw Nation. In 1844 he attended a camp meeting one mile from the Arkansas River and below the mouth of the Canadian River. A good site had been selected. An old vacated house served as the preacher's tent and the supply room. The front porch was the pulpit and an arbor was constructed in front of the porch. On Friday the people of the local church cleared the ground, then pitched their tents. That evening the first sermon was preached and was followed by a prayer meeting.

On Saturday the people came from every direction. There were Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees, and Creeks, together with a number of colored servants. This day was spent in preaching and prayer meetings.

³⁵ Carl Coke Rister, Baptist Missions Among the American Indians, 91.

³⁶ Colin B. Goodykoontz, "Missions and Education," Trans-Mississippi West, 66.

In the evening penitents came forward and some wept bitterly. The men were so attentive they did not smoke their pipes and at the end of the talk or sermon they expressed their approval by saying, "It is well."

As the services continued, the interest increased and when the penitents were invited to the altar on Sunday afternoon nearly half of the congregation came forward, many weeping and "some of whom were crying aloud for mercy." One woman became so excited and cried so bitterly she had to be carried from the tent. At that stage of the meeting an intelligent Choctaw woman rose from her seat and demanded that the preacher be seated and that he stop frightening the people. Undisturbed the preacher requested her to be composed and to listen patiently to the Gospel preached.

The meeting closed on Monday morning with twenty-two united with the church on probation, twenty-one received baptism. Benediction was pronounced late in the morning and after eating a hasty lunch, the group dispersed.³⁷

Slave holding was the burning issue of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in its meeting in 1844. After making an effort at reconciliation the delegates of the slaveholding states withdrew from the conference making a friendly division of the church. The southern group planned to hold a convention at Louisville, Kentucky, in May, 1845. The members of the Indian Conference, after much discussion, decided to send delegates to the Louisville Convention. William Goode and Edwin Peery were elected as delegates. As Goode was decidedly anti-slavery in his sentiments, he refused to serve and Cummings was sent in his place.

³⁷ Henry C. Benson, Life Among the Choctaws, 122ff.

The Methodists had so few white missionaries that they were aided by assistant preachers, interpreters, exhorters, and deacons. Most of the men who helped them were Choctaws. In fact, there were only two men who helped who were not from that tribe. These were Samuel Colvert^{6(?)} and Samuel Checote. With the help of these workers the missionaries were able to serve the greater part of the Indian mission although by 1845 there were 75,000 Indians in the Five Civilized Tribes.³⁸

When the convention met in Louisville, Kentucky, the delegates from the Indian Mission were present. On May 17, 1845, the resolution for the separation and the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was adopted. The delegates from the Indian Conference voted in favor of the resolution. Since W. H. Goode and H. C. Benson were not in sympathy with the action they requested that they be transferred to Indiana Conference and the request was granted.³⁹

In the autumn the Indian Conference held its meeting and at the final session the appointments for the following year were read. E. B. Duncan was again assigned to the Chickasaw circuit and Browning was placed in charge of the proposed Chickasaw Academy although it was not yet ready.⁴⁰

Reverend and Mrs. Duncan were located at Pleasant Grove. Mrs. Duncan taught a school to which the Chickasaws sent their children from far and wide. Although many still opposed both schools and preaching this work was very successful.⁴¹ Duncan continued his work at Pleasant Grove

³⁸ Babcock and Bryce, *op. cit.*, 65ff.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 75f.

⁴¹ R.C.I.A., 1846, 525.

during 1846 and though troubled by the lack of a good interpreter reported: "We have had some interesting meetings among the Chickasaws and regret they could not be continued. Among the more enlightened many have been led to forsake the error of their ways and to seek the living God, and many were added to the church."⁴²

In 1847 Upshaw reported to the Superintendent of the Western Territory that there was no school in the Chickasaw district as the young man of the name of Akin, who worked under the supervision of the Methodists, taught only a few months before leaving.⁴³

Since 1844 the Chickasaws had tried to make arrangements for a manual labor academy and after three years had succeeded in arranging a contract with the Methodist Church. Wesley Browning was again placed in charge of the school which was known officially as the McKendry Manual Labor School but was commonly called Chickasaw Academy.

The Reverend Mr. E. Couch had been assigned by the Methodist Conference as a missionary evangelist to work among the Chickasaws. He had been well received and had done good work among them.⁴⁴ In his mission there were twelve native, thirteen white, and forty-two colored members.⁴⁵

Browning who had started the work on the Chickasaw Academy in 1845 and had been trying to complete it since that time had had many difficulties to face. In order to have lumber for building purposes, he had

⁴² Ibid., 364.

⁴³ Ibid., 1847, 364.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 1848, 531.

⁴⁵ Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1847-1857, 59.

purchased a sawmill to add to his grist mill. After it was installed a flash flood carried it away and buried the mill stones in the sand so that it took several months to rebuild it. During the winter he cut lumber for the first building which was to be a dormitory with one room large enough to be a schoolroom. After finishing this building, Browning enclosed fifty acres of farm land on which he planted corn and raised a fair crop.

At the conference held at Riley's Chapel, October 25, 1849, Wesley Browning requested a transfer as he felt that his labors at the school were finished. He had spent the past winter felling trees and building houses which were now finished. The school had opened so his request was granted and Reverend J. C. Garner was assigned to take his place. Ezekiel Couch was again placed in charge of the Chickasaw circuit.⁴⁶

It was in this same year that the Chickasaw Council decided to build a large male academy which they wished to place under the supervision of the Episcopal Church. If that church declined, they planned that they would approach the Baptists on the subject. This school never materialized.⁴⁷

In 1850 Reverend J. C. Robinson became a member of the Indian Missionary Conference and was assigned to the Chickasaw Manual Labor Academy where he was to continue as superintendent until the beginning of the Civil War. Although nine thousand dollars had been spent on the school buildings, they were not yet completed, so a temporary structure

⁴⁶ Babcock and Bryce, op. cit., 100f.

⁴⁷ B. C. I. A., 1849.

was used. It was just six years after starting work on the school before they moved into the new building in 1851. This structure was a long, two-story stone building with a veranda across the front. The school was located in Tishomingo County about two miles east of the present town of Tishomingo.⁴⁸ There were sixty students the first term although the plan had been to accommodate sixty boys and sixty girls. As this was a manual labor school, the boys were instructed in agriculture while the girls were taught housewifery.⁴⁹

Wapanucka Academy was established when William Medill, Commissioner of Indian Affairs and Walter Lawrie, Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church (old school) made an agreement on the terms. The erection of the building, clearing of the site selected, and the cultivating of the land was placed under the supervision of James S. Allen during 1851-52. The buildings were constructed of native stone quarried nearby and were built under the direction of Charles Sparrow, a skilled mason who had come from England and who afterward erected other buildings in Indian Territory.⁵⁰

Reverend Allen found the Chickasaws easy to work with and stated his impression of the Chickasaws when he wrote, "I am not apprised of the extent of the missionary labor in this district, but should think the field an inviting one. The Chickasaws are of a kind and tractable disposition and their confidence may be easily gained by men of proper

⁴⁸ Johnnie Bishop Chisholm, "Harley Institute," Chronicles of Oklahoma, IV (1926).

⁴⁹ R.C.I.A., 1851.

⁵⁰ Maribel H. Wright, "Wapanucka Academy, Chickasaw Nation," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXII (December, 1934), 406.

character."⁵¹

According to the terms of the contract the Chickasaw council was to appropriate six thousand dollars out of the tribal funds for the completion of the building. In 1851 they complied with this provision and the school opened in 1852 with Reverend Hamilton Ballantine as superintendent. Besides his wife, he had two young lady teachers to assist him in taking care of the forty girls who attended the school the first term.⁵²

The feeling of discontent among the Chickasaws was steadily growing worse. In his report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs Harper the Chickasaw agent wrote:

They are dissatisfied with their present political connection with the Choctaws, there is a deep and abiding feeling on this subject. They believe themselves oppressed and downtrodden by their more powerful co-partners in government They act as a people who feel they have no country. Restless and dissatisfied, they are continually breaking up their homes and seeking new locations, and the same distracted spirit pervades their councils and mars their public enterprise. The distinction of the interest of the tribes in their money matters tended to alienate rather than unite them.⁵³

The political situation between the two tribes continued to grow steadily worse so that in 1851 Harper reported to Lea that "The present condition of the Chickasaws is far from being favorable to their prosperity and happiness, and I find that the minds of many of their best men are painfully awakened to this condition. They are dissatisfied."⁵⁴

⁵¹R. G. I. A., 1850, 399.

⁵²Wright, "Wapanucka Academy," op. cit.

⁵³R. G. I. A., 1850, 397f.

⁵⁴R. G. I. A., 1851, 397.

Ten days before the Chickasaw Academy closed in 1852 the public examinations were held. At the same time the girls' fancy work was exhibited. The scholars acquitted themselves so well that J. C. Robinson, the superintendent, was encouraged to write Major Holmes, the agent, that "We doubt not they will rise yet from the darkness in which they are enveloped and shine out not only in brightness of civilization, but in the glory of Christianity. For this we are laboring, knowing that no permanent change for good can be effected unless there be implanted in the heart that high moral sense and principle that the pure religion of the Bible alone can inspire."⁵⁵

In the fall, Lowrie came west on an inspection tour and visited Wapanucka Academy where he was impressed by the beauty of the brilliantly colored foliage of the woods and the rolling prairies fraying the whiteness of the stone building. The happy atmosphere influenced Mr. Lowrie to become so interested in the development of the school that after talking to Colonel Pitman Colbert, he ordered the construction of two wings on the building without consulting the Chickasaw Council.⁵⁶

The Council appropriated the sum of two thousand five hundred dollars to be paid out of tribal funds for the maintenance of one hundred girls at Wapanucka Academy. The agreement between the Department at Washington and the Presbyterian Mission Board had been figured on the basis of seventy-five dollars from tribal funds and twenty-five dollars from the board. It was evident from the wording of the resolution that there was some misunderstanding on the part of the Council. When Lowrie

⁵⁵ R. C. I. A., 1852, 428.

⁵⁶ Wright, "Wapanucka Academy," op. cit., 408.

ordered the construction of the two wings without consulting the Council, he increased the cost of completing the school and made a larger appropriation necessary for its maintenance. This led to a controversy between the Board and the Council but did not interfere with the high regard which the Chickasaws held for the school.⁵⁷

The first church erected in the vicinity of Wapanucka Academy was built of hewed logs and located near a large spring about one mile east of Bromide on Harris Greenwood's place. Lafayette Mosely was the elder in the Greenwood church.⁵⁸

Reverend A. M. Watson and his wife were sent as Presbyterian missionaries to the Boggy Depot mission station in 1852 and continued their work in that place for seven years.⁵⁹

In discussing the training which was given to the children attending the Wapanucka Academy Reverend H. Ballentine wrote:

The moral and religious training of our children is conducted with reference to their usefulness; and their happiness, in time, and in eternity; and the means employed to secure the ends in view is the Bible; from which we instruct them in the relative duties of life, and the duties that they owe God their maker. Our success in this branch of our labors--if any--will be revealed in the future history of our pupils; and peradventure may be read on the pages of eternity.⁶⁰

Each year the Chickasaws had become more dissatisfied with their political situation and had tried to make some arrangement for separation

⁵⁷ Ibid., 415.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 423.

⁵⁹ Historical Sketches of the Missions, Womens Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church (1891), 191.

⁶⁰ Wright, "Wapanucka Academy," loc. cit., 426.

from the Choctaws. Having accomplished nothing by 1852 they requested that the government intervene and the Commissioner recommended that it would be for the best interests of both tribes if they were separated but stated that "although "the Chickasaws have applied to the government to interpose its authority for the purpose of effecting this object, but as the union was the result of mutual agreement it is desired that their separation if practicable shall be accomplished in like manner."⁶¹

In 1850 the Chickasaws had petitioned the Indian Mission Conference of the Methodist Church to establish a neighborhood school in Chickasaw country. In 1852 the Conference complied with this request and assigned John C. Carr as superintendent of the proposed school. He selected a building site on a prairie covered with blossoms near the present city of Durant and erected the school. The school took its name from its location and was called Bloomfield Academy. Another neighborhood school, Colbert Institute, was established this same year with Reverend Mr. Collins as superintendent.⁶²

During the winter of 1852-53 there was much sickness and schools suffered from typhoid pneumonia so that they were late in closing the following spring. Public examinations were held in each school before it closed and after the examinations the pupils and visitors returned to their homes. Every pupil of the Chickasaw Academy who could read was given a New Testament to take home. This school had been changed from a mixed school to one for boys. Robinson was especially pleased by the response

⁶¹ R.C.I.A., 1852, 430.

⁶² Wright, "Wapanucka Academy," loc. cit., 415.

of the boys to the Sabbath School so he wrote of "a number of Indian youth, hearing and eagerly receiving instruction from the book of God while others of their people were thronging by to their ball plays and other wicked carousels. Truly, we then felt that we were doing the Lord's work in a heathen land."⁶³

An early summer flood had damaged the mill and flooded the corn field but the crop was saved. The water rose higher than it had ever risen before and did over two thousand dollars damage to the property. The winter had been spent in improving the school. A new well was dug fifty feet deep and it provided excellent water for the school. Nearly 170,000 bricks had been burned for the new three-story building which was to be fifty-two feet long by twenty-two feet wide. It was to have six rooms that were nineteen feet in the clear, with a fireplace in each one. Two small bedrooms were to be cut off the halls on the second and third stories. In looking back over the year Robinson wrote:

Thus, sir, have we been laboring and suffering through the year that has past for the benefit of the people and we are cheered to know that our labor has not been in vain. To see that, in the cloud of intellectual and moral darkness with which the people are enveloped, there is a parting gradually increasing, through which are penetrating the bright rays of the sun of righteousness. May they deeply enter every heart, especially of our youth, until, transformed into the same glorious brightness, they may go forth amongst their people as irradiating flames of divine truth, enlightening, blessing, and being ever blessed . . .⁶⁴

After Lowrie's visit to Wapamucka Academy a difference in opinion arose between the Council of the Chickasaw Nation and the Mission Board

⁶³ R.C.I.A., 1853, 163f.

⁶⁴ R.C.I.A., 1853, 404.

of the Presbyterian Church. Mr. Lowrie held that the Council should appropriate seventy-five dollars each for one hundred pupils whether that many girls attended the school or not and that they should meet the expense of erecting the two wings to the building. The Council held that they should pay only for the number of girls actually attending the school and it absolutely refused to pay for the two wings which Lowrie had ordered on his own accord after they had appropriated six thousand dollars in 1851 to finish the building.⁶⁵

In addition to their controversy with the Presbyterian Mission Board the Council was agitated by the contempt and indifference with which the Choctaws met their proposals for separation. Commissioner Maypenny summed up their continuation of the struggle for separation when he reported to Secretary McClelland that the Chickasaws were continuing their efforts to sever their connection with the Choctaws and as

The interests of the Chickasaws, particularly of a pecuniary character, are materially variant from those of the other tribe, and they are naturally anxious to enjoy the satisfaction and advantage of a separate government of their own . . . It is regretted, however, that the Choctaws, to whom the union is of no advantage whatever, still continue indisposed to yield to the natural and reasonable wishes of their brethren, and those of the government on this subject.⁶⁶

It was late in September, 1853, that Father Walsh, the first Catholic missionary to visit the Chickasaws, left Fort Smith, Arkansas. A month later he arrived at Fort Arbuckle in Indian Territory. While there he baptized four people and when he visited Fort Washita he baptized one convert. The work of this first Catholic missionary was

⁶⁵Wright, "Wapamucka Academy," loc. cit., 415.

⁶⁶R.C.I.A., 1853, 255.

characterized by a consistent devotion to his charges.⁶⁷

In his report to Governor Drew, Superintendent of the Indians, A. J. Smith, the Chickasaw agent called attention to the removal of the Reverend Mr. Collins from Colbert Institute and the appointment of Reverend Couch to that school. This change met with the approval of the people as Mr. Couch had been a favorite with the Chickasaws for some time. Smith approved of the type of work done by the Methodists among the Chickasaws when he wrote: "Much praise is due the Methodists missionaries for their untiring assiduity in the cause of education in the Indian country; and their high pressure sermons seem better adapted to the understanding of the Indian than the more learned (perhaps?) but cold emanations of others."⁶⁸

The Methodist missionaries had been able to meet the spiritual needs of the Indian more than any other denomination. Their circuit riders took care of a large charge in spite of many difficulties such as trackless prairies, dense forests, unbridged streams where quicksand made fording dangerous, vermin and bad weather. He held services anywhere he was permitted to do so. They might be in the schoolhouse, in a hut, under a brush arbor, or in the open. He was able to make his religion appeal to the Indians. "The circuit rider was equally at home in the saddle, in the rude cabin of the settler, in Indian lodge or out under the wide-spreading branches."⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Sister M. Ursula, "The Catholic Church on the Oklahoma Frontier, 1824-1907" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, St. Louis University, 1938), 41.

⁶⁸ R.C.I.A., 1854.

⁶⁹ W. W. Sweet, Rise of Methodism in the West, 59.

The Mission schools continued to do good work among the Indians and in 1854, J. H. Carr reported that the forty-five girls attending Bloomfield had made good progress. They had worked faithfully and well on their lessons and in addition, had learned to draw, paint and sing.⁷⁰

The Chickasaw Manual Labor Academy had had one hundred twenty scholars. The year had been marred by the death of two of the boys attending school and the four year old child of one of the missionaries. The pupils had worked hard and had done well in their studies and industrial employments. Mr. Robinson wrote: "Some have become interested in religion (the only permanent foundation of their improvement and advancement) and have united with the church."⁷¹

During this year the agitation for separation had become much more intense. At one time bloodshed was threatened. The question of the boundary between the two tribes was settled by having Colonel Hunter survey and determine the exact line between the two.⁷²

When E. Couch assumed charge of Colbert Institute under the supervision of the Indian Missionary Conference of the Methodist Church he had found the school destitute of everything necessary but he opened the term on November 8, 1854, with sixteen boys and fourteen girls. Besides these pupils who were boarders, four or five-day scholars attended. The Chickasaw Nation paid sixty-six and two-thirds dollars for each child and the parents furnished their clothes. The children studied regular academic

⁷⁰ R. G. I. A., 1854, 166.

⁷¹ Ibid., 150.

⁷² Ibid., 148.

subjects and the Bible. At the end of the school year, Carr wrote: "Our religious exercise consists in reading the scripture and prayer morning and evening and in preaching and Sabbath school on the Sabbath. We are trying to impart a sound education to the head, the hands and the heart. So far as we are able to judge we think our school has done well the last session."⁷³

It was in July, 1855, that the Reverend Mr. Ballentine was forced to resign as Superintendent of Wapanucka because of ill health. He and his family returned home to Kentucky and the Presbyterian Mission Board sent the Reverend Mr. Charles H. Wilson of South Carolina to take his place.⁷⁴

In spite of the controversy over the finances of this school, it was held in high regard by the Chickasaws. When the Choctaws finally agreed to the separation and the Treaty of Doaksville was signed in 1855, it provided that the boundary surveyed in 1854 would form the boundary between the two nations "provided, however, if the line running due north from the eastern source of Island Bayou, to the main Canadian, shall not include the Chickasaw district, then an offset shall be made from said line, so as to leave said academy two miles within the Chickasaw District, north, west, and south from the line of boundary."⁷⁵

The Board of Foreign Missions was ardently anti-slavery and objected strenuously to the use of slave labor as early as 1836. As the

⁷³ H. G. I. A., 1855.

⁷⁴ H. G. I. A., 1855.

⁷⁵ Davis A. Homer, Constitution and Laws of the Chickasaw Nation,

years went by, they continued to put more and more pressure on the missionaries to reform that group with which they worked. The missionaries to the Chickasaws and Choctaws soon found that if they were to have any influence over the leading men of these tribes, they must not exert too much pressure in the matter of slavery. These Indians owned slaves and saw nothing wrong in the ownership. By April, 1855, the pressure of the Board had become so great that the Presbyterian missionaries met with a representative of the Board and adopted a statement in which they held:

A missionary has nothing to do with political questions and agitations. He is to deal alone as a Christian instructor and pastor. We assure you that we are not insensible of the evils connected with slavery. In our opinion the only antidote is the Gospel. As ministers of Christ we regard it our duty and privilege to preach the Gospel to masters and servants according to the example and instruction of Christ and His apostles, and to act according to our best judgment in the reception of members to our churches.

In spite of this defiance of the Board's wishes, the situation was smoothed over so that an open break did not occur at this time.⁷⁶

The Chickasaw Council of 1853 had apportioned one thousand dollars of their 1854 annuity for Bloomfield Academy under the care of Reverend J. H. Carr and he reported that he received the money in January, 1855. The forty-five girls attending this school were taught to clean and cook, do needlework, paint, and to sing.

The drought caused the year to be unfavorable for producing crops but as the fields at the Chickasaw Manual Labor Academy had been enlarged, there were enough crops to take care of the needs of the school. In his report for the Chickasaw agent, Colonel A. J. Smith, Robertson seemed

⁷⁶ Morrison, op. cit., 66.

particularly happy in the progress of his students. The boys had seemed happy in school and had regarded it as their home. Since they were happy and contented, the boys had not tried to run away and had come to regard expulsion with dread. This spirit made the work much more pleasant as the boys attended to their duties cheerfully, both in and out of school.

By the close of the year every scholar could read and those who were capable read a lesson in the scripture and practiced hymns. "On the Sabbath, besides attending regular preaching, they are especially instructed in the Sabbath school, in which besides suitable reading they receive catechetical instruction in sacred scripture and many have committed large portions to memory, in all nearly six thousand verses, besides reading the books of the Sunday school library and Sunday school papers of various kinds."⁷⁷

The Chickasaws were now ready to withdraw from the Choctaw Nation and set up an independent government. With this problem solved, the missionaries looked forward to increasing success as the Chickasaws became more contented in their own district under their own laws.

⁷⁷ R. C. I. A., 1855.

CHAPTER III

THE CHICKASAW NATION, 1856-1866

The Chickasaws established an independent government over their district by virtue of the treaty which was approved May 4, 1856. This treaty secured "all the rights, privileges, and immunities" for citizens of each nation except the right to participate in tribal funds. Indian citizens could settle in either nation but had to be citizens of only one of the Nations. The agent desired schools to be common to both tribes as "the schools under the charge of the missionaries are also valuable adjuncts; religion and education being handmaidens in the regeneration and civilization of the untutored savage."¹

Reverend Mr. Byington in a letter to his children told of a meeting of the Indian presbytery which had eleven ministers and fifteen churches participating. There had been one hundred forty-six members added to the church making a total of one thousand four hundred ninety-four names on the books. Of these one hundred eighteen were Negroes. It was in this presbytery that Allen Wright was ordained as a Presbyterian minister.²

Reverend Charles H. Wilson had been in charge of Wapamucka since

¹ Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1856, 146. (Hereafter referred to as R.C.I.A.)

² Bound Volume of Cyrus Byington Papers, 1820-1866, II, 718 (Found in Oklahoma Historical Building, Oklahoma City.)

Ballentine's resignation and reported the school to be in fine condition. The work of the scholars had been hampered by an epidemic of typhoid but only one death had resulted. The girls were taught domestic work besides their lessons, including kitchen work and garden labor. In speaking of the religious requirements, he said: "It is a standing order that all who are able shall study the scriptures daily. Large portions have been committed to memory by most of them, and this has been carefully explained to them."³

It was in May, 1856, that Mary C. Greenleaf, a fifty-six year old woman, left Boston to start her work as a Chickasaw missionary and in her first letter to friends dated July 23, thus described the school and need of missions:

The Chickasaws are a small tribe, numbering not quite five thousand. They are less religious than the Choctaws, but of late are unusually desirous of preaching and religious instruction.

Rev. Mr. (Chas. H.) Wilson, who is at the head of this institution goes almost every Sabbath to preach to them at different stations, preaching generally in the open air, under a rude arbor In the missionary family here, besides Mr. Wilson and his wife, there are two farmers and their wives, and six female teachers. There are also five black servants who do the hard work which it would be impossible for us to do in this warm climate.⁴

Later she described the attitude of the Chickasaw toward the missionaries when she wrote her friends that "all seem to hold the missionaries in high estimation, even those who are not Christians."⁵

Miss Greenleaf learned to ride horseback, and was able to accompany Reverend and Mrs. Wilson when he preached four miles from the school

³R.C.I.A., 1856, 164.

⁴Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "Mary C. Greenleaf," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXIV (Spring, 1946), 301

⁵Ibid., 31.

on August 31. In describing this experience she wrote:

I rode without fear, forded a creek, stopping in it to let the horse drink, mounted and dismounted without assistance, and enjoyed the delightful ride. When we reached the preaching place, we found the Sabbath school in the midst of their exercises; that is reading in the English language. The building was a rude cabin about twenty feet square, without a single window; sufficient light, however, came in through the open door, and large openings between some of the logs. Directly in front, was a rude arbor made of branches of trees, with split logs laid across whole logs for seats. (When the weather was warm the meeting was held under the arbor.)

Mr. Wilson gave out the Choctaw hymns, which were read by his interpreter; for they have a Choctaw Bible and Hymn book and the Chickasaw and Choctaw languages are so nearly alike, that both tribes understand them. Then we all sung them, for I can read the book, though I do not know the meaning.

Miss Greenleaf had the care of thirty-three girls while they were out of their classrooms and was expected to cut and fit at least a hundred dresses which the children must be taught to make properly. In addition, she had to instruct them in religion and morals besides teaching them cleanliness and household duties.

In her letter of October 3 she said that "it is natural to Indians to be sluggish in their movements . . . but I did not come here to live at my ease, and I rejoice to labor for these red children, and train them up in the way they should go. I have one among them who is sixteen years red, and seems to be a very good girl and there is some reason to hope she is a Christian"

On October 19 she spoke of how easy the girls were to manage and wrote "Mr. Wright, a Choctaw, who was educated in New York, and who is a very intelligent and interesting man, and an ordained minister, preached in Choctaw . . . he gave out the text in English."⁶

⁶Ibid., 32ff.

In November Miss Greenleaf wrote of the increase of dysentery among the pupils but none had been under her care.

Reverend C. C. Copeland reported in 1856 that A. G. Lansing had returned home and he had assumed charge of the Bennington station and at the direction of the presbytery, he and Allen Wright were visiting the Chickasaw church. The field was so large they employed a number of native helpers who had been elders for some time. He visited the church once each month and had observed that during his two years work with the Chickasaws, "quite a change has taken place among the people; former habits have been cast off and new and better ones formed." There had been fifty people added to the Chickasaw Church and all except three were on profession of faith. The majority of those converted were Chickasaws of whom Copeland wrote: "The want of industry among these people is a great impediment to their improvement; but we hope, as the truths of the Gospel gain an influence over their hearts, there will be improvements in regard to this as in everything else. As it is, we feel that there is great reason for encouragement and hope."

" . . . Time, even long years, must elapse ere a people like this can take their place among enlightened or Christian nations. But we see evidences that such a time is approaching and therefore labor and toil on hope."⁷

Father Patrick O'Reilly journeyed through the Indian country instructing, baptizing, and giving Catholics a chance to hear mass. During his visits he stopped at Fort Arbuckle. He started his work in 1855 and

⁷ R.C.I.A., 1856, 157.

his last recorded visit was in 1859 just before the outbreak of the war.⁸

The first annual conference of the Methodist Church ever to be held in the Chickasaw Nation met at Chickasaw Academy on October 23, 1856, with W. L. McAlester presiding and John Harrell serving as secretary.⁹ The Academy had had a year of unusually good health in spite of the plague of grasshoppers which had eaten the entire crops. The new brick building was almost finished and Mr. Armstrong thought of further improvements as he felt the Chickasaw who had just become an independent nation would wish to excel all other nations.

Robinson reported that the boys were progressing well in their studies and, he said:

Many of them are decidedly religious. Some twenty-two have united with the church and have given such evidence of their stability of religious character that they have been received into full membership.

In addition to prayer and other social meetings in which many of them take an active part, they hold similar ones by themselves and conduct them with propriety; much of their spare time is spent in singing songs of Zion, in which they take a great delight.¹⁰

At Colbert Institute the children in school had been affected with sore eyes. This school was to be moved to a site near the headwaters of the Clear Boggy. E. Couch who had served the school as superintendent and as a missionary to the Chickasaws for over nine years summed up the aims of the church and its accomplishments when he wrote:

⁸Sister M. Ursula, "The Catholic Church on the Oklahoma Frontier, 1824-1907" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, St. Louis University, 1938), 43.

⁹J. Y. Bryce, "Some Historical Items of Interest," Chronicles of Oklahoma, VII (September, 1929), 337.

¹⁰E.C.I.A., 1856, 170.

It has been our constant aim and effort to not only give a thorough mental and business, but also a moral and religious training. Our Sabbath school has done well; upon the whole we consider this institution in a prosperous condition.

. . . I consider the nation improving rapidly in the arts of civilization. The gospel and religious institutions are having an increasing influence with the people. We look forward to the day when under the fostering care of a general government, and the patient faithful labors of the missionaries, with the blessing of God, this people will not only become a civilized, but a Christian nation of people.¹¹

During the absence of the agent great disorder had prevailed in the Chickasaw Nation as the treaty of 1855 had provided that Choctaw laws should be in force until the Chickasaw legislature had passed its own laws. The legislature met and passed the laws which were then sent to Texas to be printed. The young man who was taking them mysteriously disappeared. Since the laws of the Chickasaw legislature were lost, no one knew which laws to enforce. The missing messenger was located in Shreveport.

The churches at Bennington, Mount Pleasant and Six Town were under the supervision of both Reverend Allen Wright and C. C. Cepeland. These churches were attended by both Chickasaws and Choctaws. There were two hundred two members and the Sunday school was managed by the natives. Besides these churches these two men and Reverend C. H. Wilson supplied the Chickasaw Church which had one hundred twelve members. This church had three Sunday schools which were managed by the natives. The one at Boggy Depot was taught by a Mr. M. A. Lynde.

The church had given \$58.35 to the cause of foreign missions but

¹¹ Ibid., 1856, 171.

instead of sending it off the money was used by Copeland to pay native assistants to help maintain public worship at the ten preaching stations.

There had been much intemperance in the nation due to the unsettled conditions and great disorders prevailed throughout the nation although the missionaries felt that as the nation was settled and established they would have better order. In spite of the apparently unfavorable conditions many had been added to the Methodist Church.¹³

On New Year's day the pupils at Wapanucka were given a holiday and Miss Greenleaf described one of the visitors and then added;

The Chickasaws are a very gay, licentious people, having lived before their removal, among the whites in Mississippi; and many returned soldiers from the Mexican war have settled here and taken Indian women. They have learned a great deal of evil from the whites—they have been cheated so by them, and so many money-loving men come here to fleece them out of their annuity, that Mr. W(ilson) thinks they imagine we all come for money, and it will take time to gain their full confidence.

For some reason the school did not have its usual hundred girls that session and in a letter written on April 21 reported that the girls had had chills and fever. The runaway girls were promptly returned by their parents so there was less running away. In May there was a hail storm which made the ground white. Miss Lee made the children ice cream. It was the first they had ever eaten.

During the session the girls had made eighty-five dresses, fifty-seven skirts, one hundred aprons, nine sacks, four pillow cases, five suits of clothes of the Negro men and boys, three tablecloths, twelve towels, and more than a hundred handkerchiefs which the girls had to be

¹²Ibid., 231.

¹³Ibid., 1857, 239.

taught to use.

In June Miss Greenleaf wore herself out caring for the girls who were afflicted with dysentery and contracted the disease which was the cause of her death.¹⁴ Her grave is now marked with a broken marble tombstone inscribed: "For only one year was she permitted to labour as a missionary among the Chickasaws but her labour was not in vain."¹⁵

There had been such a demand for admission that the Chickasaw Academy had accommodated twenty more students than their contract specified. Although the superintendent of schools had directed Robinson to receive these extra pupils, the legislature had not yet made any provision to pay for them.

Reverend F. M. Paine had been transferred to the institution as teacher and physician. In running the school he was assisted by Reverend William Jones and Miss Ellen Steele. The salaries varied from three hundred to six hundred dollars a year. The serving department was under the direction of Miss Lizzie Sorrels and Mrs. S. M. Hughes who received one hundred fifty dollars a year with board.

All of the domestic affairs were under the control of Mrs. Robinson. Besides housework and cooking she supervised the milking of thirty cows, furnished milk and butter for the school, raised four hundred chickens and sixty turkeys. In addition to this, the domestic department made one hundred thirty yards of carpeting from wool spun, woven, and dyed at home.¹⁶

¹⁴Foreman, "Mary C. Greenleaf," loc. cit., 37f.

¹⁵Marial H. Wright, "Wapanucka Academy, Chickasaw Nation," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXII (December, 1934), 427.

¹⁶R.C.I.A., 1857, 253.

Listed among the boys attending the Chickasaw Academy were Benjamin Bernie, Silas Wolf, Levi Colbert, William Byrd, Lewis McAlister, and William Guy. All of these later became leaders of the people of the nation.¹⁷ Mr. Robinson reported to the missionary society that there had been no lessening of interest in the religious point of view in the school and that "we have several young men of promise, that we look upon as future operators in the great mission field."¹⁸

Colbert Institute had been moved to its new location on the headwaters of the Boggy and now occupied one of the finest sections of country in the Chickasaw district. The Methodist Church had a membership of fifty-one. As there were seventy-five or eighty families living within five miles of the mission, the congregation was large, attentive and orderly at preaching on Sunday. The Sunday school had sixty scholars whose ages ranged from eighty to twenty.¹⁹

Reverend E. W. Shean, secretary to the Indian Conference, reported to the Methodist Missionary Society that the work among the Chickasaws was progressing satisfactorily because of the efforts of the devoted missionaries who labored there and W. L. McAlister, the presiding elder of the Choctaw District wrote:

During some portions of the year, on all circuits and in some schools (Chickasaw Academy, particularly) there have been gracious outpourings of the Holy Spirit, and something near two hundred souls have been added to the Lord. Some too have died in full

¹⁷ Ibid., 256.

¹⁸ Second Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1847-1857, 79.

¹⁹ R.C.I.A., 1857, 258.

triumphs of Christian faith We need double the number of efficient white laborers in our Choctaw and Chickasaw work.²⁰

From Bloomfield Mrs. A. H. Carr wrote of the influence of the mission on the pupils in school and the surrounding neighborhood. Large crowds attended the meetings and listened with so much attention it seemed they must be interested in salvation. Mr. McAlister had attended one meeting and had preached, then assisted Reverend Carr at communion. During this service fifteen girls had been received into the church.²¹ The following week one of the girls wrote this letter:

Bloomfield Academy C.N. April 3, 1857

Rev. Dr. Sheon:

Dear Sir:—When you were here last fall, you requested us to write you. With pleasure I now make the attempt.

I presume you would like to know how we are prospering in our studies, and in religion. The school is doing well, and most of the girls have become interested in religion, since you were here. Who knows but what it may be in answer to your prayers? For we remember the promise you made, to pray for a revival here.

We are very much interested in our Sabbath lessons; we love to search the Scriptures, for in them we find the words of eternal life, and they are as living waters to our thirsty souls.

We had a very interesting meeting last Sabbath. Rev. Mr. McAlester preached an excellent sermon from Eccl. IX, 10. Twelve of the girls were baptized, and fifteen of us were received into the church; and partook, for the first time, of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The congregation was very attentive and serious.

When you were here we were expecting Miss Downs, a new teacher from New York City. We love her very much.

I have no greater desire than to become a missionary teacher in the service of my Master, wherever he might call me to go.

All the girls unite with me in sending their best wishes to you. Hoping that we still have an interest in your prayers, I subscribe myself,

Respectfully yours,
Harriet Byrd²²

²⁰Second Annual Report of Methodist Missionary Society (1847-1857),

²¹Ibid., 82.

²²Ibid., 83.

The Reverend Mr. Carr had been ill during the year but under his direction the school had progressed. The attendance had been irregular. The Sabbath school was composed of the day scholars and was taught by Mrs. Susan J. Johnson who followed the Sabbath School Manual and Wesley's and Cooper Catechism. The Bible was taught on the topic plan and Mitchell's Sacred Geography and Atlas were used. The average age of those attending the school was twelve years. The station church had five white, twenty native and forty-one colored members who had contributed \$57.75 to missions during the year.²³

The controversy between the council and Mr. Lowrie was still unsettled. Lowrie on the part of the Presbyterian Mission Board thought the Chickasaws should pay an annual sum of seventy-five dollars each for one hundred pupils whether that many girls attended the school or not and that they should make an appropriation to pay for the extra expense incurred in erecting the two wings added to the building in 1852. The council refused to pay the whole extra expense of the additions as Mr. Lowrie had ordered them on his own accord after they had appropriated six thousand dollars to complete the building and they did not feel obligated by the terms of the original contract to pay more than seventy-five dollars each for those girls who actually attended the school.²⁴

Lowrie, in a letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1857, set forth the arguments of the Board and stated:

The proposal for the full payment annually for the 100 scholars is definite and final. If it be rejected we cannot in justice to our other schools, sustain this school on an uncertain allowance, and will therefore withdraw from it.

²³ R. G. I. A., 1857, 252.

²⁴ Wright, "Wapamucka Academy," loc. cit., 415.

The claim for the \$4737.76 to be expended in the manner now proposed, we submit to the justice of the Chickasaw Council. We should be rather unwilling to give up a flourishing school for that amount of money . . . A good deal of work is yet wanting . . . and the board must decline expending any more of their own funds in finishing a building which does not belong to them, but to the Chickasaw Nation. Nor are they willing to continue the School, unless the Superintendent and the teachers, and the Scholars be made perfectly comfortable.

In spite of the intervention of the Commissioner nothing could be done with the stubborn council which controlled its funds and would not make the necessary appropriations. The Board then suggested that the Council take over the school and run it under private contract as an experiment for taking charge of all of their schools.²⁵

In 1858 the Superintendent Charles H. Wilson reported that the health had been good during the year at Wapamaska. The school had not been unmindful of spiritual things as some of the girls had united with the church. The mission served by Wilson consisted of seven preaching stations with a membership of two hundred persons and two hundred seventy Sabbath school pupils. The parents seemed well satisfied with the progress of their children but would blindly follow the leadership of the council. He was encouraged by the fact that there was less drinking and more work and because, he said, "in religious matters we have reason to be encouraged by the godly lives of our church members in general; by the peaceful happy frame of mind of some of them, even in death; and also by the numbers who are coming out decidedly on the Lord's side. The Spirit of God seems to be poured out in some measure upon our scholars and upon the people around. We hope for yet greater blessings to come in answer to prayer."²⁶

²⁵Ibid., 416ff.

²⁶R.C.I.A., 1858, 169.

This school was divided into three parts and the three divisions were made on the basis of scholastic ability. The primary school had forty-seven girls who read in the second reader and had committed portions of the Scriptures and Catechism to memory. The middle school had thirty-five girls who read from the second reader, had been over forty-five pages of geography, had memorized three chapters in the Bible and the Child's Catechism. Some of the girls in this group had learned four chapters of the Bible and the Assembly's Catechism. The third or most advanced group learned one scripture verse daily and the best pupils had memorized eight chapters of Scripture in addition to hymns and the Catechism.²⁷

Before the school closed in 1858 Governor Harris, Mr. H. Colbert, Mr. Mitchell, and Major Humphries spent two days at the Chickasaw Academy examining the classes. They expressed themselves as very gratified and surprised by the progress of the boys. Of course this pleased Mr. Robinson who was very proud of his well behaved boys. This superintendent felt that the object of his school was to teach both the school and the nation "things practical, profitable and useful"—therefore the best farming methods and agricultural papers were made available to the people as well as the scholars. The religious training of the boys had not been neglected for "in addition to instruction in the common school, they have also been carefully taught in Sabbath school in the various ways used in that department; many of them are much interested in it, and have committed large portions of scripture to memory; quite a number are deeply religious; and we trust afford grounds of encouragement for future usefulness

²⁷ Ibid., 168.

both in church and nation."²⁸

Reverend Mr. Paine had been transferred from the Chickasaw Academy to Colbert Institute in 1856 and had opened the fall term in November, 1857. When he closed the school in the spring of 1857 the superintendent of schools in the nation was unable to be present at the examination; however, Captain Winchester Colbert, the local trustee attended. The sixty boys and girls attending the school acquitted themselves well. The people of the neighborhood were interested in the school and a goodly number of them were present. The Chickasaws living in the community were kind, sociable, and moving forward in Christian ways as many had been baptized and received into the church.²⁹

Bloomfield had had fifty-four girls enrolled and an average attendance of forty-five pupils. The public examinations were held on June 22, 1858, and the girls again acquitted themselves in a creditable manner. The spiritual welfare of the school continued to be a cause for satisfaction as ten of the girls had united with the church and Mr. Carr wrote: "A respectable number of our neighbors are experimentally religious (we judge by results) and all respect the Gospel."³⁰

An extensive trade had sprung up between the Chickasaws and the bordering states in spite of the laws made several years before being a deterrent to it. The Chickasaws needed a market for their crops and a method of transporting them to the market and their agent wrote that they

²⁸ Ibid., 167f.

²⁹ Ibid., 172.

³⁰ Ibid., 171.

were "advancing to a condition which will qualify and entitle them to rank as citizens of the United States. A few more years of free trade in all things useful to them and of educational, industrial, and religious progress only, are needed to make them quite as 'well to do' as intelligent and respectable, as many communities already admitted to equality in the sisterhood of States of our Union." They had established a written constitution and laws which compared favorably with those of any state.³¹

At the urgent request of Reverend Wilson, H. Ballentine came back from the Creek country and assumed control of Wapamucka for a year.³² The controversy over the finances of this school had not been settled but the mission board still retained control of it in 1859. It was operating with a full quota of pupils until the summer of 1860.³³

The Presbyterian Board of Missions discontinued its support of the missions in the latter part of 1859 and the Indians wished to make an effort to see if they could not support those who preached to them without the help of missions.³⁴ Reverend Copeland and Reverend Wright continued their work in their charge which included Chickasaw Church.³⁵

The Chickasaw Academy closed on July 1, 1859, with a public examination under the direction of Mr. Mitchell, the superintendent of the

³¹ R.C.I.A., 1859, 188.

³² H. Ballentine to Sue Beth, April 9, 1872. In Sue Beth Letters, Indian Archives, Oklahoma Historical Building.

³³ Wright, "Wapamucka Academy," *loc. cit.*, 421.

³⁴ Byington Letters, 822.

³⁵ R.C.I.A., 1859, 192.

nations school, and the special trustees. These examinations were attended by the parents and friends of the pupils. There had been some illness during the winter but only two deaths had occurred among the one hundred five scholars. The good crops of this year would provide food for the people and animals during the next year and reduce the expenses of the school. None of the cost of a child's going to school was borne by its parents as the Methodist Missionary Society and the Nation assumed the entire expense.

This school was under the supervision of the Choctaw district of the Indian Mission Conference which employed three white missionaries in the Chickasaw Nation. These men had been very successful in their efforts during the year and "by the blessing of God on their labors, very many of the sons of the forest (purebloods) have been added to the church, and we trust, to the Lord."³⁶

During this year there were seventy-two students in Colbert Institute and all of them were Chickasaws. Reverend John N. Hamill had been assigned to the mission where he was assisted by his wife, Professor Nathaniel Foote, M.D., Miss Nancy C. Biglow, and Mrs. Foote. The school was supported by four thousand dollars per annum which it received from the Council and one thousand which came from the Missionary Society. The regular academic studies were pursued by the pupils and on Sundays everyone attended the Sunday school where "the religious instruction has consisted of lessons in Holy Scripture and Catechism." The children were required to memorize and recite one or more verses every day besides taking

³⁶ Ibid., 214f.

part in the ordinary devotions of the school.³⁷

At Bloomfield every girl was required to memorize a verse to be recited in unison during the opening exercises in the morning. They began with the first verse of the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John and finished the Gospel before school was out. They were not only taught to memorize the verses but they were explained to the pupils until they were taught the meaning of the verses.

Besides this the girls made a voluntary selection of a Bible verse which they memorized and repeated at the breakfast table. The pupils were not required to participate but most of them did.

Some of the girls had progressed much in the time they had been coming to school. In the fall of 1859 Serena Factor, a pupil in the school, had charge of the primary department and at the same time kept up with her classes.³⁸ Measles and whooping cough made it necessary to suspend school for seven weeks. When school was reopened and when the epidemic again became worse, the parents withdrew their children but school was not suspended. Three of the students died during the winter and when school was closed only half the pupils were there.

During the year two societies had been formed in the neighborhood of Bloomfield. One was begun by the Cumberland Presbyterians and the other by the Methodists.³⁹

³⁷ Ibid., 210.

³⁸ Mrs. S. J. Carr, "Bloomfield and Its Founder," Chronicles of Oklahoma, II (December, 1924), 370f.

³⁹ R.-G.-I.-A., 1859, 212.

Although the government through its civilisation fund could show its like or dislike for a denomination, the Indian country was open to all faiths. Here the churches contended with each other and the rivalry was perhaps stronger than any other part of the United States. It will probably never be known exactly how much the missionaries fostered or retarded the spread of slavery among the Indians.⁴⁰

The attitude of the missionaries toward slavery legislation by the Presbyterian Board was clearly expressed when he wrote: "No committee at the North need ever undertake to manage church discipline and domestic help for missionaries . . . no committee north or south can undertake to govern the church of Christ, for members and ministers. No congregational church would ever submit to such a position, churches have a right to their own self government."⁴¹

Allen Wright was stationed at Boggy Depot and assigned to the Mount Pleasant and Chickasaw churches in 1860. Rev. C. C. continued to assist him occasionally. In evaluating his work here he wrote: "No great manifestation of interest for the word of God is visible at any of the preaching places; yet the evidence of the efficacy of the truth has been sufficient to justify continued labor, and spending time for the temporal and spiritual good of our people; and in consequence of my time being almost entirely devoted to the preaching of the gospel."

There were several denominations working among the Chickasaws at this time and Wright commended them for the great work they had done

⁴⁰ A. H. Abel, The American Indian as Slaveholder and Secessionist, 37.

⁴¹ Byington Letters, 718.

while others talked without doing anything to advance education and religion among them. He attributed the civilization, wealth, industry, moral and social elevation, as well as intelligence of the people "to the self-sacrificing efforts of the faithful missionaries among the Choctaw and Chickasaw people."⁴²

In the spring of 1860 Ballentine received instructions from the Board to sell off the property at Wapanucka and to turn the proceeds to the Treasurer of the Chickasaw Nation and he did so. After he had closed the school, the Chickasaw Council voted to place the property under his care until they needed them for a school. Ballentine remained here until the buildings were needed by the Chickasaw Army.⁴³

All Presbyterian schools in the Chickasaw Nation were turned to the government and no provision was made by the Board to continue the work. In spite of this the missionary labors were carried on at two stations and four or five preaching places in a radius of thirty miles.⁴⁴

In December, 1860, an association of churches was formed at Philadelphia Church and named the Ramsey Baptist Association. Delegates attended from Rock Creek, Cedar Creek, and Good Spring which was located on Island Bayou in Chickasaw Nation.⁴⁵

There were four regular Methodist missionaries working among the

⁴² E.S.I.A., 1860, 133f.

⁴³ Ballentine to Miss Sue Beth (April 9/72) Indian Archives - Sue Beth Letters.

⁴⁴ Historical Sketches of the Missions (Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, 1891), 191.

⁴⁵ W. B. Morrison, "Old Philadelphia Baptist Church," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XIII (September, 1935), 271.

Chickasaws, Reverend J. C. Robinson, Reverend J. N. Hamill, Reverend J. Carr, and Reverend H. Bacon.⁴⁶

The school year at the Chickasaw Academy under Reverend Robinson had been peaceful and prosperous with good attendance and the pupils improving "not only in books, but in conduct, gentlemanly behavior, and Christian character." There had been no serious illness and no deaths in the school so they were grateful although frost and then drought had left them short of supplies. When the school closed on June 22 with a public examination conducted by the U. S. Agent, the superintendent of schools, and Reverend Ewing, presiding elder of the district, Robinson felt that the school was "working out by the blessing of a kind Providence, a great good not only to the youth, but to the nation at large."⁴⁷

Bloomfield had good attendance during the year and had provided the girls an opportunity to study vocal music. The more advanced pupils were allowed to take lessons on the melodeon. Under the supervision of Reverend J. C. Carr, the school was increasing in size and would accept sixty pupils the next year. In spite of the bad weather conditions the Indians around Bloomfield had produced a surplus of corn.⁴⁸

The long continued drought of the summer caused a total failure of the crops so that great suffering prevailed throughout the nation and the Indians were threatened with starvation if supplies were not given to them.⁴⁹

⁴⁶R.G.I.A., 1860, 144.

⁴⁷Ibid., 151.

⁴⁸Ibid., 15.

⁴⁹Ibid., 18.

During the early part of 1861 the Chickasaws maintained their neutrality in the conflict between the states but on May 25 the legislature declared that the nation was independent and in a position to make any alliance that seemed best. General Pike on behalf of the Confederate States negotiated a treaty with them and when it was signed on July 10, 1861, all relations with the United States ceased.⁵⁰ According to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, "the spirit of rebellion against the authority of the government which has precipitated a large number of states into open revolt has been instilled into a portion of the Indian tribes by emissaries from the insurrectionary states." One of these tribes was the Chickasaws who suspended all intercourse with agents of the United States.⁵¹

The government officials at Washington refused to allow the Indians any more money on account of this. The Nation having no money was forced to suspend schools but the missionaries continued their work.⁵² The Presbyterian Church of the Confederate Church took up the Presbyterian work and when the first assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States met at Augusta, Georgia, in December, 1861. Dr. Cyrus Kingsbury represented Indian Presbytery and Reverend Allen Wright was present and addressed the assembly which reappointed all of the old missionaries and recommended that six new missionaries be appointed. Unfortunately war conditions prevented the carrying out of the program.⁵³

⁵⁰Dean Trickett, "The Civil War in Indian Territory, 1861," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XVII (December, 1939), 408.

⁵¹R.C.I.A., 1861, 3.

⁵²Byington Letters, 891.

⁵³W. B. Morrison, "The Red Man's Trail," 70f.

In 1861 the Annual Conference of the Methodists was held in the Chickasaw Nation for the second time since its origin. John Harrell presided and J. H. Carr served as secretary when it convened at the Chickasaw Manual Labor School.⁵⁴

During the Civil War the school at Bloomfield was maintained as a day school and kept open for three hours in the morning. The school building was used as a hospital where Dr. Carr distributed delicacies and medicine to the sick soldiers.⁵⁵

In March, 1861, S. Orlando Lee wrote to Commissioner Dale concerning the loyalty of the missionaries to the United States. He asked that the government deal considerately with the Indians; then added:

I do not like to write such things of my brother missionaries but they are, I believe, facts and though I love some of them very much, I still must say that, except Reverend Mr. Byington, who was doubtful, and Reverend Mr. Ballentine, a missionary to the Chickasaws who was union, all the ordained missionaries belonging to the Choctaw and Chickasaw Mission of the Presbyterian Board who remained there were victims of madness which swept over the South, were secessionists. One or two of the laymen who remained were union men, Cyrus Kingsbury, son of Reverend Dr. Kingsbury, being one.⁵⁶

From this letter it is clear that the missionaries had been actively engaged in slavery agitation.

During the war these missionaries stayed at their stations and continued to preach although most of their congregation consisted of women and children.⁵⁷ The schools were used as hospitals and barracks

⁵⁴ Bryce, "Some Items of Historical Interest," loc. cit., 374.

⁵⁵ Byington Letters, 895.

⁵⁶ Abel, op. cit., 79.

⁵⁷ Morrison, op. cit.

where the missionaries helped with the sick and aided them as long as the medicine lasted. It was hard to get medicine and it was very expensive. The price of quinine went up to twenty dollars an ounce.⁵⁸

As the war progressed communication became more difficult and few reports came out of the Chickasaw Nation but the missionaries had many narrow escapes from violence as the feeling rose high in the territory. Some had property destroyed but most of them stayed with their charges to give them what aid and comfort they could.

Robinson had continued his work among the Chickasaws at the Academy until 1864 when he was appointed preacher in charge and Superintendent of the Chickasaw circuit and Academy.⁵⁹ In this year the Indian Mission Conference was held at Eastman's school, Chickasaw Nation. The meeting convened September 23, 1864, and attempted reorganization.⁶⁰ There were ten preachers who had remained and were now ready to resume their work in the Chickasaw Nation where three-fourths of the territory was laid to waste by the war.⁶¹

By 1865 the Indians were seeking to reopen their schools but were finding it difficult. The good crops relieved them of the fear of starvation and the nation was beginning to recover from its loss of cattle, swine and horses which the rebel army had used.⁶²

⁵⁸Byington Letters, 895.

⁵⁹Johnnie Bishop Chisholm, "Harley Institute," Chronicles of Oklahoma, IV (1926), 117.

⁶⁰S. H. Babcock and J. Y. Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 146.

⁶¹Mrs. S. J. Carr, loc. cit., 64.

⁶²R.C.I.A., 1865, 280.

In 1866 many of the Chickasaws still held their slaves and the policy of dealing with freedmen was unsettled.⁶³ The treaties signed this year provided for setting up a common government for the Five Civilized Tribes. The Indians had had experience with setting up governments as under the guidance of the whites and missionaries they had set up their constitutions and developed their laws.⁶⁴

The meager reports of the missionaries for the period from 1862 until 1866 indicated the undoing of much of the work which they had accomplished before the war. Many of the missionaries who had always helped the Indians through their trials were too old or too tired to continue their work. Then, too, there had to be time for the churches to raise the funds to continue the work.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U. S., sent out an appeal for workers but few recruits were willing to assume the responsibility of the work in Indian Territory.⁶⁵

Bishop Enoch M. Marvin was appointed to hold the Indian Conference in September, 1866, at Bloomfield as this was the only building left that was suitable for holding the meeting. The faithful missionaries hoped that some way would be provided so they might continue their work. Bishop Marvin brought them word of the desperate financial straits of the Board of Foreign Missions and told them that it would be unable to pay any drafts that came through and that the Methodist Church would meet these drafts before appropriating any money for Indian missions but he assured

⁶³ R. G. I. A., 1866, 285.

⁶⁴ Grant Foreman, "The Indian and the Law," The Journal, 84.

⁶⁵ Morrison, op. cit., 73.

them they would be provided for; he would personally guarantee five thousand dollars for the missions and would send it at regular intervals through the year for "our work must go on."⁶⁶

With the war and its tragedy behind them the missionaries turned toward the future and started rebuilding the Chickasaw Missions.

TRANSITION, 1865-1868

After the treaty of 1866 the Chickasaw experienced a lacerating of the national life as the control of the United States Government increased. The treaty was the first step toward the loss of national power and the end of national life. In spite of the fact that they would lose a large sum of money by the treaty terms, the Chickasaw refused to give the Negroes political and land rights equal to those of the Indians. The Negro question became a burning issue as the Chickasaw fought for racial equality.

This racial problem added greatly to the difficulties of the situation. Their work had been practically destroyed during the Civil War. Without funds and almost by opposition the missionaries decided to rebuild and reform the remnants of reconstruction as they had lived through many of the Civil War. They planned to rebuild in spite of the loss of funds.

In 1867 Reverend J. S. Mills who worked under the direction of the Southern Baptist Church settled at the Little Doggy River near the present site of Okmulgee. Mills here he did practical work among the Indians.

⁶⁶ Babcock and Bryce, *op. cit.*, 153f.

CHAPTER IV

TRANSITION, 1867-1908

After the treaty of 1866 the Chickasaws experienced a lessening of the national life as the control of the United States Government increased. The treaty was the first step toward the loss of council power and the end of national life. In spite of the fact that they would lose a large sum of money by the treaty terms, the Chickasaws refused to give the Negroes political and land rights equal to those of the Indians. The Negro question became a burning issue as the Chickasaws fought for racial purity.

This social problem added greatly to the difficulties of the missionaries. Their work had been practically destroyed during the Civil War. Without funds and faced by opposition the missionaries decided to remain and endure the hardships of reconstruction as they had lived through those of the Civil War. They planned to rebuild in spite of the lack of funds.

In 1867 Reverend J. S. Murrow who worked under the direction of the Southern Baptist Church settled on the Middle Boggy River near the present site of Atoka. While here he did personal work among the Indians of the entire territory.¹ Forest trees felled crosswise made his pulpit

¹Carl Coke Rister, Baptist Missions Among the American Indians, 91.

when he preached his first sermon here to a congregation of two people.²

The Methodists had from the first been very successful among the Chickasaws and with the Southern Presbyterians had remained with them through the Civil War. Though they had been a civilizing and unifying force the war had almost completely destroyed their work in the schools. The buildings had served as hospitals during the war and were in a bad state of repair. Due to this and lack of funds many of them were never again opened as missions.

John H. Carr, presiding elder of the Chickasaw District of the Methodist Church and Superintendent of Bloomfield, without assistance from the church, Indians, or the government opened the school. He allowed the boys and girls to attend free of charge and continued classes for a year. The nation then assumed control of the school and severed its connection with the church. The school was continued through the aid of the United States Government and today is still operating as Carter Seminary located north of Ardmore.³

Carr as presiding elder had to travel over the large Chickasaw District. It took him almost four weeks to cover his district. The roads were so poor that although he started out in a buggy, it was necessary for him to take his saddle so that he could finish his trip on horseback if the roads became too bad for him to continue in the buggy.⁴

²D. C. Gideon, History of Indian Territory, 91.

³S. H. Babcock and J. Y. Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 164.

⁴Mrs. S. J. Carr, "Bloomfield and Its Founder," Chronicles of Oklahoma, II (December, 1924).

As he was a carpenter he was often called on to build the coffins for those who died as well as preach at their funerals. When his daughter died, no one else was available so he had to make her coffin and preach her funeral service. His son was murdered as he returned home following the Civil War. In spite of these personal tragedies, Carr continued to travel through his district reorganizing churches and comforting his charges in their sorrows.

When Reverend Robinson tried to open Chickasaw Academy, he was unable to do it because he could not raise the necessary funds.⁵

The Presbyterians were unable to continue their missions on the same basis that had existed before the war as there were few recruits for this work. The churches gradually came to be supplied by native preachers. By 1870 the Southern Board had confined its efforts among the Chickasaws to those in Indian Presbytery.⁶

From 1867 to 1879 the federal War and Interior Departments contested over the control of the Indians. The controversy was over the question of whether a soldier or a civilian administration was better for the Indians.

General Grant opposed Army control. The Protestant churches enthusiastically supported the Interior Department and even the Catholic Church which had been poorly treated refused to back the Army.⁷ The outstanding failure of Grant's policy was the nomination of agents by the

⁵ Babcock and Bryce, op. cit., 165.

⁶ W. B. Morrison, The Red Man's Trail, 73.

⁷ Loring Benson Priest, Uncle Sam's Stepchildren, 24.

churches. This was supposed to improve Indian relations. Most of the churches failed to take part in the program as it was difficult to find suitable agents. Out of one hundred forty-five candidates one year, the Methodist Church found only one man qualified for the position.⁸

In 1868 the Chickasaw country was gradually recovering from the effects of the war and if they continued to do as well in the future it would not be long before they regained their former prosperous condition.⁹

The twenty-third conference was held at Boggy Depot, October 15, 1868. By 1869 there were six charges in the Chickasaw district. The patience and intelligent perseverance of the missionaries played an important part in the rehabilitation of the Chickasaw people.¹⁰

Crops were good, the condition of the country was flourishing, and a feeling of confidence pervaded. In 1869 there were four thousand five hundred of these Indians and the Commissioner reported that they were "little if at all behind the Cherokees in progress made by them in Christian civilization and their efforts at self-dependence."¹¹

The Honorable Vincent Colyer, United States Special Indian Commissioner, stated in his report that the Chickasaws and Choctaws were the most civilized tribes in the southern district and that "they owe their civilization to the justice and humanity of the United States Government, and pre-eminently to the missionaries who have most efficiently and faith-

⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁹ Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1868, 279. (Hereafter referred to as R.C.I.A.)

¹⁰ Babcock and Bryce, op. cit., 175f.

¹¹ R.C.I.A., 1869, 37.

fully labored among them for the past half century."¹²

In 1870 the economic conditions of the Chickasaws continued to improve. They agreed to accept the plan for allotting of land as it was set forth in the treaty of 1866.¹³ The Commissioner in his report praised the missionaries for their part in the development of the Chickasaws. He wrote: "I would also mention with special gratification, the good effects and great benefits resulting to these people from the able and faithful ministry and religious instructions of numbers of preachers and missionaries, both native and white, who have cast their lot among them, and are constantly employed in ministering to their spiritual wants, and strengthening them in all things that tend to their temporal and eternal good."¹⁴

None of the schools in the nation were under the direct control of the missions of any denomination but religious services were held at the various schools by the Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists.¹⁵ The Indian Agent felt that their present satisfactory condition was due to the support and encouragement of the missionaries who had worked with them so long.

The influence of the missionaries could be seen in the development of the work and in the fact that so many of the leading men in the tribe were those who had been educated under the influence of the missionaries.

¹² Ibid., 71.

¹³ Ibid., 1870, 10.

¹⁴ R.C.I.A., 1870, 292.

¹⁵ Ibid., 1871, 573.

Their influence was still great for "these missionaries are, almost without exception, capable and good men . . . and their influence among the people is for good. Many of the natives give good evidence of being sincere and faithful Christians."¹⁶

In March, 1858, Reverend Robert J. Hogue, a Baptist missionary, had begun to work among the Choctaws but moved away and returned in 1868. In 1871 he moved to Boggy Depot where he organized a church. He continued his work as pastor of that church and one at Caddo for a number of years.¹⁷

In July, 1872, Reverend Marrow issued a call to the Baptist churches in the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations to meet in Atoka to form the Choctaw and Chickasaw Baptist Association. Sixteen churches responded and from the organization established many strong Baptist bodies have developed.¹⁸

There had been general harmony in the Chickasaw Nation but they still refused to provide schools for freedmen.¹⁹ Ample funds were appropriated for Indian education but the schools were not very efficient. The agent felt that there should have been fewer schools with better teachers who had been selected by mission boards so that more moral, religious, and educational progress would have been made.²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid., 569f.

¹⁷ Rister, op. cit., 94.

¹⁸ W. H. Underwood, "Rev. Dr. Joseph Samuel Marrow," Chronicles of Oklahoma, VII (December, 1929), 488.

¹⁹ E.G.I.A., 1872, 237.

²⁰ Ibid., 1873, 208.

By 1874 the steady influx of the white people was creating a problem. Following the Civil War and the freeing of slaves, the Chickasaws had permitted white men to come into the nation to work as laborers or renters. Many came but few were known to leave the country when their permits expired.²¹

The Commissioner reported in 1875 that the churches were still failing to send in nominations for agents as it was difficult to find men to serve for they "must be filled and animated with a personal interest in their work and inspired by the constant feeling which comes from the consciousness of being an associate and representative of those who are cheerfully contributing time and thought and making personal sacrifices for the work he has at hand." None of the churches except one had used church propaganda to interfere with the purposes of government.²²

Father Rabot thus described his visit to the Chickasaw Nation in 1875:

On the first Sunday in Advent, I said mass for the Chickasaws in the home of a pious Catholic Indian family. The preceding evening the chief of the tribe²³ and the Sheriff, both friends of the family called at the residence. The chief was a man of extraordinary stature, six feet six inches tall and forty-two years of age, his companion was twenty-six. After informal introduction the conversation began in the course of which I inquired about the different denominations represented among the tribesmen. 'We have had Baptist and Presbyterian preachers among us a long time,' said the chief, 'but they have accomplished very little. We listened at first very attentively to them, but we lost confidence in them when we saw that they observed nothing of what they preached and in fact did the opposite.' My informant was not an educated man. He had, however, a discerning mind. He had never

²¹ Ibid., 1874, 170.

²² Ibid., 1875.

²³ B. F. Overton was governor of the Chickasaws in 1875.

seen a priest. He listened attentively to my explanation of the belief of the Catholic Church and attended mass the following morning.²⁴

In 1876 Father Rabot accompanied by Brother Dominic passed through Chickasaw country. After riding a horse over a country unmarked by roads, through creeks and unbridged rivers, these two men arrived at Stonewall where the Chickasaw tribal court was holding its regular session. As all available rooms were already filled the men had nowhere to spend the night. They slept that night on the courthouse floor.²⁵ Their trip to the capitol at Tishomingo was easier as there were roads and they traveled by hack.²⁶

Reverend Mr. Murrow, during the meeting of the Choctaw and Chickasaw Baptist Association in 1876 introduced a resolution for the organization of Baptist Association which would include all of Indian Territory. He wished to secure better understanding and more co-operation among the workers so that more interest and support would be given to the maintenance of mission work among the blanket Indians. It was not until 1881 that this organization was finally effected.²⁷

In 1876 the Union Agency, which included the Chickasaws, was assigned to the care of the Baptist Church.²⁸ At this time there were

²⁴Sister Mary Urban Kehoe, "The Educational Activities of Distinguished Catholic Missionaries Among the Five Civilized Tribes," (Unpublished M. A. Thesis, Dept. of History, Catholic University of America, 1942), 66.

²⁵Sister M. Ursula, "The Catholic Church on the Oklahoma Frontier, 1824-1907" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. of History, St. Louis University, 1938), 69.

²⁶Ibid., 77.

²⁷Underwood, loc. cit., 488.

²⁸R.C.I.A., 1876, 63.

five thousand eight hundred Chickasaws. Of this number there were five hundred who were Christian. Ten churches had been built in their district.²⁹

The missionary work was carried on by the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. The number of white missionaries was still decreasing and those who remained were so poorly supported that most of the religious instruction was given by native preachers directed by the white missionaries.

Nearly all of the meeting houses of the Indians were made of logs. They were usually furnished with seats made of "hewed logs without backs and are not well adapted for sleepy Christians."³⁰

The treaty of 1866 had carried a provision for the granting of a right of way for a railroad. The Santa Fe built a line running north and south through the Chickasaw Nation. Many villages and small towns sprang up along the right of way and made shipping points for the products of the territory. Many whites drifted into these small communities and stayed to work.³¹

The missionary contributions of the Methodist Church were no larger than they had been before the Civil War but the increase of the number of whites in the Chickasaw country made the missionary program much more expensive. In an attempt to reach both the Indians and the whites, three preachers were often assigned to the same town. Although the Indian population still predominated, the white population was steadily increasing. It was evident that though the Indian membership was

²⁹ Ibid., 212.

³⁰ Ibid., 64.

³¹ Ibid., 62.

five times that of the whites, the church would soon be controlled by the white membership.³²

Mrs. G. B. Hester was very prominent in the missionary work of the Methodist Church. In 1878 she had attended the General Conference at Atlanta, Georgia. The first Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was organized at that conference. When Mrs. Hester returned her home at Boggy Depot she organized the first Methodist Missionary Society in Indian Territory. There were only three members. By working faithfully, she kept the work going. In spite of opposition the society gained members and went quietly forward with its program of building parsonages, furnishing them and supplying the preachers' families with food and clothing.³³

The Reverend John Jeremiah Reed was the outstanding Presbyterian missionary to the Chickasaws during this period of transition. He had given up a church in Houston, Texas, because of ill health and had served as a missionary at Spencer Academy which was located in the mountainous country of the Choctaw Nation. When his contract with the Choctaws expired in 1881, he applied to Indian Presbytery for service as a missionary in the Chickasaw Nation.³⁴

There had been a wave of infidelity in this nation and there were no churches in the section to which Reverend Mr. Reed was assigned. He held his first services under an elm tree. His headquarters were near

³² Babcock and Bryce, op. cit., 198f.

³³ Ibid., 275ff.

³⁴ Mrs. G. T. Ralls, (Ed.), Oklahoma Trails, 172.

the present town of Wapanucka and were twenty-five miles from the nearest railroad. He had to go twelve miles to Boggy Depot to obtain his mail.³⁵

Reed was a man of feverish activity. He traveled from four to five hundred miles a month doing personal work. No one was passed by if he saw an opportunity to speak a word for Christ. His favorite saying was, "The time is short; I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day."³⁶

G. W. Dallas, a Baptist missionary, worked among the Choctaws and Chickasaw freedmen for nine months, beginning in July, 1881.³⁷

In October, 1882, Reverend J. H. Dickerson was appointed by the Cumberland Presbyterian Church to serve as a missionary to the Choctaws and Chickasaws. He was not given a salary so he depended on donations from the Indians. The first donation he received was a bale of cotton which he took to Denison, Texas, and sold.³⁸

The Chickasaw legislature granted the Methodists the privilege of establishing a church and school at White Bead Hill, Pickens County, in 1884.³⁹ The annual conference was held here in the building which had been erected and donated to the church by W. G. Kimberland.⁴⁰ At this

³⁵ Morrison, op. cit., 97.

³⁶ Dallas, op. cit., 173.

³⁷ Baptist Home Missions in North America, 573.

³⁸ John B. Meserve, "Governors Benjamin Franklin Overton and Benjamin Crooks Burney," Chronicles of Oklahoma, VI (June, 1938), 226.

³⁹ Davis A. Homer, Constitution and Laws of the Chickasaw Nation, 163.

⁴⁰ Babcock and Bryce, op. cit., 227.

meeting Pierce Institute was planned and J. G. Powell, a Methodist preacher of marked ability was assigned to take charge of it and the circuit in which it was located.⁴¹

Mr. Reed had continued the Presbyterian missions and had built four churches within three years. He turned these over to Jonas Wolfe, a Chickasaw elder, who had been ordained to the ministry in 1884. Wolfe, who was governor of the nation at this time, began his ministry here and became the most outstanding native Presbyterian preacher among the Chickasaws. Reed did not stop his work but began to work in the untouched territory. He organized churches which later developed into successful organizations in the Durant and Indian Presbyteries.⁴²

In 1886 Presbytery met at Wapanucka and a camp meeting was held. Reverend J. J. Reed presided at the meeting.⁴³ A visiting secretary reported:

An Indian Presbytery is a unique institution in itself and a visit to one of its meetings will never be forgotten. Leaving their homes the entire Indian community encamps around the church. Each Indian church sends not only its elder to Presbytery but entire families, men, women, and children. At daybreak the bell rings for sunrise prayer meetings conducted by the Indians in the Choctaw language. At nine and eleven in the morning and at three in the afternoon, they have preaching by a Choctaw Indian or by a missionary through an interpreter, while the business of the Presbytery is conducted between these hours. After the last service at night, the Indian population remains to sing, and continue their service of song until a late hour. It thrills one's soul to hear their earnest singing of the good old hymns. It is doubtful whether any Presbytery in the church

⁴¹ Ibid., 256.

⁴² Halls, op. cit., 173.

⁴³ The Council Fire, IX (November, December, 1886), 150.

attracts as large crowds where the people take such interest in the business of this church court and in public religious services.⁴⁴

In 1886 the Methodist Conference appointed five members to adjust the financial affairs of the White Bead School. They were authorized to borrow money to pay the schools debt but were unable to do it. Lack of money and interest caused the school to be closed.⁴⁵

The forty-first session of the Indian Mission Conference of the Methodist Church was held in October, 1886, with C. E. Nelson, G. B. Hester, Charles Omba, and Henry Godfrey of the Chickasaw Circuit present. W. S. Derrick, an elder was again appointed to the Lebanon Orphan's Home, C. E. Gooding to Bloomfield, and E. W. Brodie as a teacher at Wapamucka.⁴⁶ The missionary society reported that it had spent one thousand one hundred dollars in Indian Territory.⁴⁷

On October 5, 1886, the legislature renewed its approval of the privilege granted Reverend J. J. Reed in 1881. His license to preach was continued for five years.⁴⁸

Between 1888 and 1895 the whites continued to come into the Chickasaw Nation and the churches were ceasing to be mission churches as they became abler to support themselves. The whiskey problem was worse than it had ever been especially along the border where a lawless element had

⁴⁴Thomas C. Moffett, The American Indian on the New Trail, 115f.

⁴⁵Babcock and Bryce, op. cit., 228.

⁴⁶Minutes of the Indian Mission Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South (1886-1890), 21.

⁴⁷Sixty-Fifth Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1883, 32.

⁴⁸Homer, op. cit., 175.

settled.

In 1888 John Y. Bryce was assigned to a circuit which was on the border of Texas. The favorite sport of the rough element was to disturb the church. The preceding preacher had placed a six shooter on the pulpit in order to preserve order. When he left the work he offered to sell the gun to Bryce who refused as he wished to try more peaceful means. One man threatened to hang him within thirty days if he stayed, then ordered him to move on. Bryce was not frightened but continued to preach at Thackerville.⁴⁹

On the same circuit at Loves Valley a different type of community existed. The land and the church with its furnishings was donated by the owner of the valley with the understanding that the renters would attend services of some kind. The minister always had an invitation to stay overnight and most of them did. People either behaved during church services or left the premises. The owner who was not a Christian attended church to see that proper order was maintained. When asked why he did this, he explained, "I may not be a believer in the sense you Christian people profess, but I am a believer in common decency and that which tends to civilization, and I find that the ones who profess to be Christians believe in the same things and that they make the best renters . . . and I am willing to help them in the matter of their religious life."⁵⁰

In 1888 Father Switbert Breeken who was stationed at Saint Michaels Mission near Lehigh, attended the mission of Tishomingo and

⁴⁹Babcock and Bryce, op. cit.

⁵⁰J. Y. Bryce, "Judge Overton Love," Chronicles of Oklahoma, IV (September, 1926), 267.

opened a day school under the supervision of a Catholic lay teacher. This school was abandoned because of poor attendance.⁵¹

Thophile Meerschaert, a Belgian, began his work with the American Indian in 1891 when he was made Vicar-Apostolic of Oklahoma and said his first mass at St. Elizabeth's School, Purcell, Chickasaw Nation. The Bishop usually appeared in his episcopal robes wearing his embroidered miter and holding his pastoral staff. The Indians came miles just to see him. On one occasion he was going from Boggy Depot to Tishomingo in a buggy. Heavy rains had caused the Big Blue River to overflow. After waiting two hours for the river to subside he begged a ride from a chicken peddler who was going to cross. Seated on top of the crates he held his episcopal robes aloft and crossed to the other side without getting them wet. That evening he spoke to the council which listened attentively.⁵²

St. Elizabeth's School had been established in 1888 through the generosity of Mother Frances Drexel. Up to the time of statehood it was the most flourishing Catholic school in the territory. It was not exclusively for the Chickasaws or whites, and other Indians were admitted. It was at this convent that Sister Olivia Taylor became the first Indian nun. Sister Olivia was born near Caddo of Chickasaw and Choctaw parentage. As Nellie Taylor, she worked at St. Elizabeths. She was baptized and in 1892 applied for admission to the Sisters of St. Frances. After two years as a candidate she was sent to Glen Riddle to make her novi-

⁵¹ Sister Ursula, op. cit., 218.

⁵² Sister Mary Kehoe, op. cit., 70ff.

tiate. At the end of two years she returned to work among the Indians.⁵³

In 1892 the Indian Conference of the Methodist Church South extended over both Indian and Oklahoma Territories. There were two thousand white and ten thousand seven hundred fifty-nine Indian members. There had been one thousand three hundred twenty-nine members added during that year. This would indicate that Johnson was right when he wrote, "We have confessedly a larger field and greater success among Indians than any other denomination in the country."⁵⁴

Between 1890 and 1900 the population of the Chickasaw Nation increased rapidly and religious forces kept pace with the population. Churches, Sunday schools, and Christian Endeavor Societies were established. Eighty churches had been built by the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians.⁵⁵

In 1891 Indian Presbytery was transferred from the Synod of Arkansas to the Synod of Texas.⁵⁶ The Missionary Society started Sunday schools at Pauls Valley and Wynnewood but soon withdrew their support as they were able to maintain themselves.⁵⁷

The Catholics through the generosity of Mother Katherine Drexel were able to establish schools and churches at Chickasha and Ardmore.⁵⁸

⁵³Sister Ursula, op. cit., 214.

⁵⁴G. Alexander, et. al, History of the Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 126.

⁵⁵Joseph B. Clark, The Leavening of the Nation, 171.

⁵⁶Ralls, op. cit., 21.

⁵⁷G. F. M. McAfee, Missions Among North American Indians, 75.

⁵⁸Sister Ursula, op. cit., 209.

Much money was expended on schools and missions to the Chickasaws with little results. Father Ketchan explained the reason for this by saying that the "complex religious and racial character of the Indian in Oklahoma presented a problem not found in the same degree in other states."⁵⁹

The last Indian Mission Conference of the Methodist Church convened in Tulsa, Indian Territory, on November 14, 1906. The Conference was no longer one of Indian missions so the name was changed to Oklahoma Annual Conference. The name of the paper it published had been changed from "Our Brother in Red" to "The Indian Methodist" in 1891. As this change in names would indicate, the period of transition was over and the mission work had become church work.⁶⁰

In 1908 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church erected three presbyteries from Indian Presbytery and separated them from the Synod of Texas to form the new Synod of Oklahoma. The first meeting was held at Durant on October 7, 1908. At this time there were thirty-six ministers, one hundred sixty-one elders and one thousand nine hundred seventy-four members. The Synod engaged in home mission work under the direction of Reverend W. T. Mathews.⁶¹

Both the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches continued their educational work by establishing colleges but they were no longer mission schools.

George Beck, School Supervisor for the Chickasaw Nation, spoke of the value of the early mission schools when he stated:

⁵⁹Sister Mary Kehoe, *op. cit.*, 83.

⁶⁰Babcock and Bryce, *op. cit.*, 296ff.

⁶¹Hails, *op. cit.*, 22ff.

The Mission schools . . . left a very strong impression for good upon those who attended them, and it is not uncommon to hear men of middle age and past eulogize them in high terms on account of the personal character and qualifications of those in charge of them, and of the superior instruction and training which they afforded.⁶²

In 1906 there were five thousand six hundred fifty-nine Chickasaws by blood, six hundred forty-five by intermarriage, and four thousand six hundred sixty-two freedmen. As a nation they could no longer be referred to as a tribe. "The absorption of these people into the white communities in which they live has proceeded rapidly and will soon be complete."⁶³

Many of the native churches are entirely self-supporting but some are still receiving aid. The average membership is nineteen and in a number of churches services are held only once a month.⁶⁴ Neglect is the greatest handicap of the Protestant churches in their Indian work. The example and help of the white members is needed by the Indian convert. The ministry should be educated and willing to co-operate with the religious denominations. There must be a willingness to allow the Indians to assume authority in their churches. Bishop Burleson says, "We have hesitated to give responsibility. We have felt the white man must hold things in his own hand. We have not been willing to trust God with the souls of other people."⁶⁵

In spite of the shortcomings of individuals and the limitations of sectarianism, the missionaries brought civilization, education, and

⁶² Murial H. Wright, "Wapanucka Academy, Chickasaw Nation," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXII (December, 1934), 426.

⁶³ G. E. Lindquist, The Red Man in the United States, 152.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 164f.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 393f.

religion to the Chickasaws. They endured the hardships of frontier life in order to teach the Indians about Jesus. Often without pay they continued their work with no hope of reward except the winning of souls for Christ. They not only taught the Indians by words but by living their religion every day.

The Chickasaws were influenced by the words and lives of the missionaries and any list of the prominent men of the nation would be made up largely of those who had been educated under the guidance of these faithful servants of God.

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