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“CAPTURE THESE INDIANS FOR THE LORD”: INDIAN CHURCHES AND THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH SOUTH IN OKLAHOMA, 1865-1939

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“CAPTURE THESE INDIANS FOR THE LORD”: INDIAN CHURCHES AND THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH SOUTH IN OKLAHOMA, 1865-1939

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

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Introduction

In the fall of 1907, Oooalah Pyle wrote a letter to the Christian Advocate, the national newspaper for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) that was based out of Nashville, Tennessee. As many other preachers in the Southern Methodist church did during that era, Pyle sent to the newspaper his own personal report on the just-finished annual meeting held by Oklahoma's Southern Methodist churches, and he wanted to provide his own perspective on the work of the MECS. The particular event that Pyle referenced was historically significant for the region's Southern Methodists for a couple of reasons. For one, it was the inaugural gathering of the MECS's newly-created Oklahoma Conference. Southern Methodism had been active in the territory for decades, but since 1844 the National Church's work was under the administration of the Indian Mission Conference (IMC). The shift from the IMC to the Oklahoma Conference signified the changing status of Southern Methodism as more and more whites assumed control over the work. Second, the meeting came just weeks before Oklahoma entered the Union as the forty-sixth state. During this time, the region quickly lost its status as an outpost of mainstream culture as both the nation and the Church absorbed the Twin Territories of Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory into the national fabric.

Pyle was one of the Oklahoma Conference's many Indian preachers in 1907, with most of his own work concentrated among his fellow Creek Indians in the area around Okmulgee. The participation of native ministers in the

Church's work excited Pyle, and he reported to the Christian Advocate that at the recent Oklahoma Conference annual meeting nearly one-fifth of all of the preachers in attendance were Indians. Even though these ministers did not fit the profile of mainstream Southern Methodist ministers, Pyle did not doubt their commitment to Christianity. "[S]ome of them [are] full-bloods unable to speak English," Pyle wrote, but "whose lives are devoted to bringing the bread of Eternal life to their people."[1]

As he expressed in the rest of his letter, Pyle's biggest concern for the National Church's work was Chitto Harjo's movement among the full-blood Creeks. Harjo had rallied many full-blood Creeks, estimated by Pyle at nearly three thousand, in opposition to the pressures of assimilation into white society. Though Harjo advocated several ways of resisting assimilation such as the rejection of individual allotments, Pyle was particularly worried about Harjo's promotion of traditional native beliefs and his opposition to the work of missionaries and the Church in converting Indians to Christianity. To make sure his largely white readership understood the problems caused by Harjo and the full-bloods in Oklahoma, Pyle made two Biblical analogies to explain the situation within a Christian context. He noted that Harjo's movement was like the followers of Baal in I Kings, chapter 18, because these full-bloods promoted another religion against God much as the ancient Israelites had done. The trouble created a situation for Southern Methodist ministers, Pyle wrote as he moved on to his second analogy, similar to the one faced by

[1] "Letter to the Editor of the Christian Advocate 1907," Photographs, History of Missions Project, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

Moses and Aaron in the Book of Genesis when they encountered the Pharaoh's priests. "The Creek country is likely to be the scene of the last conflict between the powers of light and the powers of darkness, between paganism and Christianity, between the false and the true," Pyle told his Southern Methodist readers. [2]

Pyle's comments, which framed Creek country as the front lines for Christian forces in its centuries-old battle against heathenism, revealed much about American Indians' status in a larger Christian society. By referring to the situation occurring in Creek country in Biblical terms, Pyle appealed to like-minded Christians who understood the missionary aspects of their religion or, more specifically, of Southern Methodism. The difficulties faced by Christians in Oklahoma was not that different from the Israelites of the Old Testament – a comparison that Southern Methodists across the country could understand and a position reinforced from the pulpit on many Sundays. For much of the Southern Methodist public, Pyle represented the "civilizing" aspects of their faith for Indian peoples, as evidence by his Christian testimonial written in English and published in a national newspaper.

Pyle's comments also revealed another aspect of Christianity in American Indian lives. Even at the time of statehood for Oklahoma in 1907, a large minority of the region's Southern Methodist preachers was native; some of them, as Pyle stated, were "full-bloods unable to speak English" but who were as dedicated to spreading the Christian message to their fellow Indians

[2] "Letter to the Editor of the Christian Advocate 1907," Photographs, History of Missions Project, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

as whites were in their own communities.[3] After more than three-quarters of century of Methodist missions among the Indians in the region, pockets of Christian Indians who eschewed other forms of assimilation and clung to elements of their own Indian cultures still existed in Oklahoma. The reality of these communities stood in stark contrast to the "civilizing" aspects of Christianity that many non-Indian Christians and the government's assimilationist agenda promoted.

This dissertation examines the development of Christian Indian communities from the post-Civil War decades and into the twentieth-century, as well as the influence exerted by Indians themselves in the missionization process. While many white Christians assumed that they were bringing "civilization" to Indian communities during this assimilationist period and were therefore responsible for "uplifting" Indians to white standards, in reality Indians used Christianity for their own needs and on their own terms. At times, they forced missionaries and national church officials to bend to their needs, which some white individuals were more willing to accept as a necessary concession in order for missionary work to be successful. While white missionaries dominated the official administration of missions, it was their native helpers who were most responsible for introducing Christianity into Indian communities through their work as preachers, laypeople, and translators.

[3] "Letter to the Editor of the Christian Advocate 1907," Photographs, History of Missions Project, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

By accepting this religion on their own terms, instead of through the will or dictates of missionaries, Indian communities created a distinct form of Christianity that left whites conflicted. On the one hand, Indian churches resembled mainstream Christianity in basic form and practice, albeit in an imperfect way. Indian congregants held regular meetings with assigned ministers (in many cases, native individuals) who preached similar theological points as in the mainstream churches that most white missionaries were familiar with from their own experiences. Because mainstream churches saw Indian congregations as "Christian" in function and purpose, they did not challenge their existence in a larger, white-dominated society.

On the other hand, the influence of a distinctly native viewpoint that whites could not or would not understand left missionaries on the outside of Indian life. Thus alienated, missionaries directed their efforts toward the growing white settlements in the region. Indians infused this new religion with elements from their own culture that in time helped to differentiate Indian churches from the mainstream. Christianity became an avenue for Indians to legitimize their own spiritual outlook in the eyes of white society, while also providing a third alternative to outright assimilation or continued resistance to mainstream American life. These Christian communities allowed Indians to tap into the resources of white-dominated organizations through the common threads of Christianity and missionary outreach, but native ministers and members established churches and practices that served their own spiritual needs and were firmly "Indian" in appearance. This distinct Indian Christianity

was significant because their churches provided a buffer zone for Indians feeling the pressures of encroaching white neighbors and a dwindling land base. Churches became outlets for traditional customs and native leaders, who might then take advantage of being a part of a larger church body to benefit their own communities. Native churches and congregations became a distinct space surrounded by a larger white community, both literally and metaphorically, as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth century.

Explaining the influence that Christian Indians had on the missionization process requires a more complete understanding of individual denominational issues affecting missions and churches. Placing missionary work under the larger rubric of "Christianity" ignores the differences in theology, culture, and organization of the various denominations in the United States. While it is important to break down native communities into smaller segments of tribes or nations to avoid the monolithic or essentialized idea of "Indians," which then assumes a commonality that may or may not exist, it is equally important to discern the denominational differences among the churches and avoid the larger monolithic terms of "Christian" or "Protestant." Church members, both white and Indian, were keenly aware of the differences between the various denominations and often highlighted the inadequacies of their fellow Christians in order to establish their own doctrine's dominance. With Christianity playing an important role in the developing of the American West for white migration in the nineteenth

century, denominations wanted to establish their preeminence in a region as a sign of their superiority. Indian missions were vital to this larger process because they often became the foundations for later work among white communities. Furthermore, denominations at times created or amplified internal divisions that existed within Indian communities. A larger approach that discusses "Christian missionaries" overlooks that nuances of American religion and Indian culture.

In this study, theological beliefs and organizational structure serve as avenues of study to illustrate two obvious forms of denominational differences. Focusing on one specific denomination, the Methodist Episcopal Church South (more commonly known as the Southern Methodist Church), provides better analysis as to how exactly Indian converts adapted to a larger national organization. The fact that Southern Methodists concentrated their Indian missions on native communities in Indian Territory/Oklahoma amplifies this approach.

The roots of American Methodism extend back to the early-eighteenth century and the work of John Wesley in England. Originally founded as a reform movement within the Church of England, Methodism grew in the 1700s and spread throughout the American colonies during the First Great Awakening, in part, from the work of the renowned revivalist George Whitefield. In the subsequent years, Wesley and Whitefield differed on theological issues as Whitefield followed a Calvinistic-interpretation of Christianity, while Wesley adopted the teachings of the Dutch theologian

Jacobus Arminius. Unlike the determinism inherent in the Calvinist theology shared by other Protestant churches like the Presbyterian and later Baptist churches, Arminianism said that an individual had free will to both follow and reject Christ. Anyone could achieve salvation through their faith, and not through works, a belief in opposition to the idea of a pre-determined "elect" taught by Calvinist theologians. With salvation much more tenuous and not insured, an individual's later sins could, literally, damn them to hell.[4]

Wesley infused his Arminian beliefs with a strong sense of social justice and his ministry was notable for its interest in all classes of English society. Individuals "connected" themselves to their fellow Christians through the work of classes, group meetings, or lay people (including women), and not solely though the efforts of an established class of ministers. In turn, Methodist congregations varied in style with some adopting High Church services and others using Low Church customs. By the time of the American Revolution in the 1770s, a loosely-organized Methodism based on the work of itinerant ministers existed in many colonies. Wesley recognized that the war and ensuing independence movement had split the efforts of American Methodists from the main body in England and, as a result, he relented to the creation of a separate Methodist church for the United States in 1784. This newly organized church then developed under the auspices of Francis Asbury.[5]

[4] Frederick A. Norwood, The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodists and Their Relations (Nashville, Tn.: Abingdon Press, 1974), 31-41.
[5] Norwood, The Story of American Methodism, 38-41, 70-76, 95-102.

Asbury was a powerful figure for early American Methodism and, along with Thomas Coke, became a national church bishop to oversee and guide the denomination, a point of church polity that Wesley had avoided in England. This decision created a fundamental issue for mainstream American Methodism: the tension between an autocratic episcopacy led by elite bishops versus the democratic underpinnings of individual congregations that gave autonomy to common members. Eventually, the debate led to the first major division in American Methodism when a small faction broke off in 1828 and founded the Methodist Protestant Church.[6] Meanwhile, mainstream Methodism exploded throughout the country following the Second Great Awakening. Its use of itinerant preachers allowed the church to reach areas in the American hinterland previously ignored by more established denominations, and its future grew alongside the moving of the frontier west. But this growth also came during an era when the issue of slavery bitterly divided the country. Southerners feared that the church would insert itself into the slavery debate, which many abolitionist Northern congregations were eager to do. As a result, Southern members officially broke off from the rest of the church in 1844 and, the following year, organized the new Southern Methodist Church.[7]

These sectional attitudes, especially in the generation before and after the Civil War, greatly influenced theological issues. Southern Methodists, as with several other denominations like the southern-dominated branches of the

[6] Norwood, The Story of American Methodism, 175-189.
[7] Norwood, The Story of American Methodism, 185-209.

Presbyterian and Baptist churches, had defined slavery in Biblical terms and tolerated it as a part of its culture. This decision put southern-leaning congregations at odds with many northern churches and missionaries. Sectional attitudes added an extra layer of animosity, for instance, on the Protestant missions among the Cherokee in Indian Territory, where northerners like the Baptist Evan Jones or the Presbyterian Samuel Worcester competed with Southern Methodists for souls in a Cherokee society that became increasingly divided along the lines of slavery. With this lingering resentment between Northerners and Southerners from the Civil War era extending into the twentieth century, sectional attitudes colored many missionaries' views of other denominations and the significance of their own work.

Of equal importance to theological differences were the differences in organization and structure among the Churches. While theological issues often boil down to issues of faith and belief, and with primary evidence from the hereafter difficult to locate in order to learn which denomination chose wisely, organizational differences are easier to analyze. The various denominations in the United States had different bureaucratic structures to oversee mission efforts at a national, regional, or congregational level, with some organizations exerting a greater authority and direction over its membership than others. These differences could affect every decision made by a Church, from how to license and replace individual ministers to how to raise and spend missionary funds. Christian Indians identified ways that their

particular denomination, perhaps inadvertently or out of indifference, provided them with autonomy and authority over their own churches through avenues of hierarchy and structure. The fact that Christian Indians created their own space within a larger Christian community was typically related to the ways that they utilized denominational organization to their own benefit.

One central organizational difference of prime importance among various denominations, particularly when making comparisons at the local level, was the difference between Churches with a connectional-form of government and those with a congregational-form of government. Unlike Baptist churches, for example, where the emphasis was on the local congregation and authority was derived from that body, Southern Methodism adhered to a connectional Church that placed authority over a region in the form of a "Conference." This distinction decentralized the power of the National Church and created an arrangement whereby pastors were beholden to their local conference authority rather than to an individual congregation. Methodism's practice of circuit riding and yearly appointments complete with time limits ensured that the denomination could reach out to a Conference's hinterlands. It also required that preachers rotate through various congregations over the course of their careers rather than establish themselves within one community. As the old Methodist saying went, "if you have a good preacher, then let someone else have him. And if you have a bad preacher, then let someone else have him." This system also cut down

on issues of heterodoxy or too much congregational independence from the conference establishment while also eliminating issues of complacency.

Southern Methodist Indian churches operated in a slightly different sphere than mainstream Southern Methodist congregations, and they used their connectional status to a larger church body for their own benefits. Indian preachers were less likely to move out of their own communities or nations and into other Indian communities, typically because cultural or linguistic concerns made that rotation difficult. This fact was understood by both Conference officials and National Church officials. Individual Indian ministers could derive some authority, prestige, education, or other benefit from their official connection to the Southern Methodist church, local conferences, or Indian missions, and still expect to spend the majority of their career in close proximity to their own community. Though instances of Indian preachers moving across tribal lines or even into white churches did occur, it was more common that an Indian preacher moved from one church to another within his or her own tribe.

The importance between connectional and congregational structure is evident when comparing Southern Methodist Indian communities in Oklahoma with Jack Schultz's analysis of Seminole Baptists. In his monograph, The Seminole Baptist Churches of Oklahoma, Schultz identified the early-twentieth century as a period where individual Baptist churches led by Seminole pastors became "a distinct, vital, and traditional Seminole entity

within the dominant Anglo world."[8] According to Schultz, Seminole Baptist churches allowed "changes" that were "structured in culturally meaningful ways, allowing a social group to sustain its identity while being engaged in changing circumstances." [9] This was a characteristic shared by many Southern Methodist Indian churches during the time as well. By the 1930s, Southern Methodist officials and ministers, especially native leaders with more say in the National Church's newly re-established Indian Mission, called for increasing the use of native-speaking pastors and translated hymns within their churches, thereby preserving elements of their own culture in a church-related context. However, unlike Schultz's Seminole Baptist congregations, Southern Methodist Indian members accepted the help and support of white churches. Schultz argued that Seminole Baptists rejected the financial help of nearby white communities in order to maintain their autonomy and control over their own congregations. In another example of how Seminole Baptists protected their autonomy from white influence, Schultz stated that when individual Seminole congregations needed to replace a minister, they usually chose someone they knew from within the congregation regardless of education as opposed to accepting a new minister trained at Oklahoma Baptist University like mainstream white churches.

In contrast to this attitude evident among Seminole Baptists, Southern Methodist Indians might seek out the benefits that a larger white-controlled denomination provided, like financial aid or a college education, in order to

[8] Jack Schultz, The Seminole Baptist Churches of Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 3.
[9] Schultz, The Seminole Baptist Churches of Oklahoma, 4.

help their own communities. Money from outside sources helped congregations build churches and parsonages, which were vital elements for Southern Methodist circuit riders and were badly needed by the poorer Indian communities. Southern Methodist missionaries and ministers understood the importance of tapping into national sources of funding to support their work, yet the decentralization of Methodist authority to the individual conference ensured that most decisions were made at the local level where Indians could, in theory, exert greater influence. National organizations, especially in the nineteenth century, served more as funding agencies than as administrative partners. This arrangement was by no means a perfect situation, as paternalism, racism, and ignorance influenced white church leaders' decision-making, and it would be many years before Indians assumed more complete control over their own conference's affairs. Yet the story of Southern Methodist Indian communities from the post-Civil War decades and into the twentieth century is a story of a developing autonomy by Indians and how they exploited the resources of a larger church structure.

The specific focus of this study on Southern Methodism provides a more consistent approach than one including other denominations because of the relationship of Indian missions to the Southern Methodist Church. For Southern Methodism, the overwhelming amount of Indian work concentrated solely on Indian Territory/Oklahoma and was not spread throughout the nation. In the early-nineteenth century prior to its separation along sectional lines, the Methodist Church conducted Indian missions in the Ohio Valley, the

Pacific Northwest, and in the "Old Southwest." For the missions in the "Old Southwest," which included efforts among the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Indians, local conferences sent individual missionaries to minister to the Indian communities located within their boundaries. The work became more organized and better funded once the National Church created its own missionary society in 1820. During the Removal era, Methodist missionaries continued their work with the southeastern tribes as many moved west alongside their converts.

When American Methodism split along sectional lines and into its two largest branches prior to the Civil War, the majority of the Indian missions joined the Southern Methodist Church. In 1844, Methodist church officials created the Indian Mission Conference (IMC) to oversee the work among the Removed tribes west of the Mississippi.[10] A year later, the IMC joined together with other conferences in the South to organize the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Unlike their Northern brethren, Southern Methodists were linked more closely to a slave-based economy and culture, an issue that served as a sticking point in Methodism's eventual division. The IMC, which by the late-1840s had concentrated its work to the Five Civilized Tribes as they were then known as in Indian Territory, shared similar traits with other Southern conferences even though its membership was predominantly native for most of the nineteenth century. This factor made their admission into the Southern Methodist Church a natural outcome. In

[10] Initially, the IMC included a district in northern Kansas to direct its work with the Shawnee. Within a few years, this district was discontinued as a part of the IMC and the conference concentrated upon the Five Tribes and neighboring Indian communities.

1887, after more than half of a century working among the Five Tribes, the IMC sent its first missionaries into the western half of Indian Territory and to the Plains Indians. Even with this expansion to include Southern Plains Indians like the Comanche and Kiowa, the conference remained firmly committed to the Southern Methodist Church and its agenda.

Therefore, from 1844 to 1906, "Indian work" or "Indian missions" for the Southern Methodist Church meant the efforts of the IMC in Indian Territory, and the IMC's successor conferences continued this work in Oklahoma until a formal Indian Mission was reestablished in 1918. A few other Southern Methodist conferences made limited attempts into Indian communities, such as the Holston Conference's temporary mission to the eastern band of Cherokee or the Mississippi Conference's work among the Choctaw in the state, but these efforts were small and did not achieve as large of a status or permanency as the IMC did in the National Church's eyes. Invariably, when church officials wrote generically of "helping the Indian" or of "promoting Indian work," they were discussing the Church's efforts in what is now Oklahoma.

The effects of Christianity and the changing religious identity within individual Indian communities, particularly in the decades after the Civil War when the government and white society pursued a multi-pronged assimilationist agenda, is important in understanding the development of modern-day Indian congregations and Native Christianity. Scholars have

identified three primary methods of Indian assimilation that shaped federal policy during this period: education, individual land allotment, and conversion to Christianity. Though meant to "civilize" and "uplift" the general Indian population and incorporate them into white society, by the 1920s Indians were a marginalized people in the United States due to poverty, disease, a lack of resources, and a lack of skills and opportunities. This marginalization has been discussed by scholars in certain contexts, but not within the context of missionary work and Christianity. Frederick Hoxie argued in A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920 that the government's expectations of Indian assimilation changed once the nation entered the twentieth century.[11] Assimilation no longer meant the incorporation of Indians into white society as equals; instead it was a method to reinforce the established social hierarchy of white dominance by granting Indians partial membership in society. As Hoxie argued, by the early-1900s whites became pessimistic toward Indians' abilities and the belief that Indians could become equal members in white society.

What Hoxie describes in A Final Promise is essentially a one-way process whereby the federal government and its reformer cohorts implemented programs that forced Indians to react. When these programs did not produce the desired results by the early-twentieth century, whites changed their expectations of what Indians could do. In terms of Christianity, the changes during this era came from pressure exerted by Indians and

[11] Frederick E. Hoxie, A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

whites. Indians asserted autonomy through the ways they accepted and practiced Christianity and, instead, forced church officials to adapt to their needs. Church officials did become disenchanted with Indian missions, much like Hoxie believed had occurred in the larger society as a whole, but it was because the work was harder than they expected and not because they felt Indians were incapable. Tensions between Christian Indians' religious needs and white officials' desires for missions continued, as the process required concessions that each side debated whether or not to make. The segregation of Indian congregations from white congregations was a two-way process.

One of the most diverse topics in terms of historiography for the assimilationist period is the boarding school, which has come to dominate much of the literature. Several studies, such as Robert Trennert's The Phoenix Indian School: Forced Assimilation in Arizona, 1891-1935, K. Tsianina Lomawaima's They Call It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School, and Clyde Ellis's To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893-1920, have built upon Hoxie's argument by showing how government support for Indian assimilation through education declined due to a changing curriculum.[12] Indian schools, whether day schools, on-reservation boarding schools, or off-reservation boarding schools stressed domestic and manual labor skills for Indians that would provide jobs in the lower echelons of society.

[12] Robert A. Trennert, The Phoenix Indian School: Forced Assimilation in Arizona, 1891-1935 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); K. Tsianina Lomawaima, They Call It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); Clyde Ellis, To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893-1920 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

In addition to education and boarding schools, other studies have looked at issues of land allotment and the legal situation surrounding Indians during an era when tribal sovereignty was under federal and state assault. Janet McDonnell demonstrated in The Dispossession of the American Indian 1887-1934 how land allotment following the Dawes Act in 1887 eroded the Indian land base in the West, while William T. Hagan looked more specifically at the Jerome Commission's efforts to allot the Indians of Oklahoma in his Taking Indian Lands: The Cherokee (Jerome) Commission 1889-1893.[13] Blue Clark's Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock: Treaty Rights and Indian Law at the End of the Nineteenth Century showed the changes of allotment within an individual community perspective and its impact on the broader issue of Indian legal rights.[14] More recently, Clara Sue Kidwell and Andrew Denson, writing separately about the Choctaw and Cherokee respectively, have discussed efforts by those groups in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to assert a national identity in the context of a complicated and evolving legal relationship with the United States as a whole.[15]

In these studies on education, allotment, and legal issues, Christianity and Christian teachings are never far removed from the discussion; however, these issues do not make up a central component of analysis. Kidwell's The

[13] Janet McDonnell, The Dispossession of the American Indian 1887-1934 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); William T. Hagan, Taking Indian Lands: The Cherokee (Jerome) Commission 1889-1893 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).
[14] Blue Clark, Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock: Treaty Rights and Indian Law at the End of the Nineteenth Century (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).
[15] Clara Sue Kidwell, The Choctaws in Oklahoma: From Tribe to Nation, 1855-1970 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); Andrew Denson, Demanding the Cherokee Nation: Indian Autonomy and American Culture, 1830-1900 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

Choctaws in Oklahoma: From Tribe to Nation, 1855-1970, for instance, does discuss the roles of Cyrus Kingsbury, the Presbyterians, and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in the slavery debate in Choctaw society prior to the Civil War, though this point is a minor element of her overall thesis. When discussing Christianity, Kidwell focuses on the political battle waged between a northern religious organization and a slave-holding people and the difficulty that missionaries had conducting their work while caught in the middle of this argument. The dynamics of the church or of a denomination, and Indians' relationship with Christianity, is of limited concern to Kidwell's larger thesis.[16]

What these studies did not address more explicitly was how the third major method of assimilation, conversion to Christianity, changed from the post-Civil War decades and into the twentieth century. This exclusion from the literature is due in part to the work of scholars such as Francis Paul Prucha (American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900) and Robert Keller (American Protestantism and United States Indian Policy, 1869-1882) who identified the end of Grant's Peace Policy in 1882 as the end of Protestant missionary work among Indians in general.[17] Churches, they argued, became more concerned with the promise held by foreign fields such as Asia or Africa rather than the dwindling domestic concerns like Indian communities. The federal government, they continued,

[16] Kidwell, The Choctaws in Oklahoma, 30-40.
[17] Francis Paul Prucha, American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976); Robert H. Keller, American Protestantism and United States Indian Policy, 1869-1882 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

implemented policies that would bring about more tangible changes such as boarding schools and allotment. Though the close working relationship between the government and churches did end in the early-1880s, concentrated missionary efforts continued for several more decades. David W. Daily, in his study Battle for the BIA: G.E.E. Lindquist and the Missionary Crusade against John Collier, identified this perception as "the vanishing mission."[18] In Oklahoma, the Land Run of 1889 increased missionary activity, especially in the western half of Oklahoma, as Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Mennonite, and Catholic missions developed in the region, and these denominations remained influential well into the twentieth century. Since most of these missions contained schools, scholars have typically discussed them in the context of Indian education. This viewpoint is not completely inaccurate, but it does overlook the exact nature of Indian missions during this era and the role played by Christian Indians in their development.

Indians remained agents in their own religious development during this era and the Southern Methodist church became a viable avenue for this development. Whereas Prucha and Keller approach Indian missions from the larger perspective of federal policy, their discussion of changes within individual communities is negligible. As Homer Noley stated, the impact or influence that Native Christian leaders had in the missionization process has been overlooked due to this emphasis on the activities of white leaders.

[18] David W. Daily, Battle for the BIA: G.E.E. Lindquist and the Missionary Crusade against John Collier (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2004), 15.

"[A]lthough they were the true vehicle through whom the message of Christianity took root among the Native people," Noley wrote, Christian Indians "have very seldom been lifted up and given due recognition for their work."[19]

The idea of the white missionary as the focus of the work and as a heroic figure of the frontier is an enduring image that has been repeatedly challenged by scholars over the years. Extending from the early years of Herbert Bolton to Prucha's works nearly five decades later, a large portion of the historiography focused on the roles of Euro-American missionaries in the missionization process with Indian converts assuming a reactionary stance of secondary importance. Writing in 1990, William G. McLoughlin stated that "white Americans have forgotten about the peaceful heroes of the West and remember only their warriors. Perhaps in that way [white missionaries] are like the Indians."[20] McLoughlin made that statement in the introduction of his own extended study of two white Baptist missionaries, Evan Jones and his son John, who worked among the Cherokee for most of the nineteenth century.

C.L. Higham provides a more critical interpretation of missionary motivations in her work Noble, Wretched, and Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820-1900. In her comparison of nineteenth century Indian missions in the United States

[19] Homer Noley, "The Interpreters," in Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods, Jace Weaver, ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 52.
[20] William G. McLoughlin, Champions of the Cherokees: Evan and John B. Jones (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 3.

and Canada, Higham looks at how missionary societies, governments, and scholarly institutions "placed financial and political pressures on individual Protestant missionaries that shaped how these missionaries portrayed the Indians to these institutions, as well as to the literate, white Christian public."[21] Since white missionaries left the bulk of primary sources associated with Indian missions, and because her thesis revolved around the image of unconverted Indians created by these missionaries, Higham naturally focused on the missionaries' perspective and their attitudes instead of the actions of Indians.

This dissertation also adds to the historiography on Oklahoma's Indians and their history in the twentieth century. Much of the discussion concerning the Indians of Oklahoma has a tendency to end with Oklahoma's statehood in 1907; in many ways, it leaves the false impression that since statehood brought an end to tribal sovereignty, it also brought an end to Indians in the state until their "magical" reappearance following the social turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s. This trend is especially true when approaching topics about the Five Tribes. Older works by Morris L. Wardell, Angie Debo, and Arrell M. Gibson, as well as more contemporary works by Murray R. Wickett and Jeffrey Burton, concentrate on that time period between the Removal decades of the 1830s and 1840s and Oklahoma's

[21] C.L Higham, Noble, Wretched, and Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820-1900 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 1.

eventual statehood.[22] In their selected works, these scholars look at the period when Indian society came under pressure from the growth of white migration, whether it was through political sovereignty, legal issues, or economic concerns.

Obviously, Indian culture and society did not end with Oklahoma statehood. As mentioned earlier, Christianity provided something of a distinct space for Indians to operate within even as the pressures from white society mounted, their land came under siege from greedy or opportunistic neighbors, and their culture faced an assimilationist-minded onslaught from the government and reformers. This study aims to explore that changing period when tribal sovereignty did end, but Indian society did not.

Before proceeding, it would be useful to note that terminology is problematic for discerning the divisions within the various Indian societies as well as the differences in church organizations. The inconsistent or inadequate use of certain terms in primary and secondary sources has blurred many facts and left several false impressions. For the Southern Methodist Church, the term "conference" applied to several different organizations and meetings, and the abundance of definitions for that word

[22] Morris L. Wardell, A Political History of the Cherokee Nation, 1838-1907 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938); Angie Debo, The Road to Disappearance (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941); Angie Debo, The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934); Arrell M. Gibson, The Chickasaws (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971); Murray R. Wickett, Contested Territory: Whites, Native Americans and African Americans in Oklahoma, 1865-1907 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Jeffrey Burton, Indian Territory and the United States, 1866-1906: Courts, Government, and the Movement for Oklahoma Statehood (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

might confuse those unfamiliar with Methodist structure. For the purposes of this dissertation, the use of "conference" refers primarily to the administrative body which oversaw Methodist work in a particular region. In most cases, these conferences were roughly the size of a particular state, or in places in the Deep South where membership totals were greater, a portion of a state. Conferences were the connectional organization that appointed ministers and presiding elders to circuits and districts. The National Church considered itself made up of the various conferences and gave those bodies administrative power over their local needs.

The most important activity of the conference was its annual meeting, sometimes referred to as the "annual conference." At these gatherings, the conference came together as a body to report on the activities of the Methodist church over the previous year. As a bishop from the National Church presided over the meeting, committees made their reports, church initiatives were discussed and acted upon, and ministerial appointments were made. It was the key event for a conference during the year.

Annual meetings in the late-nineteenth century were also a time of anxiousness and change for many IMC members. Sidney Babcock and John Y. Bryce, two Oklahoma ministers who in the 1930s wrote a history of the region's Southern Methodism and the IMC, discussed the uncertainties that surrounded ministers during a typical annual meeting. It was the IMC's custom at this time to keep all ministerial appointments private until their official announcement at the annual meeting. Typically, the Bishop consulted

with his Presiding Elders in making pastoral appointments for the following year, though the Bishop retained the authority to completely disregard their recommendations if he so desired. With this council of the Bishop and Presiding Elders keeping their decisions a secret and the possibility of their choices being made at the last moment, it was difficult for ministers to predict their future assignments. As Babcock and Bryce stated, "no preacher, when he went to the Conference, knew what would befall him."[23]

In addition to the term "conference" applying to an organizational body, it had other uses applying to a wide range of meetings from the local level all the way to the national stage. On a smaller scale, Quarterly Conferences and District Conferences reported the details of the work in local communities and on the various circuits, and these meetings were typically held several times a year. Presiding Elders or senior ministers usually directed these events, and the authority of these meetings applied to individual churches, circuits, or districts. Important decisions were made during these meetings, but they lacked the larger importance of the annual meeting.

In contrast, the General Conference was a nationwide church meeting held every four years. Delegates from the individual conferences met with National Church officials, including the College of Bishops, to discuss the rules and regulations of Southern Methodism. The major decisions that would affect Southern Methodism, which included everything from confronting theological issues in society to the creation and direction of national

[23] Sidney H. Babcock and John Y. Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma: Story of the Indian Mission Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (Oklahoma City: n.p., 1935), 236.

organizations like the Board of Missions, were made at the quadrennial meeting.

Along with the terminology applying to Southern Methodist institutions, another important consideration is how missionaries and ministers referred to their native congregations and members. From the perspective of the National Church, and the image of native missions that it created for its national audience, Indians were a generic construction of an indigenous people who needed the Gospel. The differences between the Plains Indians of western Oklahoma and the Five Tribes in eastern Oklahoma were glossed over, much less the differences between “full-bloods” and “mixed-bloods” most prominent within the Five Tribes.

This simplification was not true for the Indian Mission Conference and its successor conferences. Even as they worked to convert and assimilate all Indians into the national fabric, Southern Methodists in Oklahoma were well aware of the differences among all of the diverse cultures in the region and they understood the fact that individual tribes had their own set of internal conflicts and divisions. Christianity might have been the unifying element and the hope for the Indians’ future, but how missionaries were able to spread that message depended on the attitudes and customs of their native audiences.

For Southern Methodists missionaries with the Five Tribes, the perceived distinction between full-blood and mixed-blood Indians that they believed existed often shaped the direction of their work. In their eyes, and in the eyes of many other white contemporaries in the nineteenth century, the

full-blood/mixed-blood divide represented the differences between the "traditionalists" and "progressives" within Indian society and was not necessarily indicative of blood quantum.[24] Though the connotation in church records often equated "mixed-bloods" with the progressive or more assimilated Indian population and the term "full-blood" referred to the traditional or conservative element of Indian culture, the reality was not as simple. Indeed, John Ross, a Cherokee chief with only one-eighth Indian blood, represented the full-blood faction among the Cherokee for much of the mid-nineteenth century, while his rival, the full-blooded Major Ridge, signed the Removal Treaty alongside other prominent leaders of the mixed-blood Cherokee elites.[25]

When using the terms "mixed-bloods" and "full-bloods," conference officials spoke directly to the difficulty of conducting their work in native communities. "It takes a WE to preach to full bloods when a white preacher is in it," a Southern Methodist minister wrote in 1894 after using a translator during a visit to a Cherokee full-blood church.[26] Simply put, church officials felt that those labeled as "full-bloods" demanded more effort and money on their part, while "mixed-bloods" and white congregations required significantly less. The terminology conference officials then used when referring to

[24] Devon A. Mihesuah, Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1993), xi; Rennard Strickland, The Indians in Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 14; Denson, Demanding the Cherokee Nation, 18-19, 108-109.
[25] Strickland, The Indians in Oklahoma, 15.
[26] Our Brother in Red, May 31, 1894.

specific Indian communities, congregations, or individuals was indicative of their own outlook on assimilation and its overall success.

When Southern Methodist leaders debated the different aspects of Indian work in Oklahoma, they did so in two contexts: the full-blood/mixed-blood divide and the "savage"/"civilized" dichotomy. The full-blood/mixed-blood debate dominated church records while the conference focused primarily on the Five Tribes in the nineteenth century. When the Southern Methodists expanded their work after 1887 to include the Plains Indians, the full-blood/mixed-blood terminology did not apply in the same way even though the major underlying issues of assimilation and acculturation did. In these cases, Southern Methodists followed popular culture in classifying the differences between the "civilized" Indians among the Five Tribes and the "wild Indians" who still "clung to the blanket" in western Oklahoma.

Southern Methodist Indian missions and the ensuing work can be divided into certain historical periods, as scholars are wont to do, though not all of these periods are discussed in this dissertation. The first era covers the beginning of Methodist missions in the 1820s among the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw and continues into the gradual rebounding of the work following Indian Removal of the 1830s and 1840s. In those years, Indian missions were conducted as extensions of nearby conferences with only limited direction from larger organizational bodies. In light of this, the official creation of the Indian Mission Conference in 1844 (followed

immediately by the division of American Methodism into Northern and Southern branches) begins the second major phase which continued into the devastating years of the Civil War. During that period, Southern Methodism emerged as one of the leading denominations among the Five Tribes before facing the war's destruction much like their fellow southern brethren in the Confederacy.

Between 1866 and 1889, the IMC and National Church, once again, set about rebuilding their work among the Five Tribes in Indian Territory, this time amid an era of government-decreed Reconstruction, increasing white "boomerism," and Indian struggles for sovereignty and self-government. This era is discussed in Chapter One. In 1887, the IMC expanded its missionary work to include the Southern Plains Indians located on the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency in southwest Indian Territory. As shown in Chapter Two, the growth among the Southern Plains Indians added an additional layer of cultural diversity to an already diverse conference that it had not seen in decades. But just after the IMC expanded into a new field, the entire region underwent a drastic change following the land run in the Unassigned Lands in 1889. The period between 1889 and Oklahoma's eventual statehood in 1907, which is the subject of Chapter Three, saw the very framework of Southern Methodism in the region evolve from an Indian-dominated focus to a white-controlled denomination.

In anticipation of statehood, the IMC officially became the Oklahoma Conference in 1906 and cemented its overall change. This ushered in the

next major phase for Southern Methodist Indians and is discussed in Chapter Four. Indian missions dropped to their lowest ebb during this period as the Oklahoma Conference shifted Indian congregations to the side and questioned their usefulness. Recognizing that the work was failing, the National Church organized a new Indian Mission to administer its work in 1918, as covered in Chapter Five. From 1918 until 1939, the Indian Mission concentrated on renewing its work among the Five Tribes (though the Cherokee work would ultimately disappear) and the Kiowa and Comanche in southwest Oklahoma.

The reunification of the Northern and Southern branches of Methodism in 1939 serves as an end point for this dissertation because Oklahoma's Methodist Indian communities grew to include the work formerly conducted by the Northern Methodist Church. Though much smaller in scope than the Southern Methodist Church's work, Northern Methodists also conducted Indian missions in the area, most notably among the Ponca in the north-central part of the state. When the two branches merged, the introduction of the Ponca mission shifted the nature of the work and signaled a new phase for Methodist Indian congregations. Yet, for more than thirty years of growth among Oklahoma's diverse Indian communities, the Indian Mission remained hindered by a secondary administration status within the National Church. The most current era in the region's Methodist Indian communities began in 1972 when the United Methodist Church (itself a new organization formed with the merger of the Methodist Church with smaller denominations in 1968)

formally established the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC), whereby it elevated its Indian efforts to the level of a conference as it had been a century earlier. In addition to its increased standing in the larger United Methodist Church, this period also saw the highest position within the conference, Conference Superintendent, move from being occupied by white officials as in earlier years to Indian ministers who had spent their career working in the OIMC.

Chapter One – Rebuilding the Mission:

Efforts among the Five Tribes, 1866 to 1889

Much like it did with the rest of Indian Territory, the Civil War had a devastating effect on the Indian Mission Conference. With its churches destroyed, white missionaries and conference leadership recalled to other states or traveling with military units, funding from national sources suspended, and Indian congregations scattered from Kansas to Texas and points beyond, the postwar period was a time for rebuilding for the IMC. The immediate concerns focused on re-forming its circuits and districts, which were in desperate need of support, and re-establishing its mission work among the Five Tribes to the same level that existed prior to the war.

To recoup their spiritual losses and enlarge the work, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South turned to the same method of missionary work it had employed since the 1820s. This method involved placing their predominantly- Southern white missionaries in most positions of authority in the conference while relying heavily upon native converts as translators and local preachers. Southern Methodists had two distinct qualities to their mission work that set them apart from many other denominations in Indian Territory. Along with the Northern Baptists, they were quick to incorporate native converts into the ministry from the start, ensuring native input and a reliance on Indian helpers. In addition, the IMC eschewed the use of mission facilities as the centerpieces of the work. This method, as exemplified by Samuel Worcester and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign

Missions, was more expensive due to building and labor costs and it also created more dependency on national sources for support. Instead, the IMC relied upon establishing more localized preaching places for its congregations and using Indian boarding schools contracted from the Five Tribes. Avoiding expensive mission stations allowed for greater access into smaller or more isolated Indian communities over a wider region and allowed the IMC more autonomy over the work within its borders, while using Indian-controlled boarding schools ensured contact with a younger generation of Indians. The emphasis on targeted mission efforts worked for the IMC. Once the work rebounded after Removal in the 1830s and 1840s, and once the National Church officially organized the Indian Mission Conference in 1844, Methodism in Indian Territory moved to the forefront of the region's denominations. In the decades before and after the Civil War, the IMC claimed such notable native leaders as John Ross, Samuel Checote, and Greenwood Leflore as members, which the conference used as evidence of its influence among the Five Tribes and its preeminence in the territory.[1]

The IMC's initial style of mission work among the Five Tribes mirrored the techniques that contributed to Methodism's overall growth in the United States in the nineteenth century. Circuit riders, whose education varied from person to person, traveled across the countryside and into rural areas in order to reach a population spread out over many miles. But the demands of Indian Territory, with its diverse native cultures and languages as well as lower level

[1] Sidney H. Babcock and John Y. Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma: Story of the Indian Mission Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Oklahoma City: n.p., 1935), 23-24.

of pay for ministers, differentiated the IMC from other Southern Methodist conferences and showed the divide between the IMC and the rest of the National Church. Indian preachers filled that gap. While many white ministers might receive the plum appointments each year, Indian ministers carried out the day-to-day needs of the church's work. As translators, they literally and metaphorically interpreted the Christian message for potential converts. As local preachers, they attended to the congregation's needs regularly and in between the infrequent visits of the preacher in charge. As circuit riders themselves, they traveled the countryside on foot or horseback to reach small, isolated churches that might be able to pay only in food.

The combination of tried-but-true Methodist techniques complemented by native helpers worked for the IMC in Indian Territory at least as long as it remained focused on Indian missions. The post-Civil War decades saw the IMC regain its status among several tribes in the territory and its membership increased from 570 in 1866 to 8781 in 1888.[2] Indian ministers spread Southern Methodism and established churches that catered to Indian needs or provided an alternative course to assimilationist pressures. But language and cultural issues directly rooted these churches in the individual Indian community where they were located, whether Cherokee, Creek, or Choctaw, rather than in the customs of the larger Southern Methodist church and mainstream society. These communities did not completely replace their

[2] Francis M. Moore, A Brief History of the Missionary Work in the Indian Territory of the Indian Mission Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Muskogee, Indian Territory: Phoenix Printing Co., 1899), 60; Forty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1889), 23.

Indian culture with Southern Methodist customs like many white ministers wanted them to do. Furthermore, building new church facilities or operating boarding schools could not be done without the consent and oversight of national councils, which placed the IMC in a subordinate position to Indian governments where they depended on Indian approval and oversight. Some white missionaries accepted this fact as a reality of mission work in the region, while others, in time, viewed it as a sign of the conference's backwardness and inability to integrate into the larger American framework. For their part, Indian congregations pursued their own course toward Christianity and Methodism that they thought would best help their communities irrespective of the demands or expectations of the National Church.

In the long term, the reliance on Indian ministers and on strictly Indian congregations moved the IMC further from the goals and makeup of the larger Southern Methodist Church. By the 1880s, the demographics of the conference had changed and its white membership increased from 86 in 1855 to 4173 in 1889.[3] White members assumed a greater influence over the IMC's affairs and wanted it to resemble other Southern Methodist conferences in the American South more closely. These new members chafed at the label of a "mission" conference and ratcheted up the pressure of Indian assimilation in order to legitimize their own relationship with the larger

[3] "12th Session of the Indian Mission Conference, Asbury Manual Labor School, Creek Nation, October 10, 1855," Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877," Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK; "44th Session of the Indian Mission Conference, Atoka, Indian Territory, October 2, 1889," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.

National Church. The period between 1865 and 1889 was an era of re-growth and retrenchment of previous efforts for the IMC, but it also signaled the beginning of a conflict between its overt goal of Indian missions and the desire for mainstream acceptance by its white leadership and growing white membership. It was a period of a developing separation between white and Indian congregations.

Prior to the beginning of the Civil War, the Southern Methodist Church was one of the largest denominations in Indian Territory, and the IMC claimed over 3000 members among the Five Tribes by 1860. In the Cherokee Nation, only Evan Jones's work for the Northern Baptists equaled the Southern Methodists as the largest Christian presence.[4] The IMC's growth in the 1840s and 1850s had not been easy due to political and cultural disputes evident within the individual tribes. The controversial issue of Indian Removal, in which missionaries had been actively involved on both sides, bitterly divided tribes as they resettled in Indian Territory. Among the Cherokee, conflicts between John Ross's full-blood supporters and members of the "Treaty Party" who had negotiated removal in the Treaty of New Echota in 1835 led to hostilities and assassinations before the two sides signed an uneasy truce in 1846. Similar issues existed among the Creek and Choctaw, for example,

[4] "17th Session of the Indian Mission Conference, Riley's Chapel, Cherokee Nation, November 1, 1860," Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877," Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.; William G. McLoughlin, Champions of the Cherokees: Evan and John B. Jones (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 278; William G. McLoughlin, After the Trail of Tears: The Cherokees' Struggle for Sovereignty, 1839-1880 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 38.

where the removal debate revealed different attitudes between full-blood communities and mixed-blood communities within each tribe.

In the midst of these larger political conflicts, missionaries tried to introduce Christianity to communities already steeped in their own religious ceremonies and with their own spiritual outlook. Missionaries saw only the absence of Christianity in Indian society and recognized native practices as nothing but various forms of heathenism and paganism. From the perspective of Indian communities among the Five Tribes, however, spirituality coursed through their daily lives and was most evident during the practice of ceremonial acts, which could range from daily to seasonal and from incorporating the entire community to being limited to smaller units of clans and individuals.[5] Creek Indians, for instance, based their communities around sacred camp fires and met regularly at stomp grounds.[6] During the Green Corn festival, a ceremony that celebrated the harvest and was held in the late summer by the former southeastern tribes, men and women came together and, over the period of days, performed several dances and other rituals in thanksgiving that renewed relationships within the community.[7]

In this spiritual climate, missionaries like those from the Southern Methodist Church wanted to restructure Indians' religious thinking by introducing concepts that were, at times, quite foreign to their traditional

[5] Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, and George E. Tinker, A Native American Theology (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001), 12.
[6] Pamela Innes, "Creek in the West," in Handbook of North American Indians, Vol 14, Southeast edited by William C. Sturtevant, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2004), 400-403; John James Collins, Native American Religions: A Geographical Study (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 329-331.
[7] Collins, Native American Religions, 334-335; Kidwell, et al, A Native American Theology, 19.

beliefs. This could range from ideas of an omnipotent Christian God and Jesus Christ, to more abstract beliefs like the impact of sin on a person's life. From a native perspective, traditional customs like renewal ceremonies or dances reinforced an individual's connection to power, which was the central component to their religious beliefs. Missionaries struggled to reorient Indian cultures and focus on a belief system built upon giving complete power to a singular, omnipresent deity.[8]

Southern Methodist mission work in Indian Territory faced additional obstacles grounded in the political and social affairs of the United States. As a southern denomination whose roots extended into the sectional controversy of the 1830s and 1840s, the Southern Methodist Church was closely aligned with the issue of slavery, particularly in eyes of northern observers. Writing to his mission board in 1856, Jones complained bitterly of the IMC's pro-slavery stance. "The Methodists en masse go for slavery," he stated. "They admit slaveholders and make capital out of the fact that the Presbyterians speak against slavery and the Baptists have cut off all connection with it."[9] Jones's assessment of the IMC's loyalties was not far off the mark since several of its members were slave-owning mixed-blood Indians and many ministers and members later joined the Confederate army. As long as Indian Territory remained under Confederate control during the war, which occurred once Union troops pulled out of the area and each of the Five Tribes signed

[8] Kidwell, et al, A Native American Theology, 100-101, 107.
[9] Quoted in McLoughlin, Champions of the Cherokees, 353.

treaties of alliance with the Confederacy in 1861, then the IMC could continue its work with little disruption.[10]

This advantage changed once Northern Forces invaded both Indian Territory and parts of the South. Back east, federal troops commandeered the Southern Methodist Church's Publishing House in Nashville, Tennessee, which also housed the headquarters for the its Board of Missions. As a mission conference, the IMC relied heavily upon national appropriations to finance its work and the loss of the Board of Missions cut this funding off at the source.[11]

The Union presence in Indian Territory and the ensuing chaos was even more devastating for the IMC. Church officials wrote that the war "made terrible havoc of our little Conference. Districts, circuits, societies, and schools, were all annihilated."[12] The IMC's Doaksville Circuit located in the Choctaw Nation reported that due to the war "the Church has suffered greatly, many have died & removed."[13] In Creek country, the superintendent of the conference's boarding school blamed marauding Cherokee for most of the destruction and loss of property at the school.[14] The IMC scheduled its 1862 annual meeting at Fort Gibson for the autumn, but in the interim the fort fell to federal troops and the proceedings were cancelled. Conference officials reported later that they cancelled subsequent meetings in the following years

[10] Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 138-139.
[11] Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 142.
[12] Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1871), 32.
[13] "Minutes, Choctaw Circuit Quarterly Conference, 1836-1888," Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[14] Report on Indian Affairs by the Acting Commissioner for the Year 1867 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1868), 329-330.

at the district and territorial level because Union forces had “gotten possession of our Indian Territory.”[15] The lack of Southern Methodist ministers and the return of federal troops emboldened northern denominations to enlarge their work at the IMC’s expense, and church historians even claimed that other, unnamed missionaries encouraged Indian attacks against known conference members during the war.[16]

At the Eastman Schoolhouse in the Chickasaw Nation in the fall of 1864, the IMC held its first annual conference since the beginning of the Civil War, and the war’s effects on the IMC were obvious. The IMC reported that "some of the preachers …have been driven from their homes and work,” and that others were “within the Federal lines, and consequently their condition is not known.”[17] Furthermore, it continued, "[m]ore than three fourths of our Territory is now in a desolated state, from the ravages of war."[18] Only eight members attended the annual conference in the Chickasaw Nation that year. With no Bishop present "nor no communication from one,”[19] Thomas Bertholf, a white missionary who had intermarried into the Riley family of the “Long-

[15] “19th Session of the Indian Mission Conference, Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877,” Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[16] Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 138-139.
[17] “19th Session of the Indian Mission Conference, Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877,” Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[18] “19th Session of the Indian Mission Conference, Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877,” Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[19] “19th Session of the Indian Mission Conference, Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877,” Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.

Hair clan" of the Cherokee Nation, presided over the meeting.[20] Later, the IMC told the Board of Missions that during these difficult years, "the name of the Conference was about all we had to boast of."[21]

It was not until 1866 that the IMC was able to reconnect with the National Church and resume normal operations, albeit in a way severely handicapped with uncertainty. That year the annual conference met at Bloomfield Academy in the Chickasaw Nation, and for the first time since before the Civil War, a Bishop attended. Bishop Enoch M. Marvin's presence meant that the IMC could return to its regular relationship with mainstream Southern Methodist society and receive direction and support from the National Church. But Bishop Marvin's attendance did not solve the immediate problem of funding as the poor economic state of the National Church membership in general cut appropriations from the Board of Missions.[22] With only seven members attending the meeting at Bloomfield Academy, and with the IMC's churches just starting to rebuild following the war's destruction, the chances that the conference could fund its own work without outside assistance were nil.[23] Fortunately for the IMC, Bishop Marvin personally promised $5000 to keep the conference alive, money which he

[20] "19th Session of the Indian Mission Conference, Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877," Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK; "A Historical Sketch of Our Work in Oklahoma," Ruth Brewer Stith Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; John Y. Bryce, "Beginning of Methodism in Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, 7 (Dec 1929): 478; "Letter from W.H. Balentine, Sr., April 12, 1932," Folder 37 UMC Riley's Chapel, Cherokee County, Box 46, Hobart Ragland Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[21] Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1871), 32.
[22] Hunter Dickinson Farish, The Circuit Rider Dismounts: A Social History of Southern Methodism 1865-1900 (Richmond, Va.: The Dietz Press, 1938), 27-31.
[23] "A Historical Sketch of Our Work in Oklahoma," Ruth Brewer Stith Collection, WHC, OU

earned mostly from fees generated through the sale of his pamphlets, periodicals, and books.[24] This act earned Marvin the appreciation of many within the IMC, who referred to him as "the savior of the Indian Mission Conference."[25] "No man could have treated our little band with more courtesy and Christian affection," John Harrell wrote of the Bishop, and Harrell greatly admired Marvin's help for the IMC's preachers, "all of whom at that time were in great want."[26]

As superintendent of the Indian Mission Conference as well as superintendent of several Southern Methodist-run Indian boarding schools in the region, John Harrell was directly involved in much of the IMC's work in Indian Territory in the mid-nineteenth century in addition to serving as its main representative with the National Church. He embodied the attitudes that many white missionaries from the South carried toward their mission work among the Five Tribes. Originally from the Arkansas Conference, Harrell officially transferred to the IMC in 1850 though he had worked in the territory since the 1830s as a missionary to the Cherokee in the Flint District.[27] Overall, Harrell served the Indians in the IMC for nearly half a century until he collapsed in mid-sermon and died in Vinita in 1876.[28] During his lifetime, he was a staunch supporter of the Southern Methodist church, having been present at the Louisville Conference in 1845 that officially organized the

[24] Missionary Voice, April 1911.
[25] Our Brother in Red, Sept 1883
[26] 1871 Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 32
[27] "History of Stillwell Methodist Church," Folder 10 UMC Stillwell, Hobart Ragland Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK
[28] Our Brother in Red December 17, 1887.

Southern Methodist Church and later elected by the IMC to the National Church's General Conference five times. During his career, Harrell's work included much of eastern Indian Territory with significant appointments in the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Muscogee Nations. He was also the chaplain in Stand Watie's Cherokee regiment during the Civil War.[29]

As a preacher, Harrell reflected many of the assumptions that white missionaries had toward the ability of Indian congregants to understand the Christian message. A parishioner once described Harrell's sermons as "plain, simple, direct, personal, and powerful" and "that he never told 'funny' stories, seldom quoted poetry, and was little given to anecdote."[30] This preaching method was in line with many of the eastern-educated white ministers who believed that a simple and straight-forward sermon was the most effective. Anything more complicated, they felt, could not be adequately translated for Indian congregations. This was true, for example, when missionaries' attempts to introduce the deeper idea of original sin, a fundamental concept of their faith, resulted in translated terms that diminished its meaning by referring to it as "a mistake" or "to bother someone."[31]

Harrell's communication with the National Church displayed a similar attitude about the abilities of Indian congregations, in addition to showing the secondary status that conference officials expected native ministers to assume in the IMC. As with other conference leaders, Harrell believed that

[29] George McGlumphy, "John Harrell, The Builder on the Border," Methodist Quarterly Review 78 (July 1929): 444-449; McLoughlin, After the Trail of Tears, 243.
[30] McGlumphy, "John Harrell," 445.
[31] Kidwell, et al, A Native American Theology, 101.

the IMC needed plenty of committed white ministers for the field, especially in leadership positions. "We need more white men to preach to our people – men who are willing to suffer and work for eternal rewards," Harrell wrote to the Board of Missions in 1871. He complained that the reliance on "our native brethren, who only speak the Indian tongue" limited the IMC's reach and, perhaps more important, cut it off from mainline American culture and the Southern Methodist church. Because Indian preachers "cannot read English, have no access to our Commentaries, or any books on theology," there was a fear that they did not understand Southern Methodist doctrine and were promoting a different type of Christian message. Harrell thought that trained white preachers were the only way to correct this problem and overcome the inadequacies of native ministers, "[b]ut we fear to invite such men to come and help us owing to the embarrassed condition of the treasury." [32]

Harrell's requests for white ministers underscored the direction that he thought the IMC should follow, but it also implied that Indians were influencing the direction of the conference more than white officials wanted. By asking for white missionaries, Harrell wanted to recreate a church culture similar to other southern conferences that understood "proper" theological principles. Yet the reluctance of Indian members to embrace a culture that better resembled southern conferences stymied IMC officials. No matter how much they wanted to replicate the appearance of other Southern Methodist

[32] 1871 Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 32.

conferences, IMC officials needed Indian preachers and translators because most of their members were Indian.

Besides demonstrating a preference for white ministers, Harrell's 1871 report to the Board of Missions touched directly on two of the major issues affecting the IMC's efforts in Indian Territory: money and language. Both issues further complicated the conference's work and forced the IMC to make concessions in order to reach Indian communities. As time wore on and white membership increased, these issues also came to differentiate the IMC further from the mainline Southern Methodist Chruch and other conferences. Eventually, these differences irritated IMC leaders, who instead wanted a more modern conference to stand alongside or perhaps surpass other Southern Methodist conferences as leaders in the National Church. For these men, Indian assimilation into white society raised their own status by "normalizing" their conference's relationship with the Southern Methodist Church and bringing it in-line with that of the rest of the Southern Methodist society. If its congregations became well-funded, English-speaking, and more closely resembled white churches in the South, then the IMC would stop being "one of the outposts of Southern Methodism," as Harrell referred to the conference, nearly a half-century after its beginnings.[33]

Of the two major issues, money represented the most pressing need for day-to-day operations and (at least in theory) the easiest to rectify. The issue of money also directly tethered the IMC to the National Church's

[33] 1871 Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 31.

fortunes and placed it in a subordinate position where it was dependent upon outside sources for help. Mission fields routinely required funding from larger sources, and in this case the IMC was no different than other fields. In fact, Indian missions existed before the Southern Methodist Church's other foreign fields and the IMC was only surpassed in importance later in the century when fields in Asia and South America opened up to the National Church. For much of the 1870s, the Board of Missions' annual appropriations for the IMC totaled near or more than $10,000 per year. This amount exceeded most other mission fields and was only equaled at this time by Southern Methodism's growing work in China.[34] For their part, conference officials were well aware of their reliance on the rest of the National Church for funding and other basic needs. In one instance, the IMC encouraged its Presiding Elders to "use their influence in soliciting donations of old libraries from the [Sunday schools] of the states to supply our poorer [Sunday schools]."[35] "Hope our dear friends in the States will not become weary of well-doing," Harrell admonished the Church and the Board of Missions. "Let us remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"[36]

[34] "May 9, 1872," "May 23, 1874," "May 7, 1875," "May 4, 1877," and "May 15, 1878," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 02: March 31, 1870-May 12, 1879, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.
[35] "30th annual session, Oct 6, 1875, Atoka, Choctaw Nation," Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877, Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[36] 1871 Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 33.

Even with its large appropriations and its position as the first mission field for the National Church, actual receipts for the IMC usually fell far shorter than what was promised. Since its fortunes were tied to the Southern economy, the Civil War took a massive toll on the National Church's finances. The Board of Missions incurred a heavy debt during the war, which was amplified further by "drought, mildew, short crops, low prices, and great pressure in the finances of the country" in the following years.[37] The Southern Methodist Church's poor economic status created a situation where money was promised but not delivered. As a result, conference officials could not support the extension of the work into new places, struggled to provide for its already existing workers, paid for supplies on unfulfilled lines of credit, and subsequently concentrated on more prosperous and established areas.

The difficulties of Indian Territory and its trouble in securing outside funding became obvious in the communication between IMC officials and the Board of Missions. The Secretary of the Board of Missions, J.B. McFerrin, reported to the Executive Committee of the Board in 1870 that workers in the IMC "were suffering for the common necessaries of life," but the Board's financial problems meant that it could only send "partial" support. McFerrin believed that even if the Board could double the amount it gave to the IMC, that would only equal the minimum the conference needed for its ministers.

[37] Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1872), 4.

"If these brethren do not get help," McFerrin asserted, "they will be compelled to abandon the work to provide bread for their families."[38]

Over the next few years, undelivered appropriations created friction between the conference and the Board of Missions because the IMC made plans based on what the Board promised but did not provide. Harrell consistently wrote to the Board pleading for emergency funds or for it to fulfill its appropriations, which included money for pastoral salaries and funds for school operations. In 1868, the Board promised the IMC $1,000 for a church building at Fort Gibson in the Cherokee Nation. But three years later, the Board had paid only $300 and forced Harrell to take out an unpaid draft on the account.[39] At one point, Harrell visited the Board personally in Nashville, Tennessee to look into the issue and even enlisted the help of Bishop J.C. Keener to press the Board to pay its IMC-related debts.[40]

The uneasy relationship between the IMC and the Board continued into the 1880s, as a situation involving the conference and the Potawatomie in 1885 further demonstrated both the IMC's reliance on the Board of Missions and the Board's own reluctance to support the IMC in terms of Indian efforts. In September, W.S. Derrick, the IMC's appointed superintendent for the Seminole Academy, wrote to the Board of Missions about an opportunity to expand the conference's work among the nearby

[38] "July 20, 1870," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 01: April 1866-October 1, 1870, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.
[39] 1871 Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 32
[40] "December 27, 1870," "January 25, 1871," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 02: March 31, 1870-May 12, 1879, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

Potawatomie. Derrick reported that the Potawatomie wanted the IMC to open a school because the Catholics, who already had a school on Potawatomie land, refused to accept their children. In return for operating a school for fifty students, the Potawatomie offered the IMC 640 acres in any part of their territory for school property and even agreed to pay $5,000 per year. To interest the Board further, Derrick outlined the factors that made the Potawatomie a potentially attractive field for the conference. According to him, they had already constructed a temporary school facility for twenty students to begin work, they were primarily an English-speaking population, and the field lacked most denominational competition since no other Protestant group was working among them. "[T]his is certainly the best opening our Church has in the territory in the way of schools, and also for the conversion of a tribe of Indians," Derrick believed. Yet even with these advantages and the interest shown by the IMC and the Potawatomie, the Board remained skeptical of committing resources to the endeavor. It offered lukewarm financial support and it refused to provide any money for building costs. In the end, the IMC turned down this specific opportunity and never began a concerted effort to expand among the Potawatomie during this period.[41]

One major expense for the Board's appropriations was to support the ministers in the IMC directly. Albert N. Averyt's experience as a minister in

[41] "October 13, 1885," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 03: May 12, 1879-August 31, 1886, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, New Jersey. Eventually, the Northern Methodist church moved into the field and began work among the Potawatomie.

the Chickasaw Nation was representative of some of the physical and financial hardships that preachers faced in Indian Territory and the need for their external support. Born in Arkansas, Averyt married Meddie Corley Baker, the daughter of a slave-owning Methodist missionary to the Chickasaw and Choctaw, in Montague, Texas in 1879. He joined the IMC in 1884 and moved with his wife from West Texas to his first appointment on the Johnsonville Circuit in the Chickasaw Nation. When they arrived, they discovered that no parsonage had been built because a minister had never lived on the circuit. Instead, the couple lived temporarily with a local Indian family even though none of the women in the house spoke English, a difficult living arrangement for Mrs. Averyt since her husband could be gone two to three months at a time traveling his circuit.[42] Eventually, the couple moved into their own one-room cabin. The next year, Averyt changed appointments to Sorghum Flats and traveled through the Arbuckle Mountains on horseback to reach his various congregations. Through all of this hardship, the Board of Missions provided a small appropriation due to the circuit's poor finances with the rest coming from assessments made on individual congregations. These assessments, however, were rarely collected because the parishioners simply could not pay in cash. "The people in the country had an abundance of food," Mrs. Averyt recalled, "but little money."[43]

[42] "Interview with Reverend Albert Norris Averyt, Jr.," Indian-Pioneer Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[43] "Interview with Mrs. A.N. Averyt," Indian-Pioneer Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

Building and supporting proper facilities such as parsonages and churches was important for the National Church and the IMC as a sign of legitimacy and permanence. Church buildings were physical reminders of a denomination's presence, and constructing these facilities were motivating factors for many congregations. However, in a place like Indian Territory where few railroads existed and populations were small, funding and building church facilities was not always practical. John Q. Tufts, the Indian agent at Union Agency, noted the inauspicious facilities among the Five Tribes when he said that they were "not expensive or ornamental, but are built for use."[44] Many smaller or remote congregations met in whatever facilities they could find, which included individual homes and school houses, or in community churches built and shared by several denominations. The IMC's congregation in Okmulgee, for example, met in the chamber of the House of Kings in the Creek Council House for several decades before building their own church in 1896.[45] But both options of using public places or sharing churches with other denominations met with opposition from IMC leaders who worried about the conference's status in Indian Territory. Marcus L. Butler grew irritated with talk of "Union" services and "Union" Sunday Schools where conference congregations shared services with other denominations, believing that the IMC should have its own buildings.[46] Bishop Charles Betts Galloway, who presided over the conference in the 1880s and 1890s, was

[44] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the year 1880, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880), 95.
[45] "Historical Tablet," Folder 18 UMC Okmulgee First, Box 46, Hobart Ragland Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[46] Our Brother in Red, November 29, 1887.

more explicit in his criticism. He admonished the IMC and said that using these places meant "we de-vitalize the spiritual life of the congregation, and the more difficult it is to develop self-support and connectional loyalty."[47] Physical buildings not only established a physical presence in a community, but it also lent legitimacy to the community's spiritual well-being and connection to the larger Southern Methodist church.

The need for proper church facilities combined with the lack of outside funding meant that the IMC had to turn to its individual congregations for support and assistance, which only amplified pressures for Indian assimilation and their loss of autonomy. Writing in the IMC's official organ, Our Brother in Red, in September 1883, Edwin R. Shapard explained the situation as he saw it in the Choctaw District. Shapard, a Presiding Elder in the district and longtime IMC-appointed superintendent of the Choctaw Nation's New Hope Seminary, saw a direct connection between the conference's future and the "unsettled membership" of whites in the Choctaw District. According to Shapard, the Board of Missions paid for only one missionary in the Choctaw District and placed added expectations on Choctaw congregations to support their own preachers. At the same time, whites, who made up the majority of the "unsettled" membership in the district, were restricted from owning land and less likely to be economically involved in the church. Shapard wrote that whites who were not citizens of the Nation "do not feel the ties of home, of family, of neighbor, for they know not how soon they may be removed." As a

[47] Our Brother in Red, November 5, 1887.

result, congregations were unable to build their own church facilities and were forced to meet in school houses and other public places.[48]

Shapard's comments showed the connection between adequate financial support and religious legitimacy. For the white members of the conference, legitimacy meant church facilities, pastoral representation, and connectional authority. A lack of funds not only threatened individual congregations but the entire conference as well because the IMC would no longer be able to afford the basic necessities required for a Southern Methodist conference. The answer to this problem, as Shapard implied, was making whites into "settled" members and removing the meddlesome aspects of Indian authority. Changing the legal system in individual Indian nations so whites could own property would encourage their participation in church functions and in church funding. In short, the financial future of the "Indian Mission Conference" lay in its white members, not in its Indian congregations.

The IMC's Indian ministers were not oblivious to the changing attitude of the conference and its potential impact on Indian congregations. Robert McLemore, a full-blood Cherokee also known as Tsu-ga-do Da and assigned to the IMC's Flint Circuit, saw some of the same trends developing In the Cherokee Nation that Shapard observed in the Choctaw Nation. McLemore was disappointed by the decline of the IMC in the Round Springs community, which previously met on the first Sunday of each month as a part of the preacher's circuit rotation. By March 1884, its meeting was relegated to the more infrequent fifth Sunday. "Our preachers have to preach where 'they can

[48] Our Brother in Red, September 1883.

do the most good' and where the people will prepare a house for them to preach in," McLemore understood. But that was no reason for Indian congregations and communities to be neglected by the conference, he believed, and no reason why Indian congregations could not be vital members of the conference. "We may not be the same in color," McLemore reminded his fellow white church members, "but we are the same in heart."[49]

The problems over funding left the IMC in a situation seemingly at odds with its stated purpose. As a mission conference, its purpose was to convert a population unfamiliar with Christianity. It relied upon the Board of Missions for funds to do so, but the Board's subsequent struggles to fulfill its financial commitments left the IMC with two conflicting options. It could continue to act as a mission conference and reach out to the thousands of Indians in the territory, albeit in a financially limited and crippled way, or it could focus on its own previous successes and continue to build up those congregations who were better off from a fiscal point of view. Complicating matters was the fact that the congregations that often needed the most financial support were typically the full-blooded Indian ones, or in other words, in communities less likely to be tied to white culture and more inclined to adhere to Indian ways. Following that path would ensure that the IMC remained both an "Indian" and a "mission" conference for the time being and its churches would retain their distinctly native characteristics.

The second option for the conference was to concentrate its work on mixed-blooded congregations, which were more connected to white society

[49] Our Brother in Red, March 1884.

through language, marriage, and economic ties. These communities, after all, had been traditional areas of Southern Methodist growth in Indian Territory in the period between Removal and the Civil War, and they were located in the more prosperous towns like Vinita, Tahlequah, and Muskogee.[50] If respectability in the eyes of the National Church meant churches more akin to their eastern relatives, then the IMC's pursuit of mixed-blood congregations with white members who could support the ministry financially seemed logical.

Once again, Indian members of the IMC were not oblivious to the conference's emphasis on mixed-blood communities over full-blood communities, which became noticeable by the 1880s. A writer in Our Brother in Red, identified only as "Wapha," complained about the "Dangerous Drifting" that the IMC committed by abandoning its Indian roots. Wapha claimed that the conference "drifted" away from full-bloods at the same time that Indians "drifted" away from conference leadership positions. Contrary to popular sentiment in the IMC, he believed that the conference should be handing over more authority to the Indian preachers that it had developed over the years rather than relying on more white preachers. "It would seem now few, if any, foreign missionaries would be needed to man the work," Wapha wrote. But he also acknowledged that money played an important role in the direction the IMC was taking because the low pay was driving full-blood preachers away. To ensure that native ministers remained active in the IMC, Wapha

[50] Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma,23-24; McLoughlin, After the Trail of Tears, 136-137; Angie Debo, The Road to Disappearance (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941), 121.

suggested increasing their salary so "that [the conference] can justly claim all their time."[51]

Milton A. Clark echoed some of Wapha's comments a year later in his own letter to Our Brother in Red, though Clark took a view of the funding situation that deemphasized Indian influence. Clark had extensive experience in the territory, having served as a Presiding Elder in both the Muscogee District and Cherokee District and overseeing much of the IMC's work among the Creek and Cherokee. Like Wahpa, Clark saw a decline in the quality of the church among full-bloods, which he attributed to the lower standards applied to full-blood preachers. The easy alternative for Clark, though, was not economically feasible. Raising the standards in full-blood communities to meet standards in "regular" MECS conferences meant employing more white preachers, who cost two to three times as much as an Indian preacher due to the need for interpreters in individual congregations. The IMC's financial situation could not afford that plan.[52]

Clark and Wapha represented two differing perspectives, though the central issue was same to both men. Money was needed to further the work of the Indian Mission Conference, and money was in short supply. For Wapha, a full-blood Indian who supported the growth of the "Indian" Mission, it meant funneling more money to Indian preachers even though funds were limited. Clark, a white missionary whose daughter married the son of Quanah Parker, highlighted the same idea, though he claimed that expensive white

[51] Our Brother in Red, April 1886.
[52] Our Brother in Red, June 1887

preachers in full-blood communities were the answer. The question was whether the Indian Mission Conference, with a growing white membership and influence, was prepared to take what limited money it had, use the few qualified white preachers it had, and assign both resources to non-white communities to achieve what promised to be limited financial and spiritual results. This alternative was sure to further distance the IMC from the National Church.

It would not be until the early-twentieth century before the IMC and the National Church resolved the debate over full-blood and mixed-blood communities. The issue moved more to the forefront in years between the Land Run and statehood in 1907 as the population in the IMC diversified even more and before a dual system was created in 1918. But for now, this was the beginning of an attitude change in the IMC as some members saw the downside of remaining an “Indian” and “mission” conference, while others supported the conference’s distinct Indian identity. White members pressured the IMC to move in a direction toward religious legitimacy on par with the rest of the National Church, while Indian members sought to protect their own autonomy and space within the IMC. For the time being, both sides struggled for control over the direction of the conference.

Closely linked to the debate over expansion into the full-blood communities was the second major issue affecting the IMC: the issue of language. Language underscored the cultural divide between white missionaries and Indian congregations and also differentiated the IMC from

the MECS's other mission fields. Unlike China, Japan, or Mexico, where it was possible to reach large segments of the country through only one language, allowing for missionaries to learn the language before entering that particular field, Indian Territory claimed dozens of dialects, languages, and cultures among its diverse Indian population. From the National Church's perspective, the Board of Missions clearly outlined its belief in the connection of English to Christianity in its 1873 annual report that stated "[w]herever [English] is spoken, or written, the Christian religion must prevail."[53] This statement confirmed the feelings of many in the National Church who believed English was the proper way to spread Christianity and that other means were suspect.

At times, the issues of money and language were linked, such as efforts to translate the Bible into Indian languages or concerns over paying for District Interpreters. If the Christian message (or, more specifically, the Methodist-interpreted Christian message), whether spoken or written, was not properly translated, then questions might develop over the authenticity of the individual Christian conversion. White missionaries stressed the importance of correct understanding of theological principals and Methodist rules that, in their eyes, would eventually lead to Indian assimilation, whereas native converts were less obsessed with church dogma and more concerned with Christian experience. Many Indian converts, such as those in full-blood Cherokee communities, did not see the distinction between native customs

[53] Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1873), 3.

and Christian teachings like white missionaries wanted.[54] Indians did not see the contradiction in being "native" and "Christian" that whites did. They were willing to incorporate elements of both cultures into their daily lives.[55]

In another sense, the divide between the exclusive views of Christianity by whites and the more inclusive incorporation of native religion by Indians mirrored the larger belief by white society that Christianity and "civilization" were inexplicably linked together. For the National Church, accepting Christianity in ways that whites sanctioned ensured that Indians were on the proper path to assimilation. The Euro-centric interpretation of Christianity that guided many American churches left little room for outside influence from other religious beliefs and since so many social institutions in American society had their groundings in Christian teachings, proper understanding was paramount. Native converts did not necessarily agree. Christianity could be incorporated into their communities without totally supplanting their own customs and beliefs. In fact, Indians were more concerned with maintaining their own distinct communities and some individuals considered accepting Christianity as a way to achieve that.[56]

When John Harrell hinted to the Board of Missions about the inability of many native converts to read English and their subsequent lack of access to Church publications, he was addressing the larger language problem within the IMC. For much of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the IMC

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[54] McLoughlin, After the Trail of Tears, 74.
[55] Homer Noley, "The Interpreters," in Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods, Jace Weaver, ed., (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 52; Debo, The Road to Disappearance, 297.
[56] Noley, "The Interpreters," 52.

was reluctant to translate material into any Indian languages, partly due to the expense and effort required and partly due to the desire to assimilate Indians into white society by eliminating their reliance on their native language.[57] There was also an underlying bias in the conference toward the English language as the proper way to express Christian teachings. The editor of Our Brother in Red reflected this cultural bias when he told his readers in the IMC in 1887 that "[m]any abstract thoughts cannot be given in Indian tongues," which expressed the belief that Indian languages could not covey a proper Christian message.[58]

By the late-nineteenth century, the Southern Methodist church implemented educational requirements for its preachers, elders, and deacons. Each of these jobs were licensed positions that held a degree of authority within an individual church and conference. The National Church established its standards in The Discipline, the official manual of beliefs, rules, and regulations which was updated and published every four years after a General Conference. But while the National Church set the rules regarding licensing preachers and other members, it was up to the conferences to test these individuals and pass their credentials. With The Discipline's requirements stipulating a multi-level program to ensure proper training for the ministry, getting admitted into full connection with a conference

[57] Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 197.
[58] Our Brother in Red, October 29, 1887

took several years of study and with yearly examinations before more experienced preachers.[59]

The IMC faced a constant problem in trying to find the necessary publications in translated form for its Indian members. If these materials could not be found or if their preachers could not read English-language versions as Harrell stated, then the IMC would not have any ministers (much less ones that rivaled other conferences). Yet, the IMC never lacked a ministerial staff because the conference, not the National Church, ultimately decided for itself who it would license, which gave the IMC flexibility to follow the rules. Indian ministers who might never pass an examination in another MECS conference, either for their lack of English or lack of Biblical training, could still get licensed in the IMC. Church officials who understood the difficulties of Indian Territory also understood the limitations it placed on ministerial training, and they were willing to balance the needs of the field versus the rules of the National Church.

On occasion, the IMC took the initiative and tried to translate materials for its Indian members without prior approval from the National Church. Several times the conference's Committee on Books and Periodicals moved to acquire translated materials, though practical and bureaucratic conflicts arose.[60] With the bulk of its membership coming from the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Nations during this time, translations would have to

[59] Holland N. McTyeire, A Manual of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1870).
[60] "42nd Session, Vinita, Cherokee Nation, Oct 12, 1887," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, OCU, OKC, OK.

be done in several languages. This was a costly and time-consuming effort that required the IMC to find trustworthy and knowledgeable translators for each language. Furthermore, any potential expansion among new Indian groups, which occurred after 1887, only exacerbated the problem by increasing the number of languages required to meet its obligations. The Committee on Books and Periodicals might support the initial steps to translate materials, but then the Committee referred the issue on to the Board of Missions for its financial assistance. In turn, the Board of Missions might refer the matter to its own internal committee on expenses, where the issue would get buried in the debate alongside the needs of the other conferences in the National Church and ultimately get lost in the bureaucracy.[61]

With a lack of materials coming from the National Church and its own publishing house, the IMC turned to other sources for Indian-language publications. Ann Eliza Worcester Robertson, Samuel Worcester's daughter and herself a noted Presbyterian missionary to the Creek, offered the conference her translation services. When she finished translating her Creek Testament in 1884, Milton Clark used it as he conducted camp work and helped spread it among Creek Methodists. By the 1890s, Robertson agreed to translate portions of The Discipline for the IMC, which she did in between her work in translating the entire Bible into Creek. Some of these sections were later published in Our Brother in Red alongside her translations of letters from native-speaking Creek ministers for the wider English-speaking

[61] "February 11, 1880," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 03: May 12, 1879-August 31, 1886, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, New Jersey

audience in the conference.[62] In other circumstances, Indian members sought out their own material and bought publications translated by non-Methodist organizations like the American Tract Society or the Union Publishing House, even though the conference discouraged doing so.[63] Clearly, there was a desire on the part of Indian Methodists for religious materials in a language they could understand regardless of how church officials acted.

Using these alternatives created a different set of problems for the IMC that demonstrated its problems in presenting the proper Christian message. For one, Robertson's translations were only for Creek readers. Translating the Bible required having an additional version in Choctaw and Cherokee in order to reach the majority of the IMC's Indian members at that time. Additionally, the quality and the doctrinal point of view of the translation were also subject to scrutiny. At its annual conference in 1873, IMC officials spoke of the need for Methodist hymn books for its Choctaw and Chickasaw members since books from its publishing house were "almost totally unknown to our people." When Choctaw and Chickasaw members did buy publications on their own, they often bought cheaper books published by non-Methodist organizations. This worried conference officials who felt that those

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[62] "Ann Eliza Worcester Robertson," Methodist Review of Missions 19 (June 1899): 705-709; "The Creek Discipline," Methodist Review of Missions 19 (June 1899): 754-755; For examples of Robertson's translations, see Our Brother in Red, December 20, 1894; Our Brother in Red, January 17, 1895; Our Brother in Red, February 15, 1895; Our Brother in Red, March 7,1895; Our Brother in Red, April 11, 1895; and Our Brother in Red, May 9, 1895.

[63] "28th annual session, Oct 23, 1873, Tahlequah, Cherokee Nation," Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877, Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

publications taught principles that were at odds with Methodist beliefs. "[T]hough we have no quarrel with any church or denomination," the Committee on Books and Periodicals reported in 1873, "we are not willing for these works to be circulated in our bounds, making these impressions, and take no notice."[64]

One way for the IMC to alleviate this problem to some degree would have been to make its white missionaries learn the various Indian languages. Robertson and John B. Jones, both children of established missionaries in Indian Territory from other denominations, had learned a native language and used it to much success in their work. Historian William McLoughlin wrote of Jones, the appointed United States Indian agent to the Cherokee in the early-1870s and the son of Evan Jones, that he "spoke Cherokee like a native."[65] Missionaries from the Southern Methodist church, however, were less inclined to learn an Indian language. One practical reason for their reluctance was its connectional system of church organization and the circuit rider system, which meant that ministers might be transferred from one community or Indian tribe within the conference to another one on a yearly basis. When a minister might work with the Creek, Cherokee, and Choctaw within a few years, having to learn each language was an added difficulty. Instead of requiring its members speak an Indian language, the IMC relied upon the work of translators, many of whom were Indians.

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[64] "28th annual session, Oct 23, 1873, Tahlequah, Cherokee Nation," Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877, Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[65] McLoughlin, Champions of the Cherokees, 243.

Preaching through an interpreter was a challenge in its own right and not all white ministers could master the skill, as William Mulkey demonstrated during his brief tenure in the IMC. Mulkey was an excitable minister who spoke at a quick clip and employed full-body gestures in his preaching. Though his style might have attracted interested church goers in other conferences and among white communities, translators in the IMC could not easily interpret his sermons for an Indian audience. Unable to work effectively and adapt to his Indian congregations, Mulkey left the conference.[66]

The growing reluctance on the part of the IMC's white ministers and members to support its Indian missions explains only one half of the situation. Even with money and language issues causing troubles for the conference, Indian missions did grow. In the Chickasaw District, for instance, Indian membership increased tenfold from 200 in 1867 to 2153 in 1884.[67] This growth was due more to the actions of Indian preachers, members, and nations than to white conference leaders. White officials grew irritated with the autonomy or issues of sovereignty that Indian nations had over the conference, and they became increasingly aware of the fact that Indian Methodists wanted a space within the Southern Methodist community in Indian Territory that allowed for their own culture and control. Indian

[66] Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 33-34.
[67] "22nd annual session, Oct 3, 1873, Fort Gibson, Cherokee Nation," Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877, Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, OHS, OKC, OK; "39th Session of the Indian Mission Conference, White Bead Hill, Chickasaw Nation, September 14, 1889," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.

autonomy ran counter to the IMC's twin goals of Indian assimilation and church legitimacy.

Observers unaffiliated with the conference recognized the growing demand by Indian congregations for Indian ministers and their sense of autonomy. In a series of annual reports in the early-1880s, the federal government's Indian agent overseeing the Five Tribes noted that Indian congregations "have no use for those in whom they have no confidence, and it would be better for all concerned if such were sent to some other field of labor,"[68] a statement aimed at those white missionaries ill-prepared for work in Indian Territory. "The number of native preachers is increasing" at the Union Agency, agent John Q. Tufts reported a year later. "Education and a little drill will make them very effective missionaries, especially the full bloods."[69]

Two of the most basic and important positions that Indian ministers filled in the conference were as local preachers and translators. Translators could be informal positions used by visiting preachers when they arrived in a community, or they could be formal appointments made by the conference and expected to be present at larger church gatherings. At various times in eastern Indian Territory, the IMC assigned Indian preachers to serve as official District Interpreters. These interpreters translated for preachers and Presiding Elders as they made their rounds and at Quarterly Conferences,

[68] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the year 1881, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1881), 104.
[69] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the year 1882, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1882), 90.

District Conferences, and at camp meetings held regularly throughout the year. Local preachers were official members of the church who held a less formal position than itinerant or traveling preachers. In Matthew Simpson's Cyclopedia of Methodism published in 1880, local preachers were described as a "class of ministers peculiar to Methodist Churches" who "have been in many places the pioneers of Methodism."[70] In large circuits such as the Doaksville Circuit in the Chickasaw Nation, where it took three months for the appointed preacher in charge to visit each congregation, local preachers were vital in keeping the church alive and dealing with the regular needs of parishioners.[71] In 1873, the IMC reported more than four times as many local preachers than preachers in charge, which was a higher ratio than any other conference in the Southern Methodist Church.[72] With its dependence on local preachers, the IMC lagged behind other conferences as it tried to stabilize missionary efforts in Indian Territory.

At its 15th annual conference at Skullyville in 1858, the IMC reported a service of "deep interest" because it ordained "[m]inisters of four different tongues - one English and three the Red men of the Forest."[73] John Page from the Choctaw, James McHenry from the Creek, and Walker Gary from

[70] Matthew Simpson, ed., Cyclopedia of Methodism: Embracing Sketches of its Rise, Progress, and Present Condition, with Biographical Notices and Numerous Illustrations (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1880), 541, 542.
[71] Our Brother in Red, January 1886
[72] 1873 Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.
[73] "15th annual session, Oct 7, 1858, Skullyville, Choctaw Nation," Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877, Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

the Cherokee, each "an able interpreter,"[74] officially entered the ministry in the Indian Mission Conference. The IMC stressed the importance of Indian preachers in relation to church affairs and conference history, but these individuals might be important leaders within their nation or tribe, too. Official church historians described McHenry, who served as a preacher in the Coweta Circuit as well as elder and deacon, as "the most picturesque preacher of the Indian Mission Conference."[75] Yet McHenry was also an important member of the Muscogee Nation having served as the Speaker of the House of Kings and judge of the Coweta District.[76] In the years before Removal in the old Creek Country back east, McHenry led a resistance movement against the United States government before being captured and sent to Indian Territory, where he eventually converted to Methodism. During the Civil War, he was a major in the 1st Creek Regiment for the Confederate Army.[77] Samuel Checote, himself a minister and Presiding Elder while also serving as Principal Chief of the Muscogee Nation, reminded the conference of McHenry's importance to the Creek. After McHenry's death in 1883, Checote wrote that "[t]he Nation, as well as the Church, sustains a great

[74] "15th annual session, Oct 7, 1858, Skullyville, Choctaw Nation," Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877, Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[75] Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 211.
[76] Our Brother in Red, May 1883
[77] Homer Noley, First White Frost: Native Americans and United Methodism (Nashville, Tn.: Abingdon, 1991), 132-133; George Washington Grayson, A Creek Warrior for the Confederacy: The Autobiography of Chief G.W. Grayson W. David Baird, editor, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988) 108-109n2; Angie Debo says that McHenry's resistance in the old Creek country was so notable that he once had a price placed on his head by angry Alabamans, see Debo, The Road to Disappearance, 121.

loss."[78] While the conference wanted to stress the Christian character of men like McHenry and their importance to the church, in reality these individuals were committed to the responsibilities of their nation and used Christianity as a tool to supplement this fact.

With men like Checote and McHenry in the Muscogee Nation as ministers and presiding elders, the conference walked a fine line between appealing to Indian communities and allowing Indian governments too much influence. Checote's daughter recalled that before they had any church building at New Town, the chief held prayer meetings and camp meetings at his home.[79] Yet, as Angie Debo noted, "no other Creek leader ever worked so vigilantly [as Checote] to guard the racial integrity of his people against white and negro immigration," an allusion to Checote's feelings on the limits of Indian/non-Indian integration and how carefully he guarded his Creek community from outside influence.[80] In fact, Checote helped pass legislation in the Creek Council that forbade blacks from preaching to Indian congregations.[81] In the Cherokee Nation after the Civil War, the IMC sent out five men, three of whom were native, which was recognition by the conference of the importance of native ministers.[82] With their closer connections to native communities whether through family ties or language, Indian preachers had better access to some congregations. And white

[78] Our Brother in Red, June 1883
[79] "An Interview with Agnes Kelley," Indian-Pioneer Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[80] Debo, The Road to Disappearance, 183.
[81] "Creek Nation: Laws, records, resolutions, etc, written by Col. Samuel Checote, P.C. Creek Nation," Samuel Checote Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[82] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1868 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1868), 283.

ministers were not averse to letting Indian preachers reach the more remote and poorer churches when circuits like Long Creek in the Chickasaw Nation paid less than $9 per quarter for its two ministers.[83]

From the IMC's perspective, Indian ministers were there solely for church-related purposes, and conference officials did not want them to use their status and education on behalf of the Indian nations. Southern Methodism in general was skeptical of the pulpit's involvement in political affairs. One official church history published in the 1890s heralded the fact that "one of the excellencies of the Southern Methodist Church is that it avoids all connection with politics."[84] The IMC was no different in its outlook. From a practical standpoint, Indian preachers who left for political appointments or to tend to governmental affairs could leave a circuit empty and force the IMC to scramble to find a replacement, as happened when the minister of the Creek Agency Circuit, Cow-e-tah Micco, left for Washington D.C. as a delegate of the Muscogee Nation in 1873.[85] The added issue that these individuals were working to protect Indian sovereignty and delay the federal government's assimilationist agenda perhaps frustrated the conference even more as it worked for the larger goal of Indian assimilation.

Though the IMC considered it prestigious to claim important Indian leaders as members of the conference, it expected its Indian ministers to

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[83] "Minutes, Choctaw Circuit Quarterly Conference, 1836-1888," Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[84] Gross Alexander, A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (New York City: The Christian Literature Co., 1894), 110.
[85] Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1873), 40.

forgo their tribal needs and work solely for the cause of Christ. One anonymous critic told the conference that "[t]he ministry qualifies them to be leaders; the principles of godliness which they profess point them out as men to be trusted; the next thing is they are candidates for political office, and their usefulness to the church ceases."[86] Indian preachers used the ministry, and by default the IMC, to improve their own status and the needs of their Indian community at the expense of the conference's goals, and the writer implored Indian preachers to "be men of one work."[87] Writing from his experience as a Presiding Elder, Edwin R. Shapard attacked the political ambitions of Indian ministers as causing "lukewarmness, backsliding, etc" in Indian congregations.[88] Shapard revealed the perception among IMC leaders that Indian preachers should be committed solely to their ministry: anything less was unacceptable.

Perhaps because he avoided political ambition and remained focused on Indian missions throughout his life, Willis Folsom became the IMC's leading symbol of the potential Indian ministers had. Folsom, a Choctaw from a prominent mixed-blood family who came to Indian Territory during the Removal era, was admitted into full connection in the IMC only at the end of his life.[89] Prior to that, Folsom was an active local preacher throughout much of the Choctaw Nation. During the Civil War, Folsom preached to members of the Choctaw Regiment and expanded his work to include those in the

[86] Our Brother in Red, September 10, 1887.
[87] Our Brother in Red, September 10, 1887.
[88] Our Brother in Red, September 1883.
[89] Noley, First White Frost, 199.

Nation who stayed behind.[90] This ministry came at a great personal cost to Folsom because soldiers burned his home and stole his livestock at the beginning of the war, leaving him to struggle alongside many other Choctaw. Because of his sacrifices and efforts, church officials considered his work during these years as the reason the Southern Methodism continued to exist among the Choctaw in the postwar decades.[91]

Folsom became the public face for Indian missions for the IMC and the MECS. On occasion, he traveled to white and Indian communities in the Deep South, including Mississippi and Alabama, promoting Indian missions and preaching to white, black, and Indian congregations.[92] In December 1884, Folsom attended the National Church's Centennial Conference in Baltimore as a delegate, making stops in St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Washington D.C. along the way.[93] Yet Folsom never forgot the differences between white congregations and his Choctaw churches or his connection to native congregation. When a new white minister to Indian Territory attending his first "Indian Cry" chastised Folsom for preaching and thereby encouraging non-Christian beliefs, Folsom responded "with a faint smile on his face and said 'You don't know the Indians'."[94]

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[90] July 28, 1861 and September 5, 1861, Box 1, Folder 6, Rev. Willis F. Folsom Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[91] Noley, First White Frost, 167-168; Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 145-146.
[92] "Interview with Mary Elizabeth Folsom," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; "April 1889," Folder 4, Rev. Willis F. Folsom Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[93] "Diary Vol. 1-2, 1873-1884," Rev. Willis F. Folsom Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[94] "John Jasper Methvin Autobiography," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.

Even with his heightened status in the conference as an example of Methodism's positive effect on Indians, IMC officials offered only faint praise for his actual preaching abilities especially when compared to the standards of white ministers. "He is no doctrinal preacher," Shapard reminded the conference in 1884. Shapard, who worked closely with Folsom in the Choctaw Nation as his preacher and Presiding Elder, saw flaws in the Choctaw preacher: "He is a poor counselor in worldly matters – no politician at all; is easily imposed upon by pretenders and hypocrites."[95] The IMC's memorial for Folsom written after his death in 1897 was no kinder: "He was, strictly speaking, a man of few talents. His education was limited; his opportunities were few. He was never what you would call a good preacher."[96]

What the IMC did praise Folsom for was his gift of prayer. "No one who ever heard him pray at the altar among penitents will forget his prayers…In conversation or preaching he faltered or hesitated, but in prayer his words flowed with a rythm [sic], fluency and an earnestness which brought the power of God upon the penitents."[97] Prayer became a central component and distinct aspect of Folsom's ministry, and his wife stated that he spent hours on his knees in prayer.[98] While white ministers and congregants

[95] Our Brother in Red, July 1884.
[96] "52nd session, Nov 10, 1897, Muscogee, Indian Territory," Minutes of the Indian Mission Conference, 1894-1900, Box 34, Hobart Ragland Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[97] "52nd session, Nov 10, 1897, Muscogee, Indian Territory," Minutes of the Indian Mission Conference, 1894-1900, Box 34, Hobart Ragland Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[98] "Interview with Mary Elizabeth Folsom," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

wanted sermons grounded in complexities of doctrine as interpreted by Methodist dogma, Folsom offered his native audience a practical avenue to Christianity that focused on an individual's actions.

One of Folsom's most often used verses for a sermon was I Timothy 2:8, which implored "men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing."[99] Preaching this message at country churches throughout the Choctaw Nation or to native students at the IMC's various boarding schools for over forty years, Folsom stressed the interactivity of Christianity and the power of the individual. "I exhorted them to spend the evening in secret prayer alone as the congregation dismissed," Folsom wrote in his diary after one service. "More than half of the congregation went to secret prayer meeting. I hear just now in every direction, praying and weeping for mercy."[100]

Folsom's ministry and success, in part, could be explained be the fact that he put the power of Christianity into the hands of individuals, rather than making them casual recipients of a preacher's message. Indians were less concerned with the specifics of doctrine and more focused on how Christianity could speak to their specific needs.[101] Historian William McGloughlin argued that the Baptist missionary Evan Jones had more success among the Cherokee than Methodists because he connected the baptismal ritual of full

[99] For a sample of Folsom's use of this verse over the years, see "Dec 28, 1873," Feb 3, 1877," and "Sept 16, 1884," Folder 3 Diary Vol. 1-2, 1873-1884, Rev. Willis F. Folsom Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[100] "January 29, 1859," Folder 2, Rev. Willis F. Folsom Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[101] Noley, "The Interpreters," 52.

immersion with a yearly Cherokee ceremony performed with the aid of adonisgi, or Cherokee spiritual leaders. In this ceremony, Cherokee individuals recognized the new year with a ritual immersion in water believed to wash away problems of the previous year and restore harmony to the tribe.[102] Connecting Biblical principles like baptism or prayer with already-established native practices, rather than by enforcing new difficult-to-understand doctrine alien to the community, eased the transition for individuals into a Christian society. It also reinforced the fact that Indian converts did not immediately throw off the elements of their native culture once they became Christian.

Willis Folsom's style of preaching and its reception by his white contemporaries was indicative of the differences between the IMC's Indian and white members, a divide that grew throughout the postwar decades. Mary Cole, a former slave who attended a Choctaw Methodist church near Skullyville in her younger days, noted that the Choctaw's "methods of worship were peculiar and different" from their white contemporaries.[103] Cole observed a congregation with a small church building in Skullyville forced to use a brush arbor for larger crowds and that had singing, preaching, and praying "all done in the Choctaw language."[104] While blacks originally attended services alongside the Choctaw, Cole stated that when

[102] McLoughlin, Champions of the Cherokees, 88-89. Baptism was a contentious issue between Baptists and Methodists in the nineteenth century, and in particular acts like full immersion baptisms and infant baptisms. Much of the rhetoric and venom exchanged by the two denominations involved this issue.
[103] "Interview with Mary Cole," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[104] "Interview with Mary Cole," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

overcrowding became an issue, blacks were told to hold separate services later in the day so as not to conflict with the Choctaw's.

One difference between the IMC's Indian and white members was the growing use of camp meetings by Indian Methodists. Native congregations, whether Choctaw, Cherokee, or Creek, held extended camp meetings for services and conferences, even as the practice declined in mainline Methodist congregations after the turn of the century. These meetings lasted for several days and could be intertribal gatherings or they could be services for extended kinship networks. "The fervor of song and prayer, and the entire atmosphere of the place, impresses you with the fact that you are among a devoutly religious people," one white visitor noticed at a full-blood camp meeting in the 1880s.[105]

Observers were quick to point out the native influence in these camp meetings as evident in the language, song, and funeral customs being practiced. Dr. Isaac G. John, secretary of the Board of Missions, visited a Creek camp meeting in the late-1880s and remarked at how the these Creek Methodists had replaced the Green Corn Dance with all-night worship services. John saw a mix of Indian culture combined with elements of a more traditional Southern Methodist past: "Their services, conducted by native preachers, were in their native language, but their tunes were almost as familiar as the negro melodies that in other days we so often heard on

[105] Our Brother in Red, September 1886.

Methodist camp-grounds in the South," John wrote.[106] Not every observer, however, considered the native influence a positive aspect of Indian Methodism. Milton Clark saw too much veneration of the dead at Creek and Seminole camp meetings and not enough emphasis on reaching the living. Funeral sermons by Indian ministers, he complained, stressed the native aspects of the deceased's life as opposed to spending time trying to reach the living with a Christian message, and he saw no reason why the IMC's native preachers should preside over a non-Christian Indian's funeral.[107]

With several Indian ministers also occupying positions of importance within their tribe or community, conference officials considered it important that the church influenced Indian society rather than allowing Indian society to influence the church. This position reflected not only Southern Methodism's aversion to mixing the pulpit with politics, but IMC's own frustration at the slow process of Indian assimilation. Indian preachers resisted IMC desires and flummoxed white members with their reluctance to embrace what the conference wanted and expected. W.H. Morehead from the Salisaw Circuit in the Cherokee Nation complained that he had only three local preachers to work on his circuit. "[O]ne is a full blood, and can't talk English," he told members of the IMC, "one can talk English, but won't try, and the other talks neither Cherokee or English as I have heard (I mean publicly as a preacher)."[108]

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[106] I.G. John, Hand Book of Methodist Missions (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1893) 108-109.
[107] Our Brother in Red, April 1886.
[108] Our Brother in Red, March 1884

More egregious in the eyes of IMC officials was when Indian communities wanted to exert some control over the conference's mission work. Dealing with the various Indian nations, as well as the federal government, had forced the conference to make certain compromises in order to operate. With church property important to the conference, legal questions concerning land holdings had to be ironed out with national councils and the federal government before the IMC could make any claims.[109] The conference's insistence on building permanent structures to ensure legitimacy required that the IMC rely upon Indian members for help and placed the conference in a dependent position upon the Indian governments. In order to acquire to land and property, the IMC typically had to petition the federal government and/or one of the Five Tribes' governments before it could proceed. In their dealings with the IMC, the Five Tribes were hindered to a degree due to post-Civil War treaties with the United States that guaranteed missionary societies access to Indian Territory, but they still had some power over the actions of the conference. In 1882, the IMC's appointed superintendent of its Harrell International Institute in Muskogee, Theodore F. Brewer, acknowledged this fact when he asked the principal chief of the

[109] The MECS had a poor relationship with the federal government over Indian affairs, and the Church did not have a representative on the Board of Indian Commissioners until 1885. "Our work continues at a serious disadvantage for lack of due representation in other agencies connected with the education of the Indian," MECS Bishops stated in their address at the 1886 General Conference. See W.P. Harrison, ed., Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1886), 22.

Muscogee Nation for "official permission" to start a newspaper.[110] Since the newspaper would be associated with the school, and since concerns involving the school's management required the consent of the Creek Council, Brewer recognized that he did not the full authority to act without their approval.

A more common concern for the IMC in its relations with the governments of the Five Tribes involved land grants. When the conference wanted to build a church in Muskogee, the Creek Council gave permission on the condition that the church's board of trustees were Creek citizens. Just over two years later, the Council gave the IMC land for a new school one-half mile from the Muskogee depot where the school would provide the least amount of interference for the community as well as limiting its contact with the Creek.[111] Regardless of what legal contracts might be signed, the conference clearly believed that it was the organization running mission operations and not any Indian nation or council. "I was surprised and humiliated," Shapard wrote, "when I read an editorial in a paper edited by an Indian of intelligence, containing the expression that a Mission Board had been allowed to exercise its office."[112]

The situation was much the same in the Cherokee Nation. Due to their alliance with the Confederacy during the Civil War, the victorious United States government punished the Cherokee Nation with a new treaty in 1866

[110] "Letter from T.F. Brewer to Samuel Checote, July 20, 1882," Creek – Schools – Bacone University, Muskogee High School, Muskogee Institute, & Harrell Institute, CRN 43, Creek National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[111] Grant Foreman, Muskogee: The Biography of an Oklahoma Town (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943), 53.
[112] Our Brother in Red, May 4, 1889.

that eroded elements of their sovereignty. Besides taking away Cherokee land given in previous treaties and forcing them to accept railroads, Article 14 of the 1866 treaty granted religious organizations the "right to the use and occupancy of a quantity of land not exceeding one hundred and sixty acres… for missionary or educational purposes."[113] While this article forced the Cherokee to accept missionary efforts, it did stipulate that the Cherokee national council had to give its consent if the land was later sold. Furthermore, the treaty required that any profits from the sale had to be reinvested in the organization's missionary work in the Cherokee Nation.[114] To expedite the process, the IMC drew upon its Indian members to petition the council when it needed land, such as in 1874 when the Cherokee Council granted IMC members and Cherokee citizens Joseph F. Thompson, Levi Keys, and Richard Half Breed one town lot in Tahlequah for a church.[115]

Perhaps chafing at the need to placate the Cherokee Council, the IMC tried to avoid its input as much as possible in later instances. In November 1886, the Cherokee Council granted the IMC 160 acres near Vinita in accordance with Article 14 of the 1866 treaty. According to the bill authorizing the project and passed the by the Cherokee Council, Principal Chief Dennis W. Bushyhead appointed a three-person committee to work alongside representatives from the conference to choose the land "so as not to interfere

[113] Charles J. Kappler, ed., Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Volume II (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 946.
[114] Kappler, ed., Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Volume II, 942-950.
[115] "Act granting one town lot to the Methodist Episcopal Church South, n.d.," Cherokee (Tahlequah) – Churches, CHN 69, Cherokee National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK; ""Letter from J.F. Thompson to William P. Ross, Principal Chief, November 13, 1874," Cherokee (Tahlequah) – Churches, CHN 69, Cherokee National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

with the rights of any Cherokee citizen nor public reservation."[116] The Cherokee committee and the three representatives of the IMC, Theodore Brewer, Edwin R. Shapard, and J.Y. Bryce, initially met in March 1887 though the two sides disagreed over the land selection.[117] In May, when two members of the Cherokee committee were unable to attend, the remaining men selected 160 acres on the north side of Vinita and next to the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad's right of way near town.[118] John Chambers, one of the Cherokee committee members who missed the May 1887 meeting, later complained to Principal Chief Joel B. Mayes about the conference's actions but conceded that a majority of the men had voted in favor of the land and that there was little they could do at that point.[119]

Another major conflict developed over the issue of contract schools, which grew out of the uneasy relationship that the IMC, its parent organizations in the National Church, and the Indian nations had with one another. Under these agreements, the nations contracted school operations out to various denominational groups who in turn operated boarding schools for Indian students. The contract between the Chickasaw Nation and the Board of Missions was representative of these types of agreements. Under an arrangement approved in 1888 for the Collins Institute, the Chickasaw

[116] "Council Bill No. 4, November 25, 1886," Volume 275 – National Council, CHN 12, Cherokee National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[117] "Letter from John Chambers to Henry Chambers, March 30, 1887," Cherokee (Tahlequah) – Schools: Private and Religious, CHN 100, Cherokee National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[118] "Letter to D.W. Bushyhead, May 8, 1887," Cherokee (Tahlequah) – Schools: Private and Religious, CHN 100, Cherokee National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[119] "Letter from John Chambers to J.B. Mayes, December 3, 1888," Cherokee (Tahlequah) – Churches, CHN 69, Cherokee National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

Nation provided land and property, supplied desks, books, beds, and farm tools, and paid the Board $3,000 a year for 30 students. In return, the Board was to appoint a superintendent who would oversee the education and operation of the school, which included hiring teachers and other personnel. The Chickasaw government approved the contract, as well as representatives from both the IMC and the Board of Missions. The Board agreed to appoint the superintendent, but as a position within the bounds of the IMC, it was the conference that had the most say in how the school operated with the exception of some financial concerns. Therefore, this was an arrangement where the superintendent of a contract school reported to both the IMC and the Board on a regular basis, while interacting with and depending upon Indian nations for basic operational needs.[120]

At various times, the IMC operated schools among each of the Five Tribes. This policy began prior to the Removal era when the Methodists began Indian missions in the 1820s and was renewed in the post-Civil War decades. Schools such as New Hope Seminary in the Choctaw Nation, the Seminole Academy in the Seminole Nation, or the Asbury Manual Labor School in the Muscogee Nation became centerpieces in the IMC's desire to train a generation of Indian Methodists. Lamenting the needs of the conference and its inability to find preachers for the mission field, the editors of Our Brother in Red saw schools as an answer and questioned why the IMC

[120] "Contract between the Chickasaw Nation and the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Approved Sept 15, 1888," Indian Territory, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

was not as progressive as the Indians when it came to education. "When we want a preacher, we draw from the older Conferences, instead of raising them, up here," Theodore Brewer and Joseph F. Thompson stated. "The policy of some of the [Indian] Nations is to raise up and educate their own teachers; is the Church to be behind the Nation?"[121]

While Brewer and Thompson decried the church's status, the real problem revolved around the dueling agendas that the conference and Indian nations had toward contract schools. For the IMC, a "Christian education" was the key; in fact, the masthead of the conference's newspaper referred to it as "the Hope for the Indian."[122] The IMC's Committee on Education further stated the conference's standpoint in its 1873 report: "we ought to be more interested in, awake to, and identified with the subject of a sanctified education."[123] The fact that Indian nations had control over the school's makeup irritated conference officials who wanted schools that resembled those in the United States. In his annual report to the Creek Council in 1874, Young Ewing, the IMC's appointed superintendent of the Asbury Manual Labor School, blamed the council's insistence on making Asbury a co-

[121] Our Brother in Red, January 1884. Joseph F. Thompson was a Cherokee mixed-blood and leader in the Cherokee Nation. In addition to his role in the IMC, Thompson served the Cherokee Orphan Asylum and often was considered for other leadership positions in the nation. See T.L. Ballenger, "Joseph Franklin Thompson: An Early Cherokee Leader," Chronicles of Oklahoma 30 (1952): 285-291.
[122] Our Brother in Red, November 1882.
[123] "28th annual session, Oct 23, 1873, Tahlequah, Cherokee Nation," Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877, Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

educational school for some of its struggles. "The people in the states seldom ever attempt a mixed school," Ewing reminded the Creek Council.[124]

Like other boarding schools of the era, the IMC's schools stressed assimilation to white society by banning what it considered were disruptive elements of Indian culture, teaching an English-based curriculum, and providing manual labor training either with farm labor for boys or domestic skills for girls. Richard Audd, an employee at Asbury, described his duties as "the direction of the farm work of the students and the chasing and catching of runaway Indian boys." Audd commented that "the greater number of the students were from an environment of semi-savagery and the first duty was to teach them the rudiments of civilization."[125] Still, religious training played an important role in the IMC's educational efforts. At New Hope Seminary, the superintendent stated that "[e]very child is furnished with a bible, is required to attend prayers, sabbath school and preaching. Morning & night we collect in the school room for prayers."[126] But religious training could be difficult and time consuming for those unfamiliar with Methodist theology. "We are seeking by preaching of the gospel and regular sabbath school instruction, to impress them with religious truth," the superintendent of Asbury said. "In our

[124] "Letter from Young Ewing to National Council, Muscogee Nation, n. d.," Creek – Schools – Asbury Mission, Roll CRN 43, Creek National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[125] "Interview with Richard Young Audd," Indian-Pioneer Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[126] "29th annual session, Oct 22, 1874, North Fork, Creek Nation," Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877, Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

work however we find it requires 'precept-upon-precept, precept-upon-precept; line-upon-line, line-upon-line'."[127]

Equally important as the religious training, contract schools served as bases for church expansion for the IMC. The conference's church in Eufaula attributed its origins to the re-founding of the Asbury Manual Labor School in 1847.[128] The Board of Missions and the Muscogee Nation split the nearly $10,000 building costs, while the Board supplied an additional $1,000 for farm equipment and livestock. As Eufaula grew in commercial importance in the territory after the Civil War, the school and church attracted a larger population of mixed-blood Creek elites and whites who intermarried into the tribe. In 1874, Theodore Brewer, newly-arrived in the conference from Tennessee, separated the church from the school and moved the church into downtown Eufaula. The prosperous congregation quickly established the church as self-supporting.[129]

Unsurprisingly, Indian nations had their own ideas toward school operations, and these differing ideas irritated and angered their denominational partners. Indian nations wanted the basic educational value that schools provided rather than the religious training that the IMC desired, and these nations were not shy of expressing this fact to school officials. At

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[127] "27th annual session, Oct 2, 1872, Okmulgee, Creek Nation," Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877, Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

[128] Methodists originally founded the Asbury Manual Labor School in the old Creek country prior to the Removal era, during which time Samuel Checote, later Principal Chief of the Muscogee Nation, attended the school. After removal and the creation of the IMC in 1844, the conference sought to reestablish its schools and built a new Asbury Manual Labor School in Eufaula, Indian Territory.

[129] "1847-1947: A Century of Service," Folder 27 – UMC Eufaula, Hobart Ragland Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

New Hope, Superintendent Shapard believed that Jackson McCurtain, the Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation, interfered with his management, a problem that Shapard claimed would "embarrass the school in the future."[130] The Creek trustees of the Asbury Manual Labor School complained that the students worked too many hours in the field, while the superintendent, in return, blamed the Creek Council for the problem. "I find it an impossibility to run the school with less labor at the low price of 70 dollars per scholar, which the nation pays," he responded.[131]

Five years later, the IMC complained that the Creek paid for their best male students to attend other high schools instead of Asbury: "We are slow to believe the Muscogee Nation would discriminate against us in such a manner. We do not believe their Council would be willing to treat us unfairly."[132] Instead, the Creek sent their younger children, mostly between the ages of seven and nine, to the school for more rudimentary training. These younger students, the superintendent claimed, did not know the standards of education like the English alphabet and proved more difficult to educate.[133] There was also evidence that someone in the community had bigger problems with Asbury. In September 1881, a suspicious fire destroyed several buildings on campus and the superintendent's initial report

[130] "36th annual session, Oct 5, 1881, Caddo, Choctaw Nation," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, OCU, OKC, OK.
[131] "28th annual session, Oct 23, 1873, Tahlequah, Cherokee Nation," Minutes, Indian Mission Conference, 1844-1877, Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[132] "33rd annual session, Oct 15, 1878, Muscogee, Creek Nation," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, OCU, OKC, OK.
[133] "34th annual session, Sept 10, 1879, Double Springs, Choctaw Nation," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, OCU, OKC, OK.

acknowledged that a student might have started the blaze.[134] Just weeks later, a second fire "totally destroyed" Asbury Manual Labor school.[135]

By the 1880s, Indian "interference" led to an end to the contract-school system as the Five Tribes asserted more control over schools in their territory and established more national schools and neighborhood schools. The IMC preferred to view this change as an opportunity to focus on its own needs rather than the needs of an Indian nation. The superintendent of the Seminole Academy in Sasakwa gave this as the reason when the Seminoles ended their contract with IMC in 1887.[136] The IMC believed that Indian influence over the boarding schools "would not allow that freedom and firmness of discipline essential to their proper management."[137]

Conference critics lambasted the contract school system as inefficient, claiming that it did not produce enough adequately-trained native preachers for the IMC in light of the money invested by the Church. They wanted that money funneled toward IMC projects that helped the conference, preferably toward new schools operated solely by the IMC that would "have secured

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[134] "Letter from J.F. Thompson to Samuel Checote, September 30, 1881," Creek – Schools – Asbury Mission, Roll CRN 43, Creek National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK. Initially, Superintendent Thompson blamed the fire on arson. In a later report given to Checote prior to the second fire, Thompson seemingly changed his mind when he wrote that "I can never be induced to believe a member of the school would maliciously perpetrate so diabolical a deed." In light of a second fire only days after sending that letter, Thompson's views might have changed once more.

[135] "Letter from T.F. Brewer and J.F. Thompson to Samuel Checote, October 19, 1881," Creek – Schools – Asbury Mission, Roll CRN 43, Creek National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

[136] "Interview – J.J. Methvin of Anadarko," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

[137] Forty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1889), 26.

greater and better ends."[138] An added bonus to these new schools, they pointed out, was the fact that white Southern Methodist children would be allowed to attend. Since boarding schools were controlled by Indian nations, only Indian students could attend. This created some problems for the IMC, as in 1873 when the conference's newly-assigned superintendent to Asbury quit once he discovered that he could not admit his own children to the school, and the IMC was forced to find a suitable replacement.[139] "There are almost as many children of Methodist preachers engaged in this work, who are suffering for the want of an education," one critic wrote of the stance toward white children in Indian boarding schools, "as there are children of natives educated in these contract schools."[140]

The IMC's mismanagement was an additional factor in the Five Tribes' decision to terminate contracts, a point which the conference did not publically discuss. In the Choctaw Nation, the IMC had operated New Hope Seminary since 1870.[141] The Choctaw Council, in turn, paid for subsequent building costs in addition to its yearly appropriations. In October 1884, the IMC asked the Choctaw Council to reimburse the conference $2,757 that it paid for some new buildings and the Council agreed to do so.[142] A year later, the Council discovered that the superintendent of the school, E.A. Gray, tried to resubmit $805 from the previous amount for reimbursement, "or in other

[138] Our Brother in Red, January 1887.
[139] 1873 Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 40.
[140] Our Brother in Red, January 1887.
[141] "A proposed act for the erection of two boarding schools…," Folder 51, Box 2, Choctaw Nation Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[142] "Report of E.A. Gray," Folder 22, Box 16, Choctaw Nation Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

words, he had credited himself with the latter amount twice; showing a deliberate intention of perpetuating a fraud upon the Choctaw Nation."[143] Adding to the trouble, Gray also skipped out on paying $79 and instead billed the Council for it.

Gray's theft led the Council to begin negotiations for ending New Hope's contract with the Board of Missions. The then-current contract, signed in 1880 by the Choctaw Council and the Board of Missions, was for ten years and it allowed either party to end the contract at any time provided that the one side gave notification at least six months in advance to the other side.[144] In August 1885, Bishop Robert Hargrove replaced Gray with J.J. Methvin, a minister and educator from Georgia new to Indian Territory who tried to renegotiate with the Council in order to maintain the Board of Missions's contract.[145] The Board told Methvin that it would support a renewal of the agreement, but only if it "continue[d] the old contract under the present safe gaurds [sic]."[146] These "safe guards" included church control over the appointment of the superintendent, who would also have control over teachers and staff. The Council rejected this offer (a sensible decision considering the previous church-appointed superintendent fleeced the

[143] "Bill No. 26 – Report of E.A. Gray," Folder 24, Box 17, Choctaw Nation Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[144] "A Resolution providing for the manner of contracting with Foreign Mission Boards for the conduct and management of New Hope Seminary and Spencer Academy," Folder 26, Box 12, Choctaw Nation Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[145] "41st annual session, Oct 20, 1886, Eufaula, Creek Nation," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, OCU, OKC, OK.
[146] "June 8, 1886," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 03: May 12, 1879-August 31, 1886," Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

council) and passed a new resolution that called for the principal chief of the Choctaw Nation to appoint the new superintendent.[147] In October 1886, New Hope Seminary officially passed out of the control of the IMC and back into the hands of the Choctaw people, and the IMC quickly transferred Methvin to the Seminole Academy.[148]

How the IMC and the Choctaw handled the closing of New Hope was symptomatic of the conference's relationship with its Indian congregations by the late-1880s. For the IMC, "interference" on the part of Indians hampered their efforts at the school and restricted their "freedom" to engage in missionary work as it saw fit. In order to achieve the needed results, whether through an educated ministry or a self-supporting congregation, it needed to exert more control over the direction of the conference. The reluctance of Indian congregations to assimilate as the conference expected only dragged down the conference as a whole, especially when comparing it to other MECS conferences. Indians were holding the IMC back, conference officials began to realize, and this would dictate a change of direction and focus.

The IMC did not mention the other reasons for the end of the New Hope's contract. Ideas of Indian autonomy, ways to meet Indian needs properly and in accordance with their wishes, or the conference's own

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[147] "Bill No. 66," Folder 62, Box 17, Choctaw Nation Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

[148] Methvin's stint at the Seminole Academy was equally as short because it passed out of the IMC's control at the end of the 1886-1887 school year. Acting on the Board's instructions, Methvin "submitted certain important changes" to the contract because the current one did not serve "the best interests in the cause of Christ." The Seminole rejected these changes. See "42nd Session, Vinita, Cherokee Nation, October 12, 1887," Methodist Indian Conference Records, 1836-1906, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.

missteps were overlooked by the IMC but not by natives. Indian officials began to assert their own needs over Methodist-run schools much to the white man's chagrin. Though they embraced Methodism to a certain extent, native congregations continued to incorporate elements of their own culture into their services and refused to accept the demands that the IMC placed on them, creating a divide between Indian and non-Indian Methodists.

In the early days, Indian Territory required concessions on the part of organized denominations like the MECS. The IMC willingly used native preachers in order to reach native communities, and it enjoyed broad support from national organizations. But in the years after 1865, this changed. The pressures to assimilate Indians into the larger American culture permeated into the IMC's non-native membership, which grew throughout the 1870s and 1880s. These potential new members could support the struggling field on their own, and build facilities and other accouterments necessary for a proper Southern Methodist experience, if the IMC could reach them. It could remain a "mission" conference and expand in the region, but only if it de-emphasized efforts among the Indians. As a result, white congregations and leaders began to define their own relationship and legitimacy in the larger National Church based on the degree that Indians had assimilated to Southern Methodism.

Because they had accepted Christianity and Southern Methodism, however imperfect or different than the mainstream it may be, IMC officials considered the conference's Indian members on the path to "civilization."

These converts stood in stark contrast to the full-bloods/traditionalists who rejected the white society developing around them even though the Indians had not assimilated to the degree that the conference wanted. Indian Methodists could exist, but they were increasingly being separated from the white-dominated Methodist community in Indian Territory. It was a concept in place by the 1880s, but one that exploded after the Land Run in 1889.

Chapter Two: Expanding the Mission:

The Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency after 1887

For much of the nineteenth century, the citizens of the Five Tribes dominated the membership rolls of the Indian Mission Conference because the conference had only limited or sporadic contact with other Indians in the region. At times, intertribal camp meetings might introduce Southern Methodism to individuals or small groups of neighboring Indians like the Delaware or Shawnee, but overall, the work concentrated on the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw (with occasional efforts to the Seminole). For the IMC, this focus created a baseline of expectations as to what Southern Methodist missionaries could achieve in a native population and it set a standard of how the conference should conduct its mission work.

That began to change for the IMC in 1887 when the conference sent out missionaries into two new fields. While one field quickly faltered and was abandoned, the other field developed into a vibrant area of Indian Missions for years to come. John Jasper Methvin's work primarily among the Kiowa and Comanche became the centerpiece of IMC's efforts among native populations in western Indian Territory. With his school, the Methvin Institute, establishing a Southern Methodist presence near the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency (KCA) in Anadarko until it closed in 1908, Methvin spent more than fifty years building up the IMC's work. Though other Southern Methodist missionaries came into the field (some working closely with

Methvin and others working at odds with him), once again native converts were instrumental in shaping the direction of the Church in the region.

While some in the conference might have considered the Western Tribes an extension of previous mission efforts, in reality these communities presented new challenges for the IMC that it was not necessarily willing to meet. Unlike the Five Tribes, who had closer links to Southern culture and larger populations of acculturated members that the Church could reach out to, these Plains Indians were more recent immigrants into the territory who bristled under the direction of the federal government. Called "the terrors of the plains" by their Indian agent in 1888, the Kiowas and Comanches did not have the decades of interaction with Christianity and white society that the Five Tribes had, nor did they have a large, prosperous, or settled population that a Church could draw upon for support.[1] Missionary work with the Western Tribes presented some of the same challenges as the isolated full-blood communities among the Five Tribes did, in addition to introducing a whole new learning curve of cultures, languages, histories, and government relations that the conference had to address.

Initially, the IMC's work in western Indian Territory began in much the same way as its previous work with the Five Tribes did. The conference established a mission school as a base of operations, used white missionaries to visit Indian camps, pressured Indians to assimilate to Southern Methodist ways and white culture, and relied upon the abilities of

[1] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the year 1888, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1888), 96.

native converts to translate and promote the message, although the IMC limited their authority to direct mission efforts. The major differences were changes in expectations and attitudes toward the place of Indian converts in the IMC. Conference officials wanted quicker results than what Methvin and the others promised, and they wanted it done with less work than what the IMC had expended on the Five Tribes. Furthermore, at a time when the IMC wanted to move away from its Indian past and toward equality with other conferences, work among the Western Tribes continued to differentiate the conference from the National Church and mainstream Southern Methodism by re-emphasizing its “Indian” missions and need for support.

Much of the IMC’s growth among the Kiowa, Comanche, and other nearby tribes developed in some way from the work of J.J. Methvin. Though he did not direct the IMC’s efforts completely in the region, he was certainly the most vocal representative of Indian converts to both the conference and the National Church. However, Methvin was representative of only a small minority of white missionaries. Most did not spend more than fifty years in a mission field working primarily with a native population like he did. Instead, many missionaries grew frustrated and left the field after a short period of time or shifted their work toward easier populations to reach like nearby white communities. Concentrating on Methvin not only shows us why he was successful and what compromises he had to make with Indian congregations but also illuminates the reasons that many more individuals failed.

Methvin's personal beliefs were clear. He believed in the superiority of a Methodist lifestyle and saw many, many faults in aspects of native culture and the non-Southern Methodist Christian influence that affected Kiowa and Comanche communities. Like others who promoted an assimilationist agenda, he wanted to concentrate on "uplifting" Indians into white society rather than "lowering" himself to their level, and he was especially critical of practices that he believed were contrary to Christianity. But he felt that all non-Christians, whether Indian or not, were equally damned. As he wrote in his daily journal, Jesus Christ "becomes all things to all men. He becomes an Indian to save Indians[.] He becomes an African or Chinaman to save Africans and Chinamen."[2] Methvin's ethnocentrism was based more in a Christian culture than in the trappings of white society. He could be outspoken and intolerant toward customs that he felt contradicted Christianity or Southern Methodism, yet supportive toward Southern Methodist Indians and how they shaped Christianity. This support could put him at odds with conference officials. Methvin recognized the importance that Christian Indians played in the missionary process and he believed that change took time, a position at odds with many IMC leaders and the conference's own evolving attitude in the 1890s.

What Methvin learned and, more important, what he accepted was the need for Indians to spread Christianity, which implied that Indians would influence the direction of Southern Methodism in their communities. Just as among the Five Tribes, native converts were the most effective translators of

[2] "February 1, 1927," Methvin Journal, J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

the Southern Methodist message, and he recognized that individuals like Andres Martinez and Kicking Bird were integral in his work. Methvin cultivated ties with influential individuals within a tribe, connecting himself to the Quoetone and Horse families among the Kiowa for example, and he was an outspoken critic of mistreatment of Indians by the government and other whites. Ultimately, he used his school to create a generation of Southern Methodist Indians that would influence and lead the mission in the early twentieth century.

Though the mission spread in the western half of the conference due to the work of Methvin and his white and Indian associates, IMC officials wanted better results with less effort. The divide between its white churches and Indian congregations that formed in the post-Civil War decades grew along with the conference. This time, the distinction was clearer than before. The less-acculturated "wild tribes" of the Kiowa and Comanche converts stood out when compared to white members and even older congregations among the Five Tribes.[3] Newly immigrated white members scoffed at Indian missions in general, and missionaries among the Five Tribes saw a superiority of their natives over the Western Tribes. While the IMC and National Church envisioned assimilated Indians irrespective of tribal histories alongside the region's burgeoning white congregations, by the 1890s, the conference had diversified even further.

[3] For a variety of references to the "wild tribes," see J.J. Methvin, "Reminiscences of Life Among the Indians," Chronicles of Oklahoma 5 (June 1927): 169; Our Brother in Red (Muskogee, Indian Territory), October 29, 1887; and Letter from Methvin to J. Morris Nichols, January 2, 1919, J.J. Methvin Manuscript Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

After more than four decades of missionary activity among the Five Tribes, National Church officials worked in conjunction with the Indian Mission Conference to push the conference into two new fields. In 1887, the conference sent J.J. Methvin to the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency in Anadarko and C.S. Jones to the Sac and Fox reservation to establish missions among Indians that the Southern Methodist Church had only limited contact with previously. The so-called "Wild Tribes" (a term often employed by the IMC to show the perceived differences between the Plains Indians and its established work among the Five Tribes) assumed a central position in the National Church's Indian missions by the 1890s, even as the conference in general began to lean more toward its white membership and move away from Indian work.

The IMC and National Church had made some attempts at expanding into other native communities in Indian Territory prior to the late-1880s. With their worked concentrated among the Five Tribes, neighboring Indians such as the Delaware or Osage could come in contact with conference missionaries. In early 1881, H.S.P. Ashby from the Northwest Texas Conference worked briefly as a missionary near Fort Sill and received $50 a month from the Board of Missions for support. Health problems limited Ashby's ability to travel and he spent the majority of his time preaching to the Indians near the fort before leaving the region altogether the following spring.[4]

[4] "May 5, 1881," "February 6, 1882," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 03: May 12, 1879-August 31, 1886, Methodist Episcopal Church, South

Southern Methodism's first attempt at reaching the Plains Indians had an uneventful beginning.

The election of Charles Betts Galloway as a Church Bishop in 1886 was the first step in the IMC's eventual expansion. Galloway was a minister from Mississippi before his election and, as common during that era, his lack of seniority as a Bishop meant he was assigned one of the least desirable church conferences in the west. But Galloway was quick to bring changes to the IMC and implement the practices of mainstream conferences. At his first annual meeting with the IMC in October 1886, he imposed a rule restricting ministers to four years in one assignment which enforced the itinerant underpinnings of the Methodist ministry common in the North America. The secretary of the annual meeting confirmed that Galloway's attempts to bring the IMC in-line with other southern conferences had resulted in "more changes than ever before" and that "[s]ome who had felt they were fixtures were changed."[5]

In June 1887, Galloway spent two weeks in Indian Territory and visited the International Indian Council in Eufaula. Here Galloway met with representatives from many tribes in the region and had his first real encounter with Plains Indians. "It is impossible to look into the faces of you of the Civilized Nations," Galloway addressed the council primarily composed of representatives from the Five Tribes, "and then into those of our brethren of

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Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, New Jersey; Walter N. Vernon, "Methodist Beginnings Among Southwest Oklahoma Indians," Chronicles of Oklahoma 58 (Winter 1980-81): 394-395.

[5] Christian Advocate, November 6, 1886.

the plains and not realize the blessed results that follow the teaching of the religion of Jesus Christ."[6] In the Church's national newspaper, The Christian Advocate, Galloway recounted his visit to the council for the broader Church-wide audience in the hopes of invigorating new mission work among the Plains Indians. Those Indians, Galloway stated, "ought to stir the missionary fire of the Church everywhere."[7] According to the Bishop, an elderly Kiowa named Poor Buffalo asked for Christian missionaries to come to their camps and teach the Kiowa. Missionaries "cannot make much of us old Indians," Poor Buffalo told Galloway, "but much good might be done with the young."[8]

Galloway interpreted Poor Buffalo's comments as a plea for help from a non-Christian and an opportunity for Southern Methodists to carry forth the Pauline mission of evangelism to an eager population. He did not consider any other reasons for the Kiowa's request and instead saw it as a chance for his Church's growth. In his address to the council, the bishop stated how affected he was by the plight of the Plains Indians and confessed that "the Indian cause is nearer my heart now than ever before" as he pledged the support of the National Church. "As one of the chief pastors of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, I …assure you of [the Church's] desire for your prosperity and advancement, and [its] wish to help you as far as possible," Galloway said.[9] The editor of the Christian Advocate understood the Bishop's

[6] Our Brother in Red, July 1887.
[7] The Christian Advocate, August 13, 1887.
[8] The Christian Advocate, August 13, 1887.
[9] Warren A. Candler, Bishop Charles Betts Galloway: A Prince of Preachers and Christian Statesman (Nashville, Tn.: Cokesbury Press, 1927), 94.

thoughts and wrote that Galloway's "missionary heart kindles whenever he gets out among the Indians."[10]

What Galloway overlooked were some of Poor Buffalo's other comments at the council. In addition to giving his perspective on the role of Christianity in maintaining relations between Indian and white societies, he hinted at a spiritual view that blended Christian beliefs with native concepts. More than just a plea for education, Poor Buffalo saw missionaries as a way for white society to correct its mistreatment of Indians. "Don't know much about the great Father above, but believe in his existence," Poor Buffalo said. "I think he must be displeased with the treatment the Indian is receiving from his white brother."[11] According to Poor Buffalo's beliefs, each Indian tribe had their own god while the white man had his, and it was important that followers did not dishonor their god. "But when a tribe does wrong, its god becomes displeased at it, especially because the other gods of other nations see his disgrace," he told Galloway.[12] Poor Buffalo felt that the Kiowa had been victims of white depredations and that greedy whites wanted Kiowa land. In his opinion, the introduction of Christian missionaries was an opportunity for whites to makes amends for their treatment of Indians while at the same time honoring their own god. Poor Buffalo hoped that missionaries would bring the Kiowa benefits like education, but he did not think Christianity would completely replace Kiowa beliefs because the tribe had not shamed their

[10] The Christian Advocate, August 13, 1887.
[11] The Christian Advocate, August 13, 1887.
[12] The Christian Advocate, August 13, 1887.

"gods" like whites had. The Kiowas' "gods" were already "pleased," Poor Buffalo said, "because [Kiowas] are trying to do right and keep peace."[13]

Invigorated by his experience at the International Indian Council, Bishop Galloway formally expanded the IMC at the conference's annual meeting that fall by assigning missionaries to two new fields.[14] These new missionaries, C.S. Jones and J.J. Methvin, initially faced many of the same circumstances and situations in their respective mission fields, though their results varied greatly. While Methvin firmly established the church and had a career lasting more than five decades, Jones's work was over within two years.

Interestingly enough, when the conference sent out the two men, Jones had more experience with Indian missions than Methvin. Licensed to preach in 1879, Jones worked for several years among the Cherokee and was well acquainted with the difficulties of Indian missions.[15] He understood the absence of proper church buildings, the reticence Indian communities might have toward white missionaries, and the lack of pay and other support that the field promised.[16] When he arrived at the Sac and Fox Agency near the western border of the Cherokee Nation in November 1887, he struggled to find a home for his wife and five children after reversing his initial decision to send his family to Arkansas while he worked. Eventually, he bought an

[13] The Christian Advocate, August 13, 1887.
[14] "42nd Session, Vinita, Cherokee Nation, Oct 12, 1887," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.
[15] Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 252.
[16] The Christian Advocate, May 22.1886. Jones claimed that the 15 appointments on his 2 circuits paid only $90 for the year.

unfinished house for his parsonage on the condition that he would have it paid off by March 1, 1888.[17]

Jones's assessment of the conference's potential at the agency was optimistic, though it also revealed some of the problems he faced. He detailed some of the tribes living within reach of the agency and claimed that no Southern Methodist had ever worked in the area before and that few missionaries were willing to venture out to the full-blood camps. Fortunately, Jones said, the Sac and Fox had committed $5,000 for a church-run school and promised a yearly $5,000 appropriation for its support.[18] "Here is another grand opening for us…. Our Church should by all means enter this open door," he wrote in The Christian Advocate within months of his appointment.[19] Yet Jones's description of the field also revealed some of its faults. The only permanent church house at the agency belonged to the Baptists, which the full-blood Osage preacher had offered to Jones until he had his own church building. Jones, in turn, volunteered to spend half of his yearly appropriation on a building on the condition that the National Church help pay off his preexisting debt on the parsonage. Finally, language issues, which many National Church members back east falsely assumed had disappeared in the territory, once again complicated missionary work. Jones argued that contrary to popular belief, the older generation of native-speaking Indians was

[17] The Christian Advocate, December 17, 1887.
[18] Our Brother in Red, December 17, 1887; The Christian Advocate, December 17, 1887; The Christian Advocate, January 7, 1888.
[19] The Christian Advocate, January 7, 1888.

not being replaced by English-speaking Indian youth.[20] "Our fathers made the same mistake with the Choctaws, Cherokees, and Creek," he wrote to The Christian Advocate, criticizing the National Church's reluctance in translating the Bible and other publications into Indian languages during the previous four decades.[21] For Jones, the field required more money for translated materials and suitable interpreters or it would suffer and possibly fail.[22]

Jones was never able to overcome these problems. One year after his appointment, the conference "superannuated" him at their 1888 annual conference and left the Sac and Fox Agency "to be supplied" (a common designation used by a Methodist conference when no official appointment of a preacher in charge could be made for a particular circuit).[23] The conference had little desire to send more people into the field, a position upheld even after Jones died from tuberculosis in June 1889.[24] Southern Methodist work around the agency after that point occurred only in sporadic outbursts or occasional opportunities over the next several decades.

In contrast to its failure at the Sac and Fox Agency, the IMC did establish a permanent presence among the Western Tribes near Anadarko

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[20] Our Brother in Red, December 17, 1887; The Christian Advocate, January 7, 1888; The Christian Advocate, July 7, 1888.
[21] The Christian Advocate, July 7, 1888.
[22] The Christian Advocate, December 17, 1887.
[23] When a preacher was superannuated, they were retired by the conference. This was mostly due either to health issues, as in Jones's case, or due to advancing age. "To be supplied" often occurred in the IMC, especially in the conference's more remote or isolated circuits. In these cases, local preachers fulfilled whatever duties they could until the conference officially assigned someone new.
[24] "43rd Session of the Indian Mission Conference, White Bead Hill, Chickasaw Nation, October 10, 1889," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK; Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 252.

largely due to the work of J.J. Methvin. While Jones's health suffered, which in turn led to the field's early demise, Methvin remained active around Anadarko for more than fifty years. Unlike the IMC's experience with the Five Tribes, the Plains Indians from the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency were less acculturated to white society and had only recently been resettled on a reservation, making their conversion to Christianity a difficult and frustrating experience for some missionaries. Prior to 1887, missionary efforts near the KCA Agency had been infrequent and temporary. Lawrie Tatum, an Iowa Quaker, served as Indian agent for the agency during President Grant's Peace Policy of the 1870s, but Tatum was unable to make the nonviolent policy work and he resigned in 1873. Two years after H.S.P. Ashby's aborted attempt for the Southern Methodists in 1881, J.B. Wicks, an Episcopal minister, arrived in Anadarko and even built a small church in town. Wicks's ministry, however, was more concerned with the small white population and agency personnel in town than with Indians in the region, and Wicks soon left for work in eastern Indian Territory. With most missionary efforts in the area frustrated or abandoned, the IMC sensed an opportunity for growth.[25] "We will raise the banner of the cross," Methvin wrote optimistically at the start of his missionary work in January 1888, "and capture these Indians for the Lord."[26]

[25] Vernon, "Methodist Beginnings Among Southwest Oklahoma Indians," 394-395; J.J. Methvin, In the Limelight, or History of Anadarko and Vicinity from the Earliest Day, (Anadarko, Ok.: Plummer, 1929), 83-84.
[26] Our Brother in Red, January 14, 1888.

In the late-nineteenth century, the Kiowa and Comanche were popular images of the "uncivilized" or "wild" Indian.[27] Though factions within the tribes had signed the Medicine Lodge Treaty in 1867 and agreed to remove to reservation lands, the Kiowa and Comanche resisted the federal government's policies and their Quaker agents in the 1870s with their raids into communities in Texas and their captive taking. It was not until after the Red River War in 1875 that the last bands of defiant Kiowa and Comanche capitulated and permanently resettled on the KCA Agency in southwestern Indian Territory.[28] Even so, a decade later negative perceptions of the tribes still permeated agent's reports. In 1886, the KCA agent, Jesse Lee Hall, accused Kiowa leader Sun Boy of destroying crops and fences to impede assimilation, and he called the Comanche "the most cunning, bloodthirsty, and warlike of all the plains Indians."[29] Complicating work on the KCA agency was the fact that most of the Comanche communities lived near Fort Sill and the majority of Kiowa camps were nearly 40 miles to the north by Anadarko, making traveling and overseeing the agency's diverse Indian population a difficult endeavor.

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[27] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1888, 96.

[28] For more on the Kiowa and Comanche in the post-Civil War era, see Robert M. Utley, The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846-1890, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 140-148, 174-178; Francis Paul Prucha, The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 535-536; William T. Hagan, United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990); and William C. Meadows, Kiowa, Apache, and Comanche Military Societies: Enduring Veterans, 1800 to the Present (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

[29] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the year 1886, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1886), 127-128; Quote on page 128.

Heeding Bishop Galloway's call for missionaries to the Plains Indians, the IMC asked Methvin in the spring of 1887to make a survey of the field. As Methvin later wrote, "the call of the Wild Tribes further west caught my ear and one day, I hitched my ponies, kissed my wife and children, and started west on a reconnoitering expedition."[30] Traveling with his brother-in-law, W.S. Beall, he left his home in Eufaula and journeyed west along the Canadian River, where the pair first encountered Cheyenne and Arapahoe camped along the southern banks. From here, Methvin and Beall turned south for Anadarko, passing through the Wichita Reservation along the way. Except for a Mennonite school among the Cheyenne and a Baptist church on the Wichita Reservation, Methvin "found a field of need where we could expend our resources of men and means without conflicting with other churches or overlapping the work of other organizations."[31] In the place of Christianity, Methvin discovered various native practices he classified as superstitions and fetishes.[32] The Indians he discovered in western Indian Territory, Methvin claimed, were "as ignorant of the Gospel as if they lived in the heart of Africa."[33]

Upon his return to Eufaula a few weeks later, Methvin reported his findings to the Board of Missions and Bishop Galloway. Missionary work

[30] Letter from Methvin to J. Morris Nichols, January 2, 1919, J.J. Methvin Manuscript Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[31] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[32] "Interview with J.J. Methvin, August 10, 1937," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.; Sidney H. Babcock, "John Jasper Methvin, 1846-1941," Chronicles of Oklahoma 19 (June 1941): 114.
[33] "Interview with J.J. Methvin, August 10, 1937," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

could thrive among the Plains Indians, Methvin said, but these Indians needed a young preacher dedicated to the ministry. Western Indian Territory was a large and sparsely populated mission field without a railroad or telegraph line, alienating it from eastern communities and the National Church. The field would require extensive travel to reach Indian camps, Methvin argued, and demanded a young preacher unencumbered by familial responsibilities. As a married man with a pregnant wife and four children, Methvin did not consider himself qualified for what he felt was a "difficult but glorious task,"[34] nor did he think that this reconnoitering trip "was paving the way for [his] own future work." [35] At the Muskogee District Conference in July 1887, Methvin seemed eager at the prospects of Indian ministers conducting the mission work on their own and opening the field especially after David L. Berryhill, a Creek minister, indicated his willingness. "Brother Berryhill, a full-blood Indian, says he is ready to go to these Western tribes," Methvin wrote. "How it moved our hearts when he said this, and I prayed God to give us many fully consecrated and competent Indian preachers for this Western work."[36]

For unclear reasons, the IMC did not send Berryhill or any other Indian preacher, and instead appointed Methvin as "Missionary to the Western Tribes" at its annual conference in October 1887.[37] There was little about the

[34] Babcock, "John Jasper Methvin," 115
[35] Letter from Methvin to J. Morris Nichols, January 2, 1919, J.J. Methvin Manuscript Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[36] The Christian Advocate, July 30, 1887.
[37] "42nd Session, Vinita, Cherokee Nation, October 12, 1887," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.

Methvin's background to indicate that he could be successful as a missionary, much less one to Indians in the remote outpost of Anadarko. Born in 1846 in Georgia, he served in the Confederacy during the Civil War and was a trained lawyer before entering the ministry in 1871. Methvin spent much of the 1870s and 1880s as a teacher in his home state and superintending various church-run schools. After growing tired of local politics and denominational issues affecting church schools in Georgia, he asked for and received a transfer to Indian Territory where he was originally assigned to superintend New Hope Seminary in the Choctaw Nation. That school closed within a year and his second assignment, the Seminole Academy, also closed soon after his arrival. When he left for Anadarko in November 1887 to assume his new position, Methvin was a 115 pound, forty-year-old missionary with more experience closing mission fields than opening new ones.[38]

As headquarters for the KCA Agency, Anadarko provided access to a variety of Indians and could serve as a central base of operations for missions, but Methvin also found an agency that lacked proper facilities and appropriate government personnel. The agency had a saw mill, a blacksmith, and a commissary, though the absence of any barns or stables meant that the livestock, grain, and feed were exposed to the weather.[39] Government employees, Methvin complained, were more concerned with political patronage than Indian affairs, and within his first three years in town, the KCA

[38] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK; A.E. Butterfield, Comanche, Kiawa, and Apache Missions: Forty-two Years Ago and Now (n.p., 1934), 4.
[39] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1888, 95.

Agency had three different Indian agents. The government physician, he claimed, was "an avowed infidel" who had named his son after Robert Ingersoll, a prominent Gilded Age advocate of freethinking and agnosticism.[40] "There were some exceptionally excellent characters among them," Methvin wrote of the agency personnel during this time, "but as a rule it was a crude and crusty crowd."[41]

Perhaps the biggest problem affecting white behavior at the agency and complicating missionary work was the abundance of alcohol. The liquor trade had been a constant problem since the early days of Indian Territory and it worsened with the influx of whites into the area in the post-Civil War decades. Federal authorities and Indian governments restricted liquor in the territory, but the promise of large profits and the reality of too few United States Marshalls to patrol the area ensured that the illegal trade continued. Following the creation of a separate territory in 1890, officials in Oklahoma Territory legalized liquor even though temperance remained in effect in Indian Territory. As a result, sandbar saloons on the Canadian River, which served as the boundary between the two territories, along with outposts in nearby Texas provided ample alcohol to those in the western half of the region.[42]

At the KCA Agency, liquor problems and fraud led the federal government to send a special agent to investigate in the summer of 1887.

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[40] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[41] Methvin, "Reminiscences of Life Among the Indians," 170.
[42] Murray R. Wickett, Contested Territory: Whites, Native Americans, and African Americans in Oklahoma, 1865-1907 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 147-149; Donald J. Berthrong, The Cheyenne and Arapaho Ordeal: Reservation and Agency Life in the Indian Territory, 1875-1907 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 225, 302-305.

Looking into charges of "dishonesty, drunkenness, and various other acts of misconduct" by the previous agent Jesse Lee Hall, Eugene E. White discovered a nest of drunks colluding with beef distributors and cattleman to defraud both the federal government and Indian tribes.[43] In his 1888 report to the Indian Office, White stated that liquor had infested the entire reservation and "even more so at the agency than elsewhere. The white man who did not drink was the exception."[44] Methvin's own observations of the KCA Agency were similar to White's. The agency clerks were frequent drinkers, he noted, and the superintendent of one of the government schools was suspended for drunkenness, while another employee suffered from a self-inflicted gunshot wound he received after a night of carousing.[45]

Methvin's initial impressions of the Indians around Anadarko were as equally critical as his thoughts about the agency personnel. "Here we began our work with as crude a people as ever roamed over their native soil," he recalled.[46] The KCA Agency served both the Wichita Reservation to the north and the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Reservation to the south. At Anadarko, Methvin found Indians from "ten or twelve tribes in all" who "hung around the Agency most of the time waiting for the next issue of beef and other supplies from the commissary." [47] The local agent gave his opinion on the possibilities of mission work when he told Methvin that the missionary

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[43] Eugene Elliot White, Experiences of a Special Indian Agent (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 238-239.
[44] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1888, 98.
[45] Methvin, "Reminiscences of Life Among the Indians," 170.
[46] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[47] Methvin, "Reminiscences of Life Among the Indians," 170.

"would have to knock them in the head before [he] could preach to them and teach them."[48]

Prior to the reservation era, the Kiowa and Comanche were dominant horse-dependent peoples on the Southern Plains who relied greatly upon the bison for sustenance, cultural traditions, and economic needs. The decline of the bison on the Southern Plains, coupled with the growing pressures from an expanding United States, turned the 1870s and 1880s into a tumultuous period for both tribes that disrupted religious and cultural practices. Whites who encountered these Indians in the late-nineteenth century discovered communities transitioning from the nomadic lifestyle of the Plains to the forced assimilation agenda of missionaries and government officials. Socially, the Kiowa and Comanche organized themselves around small kinship units with political power resting with individual bands.[49] Men typically joined various societies within the tribe, with the growth of military societies serving as one example of the Kiowa and Comanche preserving older customs of pre-reservation life.[50] Practices seen as anti-Christian in the eyes of whites, such as ritual dances, peyote use, and polygyny, only distanced the Kiowa and Comanche further from the mainstream of white society and white missionaries.

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[48] "Rev. J.J. Methvin, Feb. 19, 1934," Box 9, Lida White Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[49] Thomas W. Kavanagh, "Comanche," in Handbook of North American Indians, Vol 13, Part 2, Plains edited by William C. Sturtevant, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 892-899; Jerrold E. Levy, "Kiowa," in Handbook of North American Indians, Vol 13, Part 2, Plains edited by William C. Sturtevant, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 910-915.
[50] Meadows, Kiowa, Apache, and Comanche Military Societies, xi-xii.

When he visited the neighboring Kiowa and Comanche, Methvin found cosmologies drastically different than his own. At the beginning of his camp work in 1888, Methvin did not understand native traditions and customs, especially those related to social structures, and he could not recognize Indian religious practices as anything but superstitions and paganism.[51] Both Kiowa and Comanche spiritual beliefs centered on an individual's connection to power, which also involved adhering to proper rituals and practices to maintain and use this power. For the Comanche, individuals received their power, or puha, either through supernatural methods like a vision quest or by transferring power from another person, perhaps through inheritance.[52] For the Kiowa, the dwdw was the larger spiritual power that embodied all elements of the universe including the sun, earth, environment, and animals. Attainment of this power, largely as a curing power or war power, could bring prestige and importance to an individual Kiowa.[53] Methvin, however, saw more ominous characteristics in the dwdw and puha and how individuals used their power. These "perversions of the religious instinct" led to prostitution, suicide, and murder and "contributed to the perverted emotion of their savage natures."[54]

In the 1880s and 1890s, Christian missionaries found Kiowa society already undergoing a period of great religious change and turmoil. Like other

[51] Vernon, "Methodist Beginnings Among Southwest Oklahoma Indians," 395; Methvin, "Reminiscences of Life Among the Indians," 179; Our Brother in Red, January 14, 1888.
[52] Kavanagh, "Comanche," 892.
[53] Benjamin R. Kracht, "Kiowa Religion in Historical Perspective" American Indian Quarterly 21 (Winter 1997): 16-17.
[54] Methvin, "Reminiscences of Life Among the Indians," 177.

Plains Indians, the Kiowa held a kado, or Sun Dance, during many summers in which the bison was a central component of the four-day ceremony. As one scholar stated, the Sun Dance "unified the tribe socially and spiritually."[55] These dances, which included the public display of the sacred taime bundle as a symbol for the sun, offered individuals a chance to pray for the future health and well-being of the tribe and its members.[56] But the decline of the bison on the Southern Plains led to a similar decline in the Sun Dance for the Kiowa, and several Kiowa pictorial calendars documented years in which the dance could not be held because the taime priest could not find a suitable animal.[57] The Kiowa held their last Sun Dance in 1887, and the federal government banned the practice after 1890, undercutting a fundamental aspect of Kiowa culture.[58]

In this difficult atmosphere of spiritual disruption for the Kiowa, Methvin interpreted their activities as proof of their lack of morality, an observation which was indicative of his own ethnocentrism and his belief in the superiority of Christianity. What latter-day observers might note were methods of social control concerning issues of marriage or property, Methvin could only interpret through a narrow prism defined by white society and his own

[55] Kracht, "Kiowa Religion in Historical Perspective," 18.
[56] Kracht, "Kiowa Religion in Historical Perspective," 19.
[57] Alice Marriott, The Ten Grandmothers: Epic of the Kiowas (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 302-303; Candace S. Greene, One Hundred Summers: A Kiowa Calendar Record (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 127. In 1879, the Kiowa held a Sun Dance with a slaughtered horse instead of the ceremonial bison due to problems finding an appropriate animal. See James Mooney, "Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians," Seventeenth Annual Report, part 2, Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1893), 344-345.
[58] Maurice Boyd, Kiowa Voices: Ceremonial Dance, Ritual and Songs Volume I (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1981), 24.

personal Christian beliefs. "Successful theft was so much gain," he wrote. "Murder constituted a hero, adultery but a gratification with no thought of wrong, and women little more than a brute for man's lustful use."[59]

Methvin's views on the perceived violent nature of the Kiowa mirrored other whites who came into contact with them during the same time period. "The Kiowas are said to worship in camp certain rough images of wood and present as propitiatory offerings strips of calico, beads, etc.," wrote Charles E. Adams, the KCA agent, in his 1890 annual report when attempting to describe sacred Kiowa medicine bundles.[60] James Mooney, the noted ethnologist, considered the Kiowa as "deficient" in moral character. "They have the savage virtue of bravery…but as a people they have less of honor, gratitude, and general reliability than perhaps any other tribe of the plains," he wrote in an 1893 report.[61] As a dedicated and trained minister, Methvin interpreted these Kiowa traits strictly in Christian terms. The reason for this lack of morals on the part of the Indians, Methvin believed, was because "[t]here was no sense of sin, and therefore no crimes nor criminals among them, for the moral sense had not been sufficiently developed to distinguish between right and wrong, or count any thing as a crime."[62]

Methvin's cultural arrogance toward Indians was rooted in his belief in the absence of "grace" in a non-Christian's life. Though he clearly derided

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[59] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[60] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the year 1890, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1890), 186.
[61] Mooney, "Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians," 234.
[62] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

Indian customs he viewed as anti-Christian, so too did he attack similar elements in white society like gambling and alcohol. During one of his first services in the area in early-1888, he preached before a Cheyenne congregation on "the sinfullness [sic] of the heart and the actual sins of the people." In the middle of the sermon, Wolf Face, a Cheyenne chief, pointed at another chief, White Antelope, and laughed. Methvin believed that Wolf Face was ridiculing White Antelope for sins that he committed the day before and applying Methvin's sermon to him. "This made me think that human nature is the same the world over and in all races," he recalled.[63] For all of the sins he saw in Indian culture, Methvin felt that it was a similar situation experienced by non-Christians in white society. The Indian may be the "wild savage of the plains," he thought, but this made him no different from non-believing whites because "human nature is the same in all."[64] "[W]ithout grace," Methvin believed, "the white man is no better than the Indian."[65]

From the Kiowa perspective, there were similarities between elements of Christianity and their own native practices, though missionaries like Methvin were loathe to make any similar comparisons themselves. By emphasizing sin in an individual's life, missionaries were trying to reorient Kiowa society and cut out those practices that they deemed sinful such as gambling and dancing. Yet there were other aspects of Christianity that the Kiowa might embrace. Missionaries could connect the concept of God (Daw-

[63] The Christian Advocate, February 25, 1888.
[64] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[65] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

k' ee) and Jesus (Daw-k' yah-ee) to dwdw and introduce perceptions of Jesus as a positive power that appealed to the Kiowa.[66] In other instances, the Kiowa found missionaries trying to introduce concepts already fundamental in their society. As Alice Apekum Zenella, a relative of Stumbling Bear born in 1894, said, while missionaries tried to teach Indians how to pray, "we already knew how."[67] Robert Pinezaddleby, Stumbling Bear's great-grandson and a prominent Methodist Indian minister in the twentieth century, credited the "Old Ones" with teaching the importance of prayer to younger generations. Though these "Old Ones" were using prayer in regards to the dwdw, and not toward Christianity, Pinezaddleby learned the "rigid" practice of daily prayer. With missionaries trying to impose Christian prayer, Kiowas like Apekum and Pinezaddleby could easily transfer the practices and teachings of older, non-Christian Kiowas onto their new faith.[68]

The challenges of mission work among the Western Tribes balanced alongside agency life was evident in an article that Methvin wrote in the IMC's official newspaper, Our Brother in Red, in April 1889. In the article, Methvin described a typical Sabbath experience and the differences in reaching out to Indians and whites. In the early morning, Methvin, traveling with two of his sons, rode ten miles on horseback to visit a nearby Kiowa village where they expected to meet their interpreter shortly before noon. The interpreter failed

[66] Boyd, Kiowa Voices: Ceremonial Dance, Ritual and Songs, 100; Kracht, "Kiowa Religion in Historical Perspective," 20.
[67] Quoted in Lucille Gilstrap, Sayt-aym-k'ee-ah, Kiowa Chief and His People, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[68] Gilstrap, Sayt-aym-k'ee-ah, Kiowa Chief and His People, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

to arrive, forcing Methvin to find a suitable replacement from among the gathered Kiowas. Eventually, Methvin asked Virginia Stumbling Bear, a former Carlisle student and daughter of Stumbling Bear, to translate for him, and Virginia reluctantly agreed, though she continued to nurse her two children in the process. With an interpreter secured and the children playing outside, Methvin began ministering in a teepee to a small gathering of Indians. After several interruptions from livestock grazing outside, Methvin finished his work and left for Anadarko, finally meeting up with his interpreter on the way. When Methvin returned to town in the late-afternoon, he found a sick parishioner waiting for him and together the two men prayed for healing. Afterwards, Methvin left the man to attend services held by a Presbyterian minister at the agency church, a far different venue than his early service in a teepee. But while other ministers might find this solitary work among the Western tribes a failure, Methvin found contentment. "No responsive amens from appreciative brethren, no inspiring surroundings in any of these services, no reputation to make by sermons eloquent before congregations grand," Methvin told his readers, "but one gets very near heaven . . . in this work."[69]

The IMC's work around Anadarko made little headway for nearly two years.[70] "I feel like you are throwing your life away. Those people are impervious to the gospel, and yours is a hopeless task and we need you elsewhere," an unnamed Bishop told Methvin.[71] With few coworkers at first,

[69] Our Brother in Red, April 6, 1889.
[70] Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 236-237.
[71] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

little resources, and no church facilities among the Indians, circumstances required that Methvin travel on foot or bicycle to reach the Indian camps only to preach in teepees and brush arbors. [72] On these occasions, Indian audiences were reticent toward Methvin's preaching and what they felt were the religious faults of the white community.[73] Why should we feel sorrow and regret, a native congregation asked Methvin after one of his sermons on the Crucifixion, when it was the whites who killed Christ? Why must Indians pay for sins that they did not commit?[74] Methvin initially tried to force natives to adapt to his beliefs rather than finding any common ground. "I have found recently that these Indians have a kind of crude nature worship," he wrote after his first summer among the Kiowa. "I try to show them the difference between the creature and the Creator, the thing created and Him who created. I think they are beginning to understand, but what a wall of darkness; God alone can penetrate it."[75]

The IMC's success among the Plains Indians only occurred after missionaries adapted to Indian needs and viewpoints, which involved using methods that appealed directly to Indian culture as well as increasing the use of native helpers in the missionary work. For Methvin, adaptation was a trying process filled with missteps. However, this approach also ensured that

[72] Letter from Methvin to J. Morris Nichols, January 2, 1919, J.J. Methvin Manuscript Collection, OHS, OKC, OK; Bruce David Forbes, "John Jasper Methvin: Methodist ' Missionary to the Western Tribes' (Oklahoma)," in Churchmen and the Western Indians, 1820-1920, eds. Clyde A. Milner and Floyd A. O'Neil, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 50, 52.
[73] Methvin, "Reminiscences of Life Among the Indians," 171.
[74] "Interview with W.W. Bray, September 15, 1937," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[75] Our Brother in Red, September 15, 1888.

Indians had a strong influence over the makeup and direction of the conference in the region. If the IMC's ultimate goal was assimilation and creating a community of Christians that mirrored the rest of the conference, changing the work to give Indians more input and then appealing to elements of their own culture was certainly counterproductive.

Initially, Methvin used any gathering of Indians as an opportunity to preach to them, though he could be stymied by the perseverance of Indian customs at these times and forced to compete for their attention. When Stumbling Bear's son died, the chief wanted a Christian burial and an Indian burial to "be sure that his son got the benefit of which ever was right," Methvin believed.[76] Instead, the missionary insisted on only a Christian service. "[I]t was an opportunity to teach them the reality of Christian hope as to the future world," he recalled. But, as Methvin also noted, once the missionary left, the assembled Indians proceeded with their own customs, including slaughtering the boy's favorite pony for his use in the afterlife.[77]

One method of adaptation where Methvin had more success came when he introduced Methodist camp meetings as a replacement for more traditional Indian gatherings.[78] Partly due to attempts to enforce assimilation and reduce native customs, and partly due to fears of mass Indian gatherings without white supervision resulting in violent uprisings, the Commissioner of

[76] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[77] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[78] Luke Eric Lassiter, Clyde Ellis, and Ralph Kotay, The Jesus Road: Kiowas, Christianity, and Indian Hymns, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 36.

Indian Affairs banned the Sun Dance at the KCA Agency in 1889. Undeterred, the Kiowa threatened to hold a dance regardless of the federal government's ban, and tensions ran so high that summer that the Indian Office asked for military troops from nearby Ft. Sill to protect the KCA Agency.[79] One prominent Kiowa war leader from the pre-reservation days, Big Tree, blamed Methvin for alerting the government to their plans for a dance (though Methvin denied doing so) and he threatened both the minister and his Indian congregation. As a result of this turmoil and Big Tree's threats, Indians left Methvin's church, reducing his membership to a handful.[80]

Taking advantage of the federal government's ban on the Sun Dance, Methvin arranged for a camp meeting the next summer near Mt. Scott in an attempt to gradually introduce Christianity and Southern Methodist customs. "[T]his was a wild crowd to preach to," he remembered of his first Indian camp meeting in the summer of 1890. Methvin's ignorance of Indian customs and expectations was clear as he quickly encountered two problems. First, he had to convince the gathered Indians that he was not there for profit or to take advantage of them like traders or cattlemen; and second, he had to persuade them to attend the three 3-hour services held each day. What complicated this process of replacing Indian ceremonies with Christian practices was Methvin's unfamiliarity with the responsibilities that Indians expected him to

[79] "Letter from the Indian Office to the War Department, June 5, 1889," Roll 60 – May 6-July 25, 1889, Letters Sent by the Indian Division of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, 1849-1903, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK; "Letter from the Indian Office to the War Department, September 3, 1889," Roll 61 – July 22-October 10, 1889, Letters Sent by the Indian Division of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, 1849-1903, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK

[80] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

fulfill. According to Indian tradition, whoever called the meeting was also responsible for supplying the food, and Methvin had only $10 to spare. Fortunately, “BattleCreek” Williams, a local trader, offered to help and secured the beef for him.[81] Even with this problem solved, Methvin experienced nearly a week of unenthusiastic services and Indian reaction before making his breakthrough on the last day of the camp meeting. At that point, a Comanche woman “gave full vent to her joy,” and Methvin believed that that lone action aroused a Christian sentiment among the assembled tribes making the camp meeting the “beginning of a new era.”[82] Afterwards, camp meetings were held regularly at Mt. Scott and became a bridge between Indian society and Southern Methodism.

Just as with their previous experiences in eastern Indian Territory, the IMC learned that when individual Indians among the Western Tribes embraced Christianity, they did not necessarily abandon their traditional practices and Indian ways. Native customs, beliefs, and dress still persisted even among the Indians “traveling the ‘white man's road’,” Methvin told the conference, because Indians selectively incorporated elements of white society into their own.[83] As Stumbling Bear told Methvin in September 1888, “Not all of the ways of the white man better than all of the Indian ways. Some Indian ways best.”[84] Methvin’s work among the Kiowa and Comanche

[81] “The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin,” J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[82] “The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin,” J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[83] Our Brother in Red, May 12, 1888.
[84] Our Brother in Red, September 15, 1888, emphasis in original.

exposed the IMC to even more diversity at a time when its goal was assimilation, and it reinforced the conference's Indian appearance at a time when the IMC was working for legitimacy in the eyes of the National Church. To those eastern officials who incorrectly believed that the days of the "blanket Indian" had passed, Methvin reminded them to "just come this way [and] he can find all to suit his wildest fancy."[85]

With events like camp meetings beginning to have an effect among the local communities and tribes near Anadarko, individual Indians became connected to the IMC and Methvin's work. After nearly a year in the field, Methvin felt by October 1888 that the native communities were finally beginning to trust him.[86] Stumbling Bear, an advocate of accommodation since the days of the Quaker control at the KCA Agency in the 1870s, was receptive to the missionary's work and became a friend. Stumbling Bear's sister, Ankima, and her husband Tohausen were some of Methvin's first converts and even traveled with him to the IMC's annual conference on one occasion. Lillian Methvin, his youngest daughter born soon after the family moved to Anadarko, became especially close to the child-less couple, so much so that she referred to them as her "Indian parents."[87]

The experiences of Tohausen and Ankima showed how some Kiowa took the initiative in their embrace of Christianity and Southern Methodism regardless of the missionary's' skepticism, while also maintaining their

[85] Our Brother in Red, May 12, 1888.
[86] Our Brother in Red, October 6, 1888.
[87] "Interview with J.J. Methvin, October 26, 1937," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC, OU, Norman, OK.; "Interview with Lillian Gassaway, May 27, 1937," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC, OU, Norman, OK..

connections to native customs that missionaries often opposed. Tohausen was the son of the mid-nineteenth century Kiowa chief Tohausen, best known for his skills in diplomacy and warfare during a time of increasing white migration on the Southern Plains.[88] Though he did not inherit his father's standing as a principal chief, the younger Tohausen did earn a reputation for his achievements in battle and it was his sacred duty to locate and kill the ceremonial bison used by the Kiowas in their Sun Dance. Due to the bison's decline on the Southern Plains in the 1880s, Tohausen had difficulties in carrying out his responsibility. He did, however, remain involved in attempts by the Kiowa to resume the dance in the 1890s even after the federal government put a stop to the practice.[89]

Perhaps because of Tohausen's involvement with the Sun Dance, Methvin initially underestimated his and his wife's understanding and acceptance of Christianity even though the two had been early supporters of his work. Tohausen allowed the missionary to preach at his camp, while the couple steadily attended his services for several years. When Tohausen died from tuberculosis in 1894, he spent his final days camped in Methvin's front yard before passing away in Methvin's own bed. Yet even with their close friendship with his family and their support of his work, Methvin did not believe that the couple understood enough about Christianity to be considered

[88] Candace S. Greene, "Exploring the Three 'Little Bluffs' of the Kiowa" Plains Anthropologist 41 (August 1996): 233. There were three Kiowa men named Tohausen (translated as Little Bluff in English) in the nineteenth century as Greene details in her essay. According to her, Tohausen II was a nephew of the original Tohausen and used the name only temporarily, while Tohausen III was the son.
[89] Greene, "Exploring the Three 'Little Bluffs' of the Kiowa," 233.

converted, particularly since they had not assumed other elements of white culture that missionaries wanted. For Methvin, conversion required "a deep conviction. There must be an agonising [sic] sense of sin, a conscious need of God, before a soul is prepared to renounce the old and accept the new."[90] Methvin was not convinced that Tohausen and Ankima had met his standard for conversion. Finally, the couple approached Methvin and asked him why he had not invited them to join the church as Christians. "I had not thought they understood enough as yet to make an intelligent step in the Christian religion," he admitted. "I found under examination that they had received a clear conception of saving grace."[91]

Because of their relative importance among their tribe or community, Indian leaders could exert some control over missionaries. This made the missionization process a more complex arrangement than what white missionaries might initially expect. Some missionaries chafed against any sign of Indian autonomy while others, like Methvin, found ways to adapt. By opposing or supporting missionary work among the tribe, influential Kiowa leaders like Lone Wolf or Big Tree were able to maintain their prominence and control some of the changes affecting their community. In other instances, leaders retained their autonomy by rejecting certain denominations in favor of other churches or religious practices. Quanah Parker, an important Comanche leader in the late-nineteenth century and one of the last holdouts

[90] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK
[91] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK

to remove to the reservation in 1875, served as an interpreter for Methvin on certain occasions when the missionary preached to Comanche audiences.[92] But Parker was also a leading advocate for peyotism in the region and sent his children to a Catholic school, a decision that angered Methvin and limited Southern Methodist influence among the tribe for many years.[93]

Among the Kiowa, Kicking Bird and Andres Martinez were two early converts that became instrumental in IMC's and Methvin's work. Both of these individuals became preachers in the conference and continued their ministrations until their deaths in the 1930s, during which time they organized several Southern Methodist churches and established Indian congregations. With their ability to understand Kiowa customs and the Kiowa language, they distilled the Southern Methodist message into a form that many Kiowa could understand and accept. However, becoming Christian did not mean that they left their Indian life behind entirely as conference officials had hoped they would. Native preachers might continue participating in native practices that were often seen as being at odds with Christianity, which only furthered their distance from the mainline Church.

Kicking Bird was one of the first Kiowa Methodists to become a preacher in the IMC. Born in 1863 and named after his uncle, a signer of the Medicine Lodge Treaty, Kicking Bird converted to Christianity well into

[92] Methvin, whose relationship with Parker was acrimonious at best, called his interpretation skills "faulty." See "September 8, 1889," Methvin, J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[93] Lassiter, et al, The Jesus Road, 54-57; William T. Hagan, Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 89-91.

adulthood following a visit by Methvin to a Kiowa camp.[94] The sermon focused on the characteristics of a sinner and Kicking Bird thought that Methvin was singling him out specifically and mocking him in front of the crowd. Kicking Bird approached the interpreter to tell Methvin "to shut his mouth and get away from here mighty quick. The white man's way don't suit us Indians."[95] In his anger, he threatened Methvin directly. Eventually, the missionary appealed for Kicking Bird to "take the way of Jesus Christ" and assume a Christian life rather than one based solely on Indian or white ways.[96]

After his conversion, Kicking Bird became a leading Kiowa preacher in the conference and the first Southern Methodist Indian minister in western Oklahoma.[97] While many of the official IMC positions near the KCA Agency, including missionaries and appointed circuit riders, were held by whites, Kicking Bird better represented that class of local preachers and interpreters who spread Christianity among their own people. Once Indians became more involved in their own churches, individuals like Kicking Bird also served as church trustees and assumed responsibility for the property, and Kicking Bird himself eventually became a deacon in the IMC.

Yet Kicking Bird's conversion to Christianity and his work as a minister did not mean that he embraced assimilation in the ways that many white

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[94] "18th Annual Session of the Indian Mission of Oklahoma, September 20-22, 1935," OCU, OKC, OK; "Interview with Guy Quoetone," Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[95] E.H. Rawlings, "Kicking Bird's Experience," The World Outlook 25 (November 1935): 396.
[96] Rawlings, "Kicking Bird's Experience," 396.
[97] "Interview with Kirke Kickingbird," Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHA, OU, Norman, OK.

members of the IMC wanted. Southern Methodist Indians maintained elements of their native culture and lacked some skills considered vital by the mainstream church even with the continued supervision of white missionaries. While discussing his youth with a field matron in 1919, Kicking Bird infused Christian symbolism with his recollection of Kiowa customs. Remembering once when he was tied to the center pole during a Sun Dance ceremony as a boy, Kicking Bird likened his experience to "Jesus crucified," which showed the influence that Christianity had on his life while also reminding a larger audience of the different backgrounds Indian ministers had when compared to white members of the conference.[98] Education also revealed the differences between white missionaries and the class of Indian preachers the IMC relied upon for its work. Unlike Methvin, a trained lawyer well versed in Southern Methodist principles, Kicking Bird knew little English and had to have other Kiowas read and explain the Bible to him before he could preach. At the same time, Kicking Bird remained active in the peyote sub-culture in Kiowa society, even allowing its usage and practice in his home for many years after his conversion.[99] The IMC might trumpet Kicking Bird's experiences and his work as a minister as a symbol of Southern Methodism's success in Indian missions, but it was also quick to limit his authority and restrict it to Indian churches.

[98] Maurice Boyd, Kiowa Voices: Myths, Legends and Folktales Volume II (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1983), 269-271.
[99] "Interview with Guy Quoetone," Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

Much like Kicking Bird, Andres Martinez was another important figure in the spread of Southern Methodism among the Kiowa, though his background was more culturally diverse. Andele, as the Kiowa called him, was actually a Mexican taken captive as a boy by Mescalero Apaches during a raid in 1866 and eventually traded to the Kiowa. Adopted by the daughter of Heap-of-Bears, Martinez became active in Kiowa society and spent the majority of his life with them, which included marrying three native wives and taking part in the tribe's raiding and warfare. Martinez returned to his biological family's home near Las Vegas, New Mexico after the Kiowas resettled on the reservation, but stayed only briefly before he came back to spend the rest of his life with his adopted people near Anadarko.[100]

Martinez's relationship with Methvin was extremely close and the two became constant companions after Andele's conversion. One observer stated that "[a] more beautiful and constant friendship I never witnessed than that of these two."[101] Martinez served as a translator when Methvin visited camps and worked at the Methvin Institute as an industrial arts teacher. He also became a licensed preacher and district missionary for the Kiowa, becoming a high-profile Indian member in the region. Yet, like Kicking Bird, Martinez never left Kiowa society and Kiowa culture. At his funeral in 1935, Methvin and W.U. Witt, the superintendent of the Indian Mission at the time, conducted his official church service, but "[l]ater the Indians conducted a

[100] J.J. Methvin, Andele, The Mexican-Kiowa Captive: A Story of Real Life Among the Indians, Introduction by James F. Brooks, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).
[101] Robert S. Satterfield, "Andele, Mexican Indian Christian Minister," The World Outlook 26 (June 1936): 236.

funeral of their own, in their own way, for their own beloved Andele, and laid his body to rest as one of their own dead."[102]

The separate funerals conducted in different traditions revealed the duality of Andele's Christian and Kiowa identities. Many with the conference, especially Methvin, considered Andele to be an example of Christianity's redeeming qualities and in several ways he showed the outward signs of assimilation that the conference wanted. After his conversion, Andele married Emma McWhorter in 1893, a white woman, daughter of a Southern Methodist minister, and also an employee of the Methvin Institute. When his Kiowa sister and her husbanded separated, the sister gave her infant daughter Hattie to Andele and his wife to raise. Andele had done such a thorough job of introducing Hattie to white civilization that a special Indian agent sent to investigate the matter deemed it a "crime" to remove her from his home.[103] Even after Hattie's biological father attempted to reclaim her, Special Agent G.B. Pray ordered that Hattie remain with Andele so that she would not be "returned to an Indian camp where she would be as helpless as any white child as she knows nothing of the Indian language or of the ways of an Indian camp." Pray hoped that his order would "forever settle this matter and prevent Mr. Martiniz [sic] from being harassed by the Indians trying to get possession of this girl."[104]

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[102] Satterfield, "Andele, Mexican Indian Christian Minister," 236.
[103] "Letter from G.B. Pray to W.A. Jones, October 12, 1898," Kiowa, Comanche & Wichita Agency Letterpress book, letters sent, Volume 63, September 12, 1898 – April 1, 1899, Roll KA 31, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OK, OK.
[104] "Letter from G.B. Pray to W.A. Jones, October 12, 1898," Kiowa, Comanche & Wichita Agency Letterpress book, letters sent, Volume 63, September 12, 1898 – April 1, 1899, Roll KA 31, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OK, OK; Pray believed that

For all of this status within the conference and National Church as a symbol of Christianity and assimilation, Andele maintained elements and ties to his Kiowa culture that could not be ignored no matter how hard the Church might try. Andele served as an interpreter and delegate for the Kiowa in their dealings with the federal government as well as informant for anthropologists such as Robert H. Lowie and James Mooney. He also petitioned the federal government to recognize his wife a member of the Kiowa tribe after the Kiowa themselves had done so during a tribal council.[105] Historian James Brooks suggests that Andele performed a "cultural balancing act" by operating between white and Kiowa worlds. Andele's role as intermediary with anthologists and the federal government showed his pride in his Kiowa heritage, Brooks believes, while his attendance at peyote ceremonies was Andele's attempt to find his place in a religious practice that, like him, was the result of the combination of native and Christian society.[106]

Just as with the IMC's work among the Five Tribes, Indian interpreters were vital in the missionization process with the Plains Indians because many white missionaries' own skills were inadequate. On one occasion, Methvin told the story of Jesus riding into town on a donkey on Palm Sunday, but

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Hattie's father wanted his daughter back so that he could receive her semi-annual "grass" money from the tribe's leasing revenue. As it stood, KCA Agents had recognized Andele as her guardian and gave Hattie's share to him. See "Letter from G.B. Pray to Kiowa Agency, May 13, 1898," Kiowa, Comanche & Wichita Agency Letterpress book, letters sent, Volume 61, April 5, 1898 – July 13, 1898, Roll KA 30, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OK, OK.

[105] "Letter from Andres Martinez to James F. Randlett, March 1, 1901," Kiowa Agency – Letterpress Books, Volume 85, December 22, 1900 – April 1, 1901, Roll KA 59, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OK, OK.

[106] Methvin, Andele, The Mexican-Kiowa Captive, 13, 15. For an account of Andele attending a peyote ceremony, see Boyd, Kiowa Voices: Myths, Legends and Folktales, 278-283.

inadvertently mistranslated the word “ass,” eliciting laughter from the congregation.[107] Methvin complained that language was the leading problem in his mission work, citing the multitude of unwritten languages and dialects that the missionary encountered regularly. Making white missionaries learn an Indian language, he told the National Church, “would be an endless task – a useless waste of time and means.”[108]

In his explanation to the National Church regarding interpreters and language issues, Methvin gave a sense of the differences between the Plains Indians and Five Tribes and why it was useless to expect missionaries in western Indian Territory to learn an Indian language. According to him, there were ten unwritten dialects in his field, none of which had “syntactical system” that could be taught, and it required that English be the central language for the missionaries.[109] Though Methvin’s comments were not without merit, as Parker McKenzie’s work on the Kiowa alphabet was still decades away, his stance on language revealed his own limited views on the missionization process. Methvin’s reluctance to use Indian languages reflected his own thinking on the inevitable direction that Christianity would take in Indian societies. “As a race they are doomed…,” Methvin wrote in the same article. “The gospel is the only thing that can or will redeem the Indians for this life or that which is to come.”[110]

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[107] Luke Eric Lassiter, et al, The Jesus Road, 36-37.
[108] J.J. Methvin, “Work Among the Wild Tribes,” Methodist Review of Missions 14 (October 1893): 204.
[109] Methvin, “Work Among the Wild Tribes,” 204.
[110] Methvin, “Work Among the Wild Tribes,” 206.

In the field, missionaries like Methvin relied upon two types of interpreters. In larger gatherings like camp meetings or services, individuals such as Kicking Bird and Andele worked alongside the missionary and considered translating as a formal part of their job or responsibility. In fact, when Kicking Bird confronted Methvin and threatened him, Andele was the interpreter who interceded and explained Methvin's message to Kicking Bird. According to one account from another Kiowa minister, it was Andele who was more directly responsible for Kicking Bird's conversion than Methvin, an allusion perhaps to how the Kiowa preferred to frame the missionization process by emphasizing Indian action. Using official or reliable interpreters, however, assumed that the schedules for both the missionary and interpreter were the same. Camp meetings planned weeks in advance or regular Sunday services were one thing; camp visits among whatever gathered Indians could be found was something else entirely.

While the conference could assign paid interpreters for larger functions, missionaries like Methvin used several techniques to locate suitable interpreters during their visits to Indian settlements. In these cases, the interpreter's understanding or belief in Christianity and Southern Methodism became secondary to their ability to translate English. The varying commitments to Christianity by the interpreters could influence the direction that the Southern Methodist Church took among the Plains Indians and force white missionaries to make some concessions in order to reach a native population

For his part, Methvin found young Indians who he knew had attended boarding schools and understood English like Virginia Stumbling Bear, Etalye Dunmoe, or Tsaitcopte. One of Methvin's first interpreters, Dunmoe was a former Carlisle student subsequently trained for mission work by Presbyterians. Within six months of Methvin's arrival in Anadarko, Dunmoe died soon after angry Kiowas allegedly threatened to "make medicine" against[111] him and Methvin for their preaching to Kiowas who came to the agency for their monthly rations.[112] At his funeral, Methvin preached a Christian service, which he said was Dunmoe's wish, and he called on the Indian police to stop Indians from burning Dunmoe's possessions as was a customary Kiowa funeral rite. When he noticed the Indian police taking part in the procession to the grave site as well as a fire in the distance, Methvin realized the influence that native customs still had. "It was better to disobey order," Methvin said in reference to the Indian police's actions, "than to break the Indian 'Medicine'."[113]

As an associate in Methvin's ministry, Tsaitcopte required even more of a concession on missionary's part than the Presbyterian Dunmoe had. Though he underwent training in New York with the hopes of becoming a

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[111] "Interview with J.J. Methvin, September 21, 1937," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC OU, Norman, OK.
[112] "Interview with J.J. Methvin, September 21, 1937," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC OU, Norman, OK; "Letter from J.J. Methvin to Capt. R.H. Pratt, April 22, 1888," Kiowa Agency – Births, Marriages, Divorces, Deaths, Wills & Related Records 1869 – 1925, Roll KA 52, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[113] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK. Methvin was particularly angry in this instance of the Kiowa burning the property of the deceased because it left Dunmoe's widow and young daughter empty-handed. See "Letter from J.J. Methvin to Capt. R.H. Pratt, April 22, 1888," Kiowa Agency – Births, Marriages, Divorces, Deaths, Wills & Related Records 1869 – 1925, Roll KA 52, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

missionary to the Kiowa, Tsaitcopte returned to his people only to face their ridicule and leave the ministry. "The Indians are making fun of me and I can not stand up in front of them and tell them the things you say," he told Methvin.[114] Tsaitcopte "went back to the old life"[115] and resumed native customs such as attending dances, using peyote, and having multiple wives, even as he continued to interpret for Methvin.[116] Tsaitcopte blamed whites in the community for not providing proper Christian examples and support for his work, which ultimately led him to give up the ministry. "[L]oosing [sic] faith in man, I lost faith in God and Christianity," he told Methvin.[117]

In other cases where he needed an interpreter, Methvin resorted to "guile" or alternative ways to translate his message.[118] When no interpreter could be found, he relied upon sign language to preach, which could lead to a situation where individuals understood the significance of the occasion but not necessarily the specifics of the Christian message. "While praying, all bowed their heads reverently, and seemed to understand the significance of it," Methvin reported after using sign language at Lone Wolf's camp in 1889, "whether they understood the language or not."[119] Another method was to ask nearby whites to identify any English-speaking Indians before he visited a

[114] "Interview with J.J. Methvin, October 26, 1937," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC OU, Norman, OK.
[115] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[116] "Interview with J.J. Methvin, October 26, 1937," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC OU, Norman, OK.
[117] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[118] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[119] Our Brother in Red, April 6, 1889.

camp. Once there, Methvin called the individual out by name and asked him to translate; in time, Methvin identified a number of potential interpreters he could use.[120] In other situations, Methvin was more subtle in his methods by entering a tepee and joining the circle of assembled Indians before beginning to talk "in a very quiet way." Invariably, he said, the group would then turn and eye an English-speaking Indian for translation, which the individual would do as long as Methvin talked. By being indirect in his method, the missionary avoided awakening "the spirit of antagonism" from the Indians. "Had I gone to them in a professional and perfunctory way and asked for a hearing, and for an interpreter, they would have assumed a stolid look and - - - silence," he wrote.[121]

His own indifference to learning Indian languages forced Methvin to rely on native interpreters, even though these interpreters varied in their beliefs and were not the model Southern Methodists that the missionary might want. By relying on Indians in these ways, Methvin was giving them a voice in the missionization process at a point when conference leaders and Church officials advocated total assimilation. In time, Methvin's work began to take hold in the region because he had succeeded in gaining the trust of some Indian leaders, though not without relinquishing some of his own control over the endeavor. His work among the Kiowa, in particular, gave Methvin a firm foundation to expand the IMC's presence in the region. Over the next few years, Southern Methodism influenced several Kiowa camps seemingly

[120] Babcock, "John Jasper Methvin," 116.
[121] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

through familial ties, as individual churches and congregations became associated with the Ware, Quoetone, Sahmaunt, and Horse families.

One of the aspects of his work that differentiated Methvin from other missionaries in the IMC was the degree to which he became involved in the social and legal affairs of the tribe. To a degree, IMC officials had always involved themselves in the affairs of its Indian members, but usually in a way that favored the conference's work toward Indian assimilation into white society and benefited the IMC more than Indian communities. Methvin constantly engaged conference officials and government agents on behalf of Kiowa needs in a much more ambiguous way that could make him persona non grata to many whites in the region. One KCA Agent, Frank Baldwin, grew angry at Methvin and felt that the missionary was usurping the agent's authority when it came to selecting Kiowa children for Carlisle Indian School. "I cannot conceive why he has assumed this responsibility without my knowledge," Baldwin complained to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1897, "…it is in ill-keeping on the part of any one else to interfere with my efforts."[122] While he was an advocate of assimilation in the sense that Indians should begin to adopt "the Jesus Road," Methvin believed that Indians could do this and still retain some autonomy. Nor did he see the encroachment of Indian customs into Kiowa church services as a negative aspect of their Christianity.

[122] "Letter from Frank D. Baldwin to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 12, 1897," Kiowa, Comanche & Wichita Agency Letterpress Book, Letters sent, Volume 58, September 10, 1897-June 10, 1898, KA28, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Records, OHS, OKC, OK.

To be sure, some of Methvin's actions clearly were aimed at speeding up the assimilationist agenda of the National Church and federal government. One early step occurred when he convinced some Kiowas to save their semi-annual allotment of "grass money," or the money the tribe earned from leasing some of their land to cattle ranchers, in order to pay for the construction of their own permanent housing. Methvin not only spent many hours dutifully counting out the silver coins for individual Kiowas, he eventually became their banker and collected deposits that could range from $50 to $500.[123] According to Methvin, the older chiefs initially opposed building these two-room, 14' X 14' houses until they gained in popularity, and then the old chiefs wanted to be among the first to build so that they could maintain some status within the community.[124]

On another occasion, Methvin became embroiled in the federal government's attempts to allot the KCA Agency and tried to act as a mediator on behalf of the Kiowa and Comanche. The Jerome Agreement in 1892 between federal officials and the Kiowa and Comanche called for the allotment of tribal land. Indian leaders claimed that the government and its interpreters received native support through fraudulent means and they gathered at Methvin's church to draft a memorial of protest.[125] With over 400 Kiowa and Comanche present, including Quanah Parker and Lone Wolf,

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[123] "Interview with Lillian Gassaway, May 27, 1937," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC, OU, Norman, OK.; "Interview with J.J. Methvin, May 31, 1937," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC, OU, Norman, OK.

[124] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

[125] William T. Hagan, Taking Indian Lands: The Cherokee (Jerome) Commission 1889-1893 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 204.

Methvin assisted the Indians in drafting their protest much to the dismay of the Jerome Commission. The commission asked him not to pass their memorial on to Washington D.C., but Methvin refused their request because that was not "honest dealing."[126] In reply, the commission reminded Methvin that he was one of the few whites included in the agreement and, subsequently, was due to receive his own allotment. Methvin was surprised at the news and offered to remove his name from the agreement. Hoping to maintain whatever influence it could with the missionary and the allotment process, the commission eventually relented to Methvin and his memorial of protest.[127]

With the IMC's standing with the Western Tribes improving, and with Methvin becoming more involved in the activities of native communities, the conference moved to develop a permanent presence in the region. One way that Methvin and the IMC exploited their success was to establish a boarding school in Anadarko that later became the Methvin Institute. Overall, the school lasted less than twenty years and in the short term, it experienced its share of problems and conflicts with Indian tribes, the federal government, and church officials. But, in the end, many of the leaders of Methodism

[126] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

[127] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK"; Methvin, In the Limelight, 99-100; "Interview with J.J. Methvin," Vol 62, 4567, Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC, OU. In the end, the memorial was given to the KCA Agent, George Day, following Methvin's suggestion and against Indian wishes. Day, however, never passed the letter on to Washington, a fact that Methvin did not discover until two years later. When a new agent, James F. Randlett, finally found the letter in 1900 and passed it on to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, he blamed Day for the problems, citing Day's potential financial gain from the allotment as the motive. See "Letter from James F. Randlett to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, January 5, 1900," Kiowa, Comanche & Wichita Agency Letterpress Book, Volume 74, October 31, 1899-January 23, 1900, KA53, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Records, OHS, OKC, OK.

among Indians in western Oklahoma could trace their roots to the Methvin Institute.

Prior to the Methvin Institute, there had been several different schools on the KCA Agency. Thomas Battey, a Quaker missionary sent to the Kiowas in 1871 during the years of Grant's Peace Policy, operated the River Side School in an old commissary building before moving to the elder Kicking Bird's camp and conducting classes in a tent. Government-operated schools such as the Fort Sill School and the Kiowa Agency School faced issues of overcrowding, disrepair, and poor or inadequate staffing and were routinely the focus of agent complaints and Indian disdain.[128] Methvin's approach to Indian education had differing aspects than the federal government's policy. He thought that the nature of government schools precluded the teachers from focusing on religious studies, and in general he was contemptuous of the government's attitude and programs for Indians.[129] As a result, he wanted to found a school "where unhindered the Bible could be taught and its truths emphasized" because he believed that Christianity could empower the mind and form character in an individual.[130] Methvin's plans for his school were well within the then-current idea in the IMC of the value of a sanctified education unencumbered by tribal oversight. As with the schools the IMC operated among the Five Tribes, the Methvin Institute stressed the values of a Christian education while trying to limit Indian input in its administration.

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[128] Clyde Ellis, To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893-1920, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 38-46.
[129] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[130] Methvin, In the Limelight, 88.

Methvin's first step in establishing a school was to secure land on the KCA Agency, which required the approval of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington D.C. Methvin enlisted the support of A.M. Clark, a member of the Board of Missions, and together the men appealed to Commissioner John H. Oberly for a quarter section of land for a church and school. On October 20, 1888, Oberly wrote Agent W.D. Myers and recommended the request, but he also instructed the agent to gather Indian opinion on the plan before proceeding any further.[131] While the issue awaited Myers's report to the commissioner and final federal approval, Methvin began the process of securing money for the school's construction.

Funding the construction of the mission school in Anadarko revealed some of the troubling issues that developed between Methvin and the IMC, and in particular the missionary's desire to find the best sources to support his work as opposed to the serving the best interests of the conference. In March 1889, Commissioner Oberly granted 160 acres to Methvin for the construction of the school, though as was common for mission schools he refused to give the church title to the land.[132] Due to changes in federal-Indian policy in 1889, the government no longer gave financial support to mission schools, forcing the missionary societies to take full responsibility for them. Subsequently, Methvin approached the Board of Missions for additional

[131] "Letter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Indian Agent at the Kiowa Agency, October 20, 1888," Kiowa Agency – Indian History, Culture and Acculturation – Churches 1870-1925, KA50, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Records, OHS, OKC, OK; "Interview with J.J. Methvin, July 23, 1937," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC, OU, Norman, OK..

[132] "Letter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to W.D. Myers, March 18, 1889," Kiowa Agency – Indian History, Culture and Acculturation – Churches 1870-1925, KA50, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Records, OHS, OKC, OK.

support and eventually secured $2500 for the school's construction. A year later, Methvin convinced the Woman's Foreign Mission Board of the MECS to trade the school it supported in Muskogee, the Harrell Institute, to the Board of Missions in return for assuming responsibility over his mission school in Anadarko.[133] According to Methvin, the Woman's Board was disappointed that the Harrell Institute had shifted away from Indian students and wanted to get back to "real missionary work."[134]

By going outside of the IMC for funding and support for his school, Methvin angered certain members of the conference. Previously, external support from the Board of Missions or Woman's Board had been actively sought out and desired by the IMC. The Harrell Institute, for instance, was a girls' boarding school that housed over two hundred students and was routinely supported by the Board in the 1890s.[135] School officials credited its location at Muskogee with giving the Harrell Institute "centrality and accessibility" in addition to providing "local patronage…superior to that of any other town in the Territory."[136] However, the new mission school among the Plains Indians in western Indian Territory came at a time when the IMC's efforts at a "sanctified education" were aimed at whites and the more acculturated mixed-blood population among the Five Tribes. The Harrell Institute was in-line with the IMC's goals and situated in a prosperous area,

[133] Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 237-238; "Letter from Methvin to J. Morris Nichols, January 2, 1919," J.J. Methvin Manuscript Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[134] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[135] Minutes of the Indian Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Forty-Fifth Session, Muskogee, Indian Territory, October 22-27, 1890.
[136] "Harrell International Institute Catalogue, 1890-1891," Harrell International Institute Catalogue's and The Harrell Monthly, Alice Robertson Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

and, thus, its success was an adequate reflection of the conference's work. In contrast, Methvin's school focused on a "wild" population with little means to support mission work or the mission school, yet its location within the conference's bounds meant that the IMC would be blamed for the school's failure. Edwin R. Shapard, a Presiding Elder from the Choctaw District and a former superintendent of New Hope Seminary like Methvin, became a vocal critic of Methvin's actions. Writing in Our Brother in Red, Shapard questioned the Board's involvement with the school, particularly since the Board had usurped the conference's authority. The Board was making "extra efforts" with Methvin's school that it did not make with other institutions, Shapard believed, and it was "certainly ignoring the annual conference."[137]

The conference's anger at its lack of control over the Methvin Institute hinted at the IMC's changing attitude toward its work among the Plains Indians and the perception that Indians were not assimilating into the National Church as it hoped they would. When Methvin entered the mission field in October 1887, the conference was enthusiastic for the possibilities of growth and Bishop Galloway had reported at the time that "[t]he opening of new work among the Western tribes has already awakened fresh enthusiasm at home."[138] But after nearly two years in the field, conference officials resented Methvin's apparent failure to convert Indians in large numbers and wipe out elements of Indian society. When Methvin recommended Anadarko as the site for the annual conference in 1889, his fellow ministers scoffed at the

[137] Our Brother in Red, October 5, 1889.
[138] Our Brother in Red, November 5, 1887.

suggestion. “One brother, whose head had out grown his hair,” Methvin complained bitterly, “wanted to know if his scalp would be safe.”[139] The Indians around Anadarko were still hostile and uncivilized, some conference members believed, and this was due to Methvin’s failure as a missionary. A divide not only between Indians and white congregations in the IMC, but also between perceptions of the “civilized” congregations in the east and the “wild” tribes in the west grew.

This changing attitude in the conference and the perception of failure among the western tribes gave Shapard another avenue to criticize Methvin’s work publicly. Shapard questioned Methvin’s ministerial abilities and his lack of results, especially in light of the fact that the conference reported an increase in donations for the mission school at Anadarko. The IMC had made mistakes in the past with mission schools, Shapard recognized, but he could not understand why the conference was appropriating thousands of dollars for a mission field that held only a dozen converts.[140] Shapard spoke for many in the conference who believed that the IMC should concentrate its funds on successful fields that better resembled mainstream Southern Methodist society, a tension that developed even more after white membership exploded in the 1890s.

Not one to flee from criticism, Methvin openly refuted Shapard’s and the conference’s complaints. "Some of the brethren at conference seemed to be surprised that there had been no conversions over here during the past

[139] Our Brother in Red, July 20, 1889.
[140] Our Brother in Red, September 7, 1889; Our Brother in Red, October 5, 1889.

year," Methvin responded. "It takes time to break soil, sow seed and bring the harvest to ripeness. We are breaking the ground and sowing the seed, the harvest will come bye and bye."[141] For Methvin, missionary work among Indians was a slow and deliberate process, and his focus was on rooting out what he felt were anti-Christian elements of native society not just on eradicating Indian culture altogether. "Some of these tribes," Methvin reminded the conference, "are on as low a plain of misery as it is possible for humanity to go."[142] Methvin argued that there were too many negative influences, some of which came from his own church community, to overcome in such a short period of time. How could he be expected to stamp out Indian vices such as war dances, gambling, and horse racing, Methvin asked, when Our Brother in Red, the very voice of the conference, advertised these same activities at county fairs? "It will be like pitching straws against the wind, for me to talk against these things here," Methvin raged, "and my own people and the civilized Indian in the east. . . together with the Christian newspapers calling them to those scenes of dissipation."[143]

As for the conference's accusations regarding school funding, Methvin rejected these claims outright. Plans for the school had been in development since late 1888, but as Methvin reminded the IMC, the Board of Missions supplied the funds and not the conference. The conference's only expenditure in 1888 was his $600 salary; a year later conference expenditures increased somewhat to include funds for a parsonage, though

[141] Our Brother in Red, May 25, 1889.
[142] Our Brother in Red, May 25, 1889.
[143] Our Brother in Red, September 22, 1888.

even this was insufficient. In fact the IMC's lack of support only succeeded in forcing Methvin to find even more external sources for help, and by May 1888, Lucinda Helm at the Woman's Department of Church Extension for the National Church started a nationwide fund for a parsonage.[144] The following February, Helm reported that the Department received all necessary donations for Methvin's parsonage and "the mission to the wild tribes at Anadarko is saved."[145]

Methvin was particularly upset by Shapard's comments, primarily because of his status within the IMC and what he represented. Shapard's criticism came from a respected missionary with years of experience in Indian communities who, Methvin felt, portrayed the western tribes "as impervious to the gospel and that the work among them is in vain." Shapard's comments, Methvin feared, "may have that effect on some who are too ready to believe that way anyhow" and create further distance between the western tribes and the rest of the conference.[146] When he addressed Shapard directly, Methvin spoke to a larger audience in the IMC who wanted to pull back its missionary efforts in favor of supporting its established churches in eastern Indian Territory.

Despite the IMC's criticisms, the Methvin Institute opened in April 1890 with ten Indian students.[147] Methvin hoped to raise additional money from the

[144] The Christian Advocate, May 5, 1888.
[145] The Christian Advocate, February 16, 1889.
[146] Our Brother in Red, September 21, 1889.
[147] "Supply Request, April 6, 1890," Miscellaneous Schools – Methodist Episcopal Mission or Methvin Institute, April 6, 1890 – June 30, 1895, KA97, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Records, OHS, OKC, OK.

local community for books, an organ, and an altar veiling, but he acknowledged that this might be difficult since Baptists and Presbyterians were also building schools in Anadarko.[148] Within a short period of time, more denominations moved into the field around Anadarko and Fort Sill to build missions and schools, which overtaxed the local community's ability to meet the needs of individual churches.

Two early decisions made by Methvin help explain the school's success in attracting students and necessary support, though these decisions also showed a greater sympathy on Methvin's part for his Indian charges than for his conference's wishes. For many young Indian children, the removal from their own culture or harsh treatment by teachers led them to run away from the boarding schools. When three Kiowa boys ran away from the government school in the dead of winter in 1891 due to physical punishments from Principal Wherritt, they froze to death after becoming lost in a blizzard. This event angered the Kiowa, who then threatened the superintendent, George Gregory, and forced Wherritt to flee from Anadarko.[149] Before he opened his school, Methvin recruited students with little regard for the families' attitude toward boarding schools or assimilation, and as a result, many parents rejected Methvin's appeal to return their children if they left his school. This experience taught him the importance of finding parents that supported boarding schools, and once he identified these families, the

[148] Our Brother in Red, November 30, 1889.
[149] Marriott, The Ten Grandmothers: Epic of the Kiowas, 188-195; Methvin, In the Limelight, 77-78. Silver Horn's pictorial calendar records this event as the "Boys frozen winter." See Greene, One Hundred Summers, 128.

school's enrollment grew steadily throughout the decade.[150] In time, the students themselves noticed a difference between Methvin's school and other schools at the agency, particularly in terms of physical punishments.[151] As Eugenia Mausape, a Kiowa and former student, later recalled of Methvin's school, "They don't whip us. They don't punish us. That's a good school."[152]

In addition to identifying Indian families that would support his school, Methvin also needed to find adequate supplies for his students. To solve this problem, Methvin turned to the federal government instead of the IMC or the National Church. The Medicine Lodge Treaty guaranteed annuities for Indian children and Methvin convinced the commissioner of Indian affairs to distribute these goods through the school. From the government's perspective, this arrangement simplified the process of distributing annuities to Indian children; for Methvin, it provided vital supplies at no cost and gave an incentive for Indian parents to send their students to the Southern Methodist school instead of the Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, or government schools.[153]

When the IMC sent Methvin to Anadarko in October 1887, it gave him the responsibility over a field that stretched from Kansas to Texas and was

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[150] Forbes, "John Jasper Methvin: Methodist 'Missionary to the Western Tribes' (Oklahoma)," 59; "Quarterly Report of the Indian Schools, December 31, 1890," Miscellaneous Schools – Methodist Episcopal Mission or Methvin Institute, April 6, 1890 – June 30, 1895, KA97, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Records, OHS, OKC, OK.
[151] "Interview with Guy Quoetone," T-149, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU.
[152] "Interview with Eugenia Mausape," T-37, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU.
[153] "Interview with J.J. Methvin, July 23, 1937," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC, OU, Norman, OK.; "Letter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Charles Adams, April 25, 1890," Miscellaneous Schools – Methodist Episcopal Mission or Methvin Institute, April 6, 1890 – June 30, 1895, KA97, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Records, OHS, OKC, OK.

roughly 500 miles in circumference. Methvin immediately recognized that the field was too big for one person. Within two months of his appointment, he asked for additional help, a request echoed by other ministers who visited him during that period.[154] The IMC, along with National Church organizations like the Woman's Board of Foreign Mission, responded by sending more missionaries into the region, but not all of these individuals worked effectively in Methvin's shadow nor could they balance the needs of Indian converts with the desires of Southern Methodist officials. For many in the conference and National Church, Methvin remained the public face of missions to the "wild tribes," and other missionaries chafed at this perception.[155]

While Methvin concentrated his work primarily on the Kiowa camps around Anadarko and to those Indians attending his mission school, other Southern Methodists missionaries traveled farther south. Near Fort Sill, these missionaries worked among the Comanche to varying degrees of success. The Comanche presented many of the same problems that the Kiowas did for the IMC, such as language issues, camp visits to remote locations, and government interference, and it took time before the Southern Methodists could claim much progress. One reason for this delay was that the missionary in charge of the Comanche work, William A. Brewer, was continually at odds with Methvin and the conference. Brewer arrived at Fort

[154] Our Brother in Red, January 14, 1888; Our Brother in Red, January 7, 1888; Our Brother in Red, January 28, 1888.
[155] Our Brother in Red, November 23, 1893.

Sill toward the end of 1892 and immediately set out to work in his own way, claiming that the IMC needed “more horse sense” in the mission field.[156]

The different approaches Methvin and Brewer used in their work show the difficulties missionaries faced when maintaining the balance between their Indian charges and the larger Southern Methodist public. Missionaries could adhere to the Church philosophy that called for total assimilation and complete removal of Indian culture, though this approach struggled for acceptance among Indian communities. On the other hand, missionaries could reach out to Indians in way that shunned the attitudes and sensibilities of the predominantly-white National Church, which could anger conference officials. Whatever faults Methvin might have had, he understood that the focus of Indian missions should be on status of Indians and not on the actions of missionaries. "How many a poor chip of a man is undermined and destroyed by the insidious bug of egotism or self-conceit," Methvin once wrote to the conference.[157] Methvin especially knew that in order to attract broader support from the IMC or from the National Church, he had to maintain a visible distance from his Indian converts. He had to appear as the dedicated white missionary directing operations for an “uncivilized” people from a position of moral and spiritual authority, rather than as the missionary who had “gone Indian” and was contemptuous of the larger church’s attitude toward native peoples. While that attitude might keep National Church

[156] Our Brother in Red, October 12, 1893.
[157] Our Brother in Red, August 23, 1894.

officials at bay, he balanced it against the Indian-influence in the church's development in order to help its growth among Indian communities.

In contrast, William Brewer seemingly reveled in how he had ingratiated himself into Comanche society. When writing to Our Brother in Red, Brewer simply signed some letters "Tabe-e-yet-sy" or what he claimed was his Comanche name.[158] In other circumstances, he referred to himself as the "Caucasian Comanche"[159] and bragged about living with Quanah Parker in his "luxuriously furnished home."[160] Brewer had very clear ideas on how to reach his Comanche charges and was not afraid to admonish his conference colleagues. "I love to act brotherly," he said to his fellow ministers, "but I do not intend to allow my visiting brethren to preach to my Indians any more. They can preach to the whites and I'll preach to the reds."[161] Brewer mocked the efforts of other IMC ministers, believing that the 15-20 times a month he preached at the Comanche mission was a more difficult assignment than for those working among established congregations in the eastern Indian Territory. "A man is never a hero till he dies or goes to China," he told the conference in response to their complaints about their field.[162]

On some occasions, Brewer and Methvin clashed over personnel in the field. Brewer complained that the conference did not provide adequate

[158] For examples of these letters, see Our Brother in Red, February 2, 1893; Our Brother in Red, August 30, 1894; Our Brother in Red, April 25, 1895; and Our Brother in Red, June 13, 1895.
[159] Our Brother in Red, February 23, 1893.
[160] Our Brother in Red, May 4, 1893.
[161] Our Brother in Red, January 10, 1895.
[162] Our Brother in Red, March 14, 1895.

funding for translators and that required him to find whatever translators he could. "It is said that a paid interpreter is no good," he stated, "and that I ought to use a Christian interpreter and not a wicked one." Yet, as he reminded the IMC, the Kiowa interpreter was "paid nevertheless," a jab at Andele's work for Methvin.[163] In another situation, Brewer fired another missionary who Methvin had sent to work with the Comanche prior to Brewer's arrival. Helen Brewster, who received most of her funding from the Woman's Board and relied upon Methvin's advice, conducted camp work and was especially vital in reaching Comanche women around Fort Sill.[164] But when she admitted to Brewer that she was actually a Baptist and had lied about being a Southern Methodist to get the appointment, he removed her from the field.[165]

The biggest point of contention between Brewer and Methvin, and, in turn, the IMC, was over the efficacy of educating Indians. This argument mirrored the larger national debate over which had to come first for Indians to assimilate: Christianity or civilization. "The effort to evolve the Indian into A MAN simply by educating him is a monumental failure," Brewer believed. "The process is too slow. It is a very pretty theory."[166] He remained outspoken in his disdain for education and constantly criticized the conference's efforts in Anadarko. For much of its history, the IMC had

[163] Our Brother in Red, May 17, 1894.
[164] Woman's Missionary Advocate, May 1895.
[165] "Old Indian Methodist Mission at Fort Sill," Early Churches, Missions, and Schools – F, Box 13, Works Project Administration Historic Sites and Federal Writers' Project Collection, WHC, OU. Regardless of Brewer's actions, Brewster returned to the Fort Sill area and spent many more years as an active missionary among the Comanche.
[166] Our Brother in Red, July 19, 1894.

supported Indian education and poured money into the endeavor even though it objected to tribal oversight. Methvin's school was in line with conference philosophy at the start, and Brewer's comments concerned both the school and the IMC's attitude toward education. He called the conference's mission schools a "useless expense" and "inadequate" and believed that the IMC "had better attend to its legitimate business - soul saving."[167]

Brewer's acrimonious relationship with the rest of the conference was noticeable by 1894. That year, he claimed unnamed IMC members unassociated with his Comanche mission were working to get him removed from the field and he remained defiant to stay.[168] But this attitude did not last. By 1897, Brewer transferred from the IMC and to the Northwest Texas Conference, leaving Methvin unchallenged as the most prominent voice in the region.

"There is nothing that transforms life like the gospel of the Son of God," Methvin wrote toward the end of his life. "Many methods have been tried by the Government and benevolent organizations for the civilization of the Indian . . . but not in a single instance have these efforts ever been made effective and abiding without the stabilizing power of the gospel."[169] Christianity was the center of Methvin's life and his work, and, in his estimation, the only hope for Indians and their future.

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[167] Our Brother in Red, October 12, 1893.
[168] Our Brother in Red, August 9, 1894.
[169] Methvin, "Reminiscences of Life Among the Indians," 178.

And, in theory, this belief was identical to the rest of the Indian Mission Conference. Methvin had been sent to the Western Tribes by Bishop Galloway in 1887 as an extension of the IMC's stated goals, and he originally engaged in mission work in much the same manner that missionaries in eastern Indian Territory had in previous decades. He traveled into Indian camps to preach, relied upon native converts as local preachers and interpreters to further the work, and he established a mission school to educate future generations of Indian members.

But the attitudes of the IMC began to change by the late-1880s. In one sense, the Western Tribes represented a step back for the conference in its desire for legitimacy. The older generation of missionaries like Edwin Shapard questioned whether the Plains Indians were capable of understanding and accepting Christianity like the Five Tribes, while the newer generation of members fresh to the territory disliked the notion of sharing resources with the "wild tribes." Highlighting the needs and difficulties of the new field only furthered the notion of the IMC as "mission conference" catering to different population at a time when conference officials tried to emulate established conferences back east.

Methvin constantly labored on behalf of his mission work at the KCA Agency in order to convince his conference superiors of the field's needs, though the IMC and his Indian charges could pull him in opposite directions. While Methvin represented the public face of the mission to the IMC, the National Church, and the federal government, and was beholden to their

wishes to some degree, he also understood the need for Indians in transferring the Christian message and he relied upon them greatly. Indian men and women served as important translators when whites could not be found, a frequent and expected occurrence at the agency; they became ministers and church leaders who took the conference's work into camps in between the infrequent visits from white missionaries; and yet they were a constant physical reminder that pockets of unassimilated Indians existed within the IMC.

As a missionary, Methvin set his own standards even though both white and Indian society judged his work on different terms. The IMC wanted a quick transformation of Indians into something similar to white society: regular church services in permanent structures, paid assessments for the conference's yearly budgets, and an English-speaking membership. Indians, on the other hand, were not willing to embrace white society completely and they continued to support native customs that complicated the assimilation process that whites envisioned. Indians demanded concessions on Methvin's part and were more receptive to his message when it included a native perspective, and his success came from his ability to make some concessions. Missionaries who either dismissed Indian culture completely risked alienating their audience, while those who ingratiated themselves too much into Indian society angered their church superiors. Somehow, Methvin found a balance between these two pitfalls.

Writing years later, Methvin described what traits made an individual successful in the mission field. Missionaries could not hold a superiority complex over the Indians but instead had to show a "sympathetic interest in the people."[170] The desire to assimilate Indians into white society did connote a sense of superiority on his part, but Methvin also demonstrated a direct interest in Indian affairs in western Indian Territory, most notably with the Kiowa, as evident in his intersession on their behalf before the Jerome Commission or in other disputes with local and federal officials. Still, more important than superiority or sympathy to Methvin was the message of the Gospel. He felt that Christianity trumped civilization, regardless if it was white or Indian, and that only Jesus could save an individual. His critique of non-Christian whites was as scathing as his complaints about native religious practices that ignored or, in his opinion, corrupted God's message. However, finding a suitable path that stressed Christianity over civilization was difficult in an era of government-sponsored assimilation and the National Church's impatient attitude.

Eugenia Mausape attributed her time at the Methvin Institute as the reason she became a Christian. Mausape, whose son Conrad later became a Methodist minister in the mission, began attending the school when she was 13 and remembered her time there fondly. She described caring teachers who treated students with respect and tolerated a degree of Indian culture. When she grew ill, Methvin told Mausape to return to her home and

[170] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

"[l]et the Indians medicine you and you'll get well."[171] Yet their regard for Indian ways had limits. "I don't dance. I'm Christian," Mausape recalled years later. "J.J. Methvin told us it's a bad road to be going. I kept it in my heart. I don't go…I don't want to go to hell! I don't want to."[172]

Regardless of the IMC's indifference over its development in western Indian Territory, Methodism among the Kiowa and Comanche did grow by the turn of the century. Many of the students who attended the Methvin Institute became leaders in their communities, both in secular and religious matters. That was a point of pride that Methvin liked to mention, and their leadership was needed if Methodism was to survive in western Oklahoma. By the early-1900s, the divide between Indian and non-Indian members, and between "Civilized Indian members" and "wild Indian members" would formally split the conference apart.

[171] "Interview with Eugenia Mausape," T-37, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU.
[172] "Interview with Eugenia Mausape," T-37, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU.

Chapter Three: The Mission Changes:

From the Land Run to Statehood

In the spring of 1889, thousands of settlers gathered throughout Indian Territory and along the Kansas border in anticipation of the land run into the "Unassigned Lands" of the Oklahoma District on April 22. Drawn from throughout the various social classes in the region, these new settlers offended some members of the Indian Mission Conference. One observer in Purcell, J.H. Miller, wrote in Our Brother in Red that the incoming settlers were roughhewn men of lower moral status and prone to such vices as gambling and drinking. "What can be done to check this onward march of sin?" Harris asked the members of his Conference referring to the non-Christian attitudes of his future neighbors.[1] Within days of Harris's letter to the IMC, speculators, farmers, and families overran the region and disrupted established communities of whites and Indians. The land run forced the Pierce Institute, an IMC-operated Indian school located in the Chickasaw Nation, to close early for the year. J.T Fariss, the Conference's pastoral charge to the school, complained to his fellow Southern Methodists that "the great Oklahoma excitement has unhinged everything and almost every body, in this part of the country."[2] "They say this is the first time Oklahoma has ever been opened for settlement," Fariss continued. "May it be the last."[3]

The period between the Land Run in 1889 and Oklahoma's statehood in 1907 represented the greatest period of change in the postwar decades for

[1] Our Brother in Red, (Muskogee, Indian Territory), April 27, 1889.
[2] Our Brother in Red, May 11, 1889.
[3] Our Brother in Red, May 11, 1889.

the territory and for the IMC, in particular, as the face and nature of Southern Methodism in the region shifted away from Indian missions. Subsequent runs for Cheyenne-Arapaho lands in 1892 and for the Cherokee Strip Outlet in 1893, along with later lotteries of Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Wichita, and Caddo lands in 1901, further diversified the territory's population. Within the two decade period between 1889 and 1907, thousands of white migrants flooded into the area. Eager to attract prosperity and other residents, these settlers quickly established new communities with schools, businesses, and churches.[4] They eventually usurped Indian governments, land holdings, and congregations in what one scholar has described as "the final phase of a catastrophe long dreaded" by their Indian neighbors.[5]

These same trends occurred in the IMC as well. White membership in the conference, which was a growing factor in the 1870s and 1880s, exploded in the 1890s and forced the IMC and the National Church to reassess the nature and scope of its missionary work. Many of the concerns present with its Indian congregations, such as language issues, financial support, or reaching a non-Christian population, were not as problematic with the new settlers, and these migrants actively sought out their own pastors, congregations, and buildings, virtually creating their own churches overnight. In fact, the IMC faced an overabundance of Christianity as new migrants brought with them other denominations, which made Southern Methodists

[4] Charles Robert Goins and Danney Goble, Historical Atlas of Oklahoma 4th ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 122-124, 128-130, 144.
[5] Mary Jane Warde, "Fight for Survival: The Indian Response to the Boomer Movement," The Chronicles of Oklahoma 67 (Spring 1989): 31.

especially sensitive to those churches that it felt were reaping “their” spiritual harvest in the territory. Whether it was other denominations such as Baptists or Presbyterians, sectional conflicts with Northern Methodists, or internal theological issues like the Holiness movement, the IMC felt threatened by other Christians and changed the course of its work to meet these new challenges.

While the conference expanded among the new populations developing across the territory, Indian missions continued to struggle in the eyes of IMC officials. Indian congregations, whether in the east among the Five Tribes or in the west with the Plains Indians, mixed native customs with Christian practices, which did nothing in officials’ eyes but to further the image of the IMC as a “mission” conference. With whites assuming a larger influence in the conference, anything that reinforced the image of Indian-dominated work threatened its legitimacy and status. Expansion among native communities not only promised limited results due to population and monetary concerns, it also had to compete with native influences and customs that threatened to undermine Southern Methodist theology. With the Five Tribes, preachers railed against dancing and the “busk,” a harvest festival also known as the Green Corn ceremony and long practiced by native communities, as a source of Indian debasement and immorality, while ministers in western Indian Territory blamed the “nomadic lives of the Indians, their superstitions and prejudices, the management of them by the Government, the evil influences of bad whites, the degraded habits of mescal-

eating and card-playing, and the influences of the 'medicine men'" as reasons for their struggles.[6] "Were it not for the divine promises," one missionary wrote to the Board of Missions, the work "would be overwhelmingly discouraging."[7] After decades of Indian missions, the lingering native aspect to Indian churches in the IMC further highlighted just how far removed the conference was from mainstream Southern Methodist culture.

The 1890s and early-1900s saw the conference begin to segregate white and Indian congregations. The conference created new circuits and districts that served white congregations and were practically devoid of any Indian members. Newer members from other Southern states wanted the IMC to rival established conferences, and to do so meant remaking conference institutions to fit the mold of the National Church. Money had to be spent on churches that could be self-supporting, the ministry had to be properly educated, and any outward appearance of Indians in the IMC, such as the very name of the conference, had to be replaced. The move toward legitimacy demanded that white congregations take control over the conference and compete against other white-controlled denominations rather than addressing the needs of its own Indian churches.

This shift in purpose, however, did not mean that Indian congregations disappeared. Instead, they came to occupy their own space within the conference surrounded by newer churches and communities. Since Indian congregations were Methodist in appearance, they were a sign of the IMC's

[6] Forty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1890), 44.
[7] Forty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions, 44.

progress in “civilizing” Indians and the conference was content in letting them exist with only limited interference. Yet these churches also reinforced native culture by requiring their own ministers and workers who understood native customs and languages, and the reality of the mission field meant making concessions and compromises with Indian communities. Though concessions made too far in the direction of native practices seen as at odds with Christianity could not be openly tolerated, such as the growing use of peyote among the Plains Indians, the IMC did have to allow a degree of autonomy to its native congregations in directing their own churches and tending to their own spiritual needs.

Eventually, the needs of the IMC’s new white members dominated conference affairs as officials shifted resources from Indian missions to meet the demand among white communities. IMC and National Church officials reallocated the resources for non-Indian congregations for other needs, and even money, ministers, and land taken from Indian governments and tribal leaders went to white communities. Gradually, the “Indian” focus of the IMC gave way to a new reality. The move toward legitimacy culminated after more than a decade of discussion and maneuvering when the Indian Mission Conference formally shed its mission identity in 1906 and officially became the Oklahoma Annual Conference.

In its memorial marking the death of Edwin R. Shapard at the 1890 annual meeting, the IMC paid tribute not only to Shapard’s work but also to a

bygone era of Indian missions. "[N]o other men will be called upon to do in this conference the kind of work he did. The times and the work have changed," conference officials noted in the record of the meeting. "Hereafter our work and sufferings will be different. Rail Roads, legislation and change of customs and habits have ushered in a new order of things, and we look back upon the old as a thing of the past."[8] The IMC quickly recognized that the influx of white immigrants into Indian Territory would have an immediate impact on its goals and agendas. Just weeks after the Land Run on April 22, 1889, conference officials asked the Board of Missions for additional support in order to reach the new settlements growing in the former Unassigned Lands. It was "imperative that our Church should promptly extend its operations into that region," the IMC told the Board, and that the new work would "require the transfer of at least a score of our most efficient men from the older Conferences."[9]

The Land Run opened the conference up to a larger audience, though overall growth had developed over previous decades. White membership in the IMC steadily increased throughout the 1870s and 1880s prior to the Run, growing from 60 in 1869 to 4173 in 1889.[10] Referring to this growth in the years before the Land Run, Shapard told the conference in 1886 that there were "uncultivated fields" in their midst and that the IMC should "occupy more

[8] "45th Session, Muskogee, I.T., October 22, 1890," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.
[9] 1889 Forty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions, 31.
[10] "24th Session, Okmulgee, Creek Nation, September 30, 1869," Indian Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church Collection, OHS, OKC, OK; "44th Session, Atoka, I.T., October 2, 1889," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.

ground."[11] James Shanks's comments that same year about the Paul's Valley District echoed Shapard's advice. The area was "newly settled" while its "population is rapidly increasing." "All available resources are needed in these new communities in establishing the Church," Shanks argued.[12]

Expansion for the IMC in the 1890s took two different themes, both of which ignored Indian concerns in favor of white demands. The first argument was simple expansion of the preexisting work into "uncultivated fields." On the surface, this could include new Indian communities and enlarging Indian missions, such as Shapard's call for work among the Osage in 1886.[13] But once the territory opened up to white settlement, it became very apparent that expansion to many within the IMC meant new white settlements. "This newly opened country is destined to be a prosperous country, financially and spiritually," J.Y. Bryce wrote about the area around Chandler in 1892. "A great many of our people are moving in every day, by May this country will be full. At Chandler the citizens are very desirous to have preaching every Sunday, [and it] ought to be so if the man can be found."[14] Many officials in the IMC came to identify moving into these new communities as imperative for the future health and well-being of the conference.

Bryce's comments revealed how supporters of enlarging the work framed their argument in the context of white needs and connected the future of the conference to the future of white settlers. "With the influx of 5,000 into

[11] Our Brother in Red, January 1886.
[12] Our Brother in Red, March 1886.
[13] Our Brother in Red, January 1886.
[14] Our Brother in Red, January 7, 1892.

our membership, the only hope for their growth in grace is in their attendance upon…class and prayer meetings, and the preaching of the word," the conference stated at its 1894 annual meeting.[15] These new communities needed the IMC to move into the area, and the conference would be ignoring its Christian duty by rejecting them. Some in the conference even attempted to show how destitute whites were in comparison to the IMC's native congregations by claiming that they "are in a worse financial condition than the Indians are."[16] Once the logistics of settlement and migration were made to ease white migration into the region, officials believed, then the IMC could firmly establish its presence. This was true for white renters near Paul's Valley in the Chickasaw Nation, for instance, where Chickasaw laws restricted their land ownership. By enlarging the conference's work in the Paul's Valley area, the IMC stated in 1890, "our missionaries are laying the foundation of the Church."[17] Furthermore, the expansion of the railroad throughout Indian Territory connected these new communities with one another and demanded "our eternal vigilance which in this instance shall prove the price of our ecclesiastical growth and life," the conference told the Board of Missions.[18]

Yet simply sending missionaries to these new settlements was not enough because the communities wanted more tangible signs of the IMC's

[15] "49th Session of the Indian Mission Conference," Minutes of the Indian Mission Conference, 1894-1900, Box 34, Hobart Ragland Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[16] Our Brother in Red, November 1, 1894.
[17] Forty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 11.
[18] "May 11, 1900," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 02: July 26, 1894-January 5, 1904, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

presence and made demands of the conference. "[I]n order to render proper service to the town and people and surrounding community," the IMC's ministerial appointment "must concentrate his efforts right here," wrote the Minco Minstrel, a publication from the west central Indian Territory town of Minco. "It may cost a little more to have things right, but the satisfaction of knowing that it is right more than compensates for the very small additional cost."[19] What Minco demonstrated was the increasing town development occurring in the territory and how that changed the nature of Southern Methodist work. Church buildings, along with schools and businesses, connoted permanence for a new town and served to attract further prosperity. The IMC's circuit rider system, which the conference had used since its very beginning to spread into isolated areas, was out of place in a new community bent on creating permanent institutions. With urbanization and town development increasing, as well as the demands for permanence in a city's institutions, circuit riders found the rigors of traveling being replaced by the wants of a settled population.[20]

The rhetoric of enlarging the work to meet white needs was repeated whenever new land opened up to settlement in Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory, whether through land runs or land lotteries. The opening of the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency near Anadarko in 1901, for instance, caused a sense of anxiety and hope for the IMC equal to the Land Run of 1889. The IMC estimated the number of migrants near Anadarko at 10,000

[19] Our Brother in Red, January 26, 1893.
[20] "Interview with Elizabeth Alberty," Vol 3, 6422, Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

with another 10,000 expected after the opening, which also led the conference to draw up boundaries for two potential districts out of the new settlements. "We must enter promptly…," conference officials wrote to the Secretary of the Board of Missions, "…we must do all we can to hold them for God and Southern Methodism."[21]

The IMC's comments to the Secretary of the Board of Missions underscored the second major theme that expansion took for the conference. Denominational competition became a motivating factor in the direction that the IMC took in the 1890s and an eminent threat to its place in the region. Other denominations and Churches moved into the territory and their efforts threatened to undermine the IMC's work or, worse still, perpetuate an "eclesiastical theft [sic]" by stealing Southern Methodists for their own churches.[22] "We very much need for a forward move in our own Conference, among the Wild tribes, and in Oklahoma and new lands that may soon be open to Settlement," J.M. Gross wrote to his fellow conference members to encourage expansion. "We must occupy this territory at once, or we will lose our Crown."[23]

The threat posed by other churches seemingly trumped any other decision made by the IMC during this era. In the days before the Land Run, when the IMC and other churches concentrated primarily on Indian communities, the conference had an uneasy relationship with encroaching

[21] "June 13, 1901," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 02: July 26, 1894-January 5, 1904, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[22] Our Brother in Red, April 1886.
[23] Our Brother in Red, May 18, 1893.

denominations. For example, Southern Methodist work among the Seminole was often limited by the influence of Baptist congregations and Baptist leaders, such as the Seminole chief and missionary John Jumper. According to one story told in the IMC in 1885, Baptists leaders claimed that "God has given the Indians to us," while Jumper himself supposedly stated that the Seminole were predominantly Baptists "because the Baptists are right."[24] Conference leaders chafed at efforts by other denominations to steal their members, even though they might engage in similar activity themselves. As Theodore Brewer reminded the IMC, "[t]he sin of proselyting members from one Christian denomination into another deserves the condemnation of all good people."[25] This desire to avoid competition with other churches was cited as the official reason that the IMC quit operating the Seminole Academy in 1887.[26]

Perhaps the best reason that denominational competition became a focus for the IMC was that this was a problem the conference could handle and address. Indian communities might require a reorientation of culture and customs. Missionaries had to find ways to literally and figuratively translate their message for a people with, at best, a limited knowledge of Christianity. Denominational competition, on the other hand, required a superior understanding of the Bible, not a superior understanding of Indians. Indian

[24] Our Brother in Red, January 1885.
[25] Our Brother in Red, May 1884
[26] "42nd Session, Vinita, I.T., October 12, 1887," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK. Though that was the stated reason, in reality school officials chafed at Seminole oversight and tried to make new arrangements to their own benefit. The Seminole rejected these changes and the IMC abandoned its work at the school.

churches and white churches required two different kinds of workers, and not all individuals could make the transition successfully. Once Indian Territory opened up to white migration, struggling missionaries frustrated with language and cultural difficulties from working with Indian communities might quickly find white settlements easier to confront and convert.

As the IMC saw it, competition could assume several fronts as prominent denominations working in the region included Baptist, Church of Christ, Presbyterian, Quakers, and the Reformed church. The conference described the threat that these denominations posed in stark terms and took great satisfaction in pointing out their inadequacies. "The fact that this will be an ecclesiastical battleground makes it imperative that we have plenty of good men," the Presiding Elder of the Duncan District told the Board of Missions in 1901. "That it will be such a field is known by others than prophets."[27] When the IMC's A.S. Cook took part in a public debate with a Church of Christ minister in Savanna, Indian Territory, Our Brother in Red gleefully reported that the conference's minister had "cooked Rev. Barber's potatoes in short order."[28]

In other cases, the competition could come from internal sources within the IMC or from other Methodist organizations. The IMC's appointment to the Comanche mission near Ft. Sill, William Brewer, became an outspoken supporter of "Second Blessing," or the belief that sanctification was an entirely

[27] "June 13, 1901," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 02: July 26, 1894-January 5, 1904, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[28] Our Brother in Red, July 27, 1893.

separate and secondary step after salvation and which was opposed by many Methodist officials. Brewer even claimed that his Comanche congregation reacted well to this preaching and that the Comanche mission was “gaining in spiritual momentum" as a result. But, as he also noted, "[e]very lick I've received [about preaching the Second Blessing] came from my brethren in the ministry."[29] When Holiness movements gained in popularity in the territory and began encroaching upon both native and white communities, the IMC came out firmly against these groups. They were described at the IMC’s 1894 annual meeting as "fanatical movements…by which many of our people, are in places being deceived and led away.” Holiness movements were “doing great damage to the church,” and the IMC admonished its members to avoid them.[30]

In the eyes of the IMC, more egregious than internal problems from its own ministers were the perceived attacks from the Northern Methodist church. This denomination shared much of the same theological heritage as the Southern Methodist church, but held very different social views that had developed during the sectional strife of the pre-Civil War years. In the postwar decades, the National Church throughout the South faced competition from Northern missionaries intent on restructuring the region’s Methodism, which only added to the growing bitterness of Reconstruction. In Indian Territory and Oklahoma, the Northern Methodists liked to refer to the

[29] Our Brother in Red, August 3, 1893.
[30] Our Brother in Red, November 15, 1894.

Southern branch as "the old rebel church"[31] or "look down on the southern Methodist people as slave holders and secessationists [sic]."[32] The IMC found itself confronting a similar denomination in terms of theology but with a higher sense of status and respectability in a nation still reeling from the Civil War.

The threat from the Northern Methodists was most prominent in the northeast section of Indian Territory where the IMC worked in the Cherokee Nation, though the threat cropped up whenever new land opened to white settlement.[33] Charles M. Coppedge, a Presiding Elder in the Cherokee Nation, referred to the Nowata charge as "the picket line between us and Kansas. The M.E. Church [Northern Methodist church] has tried to capture this field and has manifested a zeal worthy of a better cause [by the IMC]."[34] In the Western District, the work was said to be so hard that the conference could not find ministers willing to go there and effectively turned the field over to the Northern Methodists.[35] When the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency prepared for its opening in 1901, IMC leaders worried about the Northern Methodist threat and appealed to the Board of Missions for help. "Other denominations, especially the Northern Methodists, will put forth mighty efforts to take this land that so justly belongs to us," the Presiding Elder

[31] Our Brother in Red, April 1886
[32] Our Brother in Red, March 5, 1896
[33] "June 13, 1901," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 02: July 26, 1894-January 5, 1904, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[34] Our Brother in Red, February 13, 1896.
[35] "Interview with Mrs. Sherman Hostick," Vol 44, 8534, Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC, OU, Norman, OK.

complained to the Board.[36] When the Northern Methodists made overtures to the IMC to divide Indian Territory into separate areas so that the two branches could work unhindered by the other, the Board of Missions rejected the plan by stating that it had been in the region since 1844 and had no plans to withdraw from the field.[37]

In some circumstances, the IMC's motivation for focusing on other denominations was nothing more than thinly veiled prejudice. Conference leaders believed that Catholics practiced "'First come first served' in church matters," implying a lack of concern or cooperation with other churches, and would work in an area without any recognition of previous Protestant missions.[38] The animosity toward Catholic churches was most noticeable on the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency, where Catholic missionaries founded their own boarding school and openly courted the support of Indian leaders like Quanah Parker. Sallie Davis, a missionary sent to Anadarko by the Woman's Board of Missions, reported that she had to abandon her camp

[36] "June 13, 1901," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 02: July 26, 1894-January 5, 1904, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

[37] "May 3, 1905," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 3, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ. This was not an unprecedented suggestion because Northern and Southern Methodists agreed to divide their work in several foreign fields so as not to duplicate or waste their limited efforts. For instance, in South America, the M.E. Church conducted work in the smaller Spanish-speaking nations, while the Southern Methodist worked in Portuguese-speaking Brazil. Similar arrangements existed in Mexico and Japan.

[38] "May 11, 1900," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 02: July 26, 1894-January 5, 1904, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

work with Indian children and focus on the white community near the agency out of fear that the white children would soon attend a Catholic school.[39]

Catholics first came to Anadarko in the fall of 1891 when Father Isidore Ricklin arrived at the KCA Agency, and he opened up St. Patrick's boarding school soon thereafter. Within a couple years, St. Patrick's had double the capacity of the Methvin Institute and threatened to overtake the Southern Methodists in the region. However, Father Ricklin and the Catholics concentrated most of their efforts in the Anadarko area, which left Indians living in the outer reaches of the reservation open for missionary work.[40] J.J. Methvin, the IMC's primary missionary at the agency, was skeptical of Catholic missionaries, to say the least. In 1888, he suggested that Protestant denominations should cooperate in the mission field to "save this country from the Catholics, and the people from the devil."[41]

Methvin was particularly envious of the connections Catholics had established in the region with both Indian leaders and government personnel. In 1895, he lambasted Major Frank D. Baldwin, the Indian agent at the KCA Agency, about his "leaning to Catholicism" when it came to school affairs.[42] The local Protestant superintendents, which included Southern Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian boarding schools, cooperated with one another in returning runaway students, Methvin stated, though they did not extend this

[39] Woman's Missionary Advocate, February 1893.
[40] Luke Eric Lassiter, Clyde Ellis, and Ralph Kotay, The Jesus Road: Kiowas, Christianity, and Indian Hymns (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 31-33.
[41] Our Brother in Red, October 13, 1888.
[42] Woman's Missionary Advocate, December 1895; "Letter from J.J. Methvin to Major Frank D. Baldwin, September 7, 1895," Miscellaneous Schools – Methvin Institute, September 7, 1895 – July 20, 1898, KA Roll 98, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

courtesy to Father Ricklin and St. Patrick's. Baldwin had taken students from the Methvin Institute and returned them to St. Patrick's without consulting with Methvin before hand, a move which the missionary felt was "antagonizing" on the agent's part and would lead Indian parents to avoid the Southern Methodist school altogether.[43]

More problematic for the IMC was the direct influence the Catholics had with some of the Indians at the agency. The Catholics convinced Geronimo to support their school instead of any Protestant school, Methvin complained, and twenty-five Apache children attended St. Patrick's as a result.[44] With the Comanches, Methvin thought that Catholics encouraged peyote use among the tribe in an attempt to appeal directly to them. Methvin believed that James Mooney, the noted ethnologist who studied the peyote issue among the Plains Indians during his visit to the region in the 1890s, was central in this endeavor because he, too, was a Catholic. "[Mooney] works to get them to the Catholic Mission, for he is a Catholic," Methvin complained bitterly.[45] Furthermore, Methvin accused Ricklin of baptizing Indians under the auspices that they could continue using peyote while being Catholic, "but while he fails in getting them to take on his superstition, he helps to keep them in their own. The devil is ever busy."[46]

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[43] "Letter from J.J. Methvin to Major Frank D. Baldwin, September 13, 1895," Miscellaneous Schools – Methvin Institute, September 7, 1895 – July 20, 1898, KA Roll 98, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[44] Woman's Missionary Advocate, March 1895.
[45] Woman's Missionary Advocate, January 1894.
[46] Woman's Missionary Advocate, January 1894.

Once the idea of expansion took hold in the conference, whether through enlarging preexisting work or as a result of denominational competition, the IMC concentrated its efforts on building proper facilities such as churches and parsonages. Church buildings connoted an established and active presence in a community and became the focal point of the IMC's goals for the territory. Just one year after the Land Run, the conference made its position known when it asked its preachers to "give particular emphasis to…the necessity of building Methodist Church houses and parsonages in every pastoral charge."[47] The new emphasis was quickly noticed by those outside of the church like Leo E. Bennett, the federal government's Indian agent at Union Agency. Bennett, whose responsibilities at Union Agency covered each of the Five Tribes, noted in his 1890 annual report that the Southern Methodists had "largely increased the number of their churches and added to their membership during the year."[48] A year later, Bennett claimed "a healthy progress in the matter of religion" among the Five Tribes. "Many new church houses have been built, churches and Sunday Schools established, and altogether a large increase in church membership is noticeable," Bennett wrote.[49] As the Indian Mission Conference built facilities for its congregations and ministers, it moved further from its history as a

[47] "45th Session, Muskogee, I.T., October 22, 1890," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.
[48] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the year 1890, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1890), 95.
[49] Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the year 1891, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1891), 250.

mission field and closer to the legitimacy that other conferences had in the National Church.

In previous decades, the necessities of the mission field forced the IMC to make concessions when it came to its church buildings. Several Southern Methodist congregations in remote areas shared facilities with other denominations and used these places on a rotating basis. In some communities, as many as four different churches used the same facility, which limited how often the IMC's congregation could meet and meant that the cooperating preachers worked out a schedule in advance. At other times, congregations held services in public places like Masonic lodges or school houses, though these might not be the most conducive for a church service.[50] Worse still in appearance for some conference officials, Indian meetings might take place in teepees or under brush arbors. J.J. Lovett from the Cherokee District summed up much of the IMC's feelings on these antiquated meeting places in 1895 when he wrote, "We can't win and hold this country for Christ, Southern Methodism, without building churches. School houses and brush arbors have served their day and should be abandoned as places of worship."[51]

Proper church buildings were more than just a sign of permanency for the IMC, some in conference believed, because without the necessary

[50] Our Brother in Red, April 14, 1892; Our Brother in Red, January 19, 1893; First Methodist Church, Ada (1895-1949), Box 43, Hobart Ragland Collection, OHS, OKC, OK; UMC Davis, Box 44, Hobart Ragland Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[51] Our Brother in Red, July 4, 1895.

facilities “a whole train of evils frequently follows.”[52] Ministers and church officials made frequent public appeals for building funds in local, regional, or national newspapers and often described the situation as dire without proper church facilities. In 1893, Rev. A.C. Briggs in Canadian County wrote to the IMC that he needed $750 for three church buildings and one parsonage. Otherwise, the two Presbyterian churches in the county might overtake the conference’s work. “[T]hey had scooped in some of our members,” Briggs believed, “and several more that ought to be with us.”[53] Lucinda Helm at the Woman’s Department of Church Extension for the National Church was even more critical of the conference’s inability to build proper facilities when she addressed The Christian Advocate in 1889. Writing about the IMC’s abandoned effort near Pawhuska in the Osage Nation because no parsonage could be built and, subsequently, no minister wanted the field, Helm stated that "[i]t all turns upon that one point. For the lack of a parsonage the mission to the Osages must be abandoned, and a heathen people be left to perish in the midst of a Christian nation."[54] For many within the National Church and the conference, a mission field was only successful if it had the tangible signs of permanence like church buildings and parsonages that implied the successful spread of white civilization.

Understanding the need for proper church buildings to help legitimize their communities and their presence in the region, white congregations became proactive. The Eufaula church, which had been one of Theodore

[52] Our Brother in Red, January 9, 1896.
[53] Our Brother in Red, July 6, 1893.
[54] The Christian Advocate, February 16, 1889.

Brewer's first assignments in the IMC back in the 1870s, burned down in 1896 when fire struck most of the town. But, as the church history reported, reconstruction and financing was "fairly easy in the prosperous new town" and the rebuilt church remained debt free.[55] Six days after the April 22, 1889 Land Run, fifty Southern Methodists organized an MECS church in Oklahoma City which by June claimed over 500 members. In 1904, the Oklahoma City church, now renamed St. Luke's, built its first brick building and, two years later, the congregation raised $90,000 for additional facilities.[56] In Holdenville, eight members formed a church in 1897 which grew to more than 200 members by 1906, the same year it built a new $5,000 church and parsonage.[57] The IMC's church in Clinton, established in 1903, was destroyed by a tornado in June 1904, and the congregation rebuilt the church in less than two months and added a $1,500 parsonage one year later.[58] As these examples demonstrated, funding for white churches outpaced most of what Indian congregations could provide, and whites were willing to spend their money in large amounts to support their conference's move toward legitimacy.

The need for church facilities exposed the subordinate position Indian congregations found themselves in by the 1890s. Public appeals for financial assistance with church buildings or parsonages were common in church newspapers, such as H.H. Goode's request for $37.50 for his church in Adair

[55] 1847-1947 A Century of Service, The Methodist Church, Eufaula, Oklahoma, Religious Bodies of Oklahoma Collection, WHC, OU.
[56] …A Tribute to Your Vision: St. Luke's Methodist Church, WHC, OU.
[57] History of the Methodist Church in Holdenville, 1897-1957, WHC, OU.
[58] Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, United Methodist Church, Clinton, Oklahoma, WHC, OU.

on the Vinita Circuit in 1893.[59] But many Indian ministers among the Five Tribes, especially those working with full-blooded congregations, had limited knowledge of English and had trouble communicating with a broader audience. As a result, their ability to appeal for funds from a largely white audience was severely restricted. By the mid-1890s, the IMC had a clear picture of the financial issues affecting its Indian congregations, particularly their continued reliance on external funds and their lack of self-supporting churches. Officials at the Cherokee District Conference in March 1895 had grown frustrated by the poor economic condition of their churches even after a half-century of mission appropriations. "Our stewards and preachers and members will have to wake up along here or somebody is going to be left," the District Conference reported. It went on to claim that the district had only nineteen church buildings and needed facilities for another fifty-six congregations.[60]

When Indian members did have money or land that the conference could use, the IMC was quick to exploit the situation because Indian sovereignty or federal oversight restricted the conference's ability to purchase land outright. The conference might ask Indian members who held title to land to donate it to an individual church, such as it did in Marlow in the 1890s. That congregation received its property two blocks south of Main and Broadway after a Chickasaw woman gave the church a quit-claim deed to the

[59] Our Brother in Red, April 20, 1893.
[60] Our Brother in Red, April 4, 1895.

land.[61] In other cases, the conference appealed directly to Indian governments or councils. The IMC's Sallisaw church, for example, owed its beginnings to the Cherokee Nation after it received a patent for land from the nation in 1890.[62] The Cherokee national council tried to control the IMC's physical presence to a degree by requiring that an individual church's trustees be Cherokee citizens, which kept the land or property in the legal control of the Cherokee and not the conference. This provision, for instance, was enforced when James Taylor, a Cherokee citizen, sold a lot in the town of Claremore to the Methodists in 1893.[63]

As the conference grew, it continued to press Indian governments for more land and property. For several years, the IMC petitioned the Cherokee Nation for some of the abandoned government buildings at Fort Gibson. The conference claimed that the potential school was "a great opportunity for our church to establish an institution which will meet the demands of this country with its grand possibilities."[64] Perhaps recognizing the continued encroachment of whites into their nation, along with the shifting educational emphasis by the IMC away from Indian students, the Cherokee Nation avoided the conference's request.[65]

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[61] UMC Marlow, Box 45, Hobart Ragland Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[62] UMC Sallisaw, Box 46, Hobart Ragland Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[63] "Deed to Town Lots, April 5, 1893," Cooweescoowee District Records: Land Records and Estray Property Records, Cherokee Volume 218, Roll CHN 28, Cherokee National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[64] "48th Session, Vinita, I.T., November 1, 1893," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.
[65] "47th Session, Ardmore, I.T., November 16, 1892," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK; "48th Session, Vinita, I.T., November 1, 1893," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.

The conference's call for expansion and its desire for proper church facilities showed the IMC's new goals by the 1890s. Denominational competition forced the conference to confront an "enemy" it could understand in order to maintain its preeminence in the territory, while funds for new church buildings were more likely to come from whites seeking permanent institutions for their new communities rather than poor full-bloods. But the growing separation between Indian and non-Indian churches did not come solely from the new white immigrants in the IMC. The conference's Indian congregations, both the older ones among the Five Tribes and the developing ones among the Western Tribes, created their own distinct Indian Methodism. Their ability to incorporate Indian cultures or customs into their religious practices confused some within the conference, while the fact that some Indian preachers seemed more concerned with Indian autonomy rather than with the Church's work frustrated IMC officials. Indian Methodists were certainly more "civilized" than non-Christian Indians, church officials believed, yet their form of Methodism and their desire to maintain their own culture still differentiated them from the majority of whites in the IMC. Both white communities and Indian communities created new social institutions that incorporated Christianity and Methodism, but only one bore a close resemblance to those in the rest of the American South.

The IMC's attitude toward its full-blood congregations reached a crossroad in the mid-1890s. After more than a half-century of work with the Five Tribes, the conference sensed that its churches were moving away from

Indian congregations, particularly in full-blood communities. “[Full-blood work] required greater diligence and greater faith to accomplish anything at all,” Milton Clark reminded the IMC. He saw the language barrier as the strongest reason that the conference’s work struggled for years and he suggested a renewed effort by preachers to learn Indian languages, which was a step backwards in the assimilationist agenda of the National Church and federal government. “There are some preachers now who think that it is useless to try to do anything with them. The cost is too great,” Clark continued. “It is not to be wondered at that the interest and work drifted away from the full blood."[66]

Conference officials responded to Clark’s comments by laying the blame on the underpinnings of the Methodist circuit rider system. Using native-speaking preachers years ago would have been effective, the IMC noted, but "at that time our itinerant system could hardly have been bent to fit such a contingency." As for the present time, the conference claimed that "all the Indian languages are growing steadily into disuse, and soon will be unknown by any considerable number of the Indians," a comment that spoke more to the IMC’s focus on acculturated mixed-bloods and its desires for complete assimilation by Indian congregations rather than the reality of the situation.[67] Several years later, the Board of Missions also reflected on the IMC’s use of the circuit rider system for its Indian missions and declared it a failure. “To call this mission work,” the Board reported, “…is hardly fair. The

[66] Our Brother in Red, October 11, 1894.
[67] Our Brother in Red, November 1, 1894.

defect is in the system."[68] For its work in the 1890s, the IMC debated whether Methodist traditions like the circuit rider system could be or should be applied to Indian missions. Clark embodied the views of an older generation of missionaries who advocated new ways to achieve old goals, yet this view was out of step with current conference goals. The changing tide within the IMC in the 1890s forced the conference into a direction away from its native congregations.

One of the things that the discussion between Clark and the IMC revealed was the underlying idea of a properly educated and trained ministry. Writing in another piece, Clark reminded the conference that even after more than fifty years of work "[i]t takes a WE to preach to full bloods when a white preacher is in it."[69] As white communities grew and demanded more ministers, the IMC's Indian congregations, especially its full-blood churches, relied upon native ministers. But, as conference officials were quick to point out, many of these Indian preachers lacked a basic level of education in English, the Bible, and Methodist training.[70]

Complaints about the lack of education and the need for the conference to act came from both white and Indian ministers. Several times in the 1890s, the IMC sent resolutions to the National Church's General Conference asking that body to provide materials and to allow licensing

[68] Seventieth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1916), 47.
[69] Our Brother in Red, May 31, 1894.
[70] Forty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1889), 25.

examinations in native languages.[71] H.M. Grande wanted the conference to create regular preacher meetings for its native ministers in order to provide training in the essentials of Christianity. "They cannot go to Vanderbilt, nor possibly to any good school, nor read many books," Grande wrote when asking for some training in the rudiments of Christianity for the IMC's Indian preachers. "I plead for something like an informal Preachers' Institute, where the gospel, the Church, a call to preach, how to preach, how to be saved, and other vital matters can be taught under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."[72]

William Jimboy, a Creek minister and chaplain for the House of Warriors of the Creek Council, also understood the educational issues surrounding Indian preachers, and he bemoaned the IMC's lack of efforts to help.[73] He saw the clear "difference between the white man and the Indian" because native ministers were not adequately trained by Biblical standards. But Jimboy also noted that though they might lack the same education as whites, Indian ministers still "talk about Jesus and tell boldly of salvation."[74] He believed that Indian preachers could continue to promote a Christian and Methodist message in their own way even if they lacked some of the accruements enjoyed by whites. The reason for the different educational levels between white and Indian preachers as Jimboy saw it was in the dearth

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[71] "50th annual session, McAlister, I.T., October 31, 1895," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, OCU, OKC, OK; "52nd annual session, Muskogee, I.T., November 10, 1897," Minutes of the Indian Mission Conference, 1894-1900, Box 34, Hobart Ragland Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[72] Our Brother in Red, January 1887. Vanderbilt was originally a Southern Methodist school before breaking ties with the Church in the early-20th century.
[73] "Rules of the House of Warriors, Adopted December 7, 1902," National Council, Letters and Documents, 1899-1909, Roll CRN 14, Creek National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[74] Our Brother in Red, April 25, 1895.

of materials in native languages, which he felt was the fault of conference and church officials. "[Since] the book by which we are ruled, which the white people have, is not in our possession, I think we stand as though knowing nothing," Jimboy complained. "And even of the Discipline, we Methodist ministers are entirely ignorant; every Muskogee and every Seminole. But I think we are not to blame for that."[75]

Even though conference officials recognized that "[r]equiring full-blood Indians to conform to a literature requirement that they have never had in their language as a prequisite [sic] to the ministry will be attended with disaster to our church work among them," the IMC and National Church made only limited efforts to translate the Bible and the Discipline into native languages.[76] When J.S. Lamar asked the Board of Missions for help in translating portions of the Discipline into Creek, the Board hesitated. Months later, it gave Lamar $10 from the IMC's Sunday-School budget to buy Bibles for the Creek.[77]

While white officials within the IMC debated the course of its Indian missions, native communities followed their own beliefs toward Methodism and Christianity. At times, these decisions were directed by tribal concerns and Indian customs. Because some missionaries understood that Christianity did not immediately replace native society and that concessions had to be made in order to attract Indian converts, they were careful in how they

[75] Our Brother in Red, April 25, 1895.
[76] Our Brother in Red, May 2, 1895.
[77] "Letter to J.S. Lamar, March 4, 1897," Letter Book 4, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Board of Missions Correspondence; "Letter to J.S. Lamar, December 17, 1897," Letter Book 6, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Board of Missions Correspondence;

condemned native societies. In other cases, Indian converts governed and operated their own congregations irrespective of the wishes of the National Church or the conference, which only lowered their status and legitimacy in the eyes of church officials.

In 1894, Rev. A.B.L. Hunkapiller traveled to Fort Sill to visit the IMC's Comanche mission where he observed William Brewer's preaching as well as the Indian communities Brewer tried to reach. During Hunkapiller's visit, a Comanche man approached Brewer and asked to convert even though the man engaged in polygamy and had two wives. This seeming contradiction, of a man willing to embrace Christianity while stilling adhering to older ways, left the visiting minister perplexed as to what the conference should do. "While it is our duty to guard the door of our great church against polygamy at the same time here is a lost sinner with what light he has, wanting to accept Christ, become a Christian and join the church," Hunkapiller reported. "He is at the door knocking for admittance. What shall be done?"[78]

Hunkapiller's question addressed the divisive cultural issue affecting the conference, which centered on the theological gap between white-interpretations of Christianity and long-practiced native traditions. For much of the IMC's history, it had a tenuous relationship with certain elements of Indian culture, and this problem was only exacerbated by the recent addition of Plains Indians communities to the conference roll. Many white Methodists believed in the strict adherence to Christianity and condemned Indian religious or spiritual practices as heathen or paganistic. In eastern Indian

[78] Our Brother in Red, February 22, 1894.

Territory, preachers railed against the "busk" and other similar dances or ceremonies, which they interpreted as veneration of non-Christian spirits and ideals, as "evil."[79] Among the Plains Indians, missionaries encountered polygamy, peyote, and the Ghost Dance movement as major obstacles in their work. How Methodist missionaries approached these issues, however, also revealed the uneasy balancing act that they performed between the expectations of a white audience and their own honest desire to convert a native population to their view of Christianity. It also showed that while native communities accepted Christianity and promoted it in their own homes, they accommodated their own culture and did not abandon it to the degree that whites desired.

To be sure, the public rhetoric of the IMC's missionaries came down firmly against native practices like polygamy and dancing. M.B. Avant, a missionary from the Woman's Board who worked among Choctaw and Kiowa congregations, told the Woman's Missionary Advocate that the Sun Dance was "the most debasing and degrading of all [Indian] idolatrous worship."[80] Methvin spoke for many within the conference when he colorfully painted the Ghost Dance as a scam and said that "[a] dozen maniac asylums turned loose together would hardly be equal to the scenes enacted by these tribes…in their crazy, superstitious worship of the supposed Messiah."[81] But for all their bluster and public condemnation, missionaries could not stop Indian Methodists from attending these events. The Green Corn Dance

[79] Our Brother in Red, August 24, 1893; Our Brother in Red, November 28, 1895.
[80] Woman's Missionary Advocate, September 1890.
[81] Woman's Missionary Advocate, March 1891.

among the Creek and Seminole, for example, was practiced publically well into the twentieth century with both Christian Indians (including Methodists) and non-Christian Indians participating together at least until the 1930s.[82] In the case of polygamy, missionaries attempted to end the practice, something which became easier once the federal government passed laws forbidding it in Indian communities and missionaries could appeal to Indian agents for help in enforcing the matter. However, as IMC missionaries soon discovered, actually enacting these measures could prove difficult especially among the older generation.[83] Methvin was angered by former students who continued to engage in polygamy and asked the KCA agent to make them "conform to the law."[84] Another IMC missionary, Benjamin F. Gassaway, tried to find a solution as to which wife to recognize legally based on age or how long the wife had lived with the husband. When no determination could be made, Gassaway simply threw up his hands and tried his best to ignore the transgression.[85]

A more telling example of how IMC missionaries had to face the reality of native practices and its influence over their Indian converts was the widespread use of peyote among the Plains Indians in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Often referred to as peyotism (or, more derisively

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[82] "Interview with Alex Alexander," Vol 2, 6780, Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC, OU; Jack Schultz, The Seminole Baptist Churches of Oklahoma: Maintaining a Traditional Community (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 56.
[83] Lucille Gilstrap, Sayt-aym-k'ee-ah, Kiowa Chief and His People, Western History Collections, OU.
[84] "Letter from J.J. Methvin to Major Frank D. Baldwin, July 9, 1897," Miscellaneous Schools –Methvin Institute, September 7, 1895 – July 20, 1898, Roll KA 98, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[85] "Interview with John Gassaway," Vol 33, 4920, Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC, OU.

by missionaries, as “mescal eating”), this practice spread among Plains Indians in Indian Territory during the reservation era and typically featured the use of the peyote bud infused with religious symbolism and, in some cases, overtly Christian symbolism. Defenders of peyotism claimed that using the peyote bud’s hallucinogenic properties allowed an individual to seek out a spirit power for themselves. In his analysis of changing social institutions in Comanche history, anthropologist Morris W. Foster argued that peyote use allowed older religious symbols of the sun, Earth, and moon to find new meaning and usage for a reservation-bound Comanche society.[86] The practice grew in prominence on the KCA Agency in the 1880s for different reasons even as other native gatherings like the Sun Dance declined during the early reservation period, and it gained the support of important tribal leaders like Quanah Parker (Comanche) and Apiatan (Kiowa).[87]

For the IMC, Methvin became the conference’s most outspoken critic of peyotism. Describing an Apache peyote meeting he visited, Methvin evoked images of a den of sin that was virtually impenetrable by any feelings of hope and happiness. The feast, he described, “was densely dark, the clouds shut out the stars above, and mists hung heavy about, settled down around like the blackness of despair.” Peyote use, Methvin thought, was the

[86] Morris W. Foster, Being Comanche: A Social History of an American Indian Community (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1991), 94.
[87] Omer C. Stewart, Peyote Religion: A History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 34-39, 70-81; Boyd, Kiowa Voices: Ceremonial Dance, Ritual and Songs, 27; Foster, Being Comanche, 93-96.

"most debasing of all false worships that cursed the Indians" and a "drug habit under the cover of religion."[88]

For all of his anger at "mescal eating" and the Indians who took part in the ceremonies, Methvin saved the brunt of his criticism for James Mooney, an educated, federally employed ethnologist and, as Methvin was quick to note, Catholic. The missionary felt that Mooney's promotion of peyotism as a legitimate Indian practice masked his underlying motive of trying to supplant Protestantism among Indians with his own Catholic "superstition."[89] He conflated his own disregard of Catholicism with Mooney's study of peyotism and attacked both relentlessly. Methvin wrote the Indian Agent at the KCA Agency on several occasions in the mid-1890s complaining of Mooney's undue influence, in addition to his complaints sent to church members, government officials, and even the Secretary of the Interior in 1894.[90] The fact that many practicing peyote-users were associated with the Catholic Church to some degree, regardless of how close these associations actually were, only exacerbated the problem for Methvin.[91]

Despite all of this animosity toward what he felt was an evil practice disrupting his own redeeming work, Methvin never publically mentioned the

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[88] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.
[89] Quote from J.J. Methvin, In the Limelight, or History of Anadarko and Vicinity from the Earliest Days (Anadarko, Ok.: Plummer, 1928), 69-70; Woman's Missionary Advocate, January 1894, 210-211.
[90] Woman's Missionary Advocate, May 1895.
[91] "Letter from J.J. Methvin to Major Frank D. Baldwin, September 7, 1895," Miscellaneous Schools – Methvin Institute, September 7, 1895 – July 20, 1898, KA Roll 98, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK; "Letter from Methvin to Major Baldwin, September 13, 1895," Miscellaneous Schools – Methvin Institute, September 7, 1895 – July 20, 1898, KA Roll 98, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

use of peyote by his own Kiowa converts and Indian ministers. Some Indian leaders who were peyotists, like Quanah Parker, stymied Methvin's work and became logical targets for the IMC. Parker often rebuffed Methodist mission efforts among the Comanche and his public support for peyote included lobbying Oklahoma's legislature for legalization in 1906 and 1909.[92] Methvin directed his anger at peyotism and its outspoken adherents like Parker, but he never discussed how Kicking Bird, Andele, or Hunting Horse continued attending or participating in peyote meetings for quite some time after their conversions. Unsurprisingly, the reaction by Indians to peyote, who could justify its use in their pursuit of Christianity, was not as harsh as the opinions expressed by Methvin and his ilk. "I believe Andele's Bible," Sankadota said during a peyote meeting that Martinez attended. "It is right, but the Great Creator made peyote, so we who could not read could understand. The Great Creator made everything that grows, and he made peyote."[93] The popularity of peyote use among the Kiowa made any individual recrimination by missionaries difficult for fear of alienating potential members. At the same time, peyote adherents did not see the strict divide between church membership and peyotism and continued to become members of Baptist, Methodist, or other congregations in the region. As long as peyote users

[92] William T. Hagan, United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 292
[93] Maurice Boyd, Kiowa Voices: Myths, Legends and Folktales Volume II (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1983), 281.

balanced peyote meetings with attending church services, Methodist ministers had to tolerate its use to a degree.[94]

Hunting Horse became one of the symbols of the IMC's and Methvin's success in Kiowa country even though he participated in peyote ceremonies for decades after his membership in the Methodist church. A former scout for the United States military, Hunting Horse converted to Christianity around 1900 and began attending the Methodist church soon thereafter. He was a charter member of the Mt. Scott Kiowa Church and served as the camp announcer at camp meetings. After his conversion, Methvin convinced Hunting Horse to send his two sons, Cecil and Albert, to the Methvin Institute and the two boys eventually became Methodist ministers for the Kiowa. Yet even though the church raised him up as representative of Christianity's redeeming effect on Indians, and as Methvin relied up his influence to attract students to the Methodist mission school, Hunting Horse continued to practice peyotism for years. According to his son Cecil, Hunting Horse began using peyote in 1891 and learned many of the rituals of running a peyote meeting from his friend, Quanah Parker. It was not until he was close to 90 years old and after more than four decades of use that Hunting Horse quit the peyote religion.[95]

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[94] "Interview with Alfred Chalepah," Vol 40, T-77-2, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU; "Interview with James Silverhorn," Vol 38, T-19, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU.

[95] Robert M. Templeton, "Hunting Horse," The World Outlook 30 (November 1940): 423, 447-448; "Interview with Cecil Horse," Vol 34, T-27, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU. Another son of Hunting Horse, Monroe Tsatoke, was a peyote adherent and a member of the famed "Kiowa Five," where he gained national and international fame as an artist.

Even when native converts or congregations avoided some of the explicit practices seen to be at odds with Christianity like dancing or peyote use, they might still engage in behavior that further differentiated them from the mainstream, white-dominated National Church by stressing their native customs. John Tsatoke, Cecil Horse's son and Hunting Horse's grandson who later became a Methodist minister in his own right, credited God with the creation of Kiowa hymns, which also encouraged the use of native languages even though the assimilationist agenda of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries tried to snuff out these languages. According to Tsatoke, hymns sung in Kiowa served as "the inspiration of those that are sick, some that are in bereaved, some that are in sorrow" generations after federal government tried to extinguish native culture.[96] God had "inspired some of our elder Indian people," Tsatoke said, while Kiowa Christians "handed down [hymns] to us from year in and year out."[97] In other cases, Kiowa Christians easily substituted their words for God (Daw-k' ee) and Jesus (Daw-k' yah-ee) into songs originally used in the Feather Dance, which was the Kiowa name for the Ghost Dance ceremony.[98] By incorporating their own ideas rather than totally accepting the ways of the missionaries, Indian Methodists made their own connection to Christianity. This act also reinforced white views of how distinctly "Indian" those congregations remained.

An example of how natives could approach Christianity in ways unfamiliar to whites occurred in September 1894 when Our Brother in Red

[96] "Interview with Rev. Cecil Horse," Oral History Program, OHS, OKC, OK.
[97] "Interview with Rev. Cecil Horse," Oral History Program, OHS, OKC, OK.
[98] Boyd, Kiowa Voices: Ceremonial Dance, Ritual and Songs, 100.

published a letter titled “An Indian Vision” from the Creek minister David L. Berryhill. In his letter, Berryhill detailed a recent spiritual vision he had for a conference audience, though the focus was primarily for his Creek readers. As the vision began, an angel led him first to a bottomless pit where Berryhill heard voices calling out to him, including one of man he knew. The angel told Berryhill that the pit was actually hell and that the man he heard call out “claimed to be a child of God, but at the same time was working and serving the devil more than God."[99]

After a stop at a basin that the angel said “was the great gulf of which Abraham told the rich man was between heaven and the place of torment no man might, or could pass,” the angel took Berryhill through the gates of heaven and toward a mansion. In heaven, the two encountered Samuel Checote, the deceased principal chief of the Creek and minister in the IMC. Checote asked about his children on Earth, who Berryhill said "were all on the right road to heaven." Checote then told Berryhill that Berryhill's father, mother, brothers, and sisters "were all safe in the heavenly land.” “[Checote] took me into an adjoining room and there I saw my dear old mother arrayed in shining garments, she ran to me and embraced me and kissed me, for there is no weeping here, it is a place of joy and happiness. And I went into another room, and there I saw my old father brothers and sisters shouting and praising God who liveth forever." Finally, the angel took Berryhill to see God and Jesus, who told him "to return to yonder world and admonish the people

[99] Our Brother in Red, September 6, 1894.

to cease to do evil and to learn to do well, and also that the work that I had already done was pleasing in his sight."[100]

Berryhill's "Indian vision" reinforced not only the Creek minister's commitment to Christianity, but also his own interpretation and application of the religion. Visions were certainly nothing new in Christianity, yet the title of the letter made a point of defining it as "Indian." Furthermore, white officials or ministers ignored the letter and did not discuss it at all. A year later, unnamed IMC officials removed Berryhill from the ministry. They criticized him for not wanting the "full ministry of the gospel" by passing his examinations to become an elder in the conference. "All the preachers we have ever seen except Brother Berryhill have been anxious to be ordained so that they might baptize their converts, administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and marry their friends," they said as they chastised him.[101] Berryhill, in turn, felt that only one person was to blame: a "white man that opposed God's work, and that person knows it himself, and we Indians know it."[102]

Irrespective of the conference's support, some individual Indian congregations took the initiative in founding and building their own churches. In the mid-1890s, the Kiowa chief Stumbling Bear, with Methvin's help, founded the Mt. Scott Kiowa Church. With the church located on the KCA Agency and far removed from larger towns, Kiowa members were responsible for the majority of construction for the building. Charles Apekum, Stumbling Bear's grandson who was fifteen-years-old at the time, recalled cutting

[100] Our Brother in Red, September 6, 1894.
[101] Our Brother in Red, August 1, 1895.
[102] Our Brother in Red, August 1, 1895.

limestone and hauling it to the site to build the stone church. Boosting the area's growth, the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache collectively asked for a new school in 1896 to be built at Mt. Scott and set aside $25,000 of their own money for its operation.[103]

In other situations, Indian ministers in the IMC worked more actively to keep their churches free from white involvement and participation, purposely segregating their work from the rest of the conference. Bear Timpson, a full-blood Cherokee and a former Confederate soldier, entered the ministry after the Civil War and established a church located in Craig County in northeast Indian Territory. Timpson's attempts to keep his congregation free from white members and white influence originated from his view of white society in general, which he blamed for the decades of Indian mistreatment. As a result, Timpson's church focused on Cherokee converts and included many members of his own extended family.[104] Thomas Little, a Seminole preacher, also stated his desire to remain separate from white churches. "Although we are Methodists, and are strong in Methodist belief," Little told the IMC, "we think it is better for us that the white people should not be joined with us." Little wanted the conference to create an Indian-only district for its Creek and Seminole charges. "It does not please us to be joined with whites who are not citizens. We feel that it is better for the Indians to keep themselves separate." Little argued that because his community accepted Christianity,

[103] Lucille Gilstrap, Sayt-aym-k'ee-ah, Kiowa Chief and His People, WHC, OU; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the year 1896, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1896), 254.
[104] "Interview with John Armstrong," Vol 10, T-192-1, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU.

they had earned the right to operate without white interference, and that Christianity would sustain them without the need for oversight by white officials. "Having learned God's law, and believing it," Little wrote, "wherever we Indians are, having believed in it, we will believe it still."[105]

With Indian work needing more assistance from the conference and from the National Church, the IMC faced a debate over the economics of its Indian missions. The severe depression that began in 1893 meant that the Conference and the National Church put greater emphasis on the self-support for individual churches and circuits, which pressured congregations to become financially autonomous from the IMC and Board of Missions. This pressure, however, worked in the conference because the IMC's membership soared during the 1890s and its property value skyrocketed due to the growth of white communities. Writing in the 1910s, Theodore Brewer found the changes in the IMC quite remarkable when compared to his early days in the conference nearly four decades earlier and joked that if ministers from outside the region received word of the "fine houses" and "big salaries" in Oklahoma, the Bishop would be inundated with transfer requests. "Now we are living in fine parsonages and worshiping in splendid churches," Brewer wrote, "Who would have thought it thirty years ago?"[106]

This financial success that developed within white communities did not extend to many of the IMC's Indian congregations, who found themselves unable to support their churches and who required more and more assistance

[105] Our Brother in Red, July 4, 1895.
[106] A Historical Sketch of Our Work in Oklahoma by Theodore Brewer, Ruth Brewer Stith Collection, WHC, OU.

from the conference due to increasing economic marginalization by the 1890s.[107] The IMC floated several plans to reorganize its work, including measures to make Indian work the sole responsibility of the Board of Missions and to divide appropriations evenly between whites and Indians, which would have intensified the pressure on Indian congregations to either assimilate or segregate.[108] When the Board cut its appropriations to the IMC in the late-1890s, it finally forced the conference to concentrate on self-support. "The pastors should nerve themselves up to the duty of instructing their charges in the duty of self-support," the editor of Our Brother in Red said to the IMC. "Much, too, will depend upon the attitude which the stewards take upon the question."[109]

More troubling for missionaries working in native communities was the perception and fear that some conference officials reallocated money promised for Indian missions to white churches. Just two years after the Land Run, Methvin accused the IMC of using $19,000 of its $20,000 annual appropriations on whites and wealthy mixed-blood churches instead of needy full-blood work. A decade later, the Presiding Elder of the Duncan District, which included Methvin's Kiowa work, asked the Board to specifically earmark money for the KCA Agency instead of just giving the IMC a lump sum. This request implied that without specific instructions from the Board, the IMC would spend the money however it saw fit. The Board responded by specifying $948 for the KCA Agency, leaving the remaining $10,000 to be

[107] Our Brother in Red, May 2, 1895; Our Brother in Red, August 15, 1895.
[108] Our Brother in Red, January 26, 1893; Our Brother in Red, August 23, 1894.
[109] Our Brother in Red, May 23, 1895.

used at the conference's discretion.[110] Methvin's own request for help from the Board was met with recrimination because the Board had embarked on a policy of "self-maintenance" and "self-propagation" which it deemed necessary for the Church to avoid a "fall to the low level of decadence and early death."[111] "[T]he question of self-support, as essential to the establishment of a self-respecting, self-reliant and self-propagating church, is one of paramount importance…You can do much to co-operate with our brethren in this direction," the Board admonished Methvin in 1896. "[N]o further argument… is necessary."[112]

With the new white communities in a position to direct the IMC's actions, conference officials turned their attention to two important symbols of its status and position within the National Church. Its newspaper, Our Brother in Red, served as the official conference organ detailing the regular activities of the IMC, while its very name, the "Indian Mission Conference," stated its purpose. Yet both of those institutions designated the conference as "Indian" even though the IMC's membership and attitude had shifted and, as a result, the conference moved to change its name and newspaper in order to better reflect its new direction. However, as many white congregations advocated for these changes, the IMC's Indian churches fought against it. They were

[110] "June 13, 1901," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 02: July 26, 1894-January 5, 1904, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[111] Fifty-First Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1897), 3.
[112] "Letter to J.J. Methvin, April 16, 1896," Letter Book 1 Methodist Episcopal Church, South Board of Missions Correspondence.

successful for awhile, but in time the newspaper folded and the IMC ceased to exist.

Originally founded as a monthly paper in 1882, Our Brother in Red became a weekly newspaper in 1887 and served as the official organ of the IMC for more than fifteen years. As with most individual conference newspapers throughout the Southern Methodist church, Our Brother in Red offered pastors and congregations an opportunity to communicate with other members and was considered a vital piece of church literature that each Southern Methodist home should own. Both ministers and congregants wrote to the newspaper to discuss camp meetings, conversions, local political issues, or theological questions. It was, in the opinion of IMC officials, the "easiest and swiftest means by which the preachers and the people of this conference can communicate the news of our church to one another."[113] This newspaper also initially provided a voice to native preachers and congregations as is evident by the letters frequently published in native languages by such people as Creek ministers William Jimboy and David Berryhill, among others.[114]

Conference officials stated the reason for choosing the newspaper's name in an 1884 editorial. Critics charged that the name was "condescending" or "patronizing" toward the IMC's Indian members. "Some

[113] "Minutes of the Indian Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Forty-Fifth Session, Muskogee, Indian Territory, October 22–27, 1890," Farley Collection, WHC, OU.
[114] For examples of letters published in Indian languages, see Our Brother in Red, April 14, 1892; Our Brother in Red, September 29, 1892; Our Brother in Red, May 25, 1893; and Our Brother in Red, September 6, 1894.

have, from the phraseology of the name, been led into thoughts of painted cheeks, brilliant feathers, and red blankets," the officials responded, "but such thoughts do great violence to the legitimate meaning of the name." The editorial argued that other popular terms used to refer to Indians, such as "the nation's ward" or "the red man of the forest," reinforced the perception of inequality while their terminology did not. Officials felt that the newspaper's name should then indicate the conference's belief that "the Indian be received as a brother beloved, with rights and privileges equal to those enjoyed by his brother in white."[115] This belief in rights and privileges pictured by conference officials, however, assumed that Indians could subsume their Indian identity.

After the Land Run of the Unassigned Lands in 1889, the IMC returned to the issue of the newspaper's name. An 1891 attempt to rename the paper The Indian Advocate failed, but a similar move a year later to change the name to The Indian Methodist succeeded.[116] The IMC stated at the time that the newspaper had "failed to meet the demands of the Church," an indication of the influence that its new white members began to exhibit.[117] Looking to rebrand the conference's newspaper, names initially suggested included the Oklahoma Christian Advocate along with The Indian Methodist.[118] On the surface, both titles of these titles, along with the previous suggestion of The Indian Advocate, seemed to reflect more closely the newspaper's status as

[115] Our Brother in Red, August 1884.
[116] "46th Session, Oklahoma City, November 4, 1891," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, OCU, OKC, OK; "47th Session, Ardmore, I.T., November 16, 1892," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, OCU, OKC, OK.
[117] "47th Session, Ardmore, I.T., November 16, 1892," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, OCU, OKC, OK.
[118] Our Brother in Red, January 19, 1893; Our Brother in Red, March 23, 1893.

an official Methodist organ. The National Church newspaper, after all, was known as The Christian Advocate, and several conferences had used that name in their newspaper title, such as the New Orleans Christian Advocate or the Texas Christian Advocate. In other cases, conferences directly used the word “Methodist” in the title as a sign of identity, such as the neighboring Arkansas Conference and its newspaper the Arkansas Methodist. To the editors in the IMC, the change from Our Brother in Red to The Indian Methodist, therefore, represented the IMC’s development within the larger National Church and its own growing white constituency. As future Presiding Elder W.S. Derrick told the conference, “the name Our Brother in Red, had a kind of uncivilized 'jingle,' about it."[119]

But several pastors of Indian congregations saw more ominous undertones in the name change. "The paper is all right,” D.C. Murphy wrote, “but that new name looks like Oklahoma had its hand in it."[120] Murphy’s comment pointed directly to the influence that white congregations in Oklahoma Territory began to exert over the conference as a whole. By renaming the newspaper, the IMC was trying slowly to move the conference away from its Indian past and increase its standing in the National Church as a legitimate conference. Sales of the newspaper had declined by the early-1890s, primarily due to the increased competition and subscriptions to newspapers from other conferences such as The St. Louis Christian Advocate which the IMC’s white members were more comfortable

[119] Our Brother in Red, May 18, 1893.
[120] Our Brother in Red, April 13, 1893.

patronizing.[121] Many Indian congregations saw the name change as more evidence of the disinterest white congregations had toward their communities. The Choctaw preacher Willis Folsom expressed his feelings on the conference's new attitude when he wrote that "[t]his change indicates that the white people have ceased to call us their brother."[122]

After more than six months as The Indian Methodist, public pressure forced the newspaper to return to its old name of Our Brother in Red in November 1893.[123] Several white ministers had remained indifferent to the change, but the loudest complaints had come from Indian congregations. For the next few years, the newspaper continued operations until disgruntlement over its management and declining sales forced it to shutter its operations in 1898. In 1900, the IMC briefly supported the Western Christian Advocate, a newspaper started by W.S. Derrick and edited by J.M. Gross, and the conference warned that any minister working for a rival newspaper would suffer "the penalty of the charge of a breach of faith."[124] Afterwards, the IMC supported a series of newspapers representing various conferences in the region for the next few decades.[125]

At the same time that the membership argued over the name of its newspaper, forces within the IMC debated whether or not to divide into two separate conferences. This move mirrored the division of Indian Territory into

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[121] Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 304-306.
[122] Our Brother in Red, April 13, 1893.
[123] Our Brother in Red, November 9, 1893; "48th Session, Vinita, I.T., November 1, 1893," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, OCU, OKC, OK.
[124] Journal of the Indian Mission Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Fifty-Sixth Session, Methodist Library, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.
[125] Babcock and Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, 307-308.

the “Twin Territories” in May 1890.[126] Under the Oklahoma Organic Act of 1890, Congress joined the panhandle region known as “No Man’s Land” to the western portion of the area and created Oklahoma Territory. This new territory had its own government, its own territorial courts, and rights to local self-rule separate from Indian Territory, which now consisted of the Five Tribes and Quapaw Agency.[127]

An editorial published in the church’s newspaper in February 1893 outlined the differences between the Twin Territories, at least from the IMC’s perspective. According to the editor, Oklahoma Territory was populated by people “brought up under the influences of a civilized government, well nigh perfect in its character,” a reflection on the editor’s bias toward the new white immigrants in the region. In contrast, the editor continued, “the citizens of Indian Territory… are but just emerging from a state of semi barbarianism, and as yet their knowledge of the usages and laws of civilized government too necessarily imperfect."[128] This perceived divide between the two territories left the IMC in a precarious position. As a “mission conference,” it had to support work focused on Indian communities. This meant that funds from the national church were expected to be spent on both full-blooded and mixed-blooded churches primarily in Indian Territory. The growth in

[126] Previously, Indian Territory was not a federal territory with the same status as other federal territories in the West. The creation of the Twin Territories was one more step in the slow assault on the sovereignty of the Five Tribes that culminated with Oklahoma statehood in 1907.
[127] Jeffrey Burton, Indian Territory and the United States, 1866-1906: Courts, Government, and the Movement for Oklahoma Statehood (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 142-143; Edward Everett Dale and Morris L. Wardell, History of Oklahoma (New York City: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948), 254-255.
[128] Our Brother in Red, February 16, 1893.

Oklahoma and the fear that other denominations would soon move into the region, however, left many conference members wanting to focus the IMC's limited resources on white communities and "remove the badge of missions."[129]

By dividing the IMC into two conferences, white communities in Oklahoma Territory would be free from their obligations to Indian congregations. But there were benefits to separation for churches among the Five Tribes as well. The National Church's Board of Missions classified the IMC as a "foreign mission field" appropriating money accordingly and Indian communities were not receiving a fair share. One minister, for example, complained that he received only $100 for Indian work as opposed to the $1500 missionaries in Japan and China received.[130] By removing Oklahoma Territory from the IMC, Indian Territory would keep more money for its work and better support its ministers.

Another benefit to splitting the conference was that Indian ministers and those presiding over Indian congregations would maintain some autonomy within the conference. Many Methodist Indian communities among the Five Tribes could retain independent control over the direction of their church, shape religious services to their needs, and still draw upon the assistance of the National Church as need be. Furthermore, Indian congregations could be free from association with white churches which did not care about Indian missions. As the Choctaw District stated about the

[129] Our Brother in Red, April 19, 1894.
[130] Our Brother in Red, January 18, 1894.

proposed conference split, "[t]his people has no objection to any preachers who have no interest in the welfare of the Indian and does not want to remain in the Indian Mission Conference. There is nothing to keep any one that wants to go with Oklahoma from going. The Territory land belongs to the Indians."[131]

At its May 1894 General Conference, the National Church gave the IMC the right to divide, and throughout the summer district meetings debated the issue. Eventually, the Cherokee District, the McAlester District, and the Choctaw District, with large Indian populations from the Five Tribes, voted in support of dividing the conference along territorial lines.[132] At its annual meeting that October, the IMC voted in favor of separation "by a good majority" which would have split off the Oklahoma and El Reno Districts into their own conference and added the missionary work among the Plains Indians to the IMC.[133] However, the Bishop presiding over the meeting, Robert Hargrove, rejected the conference's vote "for reasons deemed by him satisfactorily [sic]" and the IMC remained undivided.[134]

Although thwarted by the Bishop that year, the debate over separation continued for more than a decade. At the 1898 General Conference and again at the 1902 General Conference, the IMC asked the National Church for the right to divide and it was granted at least once more.[135] Meanwhile,

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[131] Our Brother in Red, August 9, 1894.
[132] Our Brother in Red, July 26, 1894; Our Brother in Red, August 9, 1894.
[133] "49th Session, McAlister, I.T., October 31, 1894," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, OCU, OKC, OK.
[134] Our Brother in Red, November 8, 1894.
[135] Jno. J. Tigert, ed. Journal of the Thirteenth General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church,

both the IMC and the National Church reevaluated their stance toward Indian missions in general. "We are no longer an Indian Mission Conference, and we ought to change our name and not sail under this non de plume any longer," I.B. Hickman wrote the conference in 1896. "I say this because the Indians have left us or we have left them."[136] At its annual meeting in May 1904, the Board of Missions looked "narrowly into the evangelization of the Indians of the territory known as the wild tribes" and decided that "[e]xperience has shown that mixed work, that is, congregations made up of full-blood Indians and of our white population, is not best for either whites or Indians."[137] The Board grew disenchanted with the Plains Indians due to their perceived lack of success around the KCA Agency and felt that separating whites from Indians was the best option for the work in that part of conference. And while the Board wanted to appoint missionaries specifically for IMC's work with the Indians around Anadarko during their annual meeting, it also took away money from the conference's appropriations later that same day and earmarked it for a pastor in Berkeley, California.[138]

It was not until 1906 before the IMC formally made any changes to its boundaries. In the year before Oklahoma achieved statehood, the IMC officially changed its name to the Oklahoma Annual Conference and shed its

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South, 1898), 102; Jno. J. Tigert, ed. Journal of the Fourteenth General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1902), 237.

[136] Our Brother in Red, March 5, 1896.

[137] "May 6, 1904," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 3, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

[138] "May 6, 1904," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 3, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

"mission" status within the National Church. The Oklahoma Conference separated its Indian missions into three Indian-only districts, the Creek-Seminole Indian District, the Choctaw-Chickasaw Indian District, and the Kiowa Indian District, with a white minister overseeing each district as Presiding Elder. No mention was given for the disappearance of the conference's Cherokee congregations from the membership rolls.[139]

Soon after the IMC officially became the Oklahoma Annual Conference in 1906, the region's Southern Methodist Indian congregations declined in membership to pre-Civil War levels.[140] The conference formally separated Indian districts from white districts, and then combined the administration of these new Indian-only districts into smaller units. Indian missions, which had once been the defining characteristic of Southern Methodism in the region, was being reduced to isolated outposts surrounded by a larger white-dominated conference. Indian schools, previously a valuable base for missions and a source of pride for the IMC, became passé within the conference as it directed its educational efforts at white communities and were a reminder of a bygone era. Whatever attention the IMC did pay to Indian schools was usually concerned with potential costs and profits, and not on a Christian education.

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[139] Official Minutes and Annual Report of the 62nd Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the MECS, Durant, November 13-18, 1907.

[140] Sixty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1909), 19. In 1909, the Board of Missions reported 2928 members from the Five Tribes and 382 from the Western Tribes.

The segregation between the IMC's white and Indian churches developed from both sides and was not simply a matter of white officials leaving their Indian brethren behind. Following the Land Run in 1889, the region's demographics changed completely and put Indians in the minority population. An increase in whites created an increase in the conference's responsibilities, whether to enlarge its preexisting work or to combat the "Johnny-come-lately" denominations that it felt threatened Southern Methodist congregations. Once the IMC took on the appearance of a "white" conference, church officials proceeded to change their institutions and assume their identity as a legitimate conference within the National Church. The influence of the new migrants into Indian Territory, who had little previous exposure to Indian missions and were more concerned with their own needs, forced this change in the conference's attitude.

For their part, Indian congregations continued their own cultural traits much like they had for many decades, only to the consternation of white missionaries and conference officials. They included elements of their own culture, such as language and song, out of necessity or a desire to worship in a way that was comfortable to them, and ascribed the introduction of these elements into their congregations as the work of the same Christian God that whites worshipped. Church services became evidence of individuals asserting their Indian identity, which ran counter to the explicit assimilationist agenda of many missionaries.[141] Indian acceptance of white ways varied with

[141] William C. Meadows, Kiowa Ethnogeography (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 151-152.

some trying to avoid white interference at all costs and others more measured in their response. But neither alternative meant that they stopped being Christian or Southern Methodist regardless of how the conference might choose to see them.

This expression of autonomy within the conference, whether conscious or not, only served to differentiate Indian congregations from the mainline-orientated IMC by the early-1900s. When whites asserted more control over the direction of the conference, they changed the IMC's emphasis away from Indians and toward something that better resembled the institutions and organization of the rest of the Southern Methodist church. Because Indian congregations had adopted Methodism, the conference could claim a small victory and the IMC was content to let them exist, though not without pushing them to the periphery first. The dark period for Southern Methodist Indian missions in Oklahoma lasted from 1906 until 1918, when the National Church re-established a separate Indian Mission to oversee its work in the region and allowed for more native control.

Chapter Four: Marginalizing the Indian and Mission Work, 1906-1918

When the Indian Mission Conference formally became the Oklahoma Annual Conference in 1906, the organization underwent more than just a name change. White churches in what was soon to become the state of Oklahoma had achieved control over conference affairs and officially laid claim to legitimacy alongside older conferences in the rest of the National Church. They pushed aside work that extended back over generations and was one of the oldest mission fields for Southern Methodism, even though they had failed in their efforts to create a fully-assimilated Christian Indian population. No longer burdened with the explicit objective of mission work, the Oklahoma Conference could now direct its attention toward the typical issues faced by mainstream Southern Methodist churches such as building proper facilities, fulfilling assessments and appropriations, and increasing their membership and presence in the face of competition from other Protestant denominations. The new conference could better represent its needs in local religious issues and before a national audience without the "badge of missions" hanging overhead. This direction evolved again after 1910 when the Oklahoma Conference officially split into two new organizations, the West Oklahoma Conference and the East Oklahoma Conference.

The emphasis by the Southern Methodist Church on work that benefitted white communities was another aspect of a larger trend evident in Oklahoma during this period that saw its native population pushed to the

periphery. The transitional period from the last days of Twin Territories in the 1890s to the beginning of Oklahoma statehood in the early-twentieth century featured a wide-spread attitude of greed and corruption perpetrated by white society on their Indian neighbors. In her classic history of the Five Tribes from 1890s to the 1930s, And Still the Waters Run, Angie Debo described the "orgy of exploitation" that took place in eastern Oklahoma as occurring "almost beyond belief."[1] In the western half of the region, the result was much the same. Unlike the exciting land runs that happened in other areas of Oklahoma and that captured the imagination of many, the dispossession of Indian land on the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency after 1901 occurred through a slightly more sedate process of land lotteries.[2] As a final insult, Kiowa attempts to stop the allotment process eventually resulted in the Supreme Court's Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock decision which gave Congress the power to abrogate Indian treaties. Throughout the region, native society was under attack as the federal government ended tribal sovereignty, abrogated decades-old treaties, and enacted land allotment in an attempt to break up the collectively-owned Indian land base into individual portions which non-Indians could eventually acquire. With the government on their side, unscrupulous whites exploited Indians for their own needs and conspired in

[1] Angie Debo, And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1940), x.
[2] Blue Clark, Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock: Indian Treaty Rights at the end of the Nineteenth Century (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); William T. Hagan, United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1976).

some of the largest examples of widespread fraud and theft on a native population.[3]

At best, Oklahoma's Southern Methodist Churches could be accused of ignoring their Indian commitments and overlooking white actions as Indian churches continued their path toward marginalization; at worst, the Church could be seen as complicit with the overall theft of Indian lands and their declining status in the state. Recognizing that its native churches were not assimilating into the mainstream culture as desired, conference officials officially segregated Indian work from the rest of its congregations where they assumed a secondary and almost forgotten position in the conference. By 1909, the Oklahoma Conference claimed only 2928 members among the Five Tribes and 382 among the Plains Indians near the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency.[4] The 1910 split of the Oklahoma Conference into two smaller conferences further divided Indian congregations as these new organizations assumed control over the Indian churches within their own boundaries, leaving the Five Tribes as a minority within the East Oklahoma Conference and the Plains Indians as an isolated station in the West Oklahoma Conference. Whether the segregation of Indian work was done for the betterment of native churches or white churches depended on one's perspective. What this new approach to the administration of Indian missions did result in was a declining attention span on the part of the National Church

[3] W. David Baird and Danney Goble, The Story of Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 315-318.
[4] Sixty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1909), 19.

and the conference. Congregations that were previously overlooked could now be completely pushed to the side as the conference's focus shifted to its "regular" churches and their improvement. The Southern Methodist Church in Oklahoma mirrored the rest of the state's white population in forgetting their Indian roots and ignoring Indian rights in favor of "progress" and "civilization." The region's native churches entered into a dark time of doubtful existence.

With the Indian Mission Conference formally disappearing into the past, the new Oklahoma Conference proceeded to claim selected elements of its predecessor's history. Official records and stories transferred to the new conference, which could now proudly proclaim its heritage as extending back decades and cement its preeminence in the state when competing against other white-dominated denominations. At the same time, churches that were founded as Indian congregations years earlier became increasingly white in their appearance and focused on their overall future in the developing region rather than their native beginnings. Indian membership declined, which the conference erroneously attributed to the claim that Indians were joining white churches in large numbers and assimilating to the point that preachers no longer made the distinction between Indian and white members or cared at all for those differences. More telling about the new direction that the conference took was how church leadership wanted to clear up ownership questions concerning church property and moved to acquire Indian land once the federal government extinguished tribal sovereignty by the early 1900s. Conference officials addressed the issue of church property, which included

church houses, parsonages, building lots, cemeteries, and school facilities, by promoting their own interests or potential profit at the expense of Indian rights.

The fact that Southern Methodist Indian congregations in Oklahoma did survive this tumultuous period was due to several factors. Congregations that had turned inward over the previous decades, especially as the old IMC increasingly neglected its Indian churches, continued on under the Oklahoma Conference and later the West Oklahoma Conference and East Oklahoma Conference. These congregations were battered, certainly, but they were not destroyed. Indian ministers remained committed to their charges regardless of the indifference displayed by conference officials. As in previous difficult times, such as the Removal era or the Civil War period, traveling preachers and local preachers continued their ministry to the remote Indian congregations in the state. In other cases, a limited number of white missionaries working among Indian communities refused to let their work die. Men and women from local churches or from national organizations persevered, though their future and their financial support was often in doubt. Still, the results of native and white ministers and missionaries during this period were small as Indian membership in the Southern Methodist church continued a decline that began in the 1890s. In 1916, the National Church recorded 2700 Indian members in the state, its lowest total since 1868 when the IMC began its slow recovery from the devastation of the Civil War.[5]

[5] Seventy-First Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1917), 52-53; Francis M.

Southern Methodist Indian communities in Oklahoma in the early-twentieth century continued their pattern of differentiation from mainstream Southern Methodist culture. With white congregations focusing on their own needs and, in turn, increasing their own wealth and prestige, Indian congregations faced a different set of problems. Issues of federal interference and paternal oversight still plagued native communities throughout the state. White ministers, who found the new Oklahoma conferences more appealing for a variety of reasons, looked at Southern Methodist Indian churches as a bygone era. Even when whites accepted Indian Methodism as a viable form of Christianity, they viewed Indian religious expressions and services as out of step with modern Oklahoman society. Whites perceived their churches, which were concentrating on outward signs of permanence and legitimacy, as fitting for a mainstream Protestant church in the twentieth century, and they thought that native churches had yet to move past the pioneer pattern of missions. While whites focused on massive church construction projects, Indian congregations still met in brush arbors, dug-outs, teepees, or single-room church houses miles from any urban area.[6]

After several years of debate, the National Church reestablished a formal Indian Mission in 1918. A collection of white and Indian ministers,

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Moore, A Brief History of the Missionary Work in the Indian Territory of the Indian Mission Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Muskogee, Indian Territory: Phoenix Printing Co., 1899), 59.

[6] Dug-outs were earthen constructions out of step with the massive church building projects evident among many white populations. They were also dangerous. In 1905, Rev. Pinkney White suffocated to death when the dug-out he was preaching in collapsed on top of him. See Sidney H. Babcock and John Y. Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma: Story of the Indian Mission Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (Oklahoma City: n.p., 1935), 296.

along with select national officials, saw the benefit of creating a separate organization to oversee Indian work without interference from the West Oklahoma Conference or East Oklahoma Conference. But by then, much damage had been done. Indian membership and congregations contracted, while most of the forward momentum of earlier decades stopped. The National Church and conferences openly acknowledged the loss of Cherokee churches from the mission, though they provided no reason as to how this occurred. The intent behind the new Indian Mission was to secure and support what was left of the old native churches, with expansion into more Indian communities being a distant and difficult goal.

The period from 1906 until 1918 was the low ebb of Southern Methodist Indian congregations in Oklahoma. The Civil War had been equally destructive, but that devastation came from the turmoil of a sectional conflict that bled into the entire region. Once the war ended, the region could and did rebuild. This time, the destruction came from casual indifference.

In the years prior to Oklahoma statehood when they operated as the Indian Mission Conference, conference officials had made several attempts to separate Indian missions from white work in the region, including petitioning the National Church for permission to divide into smaller conferences in the 1890s and early 1900s. Finally, at its quadrennial General Conference in May 1906, the National Church granted the IMC the right to change its

name.[7] In a certain sense, the name change achieved the same goal that division would have for the region's white churches, albeit on a larger scale and with less consideration for the future of Indian congregations. The idea behind division had been to separate Indian work in Indian Territory from the majority of white churches in Oklahoma Territory, with Indian work still existing as the "mission" conference and the newly settled whites making up a "regular" conference. Under this proposed dual system, each population could operate independently from the other and still be content that Southern Methodism was progressing. The name change accomplished half of this objective. The National Church recognized the IMC's newfound status as a "regular" conference, but without making any accommodations for its Indian congregations.[8] Rather than maintaining Indian work as a separate organization as once proposed, and therefore with special attention and care paid to its operation, the name change folded those churches into the new Oklahoma Conference and left the administration of Indian congregations up to white officials more focused on their own ecclesiastical growth.

How the IMC would reconcile its Indian heritage with its newfound status was the subject of debate at its last annual meeting in Tulsa in November 1906. Needing to decide upon a name for the new conference, the meeting appointed a five person committee to come up with suggestions.

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[7] Gross Alexander, ed. Journal of the Fifteenth General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1906), 267.

[8] Robert W. Sledge, "Five Dollars and Myself": The History of Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South 1845-1939, (New York: General Board of Global Ministers, The United Methodist Church, 2005), 192. Sledge uses the term "regular annual conference" to distinguish the Oklahoma Conference from its predecessor.

The committee was composed of members that represented both the older generation of missionaries who had first-hand knowledge of the Indian work, such as Theodore F. Brewer, J.J. Methvin, and Cherokee mixed-blood Joseph F. Thompson, along with white officials like N.L. Linebaugh who had spent little time with Indian congregations. The committee recommended the name "Oklahoma Conference" to the annual meeting, which would have closely linked the new conference geographically with the new state in the minds of the public. However, not all members of the IMC were ready to cast aside any formal recognition of their Indian heritage. Charles M. Coppedge, a member of the conference since the 1880s, suggested "Indiahoma" as another name for the annual meeting to debate, which would have better recognized the area's cultural diversity while also emphasizing its "Indian-ness" in the eyes of the public.[9] Coppedge's alternative ultimately failed and, as a result, what remained of the IMC operated as the Oklahoma Conference from 1906 until 1910.

Now operating under its new name, the Oklahoma Conference took formal steps to segregate its Indian congregations from its white churches, at least in terms of administrative oversight. The Oklahoma Conference reported over 42,000 members in 1907, the first year of Oklahoma statehood, but its Indian membership represented only a small minority with less than

[9] Official Minutes and Annual Report of the Oklahoma Conference of the MECS, 61st Annual Session of the Indian Mission and the 1st Session of the Oklahoma Conference, Tulsa, IT, November 14-19, 1906, 23, 25; Leland Clegg and William B. Oden, Oklahoma Methodism in the Twentieth Century (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1968), 16, 66.

7,400 total.[10] Under the system in place, Indian congregations existed alongside white churches on the conference's circuits and districts. But with its Indian congregations dwindling and struggling to survive, the Oklahoma Conference divided these churches and circuits into three Indian-only districts that operated separately from the conference's other districts. Geographically, these Indian-only districts occupied some of the same physical territory as the conference's white districts.[11] The Choctaw-Chickasaw Indian District (located in southeast Oklahoma), the Creek-Seminole Indian District (located in east-central Oklahoma and renamed a year later as the Creek-Cherokee District), and the Kiowa Indian District (located in western Oklahoma on the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency) oversaw what remained of the Indian missions in the region. Organizationally, these Indian-only districts were very similar to their mainstream counterparts with a presiding elder consulting with Bishops to determine appointments for individual congregations and with the conference leveling financial assessments for every church. In each case, however, the presiding elder was an experienced white minister who also had other assignments among white communities in the conference, which was something of a step backwards from early times when Indians like Samuel Checote were presiding elders. Even though they had their own districts

[10] Official Minutes and Annual Report of the 62nd Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the MECS, Durant, November 13-18, 1907.

[11] Overlapping districts based on race had been used before by the Southern Methodist Church in Oklahoma. After the Civil War, the IMC, for a brief period of time, had separate "colored" districts to oversee its small membership of blacks. These districts and circuits disappeared after 1870.

ostensibly to manage their work, Indians were still denied important administrative positions and authority by the conference.[12]

Pressure to separate Indians from the rest of the conference came from national organizations within the Church and not solely from local interests. In 1904, the Board of Missions decided that mixing whites with full-blood Indian congregations had a negative effect on the conference's efforts, and it asked for plans to conduct "special and exclusive work" for the Plains Indians in the western half of the region. Perhaps envisioning that this move would solve the conference's problems and lead to some sort of rejuvenation of missionary work, the Board also planned at that time to expand its missions near the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency into Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and Osage communities.[13] This was an example of how the Board, a National Church organization removed from the day-to-day issues in Oklahoma, misunderstood the sentiment of local whites, who were content to segregate but had little desire to expand their Indian work.

Within a few years, the Board seemed content in the segregation of Indian missions that occurred within the Oklahoma Conference. It considered the separation a wise move on the part of the conference and advocated a return to older methods of missionary work such as the mission school

[12] Official Minutes and Annual Report of the 62nd Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the MECS, Durant, November 13-18, 1907; Clegg and Oden, Oklahoma Methodism in the Twentieth Century, 67-68; Official Minutes and Annual Report of the 63rd Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the MECS, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, November 6-11, 1908, 26.
[13] Fifty-Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (Nashville: Publishing House, M.E. Church, South, 1904), 153.

system to meet Indian needs.[14] "To Christianize the Indians," the Board reported in 1909, "the Church school is second in importance only to the evangelistic agency." Furthermore, government schools and other public institutions could not "develop religious character" as effectively as church-run schools.[15] For the Indian congregations in the Oklahoma Conference, the Board looked to the past for ways of increasing its work even as the conference bet its forward momentum on the state's white population. The Board also failed to mention its own troubled history with Indian boarding schools prior to the 1890s and its complaints of "Indian interference" but most likely assumed that the federal government's attempts to end tribal sovereignty would eliminate many of those problems.

While the Board wanted a return to the mission school system as a means for conducting its Indian efforts, it was also excited at the potential for increasing the Southern Methodist presence in the rest of Oklahoma by expanding work in white communities. One presiding elder reported to the Board in 1909 that more than forty new preaching places had been established in the six months since the last annual meeting. "The time has arrived for attempting 'great things' for God in this destined-to-be-great State," the Board claimed enthusiastically after hearing the news.[16] The Board clearly saw the future of Oklahoma Conference as tied to the state's

[14] Sixty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1909), 19.
[15] Sixty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 19.
[16] Sixty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 20.

developing urban areas and "insisted upon…a policy of concentration upon centers of population and influence" which left little room for its Indian congregations.[17]

The mixed signals from the Board of Missions were examples of the vast difference between the rhetoric and the reality of Indian missions in Oklahoma at this time. The Board had the authority to make important decisions and direct policy on a national level, but how these plans were carried out depended upon local officials. In previous decades, the old IMC had been led by a mixture of white missionaries committed to Indian congregations in addition to Indians themselves like Samuel Checote, Joseph F. Thompson, and James McHenry. Now, under the new conference, Indian representation was largely absent and a new generation of leaders without the same ties to Indian congregations had assumed control.

The emphasis on white communities had an effect on the money appropriated for the Oklahoma Conference. Since the Indian work was a small part of the larger Oklahoma Conference, the money appropriated by the Board had to go through official conference channels first. This meant that white conference officials made the actual distribution of funds earmarked for Indians, and sometimes this money found its way flowing into white coffers. At a meeting on May 12, 1908, the Board seemingly confirmed that the conference was not acting in the Indians' best interest when the Committee on Estimates asked that all of the Board's appropriations for Indian work be

[17] Sixty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1910), 34.

marked for specific needs and not just given over to the Oklahoma Conference for it to dole out.[18] Two months later, the Board tried to protect Indian missions further by asking that the money from the sale of some of its property be set aside for "educational work that will most benefit the real Indians of the State of Oklahoma."[19] But when pressed soon thereafter to define what it meant by the term "real Indians," the Board offered only a vague definition and no further instructions, leaving the ultimate decision up to the conference.[20]

As the Board of Missions waffled over guidelines as to what "real Indians" were, the Oklahoma Conference and its Indian operations underwent more changes that continued to marginalize and segregate Indian congregations from the mainstream. After merging its Kiowa Indian District together with the Choctaw-Chickasaw Indian District in 1908, the Oklahoma Conference asked for and received permission from the National Church to split into two smaller conferences in 1910.[21] The division placed the two Indian-only districts in the newly-created East Oklahoma Conference, and the Kiowa work became a solitary charge under the authority of the Lawton

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[18] "May 12, 1908," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 5, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[19] "July 9, 1908," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 5, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[20] "August 6, 1908," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 5, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[21] Clegg and Oden, Oklahoma Methodism in the Twentieth Century, 67-68; Minutes of the Sixty-Fourth Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Muskogee, Oklahoma, November 3-8, 1909, 60; Gross Alexander, ed. Journal of the Sixteenth General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1910), 198.

District in the West Oklahoma Conference.[22] Within four years, the administration of Indian churches was passed from one authority to the other with little regard to native concerns.

One major reason that this pattern of administration failed its Indian charges was the inability on the part of whites and Indians to find common ground. Whites blamed Indians for refusing to assimilate to their ways and pushed them to the edges of the conference. They also considered native ministers and spiritual practices as inferior to their own churches, and found little room for common ground with Indian churches in the conference.[23] But these points of difference that whites would interpret as backwards might be, from the native perspective, vital expressions of Christianity. When discussing the Kiowas' acceptance of Christianity, John Tsatoke, Cecil Horse's son and Hunting Horse's grandson, said "that when we accept Christ and change the way of life, there's a new life."[24] This "new life," however, was not exactly what whites might expect. In addition to socializing with non-Christian Kiowas at powwows and showing that they "respect those things," Tsatoke claimed that the creation of Kiowa hymns was a sign of their "new life."[25] Yet Tsatoke's signs of a "new life," socializing at powwows and singing songs that reinforced the Kiowa language and culture, were not the signs of Christian assimilation that the Oklahoma Conference wanted.

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[22] Minutes of the Sixty-Fifth Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Ardmore, Oklahoma, November 10-15, 1910, 38-39, 46; Clegg and Oden, Oklahoma Methodism in the Twentieth Century, 67-68.
[23] Clegg and Oden, Oklahoma Methodism in the Twentieth Century, 90.
[24] "Interview with Rev. Cecil Horse," Oral History Program, OHS, OKC, OK.
[25] "Interview with Rev. Cecil Horse," Oral History Program, OHS, OKC, OK.

A more physical reminder of the differences between white and Indian congregations was the disparity between their facilities, or in the case of Indian churches, their noticeable lack of buildings. White communities wanted buildings, which became physical monuments to their beliefs and established their prominence in a region. They were, in short, ecclesiastical flags planted firmly in their new communities, or, as East Oklahoma Conference said in 1912, "an anchor no storm can drive."[26] When their local church burned down that year, a Depew, Oklahoma "social and embroidery club known as the Fortnightly Club" began raising funds for a new building. Though split in membership between Methodist and Christian denominations, the congregation eventually chose a Methodist church because, as one women involved remembered, "We were all of the same mind. We wanted a church."[27] In 1906, St. Luke's, a Southern Methodist church in Oklahoma City founded six days after the April 1889 Land Run, raised $90,000 for its new building, while in 1921, the Southern Methodist congregation in Norman received $200,000 from Tulsa oilman Robert McFarlin for its new building.[28]

In contrast, Indian communities still struggled after several generations to find appropriate buildings. Two Cherokee women, Dora Early Tucker and Lucinda Crittenden King, described congregations that to outsiders might seem disorganized and ill-equipped. Tucker recalled her uncle, Methodist

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[26] Minutes of the Sixty-Seventh Session of the East Oklahoma Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, November 20-24, 1912, Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
[27] UMC Depew, Box 44, Hobart Ragland Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[28] …. A Tribute to Your Vision: St. Luke's Methodist Church, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; UMC Norman-McFarlin, Box 45, Hobart Ragland Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.

preacher Bill Sullivan, working in her community: "I remember when there wasn't an organized group. The people were scarce, and far between. And they wasn't[sic] organized church."[29] King's stories were similar to Tucker's. "Well, they just had churches in people's houses," King stated when discussing the church-going experiences of her youth. "[T]hey just go, you know, just certain preacher come by this house…maybe next house next Sunday."[30]

With outward signs of a denomination's presence growing in importance in the new state of Oklahoma, national and local church officials turned their collective attention to the issue of church property and Indian rights. Over the previous decades, the IMC as well as national organizations like the Board of Missions or the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions acquired land and other types of property from the various tribal authorities and native congregations.[31] In terms of land issues, several agreements reached between the Church and native officials were byproducts of Indian treaties and initially required further Indian action before property issues could be decided; at other times, church officials used their influence and pressured

[29] "Interview with Dora Early Tucker," T-353-3, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[30] "Interview with Lucinda Crittenden King," T-422-4, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[31] Though land was the biggest issue, unresolved issues concerning smaller property could cause problems between white and Indian congregations, such as the Anadarko church not returning pews loaned to it by a local Indian congregation or the Chickasaw Charge in the McAlester District demanding a fair payment of its share of the Stonewall congregation's facilities. "1st Quarterly Conference of Indian Work Charge, Lawton District, West Oklahoma Conference, 1914-1915," Quarterly Conference Record Book from the Kiowa District, 1914-1918, Folder - Kiowas, Box 1486, Walter N. Vernon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas; "1st Quarterly Conference for 1906-1907 of the Chickasaw Charge," Quarterly Conference Record Book, Chickasaw and Washita Charge, Box 2, William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

tribal or federal authorities for their own benefit. To ensure that religious groups were not forgotten during the allotment period and the subsequent rush for Indian land, Congress passed several legislative acts that guaranteed acreage for churches, schools, and cemeteries among the Five Tribes.[32] Once tribal sovereignty was no longer a factor by the early 1900s, and once the increase in white immigrants made property values skyrocket, the Church and conference stood to profit from their Indian landholdings.

How Southern Methodism profited from former Indian property in Oklahoma was but one example of a larger period of graft and fraud that struck the state's Indians in the early-twentieth century. "The plunder of Indians was so closely joined with pride in the creation of a great new commonwealth," Angie Debo wrote about this period in Oklahoma history, "that it received little condemnation."[33] In this "plunder," a cadre composed of local residents, government officials, and select business interests worked to improve their new communities in Oklahoma at the expense of Indian sovereignty and autonomy. Some individuals were outright thieves looking to exploit Indian property such as land, oil, or mining riches for their own financial benefit, while others interpreted Indians asserting their own rights as actually interfering with the greater process of assimilation and ultimately delaying the inevitable. Religious authorities were not immune from taking part in this larger scheme. "We honor the motive which has inspired the Government, believing that the purpose was to defend the incompetent

[32] Reports of the Department of the Interior for 1910, Vol II Indian Affairs, Territories, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 180.
[33] Debo, And Still the Waters Run, 92.

Indian," a group of ministers wrote to Congress in 1904 in response to the government's protection of individual allotments for members of the Five Tribes. But "[t]he idea that the Indian citizen is an innocent victim of the rapacity and craft of the white race in Indian Territory is ludicrous," the ministers' petition continued. The group, which included two ministers from the Indian Mission Conference, believed that by restricting Indians from selling their allotments to willing whites, the government's actions "resulted most injuriously to every interest, including the building of churches and the maintenance of church schools."[34]

The Southern Methodist Church faced a range of property questions, which could include questions involving small and isolated tracts of land in the Oklahoma countryside to issues effecting much more prominent and valuable land close to the region's growing towns and cities. With overlapping church agencies involved in land dealings over the years, from conference level interests to national organizations, several different Church agencies had a stake in the area's development. In 1900, the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad offered only $10 per acre for the right-of-way it claimed from the Methvin Institute's alfalfa fields. Methvin felt the land was worth $25 and though he agreed, KCA Agent James Randlett suggested that the matter go to arbitration.[35] When Mrs. Sherman Hostick moved to Verden, located

[34] Senate Documents, 58th Congress, No. 169, February 1904, 49-50. Twenty-two local ministers from among the Five Tribes signed the petition, including the two IMC ministers N.B. Fizer and J.C. Baird.
[35] "Letter from James F. Randlett to A.A. Graham, July 9, 1900," Kiowa, Comanche & Wichita Agency Letterpress book, Volume 56, June 21, 1900 – September 22, 1900, Roll KA 56, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OK, OK.

nearly 10 miles east of Anadarko, she wanted a church closer to her new home than the one she had attended near the agency headquarters. The problem for Hostick was that the land was still a part of the KCA Agency and required the approval of the federal government and Kiowa tribe. Hostick appealed for help from her brother-in-law, Andres Martinez (Andele), who took her request to the Kiowa, while Methvin asked for permission from the KCA Agent and federal authorities. Eventually, all parties granted her request, and Hostick, along with Hattie Rose, proceeded to raise money for the new church. When the KCA Agency allotted its land and opened up to white settlement, the church's property near Verden increased in value and it was sold for $4500. This money, intended for Indian work by Hostick, was instead turned over to the Board of Missions to do with as it pleased.[36]

Land problems with the Little Washita Church, a Kiowa congregation, ended up dividing the church building from its cemetery. According to Methvin, the KCA Agent originally gave a local homesteader, George Bundy, the wrong allotment of land in 1896. What should have been Bundy's land was eventually claimed by the Little Washita Church as its property, where the congregation built a church and cemetery.[37] When debate over who was the rightful owner of the property emerged six years later, Methvin pleaded

[36] "Interview with Mrs. Sherman Hostick," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC, OU, Norman, Ok.

[37] In 1897, the Little Washita sold the church building it had to the federal government and moved to the new property sometime after that. The KCA Agent feared that the IMC had manipulated the sale for its own financial benefit, but Methvin gave a sworn statement that the trustees had approved the decision and since they were all Kiowa men, it was legal. See "Letter from J.J. Methvin, May 19, 1897" Kiowa Agency – Indian History, Culture and Acculturation – Churches 1870-1925, Roll KA 50, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OK, OK.

with the new KCA Agent to let the land stay in Kiowa hands. Without the property, the missionary wrote, the Kiowa congregation would leave the mission because it was the only church located close to them.[38]

The Little Washita Church's land problems lingered for several more years as the issue worked its way through the federal government's and National Church's bureaucracies. Initially, the Woman's Foreign Mission Board, the Southern Methodist organization that originally had sponsored the church, and Bundy reached a compromise to swap allotments, a decision supported by the Department of the Interior's General Land Office though little concern seems to have been given to the Kiowa congregation's needs.[39] The church's building and cemetery were located far apart from each other on the allotment, and the twenty acres given to the church included only its cemetery (presumably, the least valuable land to Bundy). Attempts by Charles F. Mitchell, the presiding elder in the area, to resolve this issue on behalf of the church and let the congregation have both tracts of land failed as the government rejected his appeal, and other allotments closer to the cemetery had already been claimed before the Kiowa could have a chance to acquire them. Mitchell reported to the Woman's Foreign Mission Board that the

[38] "Letter from J.J. Methvin to James F. Randlett, February 18, 1902," Kiowa Agency – Indian History, Culture and Acculturation – Churches 1870-1925, Roll KA 50, Kiowa Agency Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OK, OK.
[39] "George Bundy vs. Little Washita Methodist Church," Oklahoma 1905-1940, Records of the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

congregation had to abandon its building and move to the property that included the cemetery.[40]

Better examples of how National Church and conference officials stood to profit from what had previously been Indian land holdings came from the church's various schools such as the Willie Halsell College near Vinita and the Methvin Institute at Anadarko. Previously, the National Church and Indian Mission Conference had considered boarding schools as vital elements of their work and, as a result, they pursued an aggressive policy of founding schools in the decades after the Civil War. Unlike individual congregations, which at best could command twenty to forty acres and more likely received much less, school property often required a quarter section of land or possibly more, usually on the outskirts of town. When communities like Vinita, Muskogee, and Anadarko grew in the early 1900s, the schools came to occupy valuable land in a booming real estate market. Church leaders then petitioned government officials and Indian agents in order to get the best deal on the land that they occupied, like when the federal government included a provision to allow the Harrell Institute (later renamed the Spaulding Institute) to buy their land at half of the appraised value in Muscogee as part of an agreement between the United States and Creek Nation.[41]

What the National Church and conference did with the Willie Halsell College in Vinita and the Methvin Institute in Anadarko revealed its larger

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[40] "Letter from C.F. Mitchell to Mrs. R.W. McDonnell, February 2, 1908," Oklahoma 1905-1940, Records of the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

[41] Annual Report of the United States Indian Inspector for the Indian Territory for 1903, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 147.

attitudes toward the economic development of Oklahoma and its considerations for its Indian neighbors. Willie Halsell College's origins went back to 1886 when the IMC invoked Article 14 of the 1866 treaty between the Cherokee Nation and the United States. Bound by the punishing post-Civil War treaty to provide land to missionary societies for educational purposes, the Cherokee Council gave the IMC 160 acres near Vinita after the IMC's representatives made the selection of land under suspicious circumstances.[42] The IMC's newly-appointed presiding bishop, Charles Betts Galloway, prodded the conference into action and began fundraising for the proposed school, eventually securing $7,000 from the National Church's Board of Missions while private money contributed to the rest of the school's needs. When the school opened in 1888, it was originally named Galloway College after the bishop, but the school soon ran into financial difficulties and appealed to William Halsell, a local cattleman who had influenced the Cherokee Council on behalf of the conference on earlier occasions, for financial assistance. Halsell donated additional funds, and in return the school changed its name to honor Halsell's young daughter who had died in 1884.[43]

Located on the north side of Vinita next to the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad, the school's land increased in value over the next two

[42] "An Act allowing the Methodist Episcopal Church South the use and occupation of One hundred and sixty acres of land, November 23, 1886," Volume 284 – National Council, Senate, CHN 15, Cherokee National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK. This event is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1.

[43] O.B. Campbell, Vinita, I.T.: The Story of a Frontier Town of the Cherokee Nation, 1871-1907 (Oklahoma City: The Oklahoma Publishing Co., 1969), 73-74. Willie Halsell College's most notable student was a young Cherokee boy named Will Rogers.

decades.[44] However, what the conference and the Board of Missions could do with the land was unclear in the early-1900s due to issues developing out of the allotment of the Cherokee Nation. The original bill put before Congress would have given the IMC only four acres and school trustees believed that they deserved more. Writing on behalf of the school in 1902, trustee B.F. Fortner stated that the Cherokee Nation had intended for the church to have all 160 acres years ago when it gave it to the church. Besides, the school had earned that right, according to Fortner, because it had "sent intelligence enough into the current of public affairs" to justify its stance for more land.[45] "[I]t is manifestly unjust, if not a breach of good faith," Fortner wrote, "to deprive the school of one single acre or square foot of that land."[46]

Congress later adjusted the "Quay Bill," named for its sponsor Republican Senator Matthew Quay, and gave the Southern Methodist Church the right to purchase the 160 acres in order to receive title to the land.[47] With the Board of Missions establishing their ownership by buying the 160 acres for $1,600 in April 1903, which included setting aside a plat for the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, William Rogers, they then set out to find buyers

[44] "Letter to D. W. Bushyhead, May 8, 1887," Cherokee (Tahleqauh) – Schools: Private and Religious, CHN 100, Cherokee National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[45] "Letter from B.F. Fortner to P.L. Soper, June 13, 1902," Cherokee (Tahlequah) – Schools: Private and Religious, CHN 100, Cherokee National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[46] "Letter from B.F. Fortner to P.L. Soper, June 13, 1902," Cherokee (Tahlequah) – Schools: Private and Religious, CHN 100, Cherokee National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[47] The Statutes at Large of the United States of America from December, 1901 to March, 1903 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 719-720.

for the land.[48] In 1905 and 1907, the Board sold small sections to the Vinita & Western Railway Company first for a railroad right of way (for $399) and later for a county fairground (for $3,000).[49] Also in 1907, the Board sold fifty acres of the school's property to the Vinita College Heights Addition Company for $7,500, with the only condition being that a small portion of land in the new addition be reserved for a parsonage for the Vinita church.[50] Finally by 1908, the Board of Missions sold what property remained at the Willie Halsell College to a local businessman, R.V. McSpadden, for $25,000.[51] Though the Board stated that some of the money from the sale should be put toward "educational work among the Indians," it also invested parts of it in "the home field."[52] This field included any mission work conducted by the Board within

[48] "Letter to W.C. Rogers, February 2, 1904," Cherokee (Tahlequah) – Schools: Private and Religious, CHN 100, Cherokee National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[49] "October 3, 1905," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 4, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ; "April 5, 1907," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 4, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[50] "December 27, 1907," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 4, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[51] "May 9, 1908," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 4, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ; "July 9, 1908," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 4, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ; "Contract," Indian Work – Oklahoma #3, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[52] "May 9, 1908," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 4, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

the United States such as efforts out west, in urban areas, or among foreign immigrant populations.[53]

The Southern Methodist Church's purchase and sale of the Willie Halsell College's land in Vinita occurred only after Cherokee ownership claims had been pushed aside. On the same day that the Secretary of the Interior approved Chief Rogers's land patent given to him by the college, he also denied a Cherokee woman's claim to the land formerly held by the college.[54] A few years later, the issue of compensating the Cherokee for selling what had been their land came up before the Board of Missions. The 1866 treaty originally stipulated that the Cherokee Council had to approve any subsequent sale of the school's land. A special committee created to investigate the matter for the Board, led by Bishop Collins Denny, determined that the Quay Bill in 1902 let the school pay the federal government the assessed value of the land (listed at $10 per acre), and the government was then responsible to pay the Cherokee a lump sum for all church property. As a result, the committee denied any obligation to give a portion of the proceeds

[53] "May 9, 1908," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 4, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ; "July 9, 1908," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 4, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

[54] "Letter from J. George Wright to W.C. Rogers, January 6, 1905," Cherokee (Tahlequah) – Schools: Private and Religious, CHN 100, Cherokee National Records, Indian Archives Collection, OHS, OKC, OK. The woman's name was Bobe Griffith. See also Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior for 1903 – Indian Affairs part II, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 153.

to the Cherokee and decided that the Board could do whatever it wanted with the money. It then considered the matter closed.[55]

With the Willie Halsell College, an organization from the National Church parlayed a $1,600 investment in 1903 into a nearly $36,000 windfall in just five years, yet denied any need to share their profits with the Cherokee. How it spent the money, the Board decided, was entirely up to the Church and not to Cherokee officials. The situation was even more egregious with the sale of the Methvin Institute in 1908. In that situation, individuals connected with the conference colluded with businessmen to buy cheap land under what can only be labeled as suspicious circumstances.

The closing of the Methvin Institute in Anadarko in 1908 highlighted the conference's and the National Church's evolving attitude toward Indian education by the time of Oklahoma statehood. With more Indian land opening up to white settlement, the need for mission schools became secondary to the conference's new agenda. This sale also showed how certain factions within the conference conspired to benefit from the school's closing and the school's property to enrich themselves. For his remaining days, Methvin struggled to contain his bitterness over the closing of the school he founded and referred to those who profited from the sale as a "syndicate."[56]

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[55] Sixty-Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1913), 228-229.

[56] For examples of Methvin's use of the word "syndicate," see "Interview with J.J. Methvin," Vol 62, 4922, Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, WHC, OU; J.J. Methvin, The Lone Cedar and Else (Anadarko, Ok., N.T. Plummer, n.d.), 6; and "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC,OK.

In the years immediately before its closing in 1908, the Methvin Institute and Anadarko area underwent several changes that redefined the town. Methvin, who had founded the school, almost single-handedly secured its finances and supplies, and served as its superintendent since its inception in 1889, stepped down after the death of his first wife in 1904. The Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, which still funded the school and had oversight over its operations, hired Ida Mae Swanson to serve as the new superintendent. Previously a teacher in the Methvin Institute, Swanson stayed for two more years as superintendent before she resigned. Finally, in 1907, the Woman's Board replaced Swanson with Charles F. Mitchell, an IMC minister with experience working among the Five Tribes, as the school's last superintendent.[57]

While the Methvin Institute shuffled through different administrators, the KCA Agency had its own share of changes. The Jerome Agreement reached between the federal government and the Kiowa and Comanche in 1892 established the terms for allotment, but a collection of Indian leaders and business interests delayed its approval in Congress for several years.[58] This ended in 1901 when much of the land around the KCA Agency opened

[57] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC,OK; Charles F. Mitchell, The Story of My Life (Weatherford, Ok.: n.p., 1940), 84. Swanson was also Methvin's second wife, with the two marrying in 1908 and remaining together until his death in 1941.

[58] This event and its connection to Methvin are discussed to some extent in Chapter 2. Kiowa and Comanche leaders claimed that they were misled when they signed the original agreement. Quanah Parker was one of the leading voices in the protest, and Parker used his connections with the cattle industry (who leased the land from the tribes and stood to lose out by allotment) to delay its passage. See, William T. Hagan, Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Blue Clark, Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock: Indian Treaty Rights at the end of the Nineteenth Century (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

up to white settlement through land lotteries. Though slightly more restrained than land runs in other parts of the territory, the land lottery resulted in much of the same demographic change as white migrants overwhelmed the area in search of cheap land and a promising future.

As the Methvin Institute changed superintendents and looked to its future, its property value exploded due to the opening of the KCA Agency. In its 1901 report to the Board of Missions, the Woman's Board anticipated that "in the present readjustments the property…may become much more valuable"[59] Once the KCA Agency did open, Methvin made a move to gain permanent title to the land that the school occupied since all mission schools on the agency held only a temporary grant. He hired a lawyer with $300 of his own money who petitioned federal officials in Washington D.C. on behalf of the institute, and gained the support of other missionaries in Anadarko who helped supply funds for additional costs. Due to Methvin's efforts, Congress finally passed a bill giving the denominations in Anadarko title to church and school land they occupied.[60]

Even as Methvin negotiated with the federal government to secure the school's future, church officials became increasingly disenchanted with the school's work. Methvin already had a troubled relationship with others in his conference who disagreed with his methods, a problem that dated back to the

[59] "June 13, 1901," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 02: July 26, 1894-January 5, 1904, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[60] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC,OK; Methvin, In the Limelight, 89.

earliest days of the school and his public feud with Edwin R. Shapard.[61] But now he found his work hindered by "different and often unexpected sources." Those whose support Methvin said he "craved" and "needed," "held aloof, discounted the work and spoke against it."[62] "Not knowing how to defend the work," Methvin remembered, "I could only suffer in silent agony."[63] Even national organizations that had previously been his only source of outside support rebelled against him. S.C. Trueheart from the Women's Board expressed her disappointment with the school to Methvin when she told him that her organization had spent so much money "with so little results" that they were "discouraged."[64]

Methvin did not know how to react to comments like Trueheart's as he realized that more and more within the church, both locally and nationally, were turning against his school and its goal of Indian education. Methvin bemoaned these increasing troubles and lashed out at the "spasmodic and irregular effort upon the part of the Church."[65] Not afraid to castigate publically those who he felt were to blame, Methvin used a National Church convention in New Orleans in 1901 as a platform to air his grievances. He blamed the IMC's dismal results at the KCA Agency on "weak men" and "meager means" and criticized the Church for abandoning missions due to a

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[61] Discussed at length in Chapter 2.
[62] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC,OK.
[63] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC,OK.
[64] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC,OK.
[65] J.J. Methvin, "Work Among the North American Indians," Missionary Issues of the Twentieth Century: Papers and Addresses of the General Missionary Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville: Executive Committee, 1901), 451.

diminished faith and waning interest. "I dare not elaborate," Methvin cautioned the general church convention, "It would be humiliating."[66]

One reason for the poor relations between Methvin and the rest of the Church was that the two sides were developing different ideas of what success in Indian missions actual meant. Methvin counted success in individual lives, like that of Guy Quoetone, and he was willing to give those people authority in certain aspects of mission work. His father, Jimmie Quoetone, was one of Methvin's first converts when the missionary came to the KCA Agency. Like many other Indian children who attended boarding schools, Guy arrived at the Methvin Institute dressed in Indian clothing and with his long hair braided and wrapped in otter skin before school officials began the forced transformation into something better resembling white civilization. From this beginning, the school slowly shaped Quoetone's life and he became a leading Kiowa Methodist. When Guy finished his own education, Methvin was so impressed with the young man that he hired him soon thereafter as the boys' advisor, and, in time, Guy eventually received his license to preach in the Church.[67] At other times, Guy rode along with Methvin and assisted him as the two visited Indian camps.[68] "We have never trusted [Indians] in places of responsibility," Methvin stated years later. "Let it be understood that the Indian under Christian training is fully capable of self-

[66] Methvin, "Work Among the North American Indians," 452.
[67] "Interview with Guy Quoetone," T-637, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[68] "Interview with Guy Quoetone," T-646, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

reliant, independent leadership and should be trusted largely in the management of missions among his own people."[69]

While Methvin might look with pride toward someone like Guy Quoetone and be willing to give him responsibility, he was only one convert and the National Church and conference demanded many more. Methvin was too busy seeing individuals that he lost sight of the large numbers that his Southern Methodist brethren wanted and expected, nor was his belief in the "latent strength" in Indians in line with the National Church's white-centric leadership strategies and emphasis on white society.[70] In 1910, the Board of Missions reported only 228 members from the Western Tribes even after more than twenty years in the field.[71] Furthermore, as discussed previously, Kiowa Methodism was infused with elements of Kiowa culture that only served to differentiate them from the mainstream. Even when they did convert and adopt Christianity, it still lacked the assimilationist aspects that the National Church wanted to see in order to deem the work a success.

With discontent over the school's work growing almost in step with its land values, changes were afoot. In 1904, the IMC placed the value of the Methvin Institute's land at $100,000, though it recognized that the school's buildings were in need of repairs.[72] Hoping to keep his school going,

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[69] Missionary Yearbook: Eighty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1930), 428.
[70] Missionary Yearbook: Eighty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 427.
[71] Sixty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1910), 33-34.
[72] "59th Session, McAlister, I.T., October 26, 1904," Methodist Indian Mission Conference Records, 1836-1906, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.

Methvin's initial suggestion to the Woman's Board was to sell off forty acres of the school's property to be developed into town lots as a way to finance repairs for its existing buildings, but the Woman's Board vetoed this idea.[73] When Mitchell became superintendent, his conservative estimates placed the overall cost of repairs at $25,000.[74] At first, the Woman's Board discussed refocusing the school from a coeducational institution to a girl's only school before scrapping that plan altogether.[75] In 1907, it still publically stated that plans were to sell off portions of the land to fund repairs and keep the school in session.[76] However, Belle Bennett from the Woman's Missionary Council visited the school and met with Superintendent Mitchell, his staff, and the KCA agent to discuss the school's future, and this meeting decided upon two options. Their first option, to ask for more money for operations and repairs, was rejected by the Woman's Board. That decision forced the second option, which was to close the boarding school and begin operating day-schools in the Indian camps.[77]

Following the decision to close the school for good, the Woman's Board and Mitchell turned their attention to selling off the property. Methvin believed that "the eye of cupidity and greed was fastened upon our property" at that point, and while he was certainly biased because of the commitment

[73] "The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC,OK.
[74] Mitchell, The Story of My Life, 85-86.
[75] "May 3, 1905," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 5, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[76] "May 15, 1907," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 04: May 5, 1904-May 20, 1909, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[77] Mitchell, The Story of My Life, 85-86.

he had made to the school over the years, his statement was not completely untrue.[78] Mitchell advertised the property, to be sold by sealed bid, in newspapers as far away as St. Louis and Atlanta, but the winning bid of $45,000 came from a local company of investors made up of H.C. Bradford, H.C. Garrett, N.L. Linebaugh, and J.B. McDonald.[79] Methvin referred to these men as a “syndicate” and accused them of paying only a portion of the sale price to the Woman’s Board, and the Woman’s Board conceded in 1909 that it had only received $20,000.[80] "[I]t was an evil day for the church and the community,” Methvin lamented years later, “for here was an opportunity to build a great school that would have been a blessing for future generations.”[81]

As a member of the company that submitted the winning bid of $45,000, N.L. Linebaugh stood to profit from the land once it was converted into town lots in Anadarko. Linebaugh, after all, was well acquainted with the Methvin Institute’s property and its possibilities in Anadarko. Linebaugh was a leader in the Indian Mission Conference and its successor conferences, was a representative to General Conferences, and served in National Church organizations.[82] From 1903 to 1907, he was the Presiding Elder of the IMC’s Duncan District, which included Methvin’s Kiowa work and the Anadarko

[78] Methvin, In the Limelight, 89.
[79] Mitchell, The Story of My Life, 85-86.
[80] “The Autobiography of John Jasper Methvin,” J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC,OK; Sixty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 174-175.
[81] Methvin, In the Limelight, 90.
[82] Gross Alexander, ed. Journal of the Fifteenth General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1906), 4, 242-243; Gross Alexander, ed. Journal of the Sixteenth General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1910), 5; Gross Alexander and John L. Kirby, eds. Journal of the Seventeenth General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1914), 5.

area.[83] Linebaugh's participation could be classified, at best, as another sign of the conference's declining interests toward its Indian membership. At worst, it could be evidence of individuals within the conference using their influence to defraud, however indirectly, Indian missions. For its part, the Woman's Missionary Society requested permission from the Board of Missions to spend $15,000 from the sale of the land in Anadarko for a girl's school in Rio de Janeiro, choosing not to reinvest it in the community from which they gained the money in the first place.[84]

Though the Woman's Board used what little money it did receive from the sale of the Methvin Institute for foreign mission fields, it did not abandon its Indian missions completely. In fact, women's work during this time was one of the most consistent forces in an otherwise tumultuous period for Southern Methodist Indian missions in Oklahoma.[85] Women's groups founded in Indian congregations, such as local chapters of national missionary societies, remained active and committed during this time. In 1911, Belle Bennett from the Woman's Missionary Society of the National Church attended the Oklahoma Conference's Home Missionary Society meeting in Chickasha and was excited by the Indian presence at the gathering. Eight Choctaw full-blood delegates including one who was a District Secretary, Bennett reported in The Missionary Voice, had attended

[83] Official Minutes and Annual Report of the Oklahoma Conference of the MECS, 61st Annual Session of the Indian Mission and the 1st Session of the Oklahoma Conference, Tulsa, IT, November 14-19, 1906, 18.
[84] "May 8, 1911," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 05: August 4, 1909-June 19, 1913, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[85] Homer Noley, First White Frost: Native Americans and United Methodism (Nashville, Tn: Abingdon, 1991), 205-206.

every session "and the members in this [Indian] district had paid the largest amount in dues per capita in the Methodist Connection."[86] Bennett was, once again, displaying the belief by most whites in the National Church that equated success in the Indian mission field with the adoption of mainstream practices, in this case Choctaw women organizing and paying dues in line with their means.

One of the places that women's work was responsible for keeping Southern Methodism alive was in western Oklahoma among the Plains Indians. In this case, the Woman's Board was particularly involved in sending women into the mission field and sponsoring their work, and these missionaries were intricately involved in the founding and growth of several Kiowa and Comanche congregations. Because of its close association with the Methvin Institute, the Woman's Board appointed teachers and missionaries that Methvin also used for camp work during the summer when the school was not in session. Methvin credited Helen Brewster with developing native support for building the Little Washita Church. Afterwards, Brewster, whose "sturdy" frame "presented striking appearance in the bloomer garb she wore on her cross-country travels among the Indians, on a bicycle," spent many years living near the Comanche camps by Fort Sill, where she tried to learn the language and minister to the assembled Indians.[87]

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[86] Belle Bennett, "Report of Belle Bennett," The Missionary Voice 1 (September 1911): 30-31.
[87] "Indian Mission – Little Washita Church," Early Churches, Missions, and Schools – L, Box 13, Works Project Administration Historic Sites and Federal Writers' Project Files Collection, WHC, OU, Norman, OK; Quote from "Old Indian Methodist Mission at Fort Sill," Early

After the Woman's Board closed the Methvin Institute in 1908, it sent its missionaries to continue camp work among the Indians, which also included operating a day school near Mt. Scott primarily for the Kiowa.[88] According the KCA agent, it had been the Indians themselves, led by Kiowa chief Stumbling Bear, who wanted the Mt. Scott school and had allocated their own money for its operation.[89] It was with this Indian support, and the overall lack of attention paid by local conference officials, that Maude Welch and Mattie Hudgins from the Woman's Board began their work in the area. During the summer, both women were responsible for camp work among Indian communities, but once the day school was in session in the fall, Welch split her duties between the classroom in the morning and camp work in the afternoon.[90]

Welch conducted her work in much the same fashion that earlier Southern Methodist missionaries had in southwest Oklahoma. She relied upon interpreters to communicate with natives, though the absence of children at government boarding schools complicated her ability to find able interpreters. Workers also left bright scripture cards behind in the camps in

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Churches, Missions, and Schools – F, Box 13, Works Project Administration Historic Sites and Federal Writers' Project Files Collection, WHC, OU, Norman, OK.

[88] Sixty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 174-175.

[89] Lucille Gilstrap, Sayt-aym-k'ee-ah, Kiowa Chief and His People, WHC, OU.

[90] First Annual Report of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South for 1910-1911 (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1911), 383-385; Second Annual Report of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South for 1911-1912 (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1912), 328-329.

the hopes of attracting support, at least for those who could read English.[91] As with other female missionaries and women's groups who advocated a middle-class sensibility for marginalized populations within the United States, Welch spent much of her time working with Indian women.[92] Welch taught these women, or the "burden-bearers of the race" as she called them, domestic chores such as sewing and cooking that would supposedly ease their transition into mainstream society and teach them proper gender-based activities.[93]

Visiting Indian camps was a requirement of the field due to the rural and diffuse native population around the Anadarko/Ft. Sill area in southwest Oklahoma. But, as Welch stated in reports to the National Church, this was an area with a conspicuous lack of roads and vehicles. As a result, she said that these visits did not always produce the desired results that the Church wanted. In one year, she made 312 camp visits and traveled 1,040 miles. Yet, as she also noted, one excursion alone necessitated a 52 mile trip and resulted in only three camp visits because Indians were traveling and away from camp themselves.[94] In light of these disappointing results, coupled with its own diminishing interest in Indian populations, the National Church cut its

[91] First Annual Report of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South for 1910-1911, 383-385.
[92] For more on Protestant women's work at the turn of the century and its middle-class agenda, see Peggy Pascoe, Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939 (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1990).
[93] Third Annual Report of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South for 1912-1913 (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1913), 166-167; Quote from Maude Welch, "Notes on Our Own Work Among the Indians" The Missionary Voice 2 (July 1912): 410.
[94] Welch, "Notes on Our Own Work Among the Indians," 409-412.

financial support for the field by 1914, leaving only one worker available for camp visits.[95]

Many of the complaints from missionaries and local ministers working among the Plains Indians at this time came in regard to educational efforts and the subsequent impact on their native members in the Southern Methodist Church. At first, the day school near Mt. Scott had difficulty in attracting native students even though the impetus from the school had come from the Indians themselves. According to the Woman's Missionary Council, the federal government did not encourage Indian parents to send their children to mission schools as they had in previous years, which put extra pressure on the Church to fulfill enrollment. Mabel Head, Educational Secretary of the Council, suggested that the school be more proactive in attracting native support by providing noon lunches and wagons for transportation.[96] The problem with this approach was that it would incur more costs and efforts for the few personnel in the field at time when interest in Indian missions waned for the National Church and local conferences.

One of the effects created by the Church's weak mission school system at this time was removing Kiowa Methodists from the direct oversight of white Methodists. Mainstream Southern Methodists viewed this as a sign of the work's failure and rejection by native populations, when, in reality, it might allow Kiowa Methodists more freedom over their congregations and more flexibility to practice Christianity in ways acceptable to them. Welch

[95] "Mt. Scott Indian Work" The Missionary Voice 4 (July 1914): 413.
[96] First Annual Report of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South for 1910-1911, 384-385.

noted that with their children away at government boarding schools, Indian parents typically camped near the schools on the weekends because that was the only time they had to visit with each other. But the absence on the weekends disrupted camp visits by the missionaries and kept members away from Sunday schools and church services.[97] Welch was disappointed in how the work was developing and told the Woman's Missionary Council that the Indians were "growing more and more indifferent to Christianity and less regular in attendance on church services."[98]

Eventually, Welch became concerned that the Southern Methodist church was losing its influence with the younger generation of Indian converts. The problem was that after a quarter-century of work in the region a generation gap developed as the older, initial Indian converts were dying off and missionaries were struggling to reach the children. Since the closure of the Methvin Institute, individual Sunday Schools were increasingly seen as one of the best ways of instructing children in Christian teachings and make up for the lack of religious instruction at government boarding schools. [99] Sunday Schools were, after all, Church-sanctioned organizations that, from a missionary's perspective, taught an approved and mainstream curriculum that reinforced Southern Methodist doctrine. But Robert Templeton, the white preacher in charge of the Kiowa work in the Lawton District for the West

[97] Welch, "Notes on Our Own Work Among the Indians," 411; Third Annual Report of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South for 1912-1913, 166-167.
[98] First Annual Report of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South for 1910-1911, 384.
[99] First Annual Report of the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South for 1910-1911, 383-385.

Oklahoma Conference, reported that since most children attended government schools and were away from home, "we have but few opportunities for speaking to them."[100] Templeton and Welch exposed one of the faults of the current approach to Indian missions as it relied upon government schools in lieu of their own church-run schools as in earlier years. Church officials wanted the results that a mission could provide, but without the responsibility for a school's operation and management. This situation reflected the underlying feeling within National Church and local conferences at the time that was content to push Indian missions to the back and provide little concern for their operation while also equating their success with their acceptance of mainstream principles.

For much of the 1910s, the preachers in charge of the Kiowa work were concerned with the poor results from the area's Sunday Schools in reaching younger converts, and their reports highlighted how Indian churches lacked some items taken for granted by white churches. Templeton, along with his predecessor Benjamin F. Gassaway, held Quarterly Conferences for the Kiowa churches in the Lawton District, and recurring themes were the struggles of their Sunday Schools and the declining spiritual life of their members. Gassaway reported in March 1915 that the Cedar Creek Church lacked appropriate Sunday School literature and its preacher, Delos K. Lonewolf, was only available to teach "from time to time." Lonewolf's

[100] "2nd Quarterly Conference of Indian Work Charge, Lawton District, West Oklahoma Conference, 1915-1916," Quarterly Conference Record Book from the Kiowa District, 1914-1918, Folder - Kiowas, Box 1486, Walter N. Vernon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

infrequent attempts at Cedar Creek were better than at Hog Creek, where Gassaway noted no Sunday School was held because the congregation lacked a building.[101]

When Templeton became the preacher in charge in November 1915, his reports were similar to Gassaway's. "Our heart is pained to see so few children and young men and young women in our Sunday services," he wrote after his first Quarterly Conference.[102] He blamed the woes of the region's Sunday Schools and church services on a variety of sources. Government boarding schools, he stated several times, were keeping Indian children away from home.[103] When their Sunday Schools and churches did hold services, he chided Indian members for a wandering level of commitment to their churches.[104] "Many of our people are striving to be spiritual in their daily lives…," he wrote in November 1917, two years after he arrived in the area.

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[101] "1st Quarterly Conference of Indian Work Charge, Lawton District, West Oklahoma Conference, 1914-1915," Quarterly Conference Record Book from the Kiowa District, 1914-1918, Folder - Kiowas, Box 1486, Walter N. Vernon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

[102] "1st Quarterly Conference of Indian Work Charge, Lawton District, West Oklahoma Conference, 1915-1916," Quarterly Conference Record Book from the Kiowa District, 1914-1918, Folder - Kiowas, Box 1486, Walter N. Vernon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

[103] "2nd Quarterly Conference of Indian Work Charge, Lawton District, West Oklahoma Conference, 1915-1916," Quarterly Conference Record Book from the Kiowa District, 1914-1918, Folder - Kiowas, Box 1486, Walter N. Vernon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas; "1st Quarterly Conference of Indian Work Charge, Lawton District, West Oklahoma Conference, 1916-1917," Quarterly Conference Record Book from the Kiowa District, 1914-1918, Folder - Kiowas, Box 1486, Walter N. Vernon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas; "3rd Quarterly Conference of Indian Work Charge, Lawton District, West Oklahoma Conference, 1915-1916," Quarterly Conference Record Book from the Kiowa District, 1914-1918, Folder - Kiowas, Box 1486, Walter N. Vernon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

[104] "4th Quarterly Conference of Indian Work Charge, Lawton District, West Oklahoma Conference, 1915-1916," Quarterly Conference Record Book from the Kiowa District, 1914-1918, Folder - Kiowas, Box 1486, Walter N. Vernon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

"Some however are forgetting the church to [sic] much and following after other things."[105]

Taking its cue from people like Welch, Templeton, and other local workers, the Woman's Missionary Council once again modified its attitude toward Indian missions. Government schools might distract from mission work, but those schools "gave larger opportunity and better equipment than we could," the Council said in response to questions as to why it closed the Methvin Institute.[106] The Council was finding ways to remove itself from the work and shunt responsibility to the federal government partly due to declining interest in Indian missions and partly because it was unable to see Kiowa Methodism as a success.

Yet Southern Methodism in western Oklahoma was developing on its own accord and in ways that white missionaries either could not understand or did not want to accept. Those who defined success by the rigid standards set by mainstream Southern Methodist society would not see it among the Kiowa. Their churches lacked facilities and equipment, their preachers had limited theological training and struggled to understand English, and their congregations incorporated elements of their native culture that worked against the assimilationist agenda promoted by many missionaries and the federal government. When discussing the use of Kiowa hymns, Cecil Horse

[105] "1st Quarterly Conference of Indian Work Charge, Lawton District, West Oklahoma Conference, 1916-1917," Quarterly Conference Record Book from the Kiowa District, 1914-1918, Folder - Kiowas, Box 1486, Walter N. Vernon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.
[106] Mrs. R.W. McDonnell, "The Indian Our Nation's Ward" The Missionary Voice 3 (March 1913): 152.

described something that was Christian in practice, but not taught explicitly in the Bible or through the pulpit-based preaching of an educated minister. Horse said that the Kiowa learned their hymns "by becoming so religious and these songs just appeared to them, what we call spiritually." "They are not learned by books," he continued. "They are learned by the mind…maybe the mind would think about the Lord and it turns into song."[107]

Furthermore, the strict denominational or theological lines that defined mainstream Southern Methodists were not as obvious in Kiowa society during this period. As discussed earlier, peyote use was strong among the Kiowa. Several prominent Kiowa church members remained connected to the peyote group, including Hunting Horse, Andele, and Kicking Bird. Carl Kickingbird, Kicking Bird's grandson, recalled that in his youth the Kiowa seemed split evenly between Christian and peyote groups.[108] In other cases, denominational membership was not the motivating factor in an individual's Christian identity. Whereas white Christians in Oklahoma were concerned with establishing prominence and preeminence in the region through their church loyalties, Kiowa Methodists found the denominational bounds more flexible. "[B]ut [whites] don't get together like the Pentacostal [sic] peoples would go into the Baptist church and get up and testify and what they want to do…seems like they have no right to do that," Jenny Horse, Cecil's wife, said as she explained some of the differences between white and Indian

[107] "Interview with Cecil Horse," T-30, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[108] "Interview with Carl Kickingbird," T-302, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

congregations. "But us Indians, we fellowship. We all get together. Like a prayer service, we all take part in singing, testimony meeting. We all, whoever wants to get up and testify, why, they do."[109] Ioleta McElhaney, a Baptist Kiowa, recalled that as a young child her family attended the Mt. Scott Methodist Church because it was, most importantly, "an Indian church." "In those days there wasn't much difference between – we didn't make much of denomination," McElhaney stated. "If our people belonged there, well we would go there too."[110]

Even as Oklahoma's Indian churches and its white churches developed along two different tracks in the early-twentieth century, questions regarding authority remained. Complicating matters was the fact that the National Church reorganized its mission efforts and changed its administrative structure, and since it had some oversight and influence in Oklahoma, its changes stood to impact the region's churches and mission work as well. The Board had always provided funding for Indian missions, and this remained unchanged during the early-twentieth century even as most other facets of Indians missions did evolve. With its Indian congregations receiving money from national sources, the Oklahoma Conference (and subsequent conferences in the state) could then justify appropriating its own funds raised internally for sustaining or extending white churches inside its boundaries and not including Indian churches in its annual appropriations.

[109] "Interview with Cecil Horse," T-30, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[110] "Interview with Ioleta Hunt McElhaney," T-474-1, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

The conference could focus on white communities and not feel that Indians were being completely overlooked or ignored.[111]

Since the 1870s, the Board had concentrated more and more on overseas missions and had left the majority of mission work within the United States to women's organizations and individual conferences. Perhaps for this reason, and to recognize that Indians had different needs than the urban immigrant populations or backwoods communities in rural areas that made up the majority of mission work in the country, the Board continued to classify Indian missions as a "foreign field" for decades and was responsible for much of its funding. This changed in 1910 when the Board split the home mission field into a separate department from its foreign mission work. The creation of the Home Department moved Indian missions from a foreign concern and into a new department with its own set of administrative problems. With home missions traditionally cared for by other organizations in the Church, the Home Department secretary had to tread carefully in his administration and not upset the status quo in the conferences.[112]

In this new mix, Indian missions struggled for recognition and support. John M. Moore, the secretary of the Home Department and later a Bishop in the Church, realized the secondary position that the home field took within the Board of Missions.[113] "My eight years as Secretary of the Department of

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[111] Minutes of the Sixty-Fourth Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Muskogee, Oklahoma, November 3-8, 1909, 52-53; Minutes of the East Oklahoma Conference Sixty-Sixth Session, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Okmulgee, Oklahoma, November 1-5, 1911, 48-49.
[112] Sledge, "Five Dollars and Myself", 305-308.
[113] Sledge, "Five Dollars and Myself", 308; John M. Moore, Life and I: Sketches and Comments (Nashville, Tn.: The Parthenon Press, 1948), 103.

Home Missions were not crowned with any particular success," Moore recalled in his autobiography. "I might go further and say that in my opinion the Department of Home Missions of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, achieved no very creditable success from the organization in 1906 to the union of the three Methodisms in 1939."[114] Moore identified the National Church's fixation on foreign missions in the early-twentieth century as dominating the mission agenda and creating an "inferior complex" for home missions.[115] Indian missions became secondary to sectional concerns like combating the efforts of the Northern Methodist church, Moore said, and any financial support that did reach Indian congregations went toward "sustentation" of the existing work and not toward expansion.[116]

In his reports as secretary of the Home Department, Moore heavily criticized the Church's efforts concerning Oklahoma's Indian communities. He provided a variety of reasons for the decline of Indian missions in the state, which included conference interference, insufficient administration by presiding elders, and constant pastoral turnover.[117] But Moore attacked the system in terms of what whites expected from missions and its assimilationist-minded underpinnings rather than judging the field based on what Indian communities actually wanted or needed. According to Moore, many of the

[114] Moore, Life and I, 106.
[115] Moore, Life and I, 107.
[116] Moore, Life and I, 106-107.
[117] Sixty-Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1914), 61-62; Sixty-Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 62-63; Seventieth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1916), 47.

appointed missionaries had no proper training nor had they expressed any previous interest in mission work as a chosen profession. In addition, the appointments were likely to change from year to year, leaving the mission field with a lack of continuity or consistency which was vital for a developing area. Too often mission work, Moore believed, was conducted much like a circuit with the minister traveling from congregation to congregation. Moore stated that no individual had yet to complete a quadrennium engaged in Indian missions under this system, and, as a result, mission appropriations became "necessary philanthropy to ward off starvation." "To call this mission work, from which large results are to be expected, is hardly fair," Moore wrote. "The defect is in the system."[118]

Moore focused much of his criticism on the East Oklahoma Conference, which contained the largest number of Indian members in the region, and in particular on the poor management of Indian districts by the conference's presiding elders. As proof, he cited both the declining membership numbers among Indian congregations and the conference's use of the Board's appropriations which favored whites over Indians. Moore detailed that in 1914 the Board appropriated $2,525 to the Creek and Choctaw Districts. Of this amount, $1,800 went to the two presiding elders while the remaining $725 went to 13 Indian preachers. Two years earlier, $1,150 out of a $2,500 appropriation went to the two presiding elders, leaving the remaining $1,450 to be divided among 19 Indian preachers. Moore

[118] Seventieth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 47.

questioned the rational for conducting mission work in this manner, especially when the conference appointed the presiding elders without regard to their missionary and evangelistic qualifications.[119]

Oscar E. Goddard, a former minister in the Indian Mission Conference and later secretary of the Board of Missions, echoed many of Moore's sentiments. "We need not try to disguise the fact that the results of our work among the Indians have been the least satisfactory of all our mission enterprises," Goddard wrote in The Missionary Voice.[120] Goddard's critique fell into two main categories which both stressed traits that mainstream Southern Methodist society deemed as signs of success. First, Goddard cited the poor development of native preachers in terms of education and training. Nearly all of the Church's twenty-two full-blood congregations were served by supplies and many of these local preachers were "quite immature both intellectually and religiously."[121] Goddard believed that many Indian preachers were reluctant to join the East Oklahoma Conference because of their perceived inferior status from their lack of education. In turn, the conference had to "exercise great latitude to get him through" when a native preacher did take his examinations for the ministry.[122]

Secondly, Goddard put much of the blame on Indian congregations for not supporting their own churches. According to him, the government and the National Church's paternal policies toward Indians had created a dependent

[119] Sixty-Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 62-63.
[120] O.E. Goddard, "Our Indian Problem," The Missionary Voice 1 (November 1911): 35.
[121] Goddard, "Our Indian Problem," 36.
[122] Goddard, "Our Indian Problem," 36.

congregation. Overseas missions like Korea and China, where the Board and local officials expected new congregations to support their own work financially, were just as poor as Indian congregations, yet only one Indian church was self-supporting, Goddard argued.[123] But the bigger problem was the inability or indifference on the part of Indians to sustain their own work, and Goddard's suggestion was for the Church to lean on and press its wealthy Indians. "[T]here are enough well-to-do Indians to provide a fund, the interest of which would serve as the missionary money for the weaker charges till they reached self-support," Goddard argued.[124]

If organizing Indian missions in a pattern similar to organizing white churches was the goal, then Indian congregations in Oklahoma did lag for many of the reasons that Moore and Goddard stated. Their critique of Indian work showed how national organizations like the Board of Missions judged the field in terms of mainstream society, yet it overlooked some of the unique dimensions of Indian churches in the state. Indian missions were not embracing the traits of regular conferences like Moore and Goddard wanted; however, it did not mean that Indian congregations pushed the Church's work aside and rolled back Christianity. Instead, the traits of Indian work that Moore and Goddard derided could be seen, in some aspects, as signs of autonomy because Indian congregations and individuals asserted some influence over their churches. In short, whites wanted Indian churches to act one way, while Indians congregations had their own ideas.

[123] Goddard, "Our Indian Problem," 33-38.
[124] Goddard, "Our Indian Problem," 37.

Even though whites struggled to work in the field, Indians found ministers from their own communities and alternative ways to keep their churches alive. In earlier years, Local Preachers had filled the gap when commissioned white ministers were not available, and this continued in the 1910s as individuals with little-to-no training worked alongside other ministers in maintaining churches and congregations. Even though he did not receive his formal license to preach until 1922, Guy Quoetone had already spent more than a decade working among his fellow Kiowa, including his time as a young man traveling with Kicking Bird.[125] George Keys, a Cherokee, remembered that during his youth churches were active as community-centered places with families and neighbors gathering together. "You don't see that now," he said, "[T]hem old women get to shouting all over place. We had good times then. We didn't have sense enough to realize it."[126] When it came to paying ministers, Indian congregations found other ways if they did not have the financial means like their white neighbors. Communities supplied food, clothing, or other materials through such activities as pie suppers and quilting bees to do their part.[127] While whites might see the Church as dying in Indian communities, native congregations found ways to survive.

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[125] "Interview with Guy Quoetone," T-637, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; "Interview with Guy Quoetone," T-306, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[126] "Interview with George Keys," T-334-2, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[127] "Interview with Lulu Hair," T-514, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; "Interview with Dora Early Tucker," T-353-3, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

There was also evidence that individual Indians tried to operate within the system and fund native missions on their own (as Goddard had called for) but were thwarted by higher powers in the Church. In this case, Church and conference officials confused the process when individuals endowed funds for mission work and tried to use the money for their own needs rather than meeting the requests of the donors. This attitude was best exemplified with the controversy surrounding a donation made by Lydia A. Clark in February 1916.

According to the East Oklahoma Conference's annual meeting in November 1916, Clark, who the official record described as "a prominent Cherokee woman," donated $2,000 for mission work.[128] Half of that money, the conference stated at that time, would be forwarded to the National Church's Board of Missions to be used for foreign missions and the other half was given to the East Oklahoma Conference Board of Missions for home mission work within the state. The conference recognized Clark's gift by creating the "Mrs. L.A. Clark Endowment Fund" with the donation.[129]

But Clark believed that conference officials had not followed her instructions for the donation and that they made their own decisions regarding the money irrespective of her wishes. In February 1917, she corresponded with several National Church officials in the hopes of taking the money away from the conference and putting it toward the work she originally wanted. She

[128] Minutes of the Seventy-First Session of the East Oklahoma Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Muskogee, Oklahoma, November 22-26, 1916, 53.
[129] Minutes of the Seventy-First Session of the East Oklahoma Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Muskogee, Oklahoma, November 22-26, 1916, 53.

informed the General Board of Church Extension in Louisville, Kentucky, a National Church organization that gave financial assistance to local congregations for building church facilities, that she gave the East Oklahoma Conference Board of Missions her money "to be used in the interest of the Indian work of our church in Oklahoma."[130] It was the conference board that single-handedly made the decision to pass along half of the money to the General Board for foreign missions without consulting with Clark. The remaining $1,000 was still in conference hands, Clark said, and it was "not accomplishing the end I had in view."[131] Clark was angry that the conference had ignored her requests, which was that the money be spent on Indians in Oklahoma and, in particular, to reinvigorate the work with the Cherokee. To correct this error and salvage what remained of her money, she wanted to transfer the conference's half of the fund to the General Board of Church Extension. Once there, Clark hoped that the money could be a loan fund to be used by the Extension Board to help build churches and parsonages in Indian communities, especially among her own Cherokee people. Clark was clear in how she wanted her money spent when she communicated with the Extension Board: "It is my purpose," she wrote, "to use the interest during my life in support of the work among the Cherokees."[132] The Extension Board responded by putting pressure on the East Oklahoma Conference to hand

[130] Minutes of the Seventy-Second Session of the East Oklahoma Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Durant, Oklahoma, November 7-10, 1917, 49.
[131] Minutes of the Seventy-Second Session of the East Oklahoma Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Durant, Oklahoma, November 7-10, 1917, 49.
[132] Minutes of the Seventy-Second Session of the East Oklahoma Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Durant, Oklahoma, November 7-10, 1917, 49.

over the money, though all parties understood that the General Board of Missions had already spent its $1,000 on foreign missions and that was not likely to be recouped.[133]

After several years in practice, the administration of Indian missions as a smaller part of white-dominated conferences, along with the divided interests of the Home Department of the Board of Missions, exposed some of the problems that Southern Methodist Indian congregations faced by the 1910s. Membership numbers declined, as did appropriations, and previous Southern Methodist strongholds among the Cherokee all but disappeared. In order to combat these problems, a movement on the part of church officials, both Indian and non-Indian individuals operating from the local and national stage, worked during that decade toward creating a separate "Indian Mission" to oversee the efforts.

There were obvious benefits for Indians by creating a separate Indian Mission. Their own organization would give Southern Methodist Indians more autonomy and control over their churches. For more than a generation, whites had slowly taken control over the conferences to the point where Indian work became more of an afterthought. A new Indian Mission promised more input from Indian leaders, Indian ministers, and sympathetic whites to guide Indian congregations.

One of the initial steps in the creation of a separate Indian Mission began when John Moore visited Oklahoma in 1913 to investigate mission

[133] Minutes of the Seventy-Second Session of the East Oklahoma Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Durant, Oklahoma, November 7-10, 1917, 48-51.

work in the state as a part of his duties as secretary of the Home Department. Moore had a clear concept of how home missions should operate and how those fields differed from foreign work, as he wrote later. "Foreign Missions operate from radiating centers," he declared, while home missions "should operate by permeating forces in the life of the communities."[134] For Moore, home missions should concentrate on the existing work and amplify nearby needs, unlike foreign missions which were beachheads established in fields where Christianity did not exist. Home mission fields should not be concerned with raising money for special or new efforts, he believed, due to fears of exploiting the work in the minds of the public. Therefore, in Moore's opinion, Indian missions needed to refocus on their previously established congregations in older communities in order to grow, and not on campaigns to move into new fields and among new Indian groups.

Creating this separate Indian Mission proved problematic as established organizations within church were not ready to concede control over Indian missions to Indians themselves. In the fall of 1913, the East Oklahoma Conference asked the National Church to consider the idea of a new mission at its General Conference to be held the following spring.[135] At the same time, Moore submitted his own recommendations to the Board of Missions to reorganize their Indian work which included a provision for the mission to appoint its own superintendent in charge of the work. Moore wanted the mission to cover all of the Indians in the state, and for the East

[134] Moore, Life and I, 108.
[135] Minutes of the Sixty-Eighth Session of the East Oklahoma Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, November 12-17, 1913, 58, 68.

Oklahoma Conference to be in charge of licensing ministers and other administrative needs of that level.[136]

When the General Conference held its quadrennial meeting in Oklahoma City in 1914, the Committee on Missions rejected the calls from the East Oklahoma Conference and the Board of Missions for a separate Indian mission.[137] Moore indicated in his next annual report to the Board that the plan failed because of conflict with the East Oklahoma Conference over authority and oversight. He wanted the new mission to have its own superintendent to direct activity, especially in terms of how appropriations were spent, while the East Oklahoma Conference opposed this plan, presumably because it was losing authority and money in the deal.[138]

By 1917, Moore's irritation with the East Oklahoma Conference and the status of Indian work reached a crescendo. In his annual report to the Board, he once again criticized the church's poor response "to the 160,000 Indians within our Southern and Southwestern territory."[139] The sticking point remained the conference's control over missions even though the appropriations for Indian work came from the Board. [140] Finally, at the General Conference in 1918, the National Church recommended a

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[136] Sixty-Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 61-62.
[137] Gross Alexander and John L. Kirby, eds. Journal of the Seventeenth General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1914), 136-137.
[138] Sixty-Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 62-63, 257-258
[139] Seventy-First Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1917), 52.
[140] Seventy-First Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 52-53.

reorganization of the Indian work in Oklahoma to include a separate superintendent to direct the organization, “such tribal presiding elders as the condition and progress of the work may require and justify,” and the appointment of missionaries by the Board.[141]

With the creation of the new Indian Mission in 1918, some of the authority and financial assistance that had disappeared over the previous decade returned to Indian congregations. Though the position of superintendent remained an appointment from of the Board and was given to experienced white ministers, Indians did assume some of the lower levels of administration in greater numbers for the first time in more than a generation. The Board’s appropriations still ran through white hands first before reaching Indian congregations, but at least now the superintendent was concerned solely with the mission’s work and was not distracted by commitments to white communities.

The end of the original Indian Mission Conference in 1906 occurred in anticipation of Oklahoma statehood the following year. Just like they had with other institutions in the territories, whites assumed control over the Southern Methodist Church in the region and reshaped it to fit their needs. Indian congregations became an afterthought in a larger process of growth that benefited an emerging state focused on a new white-centric future.

[141] Frank M. Thomas and Curtis B. Haley, eds., Journal of the Eighteenth General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1918), 28, 170.

From an organizational standpoint, and in terms of simple bare necessities, Indian churches suffered greatly in the period between statehood and the creation of a new mission. Money meant for their communities had to go through the proper channels which were now controlled by white officials with little concern for Indian congregations. With the federal government doing its part to end tribal sovereignty and easing the path to white ownership of former Indian land, church officials found various ways to lay claim to Indian property to take advantage of a new market while holding little regard for the impact on native communities.

Yet this period did not signal an end to all Southern Methodist Indian congregations. In some communities, the Church did decline tremendously, such as the unexplained disappearance of their Cherokee congregations. But in other cases, the apathy or indifference from white officials allowed Indian churches to continue to develop along their own course rather than in ways predetermined by mainstream society. Indian congregations were not assimilating like church officials, the federal government, and the larger American culture wanted them to assimilate. They were, however, creating a Christian and Southern Methodist experience more in line with their own desires. The creation of a separate Indian Mission would allow this autonomy to develop even more, though not without its own share of problems.

Chapter Five: The Mission Reborn, 1918-1940

The creation of a new Indian Mission in 1918 moved Oklahoma's Southern Methodist Indian congregations in a new direction. The previous decades saw the slow decline of Indian members and Indian autonomy within the region's conferences as well as within the larger National Church, but a new mission, many believed, promised more efforts and better results. The period between 1918 and the merger of the Northern and Southern branches of Methodism in 1939, which changed the size and scope of the Oklahoma's Indian congregations, was a period of growing autonomy for native Methodists.

Under this new administrative organization, Indian members finally moved to the forefront of the region's mission work. They became presiding elders in charge of circuits dominated by Indian ministers who preached to primarily native congregations. The churches in the Mission could incorporate native elements into their services that had been explicitly shunned in earlier years. Characteristics or practices that white congregations might consider outdated or even backwards, such as the continued use of Indian languages in church services or the lack of proper church facilities, came to identify the uniqueness of Southern Methodist Indian communities in Oklahoma. Few white ministers and missionaries continued to work in the mission at this time, but those that did were typically interested in the renewed efforts and accepted Indian congregations as they were.

This newfound autonomy, however, was not the intention of the National Church and, as a result, officials tried to include certain safeguards in the form of white oversight. Church leaders implemented educational requirements as well as licensing restrictions that promoted an overall agenda of assimilation. By appointing experienced white ministers as the superintendent of the Indian Mission, or by founding a new boarding school in the mold of church-run schools of the nineteenth century that added an integrated white/Indian student body, the National Church adhered to an older philosophy that favored white ideals. Assimilation as an underlying motive never disappeared from the agenda, and the National Church expected Indian congregations' outward appearances to be similar to their white brethren and for them to support the church in proportion to their means. Much of the frustration that developed in the Indian Mission during this period came about because church officials had one set of expectations for Indian members, while Indian congregations wanted an organization that allowed them their own religious independence.

The problem for church officials was that these safeguards could not completely overcome Indian autonomy and their own indifference toward Indian work. Whites may have held important positions, but Indians assumed more say and more control over their congregations. By using the veil of Christianity, native churches could gather in worship and implement traditions that mixed their religion with traditional practices and still be accepted as legitimate Southern Methodist congregations. Church publications praised

Indian camp meetings because they "remind one of the camp meetings of our boyhood days in the South," tying these meetings into the larger tradition of mainstream Southern Methodism while overlooking the distinctly native aspects that were grounded in Indian communities.[1]

As the National Church struggled over its approach to Indian missions, Indian ministers conducted work according to their own needs and desires. While white officials pressed for educated ministers well on their way to assimilation into white society, Indian congregations operated irrespective to these expectations. Individuals founded new congregations and churches in remote areas based on their own understanding of the needs of Indian communities and not on some grand plan from the National Church or Indian Mission. At times, these actions could place the Church in an uncomfortable position with other denominations and create tension in larger, inter-denominational organizations. But for Indian congregations, these were necessary steps for their Christian communities.

After a steady decline in Indian work since the days of the Land Run of 1889, the founding of a separate Indian Mission in 1918 was a step forward for native congregations in Oklahoma. Even so, church officials continued some of the mistakes of earlier generations and ignored Indian input in the decision making process and further complicating affairs. Important issues like money or education remained under the control of white officials removed from needs of native communities, which could frustrate Indian

[1] Grover C. Emmons, "The Indian Mission in Oklahoma" World Outlook 30 (March 1940): 96.

congregations. And yet, somehow in this difficult mix, Indians managed to assert themselves and begin to take control over Indian missions.

With the new Indian Mission formally established, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon began the process of setting the mission into motion. As its presiding bishop, as well as the presiding bishop over the East Oklahoma Conference and West Oklahoma Conference, he was tasked with the mission's reorganization.[2] From the National Church's administrative perspective, Mouzon was a logical choice. Since the mission assumed operations formerly under the jurisdiction of the two Oklahoma conferences, the Bishop in charge of the entire region was best suited to make the necessary changes to budgets, organization, and personnel as well as instituting the legal framework that would govern the actions and responsibilities of the mission. In doing so, Mouzon had to walk the fine line between the expectations for a proper church institution and the needs and desires of its Indian congregations. Unfortunately, Mouzon had little prior experience with Indian missions and personally found Indians a difficult group to work with and understand. "As you know Indians are very peculiar people," Mouzon wrote to the secretary of the Board of Missions in 1920. "It takes one a long time to find out what an Indian is thinking about."[3]

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[2] Frank M. Thomas and Curtis B. Haley, eds., Journal of the Eighteenth General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1918), 269.

[3] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to O.E. Goddard, August 27, 1918," Box 263 - Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1919-CA1934, Correspondence and Clips, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

The uncertainty surrounding the organization of the Indian Mission was evident in correspondence between Bishop Mouzon and Andrew C. Pickens. As a white man who had been the presiding elder of the Choctaw District for several years, Pickens was concerned that under the reorganization he would be reappointed and lose his position. He pleaded with Mouzon to keep him in his post because he claimed that the Choctaw wanted him to stay, and he blamed declining membership of his district on outside factors like the Choctaw's high mortality rate. "My Indians are devoted to me," Pickens wrote to Mouzon, "and I do not deny that it will be very painful to them and me if you in your godly judgment should decide to separate us."[4] There was also a hint of financial motivation for Pickens's plea as he also admitted to Mouzon that he was paid twice as much as the previous presiding elder.

In his response to Pickens, Mouzon indicated that the mission would be "reorganized in a manner which will be pleasing to the Indians and which I trust will develop initiative on their part."[5] Mouzon's goal, as well as the stipulations given by the National Church and Board of Missions, was to return some control of the Indian Mission to its native membership. The church recognized that its work over the previous decade had been ineffective, and it also knew that the success of the Indian Mission would be borne by the Indians themselves. That was one reason why the new mission

[4] Letter from A.C. Pickens to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, Oct 11, 1918, Box 263 - CA1919-CA1934, Correspondence and Clips, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU.
[5] Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to A.C. Pickens, Oct 15, 1918, Box 263 - CA1919-CA1934, Correspondence and Clips, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU.

would have more native leadership in positions of authority like the presiding elders.

While this approach certainly sounded like a positive change for the region's Indian congregations, in reality the end goal of assimilation was the same. The new mission continued the same overall philosophy that tried to force Indian members into a white-dominated church culture. Officials like Mouzon wanted to re-create proper Southern Methodist churches in the mission's native congregations and were less concerned with extending Indians more autonomy to shape Christianity in their own way.

One area where the limits of Indian authority became evident was appointment of the Indian Mission's superintendent. Initially, the superintendent's position was the sticking point between the East Oklahoma Conference and the Board of Missions that delayed the creation of the Indian Mission until 1918.[6] Though opposed by the East Oklahoma Conference, the Board insisted on a superintendent for the mission who would be outside of the control of any other conference, presumably to avoid any conflict of interest between a white-dominated conference and an Indian-focused mission. The superintendent's position, however, remained an appointment by the Bishop and would go to white ministers rather than any Indian for the next several decades.

Mouzon was determined to find individuals with plenty of experience working among Indian communities to fill the administrative posts of

[6] Sixty-Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1916), 62-63, 257-258.

superintendent and presiding elders, though he was less concerned as to whether they were Indian or not. Writing to Orlando Shay before the Indian Mission's 1918 annual meeting, Mouzon told Shay "that we shall do all in our power to use the men to best advantage who know most about the work."[7] Some had suggested Shay as a possible superintendent in part due to his work among the Cherokee and because, as he liked to state, he was related to the tribe through marriage.[8] Mouzon was not convinced of Shay's abilities, as he told the secretary of the Board of Missions. "Shay is a good man and we must find some way to use him," Mouzon wrote in September 1918, "although of course he is not the man for Superintendent of the Indian Mission Conference [sic]."[9] Mouzon initially appointed R.T. Blackburn as the superintendent and Shay as a presiding elder, but a year later Blackburn stepped down and Shay assumed superintendent's position in the mission.[10]

Shay's resume at that point was dubious, largely because the Cherokee work had disappeared while he served as a presiding elder for the

[7] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to Orlando Shay, September 28, 1920," Box 260 - CA1913-CA1937, Correspondence and Reports, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.
[8] Southwestern Advocate, November 1, 1934. Shay claimed that his wife, Minnie Boles, was the great-great-granddaughter of Chief Bowles, a leader of the Cherokee living in the Republic of Texas and who died in the Battle of Neches in 1839. See "Letter from Orlando Shay to J. Marvin Nichols, July 27, 1920," John Young Bryce Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[9] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to O.E. Goddard, September 4, 1918," Box 263 - Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1919-CA1934, Correspondence and Clips, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas. Though Mouzon used the word "conference," the Indian Mission was not a conference at this time.
[10] Seventy-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1919), 44-45; Robert B. Eleazer, ed. Seventy-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1920), 45-46.

Creek-Cherokee District in the East Oklahoma Conference.[11] Even after Shay became superintendent of the mission, individuals in the state questioned his ability and wondered how effective he would be in creating a respectable class of Indian congregations to match Oklahoma's mainstream white churches. The pastor of Trinity Methodist Church in Purcell, W.L. Anderson, wrote an unsolicited letter to Mouzon asking that the Bishop appoint Marcus L. Butler as superintendent. Butler had more experience working among the Five Tribes, had married a Cherokee woman baptized years earlier by the IMC's pioneer missionary John Harrell,[12] and, as Anderson pointed out, Butler felt a "Divine Call to that special work." "I think the Indian people have all confidence in Brother Shay and I should like to do him a good turn," Anderson stated, "but [I] do not think brother Shay will ever set as high standards for those people as Dr. Butler would."[13]

During his tenure as superintendent of the Indian Mission from 1919 to 1924, Shay encountered several problems from both his fellow missionaries as well as from the surrounding white communities in the state. In terms of influences primarily outside of the Church, Shay found himself working with a population at great risk from exploitation and graft from their white neighbors. The years since statehood and allotment proved difficult as Oklahoma's

[11] Minutes of the Sixty-Fifth Session of the Oklahoma Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Ardmore, Oklahoma, November 10-15, 1910, 30-31; Minutes of the East Oklahoma Conference Sixty-Sixth Session, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Okmulgee, Oklahoma, November 1-5, 1911, 23-24.
[12] "Letter from M.L. Butler to J. Marvin Nichols, July 9, 1920," John Young Bryce Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[13] "Letter from W.L. Anderson to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, September 25, 1920," Box 268 - Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1916-CA1933, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

Indian communities faced an onslaught of greedy whites desirous for their land and resources. A multi-pronged attack from local and state officials, landed businessmen, and the federal government conspired to remove the remaining vestiges of Indian sovereignty and wealth, all in the name of progress and democracy.[14]

Further problems for Shay originated from conflicting visions for the work and operation of the Indian Mission. Shay wanted to introduce new missionary methods that were opposed by some of the established ministers in the region. The superintendent promoted more leadership positions for Indians who had been educated and trained according to the Church's standards (a stance that supported the overall assimilationist agenda of the era), while older, more experienced missionaries questioned the validity of that strategy.

To deal with the issues of graft and corruption effecting Indian communities, Shay believed that his position as superintendent required that he become proactive on behalf of Indian congregations and that he maintain a certain degree of paternalistic sympathy toward Indian members. "I find it necessary in my work to take some oversight of our Methodist Indians with reference to their temporal affairs," he told Mouzon.[15] In one case Shay cited as evidence of his involvement in "temporal affairs," a young Choctaw orphan rented out 115 acres of her land to a white man for $100, who then rented it

[14] Angie Debo, And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1940).
[15] "Letter from Orlando Shay to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, December 10, 1919," Box 261 - CA1910-CA1935, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

out to a second man for $400. That man, in turn, leased it to a farmer for $1,000. This situation led Shay to approach the principal chief of the Choctaw Nation on behalf of the girl and get her proper compensation. In another instance, Shay accused government employees of taking advantage of their Indian charges. He threatened to report the Kiowa Indian agent to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs after the agent rented 160 acres from a Kiowa widow for $180 even though the actual rental value for just the 60 acres that yielded an alfalfa crop was worth $1,000.[16]

Yet for all of his sympathy concerning their "temporal affairs," Shay maintained high expectations regarding the spiritual attitude of his Indian members and their adherence to Southern Methodist rules and beliefs. "I wish to assure you that in my ministerial work for the passed [sic] twenty five years that I have been as firm and exacting in the inforcement [sic] of righteousness and disciplinary requirements as any preacher in the East Oklahoma Conference," Shay wrote to Bishop Mouzon.[17] Shay's protection of Indian rights and perspective extended only so far when Christianity was involved. As far as the mission's work was concerned, Shay wanted an assimilated population adhering to the same standards as mainstream Church society.

[16] "Letter from Orlando Shay to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, December 10, 1919," Box 261 - CA1910-CA1935, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.
[17] "Letter from Orlando Shay to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, February 20, 1920," Box 261 - CA1910-CA1935, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

A second set of complications for Shay originated in his relationship with the presiding elder of the Kiowa District, J.J. Methvin. With more than four decades of experience in the mission field, Methvin had established his own thoughts and beliefs toward the work that conflicted with Shay's, as became evident following the one year suspension of the Kiowa minister Kicking Bird in the fall of 1920. Methvin wanted to replace Kicking Bird with Delos K. Lonewolf and Guy Quoetone, two men who he said had "more than ordinary knowledge of the New Testament Scriptures" due to previous schooling.[18] "I believe I have fallen upon a plan which under the Divine guidance will result in new life for this work, and a plan that will multiply itslf [sic] in a short while, for there are a number of young men whom I feel sure could be trained into good teachers, and later on some of them into preachers," Methvin wrote to Mouzon as he drew upon his years of experience and understanding of the work. "Indeed I must be allowed freedom of action, and the privelege [sic] of working out my plans if we are to develope [sic] any thing permanent for good in this field."[19]

Shay disagreed with Methvin's assessment of the work among the Kiowa and labeled him as out of touch with the present day needs of Indian missions in general. A primary sticking point in this particular argument was over salary for the replacement ministers. Methvin wanted to divide Kicking

[18] "Letter from J.J. Methvin to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, November 8, 1920," Box 268 – Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1916-CA1933, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas. As Methvin was quick to point out to Mouzon, Quoetone had attended the Methvin Institute years earlier.
[19] "Letter from J.J. Methvin to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, November 8, 1920," Box 268 – Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1916-CA1933, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

Bird's monthly pay of $35 between Lonewolf and Quoetone, and Methvin would provide $5 of his own money so that both men were paid $20 a month. Shay felt that Methvin's suggestion was twice as much as necessary, particularly since the men lived near their churches and had no travel expenses, "but since Bro. Methvin has promised this ammount [sic] I see no way out of it."[20] Furthermore, he thought that the field was overcrowded with too many Methodist ministers to justify adding more workers. Shay wanted Methvin, who was nearly seventy-five years old at that point, to do more preaching and visiting congregations, and let the local Indian preachers pick up the remaining slack.[21]

At the center of this argument between Methvin and Shay was the role that Indians would play in developing the work among the Kiowa. Both men thought that Indians needed to expand the work themselves, but Methvin thought it would be a lengthy process before they were able to do so effectively and he was willing to give them more latitude. "It is more difficult than it was thirty five years ago when I first began work among the Indians," Methvin said when comparing the field in 1920 with what he encountered in the 1880s.[22] Methvin believed in a slow and steady process, much like he

[20] "Letter from Orlando Shay to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, December 10, 1920," Box 268 – Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1916-CA1933, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.
[21] "Letter from Orlando Shay to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, December 10, 1920," Box 268 – Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1916-CA1933, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas; "Letter from Orlando Shay to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, January 19, 1921," Box 268 – Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1916-CA1933, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.
[22] "Letter from J.J. Methvin to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, July 14, 1920," Box 268 – CA1910-CA1935, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

had years earlier when he first entered the field. He wanted to utilize experienced ministers, including his old friends Benjamin Gassaway and Andres Martinez, to strengthen the mission while it gradually spread out among Kiowa communities.

Shay, on the other hand, viewed Methvin's approach as outdated thinking. "But here is the true situation, Bro. Methvin is an old man living in the past largely," Shay told Bishop Mouzon. "Bro. Martinez is past sixty and not in good health, and now Bro. Methvin is asking for Bro. Gassaway, a man about seventy six years of age. I believe it would be almost a waste of time and money to place another elderly man in that field." Instead, Shay linked the future of the work with the "younger life" and the mission's ability "to get ahold of the boys and girls when they return from school." [23] Shay's belief in reaching the youth of the mission was a common belief at the time. As in previous years, white ministers like Shay (and Methvin in his earlier days) felt that young Indians were easier to convert and train for the future. By bringing youth into the church before they had been inculcated by their native heritage, these people believed that assimilation was easier. This, in turn, would lead to a stronger foundation for the mission. But Methvin's own success among the Kiowa came after he converted older and respected members of the tribe like Hunting Horse, Jimmie Quoetone, Stumbling Bear, and Tohausen. Gaining acceptance by the community's elders was just as, if not more, important than securing a younger generation of converts.

[23] "Letter from Orlando Shay to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, January 19, 1921," Box 268 – Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1916-CA1933, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

While Shay adjusted to his new assignment, Mouzon's appointments for presiding elders created their own share of controversy for the Indian Mission. Mouzon chose the aforementioned Methvin, the longtime missionary from Anadarko, as the presiding elder for the Kiowa District, before it was eventually downgraded to a circuit and folded into the Creek District in 1921.[24] He also replaced Andrew C. Pickens, formerly the presiding elder of the Choctaw District in the East Oklahoma Conference, with Lewis W. Cobb, a Choctaw mixed-blood who had joined the IMC in 1885.[25] Pickens, though, was embittered over Mouzon's decision and being replaced in the work. "I have succeeded as Pastor wherever I have been sent as the Records show," Pickens wrote to a Southern Methodist official in Texas shortly after the mission's first annual meeting. "But as Presiding Elder whether of Indians or Whites I have excelled – 'But there arose a Pharoah [sic] who knew not Joseph," he said alluding to the Mouzon's decision to remove him from the field and the new bishop's lack of familiarity with Indian work.[26]

As for the new Creek District in the Indian Mission, Mouzon appointed Johnson E. Tiger, a respected Creek leader, an active minister of the Southern Methodist church, and a member of the Alligator Clan of Eufuala

[24] Minutes of the Third Session of the Brewer Indian Mission of Oklahoma of the MECS, Kullituklo Church, near Idabel, Oklahoma, Sept 10-12, 1920; Minutes of the Fourth Session of the Brewer Indian Mission of Oklahoma of the MECS, Salt Creek Church, near Holdenville, Oklahoma, Sept 16, 1921.
[25] Seventy-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 45-46; "Letter from Orlando Shay to J. Marvin Nichols, July 27, 1920," John Young Bryce Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.
[26] "Letter from A.C. Pickens to J. Marvin Nichols, January 9, 1919," John Young Bryce Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, OKC, OK.

Deep Fork Town.[27] Tiger's father, Moty Tiger, was also a minister in the conference who, in 1907, became chief of the Muskogee Nation following the death of Pleasant Porter and his subsequent appointment by President Theodore Roosevelt.[28] Besides his father, the younger Tiger had other connections to Creek government from his time working for Porter prior to the chief's death. As principal chiefs, both Pleasant Porter and Moty Tiger faced the difficulties surrounding land allotments and the Creek in the years following the Curtis Act of 1898. The elder Tiger was considered a full-blood who favored restrictions on land sales in order to protect Creek landowners from rapacious whites. As a result, Chief Tiger faced his share of opposition from leading Oklahomans in addition to wealthy Creek mixed-bloods determined to acquire and sell valuable Creek land free from any oversight.[29]

Johnson Tiger carved out his own reputation within Creek society and the Southern Methodist church. He graduated from Bacone College, a Baptist school located in Muskogee, in 1895 where he excelled in learning languages that included Latin, Greek, and French along with Creek and

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[27] "Interview with Lena Benson Tiger," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; "Johnson Tiger, A Famous Creek Leader," Oklahoma Biographies T-V, Box 19, Works Project Administration Historic Sites and Federal Writers' Project Collection, WHC, OU.

[28] "Biographical Sketch of Moty Tiger," Folder 2, Moty Tiger Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Ok. Tiger was elected second chief in 1899 and re-elected in 1903. When Porter died unexpectedly in 1907, Roosevelt appointed Tiger principal chief because the position would normally have gone to the second chief according to the Creek constitution. The general belief at the time was that Tiger's tenure would be brief since his remaining duties involved concluding Creek business affairs following allotment.

[29] "News Item of Tiger, from The Nowata Star, December 15, 1911," Folder 15, Moty Tiger Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Ok; Debo, And Still the Waters Run, 170-171. Porter also served as chairman of the Muskogee convention of 1905 called to discuss the possibility of separate statehood for Indian Territory. See John Bartlett Meserve, "Chief Pleasant Porter," Chronicles of Oklahoma 9 (September 1931): 332.

English. Tiger's linguistic abilities made him a sought after resource as an interpreter by the Southern Methodist church, Creek officials, and business interests wanting to negotiate with the Creek government. Near the turn of the century, Tiger worked with his wife at the Creek Orphan Asylum before moving into the ministry of the Southern Methodist Church. He was ordained a deacon in 1905 and appointed presiding elder of Creek District in the East Oklahoma Conference in 1916.[30]

The appointment of Tiger afforded the Indian Mission a certain degree of prestige, and he received important responsibilities concerning the mission's administration. Besides serving as a presiding elder, Mouzon also made Tiger the Conference Treasurer, where he was responsible for collecting and accounting for all of the funds raised by the various congregations in the mission.[31] Tiger later represented the Indian Mission as its sole delegate to the National Church's General Conferences in 1926 and 1930.[32] But for all of his status within the mission, authorities in the two Oklahoma conferences were reluctant to allow him any influence in the affairs of their white Southern Methodist communities. In September 1920, the

[30] "Interview with Lena Benson Tiger," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; "Johnson Tiger, A Famous Creek Leader," Oklahoma Biographies T-V, Box 19, Works Project Administration Historic Sites and Federal Writers' Project Collection, WHC, OU; Minutes of the Seventy-First Session of the East Oklahoma Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Muskogee, Oklahoma, November 22-26, 1916, 43.
[31] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to Johnson E. Tiger, December 18, 1918," Box 262 - CA1914-CA1925, Correspondence and Clips, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.
[32] A.J. Weeks, ed. Eightieth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1926), 187; Curtis B. Haley, ed., Journal of the Twenty-First General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1930), 9.

Indian Mission elected Tiger as its representative on the Oklahoma Educational Commission, an organization compromised of members of the two Oklahoma conferences working on funding a new Southern Methodist university for the state, and mission officials sent a resolution asking that the commission admit Tiger as a member. The correspondence between Tiger and Mouzon indicated that the conferences were reluctant to recognize him and give him a seat on the commission.[33] Still, while the commission may have dragged its heels toward giving Tiger, and by default Indians, any say in the planning of the region's work, Mouzon was certain that the Indian Mission would help fund the movement and "do its part in the [Commission's] Educational Campaign, looking toward the building of a college in Oklahoma."[34]

This incident with Tiger and the Educational Commission was indicative of how officials in Oklahoma's white conferences expected to use Indian resources when necessary, though they were less concerned with giving Indians any say in the decision-making process. When church officials realized the potential wealth of some of its members, especially among the Five Tribes where oil revenues had skyrocketed, they were quick to press any advantage that they might have had. In 1921, Mouzon recruited Shay and

[33] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to Johnson E. Tiger, September 28, 1920," Box 268 - Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1916-CA1933, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas; "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to Johnson E. Tiger, September 30, 1920," Box 268 - Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1916-CA1933, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

[34] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to Johnson E. Tiger, September 28, 1920," Box 268 - Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1916-CA1933, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

Theodore F. Brewer in order to use their connections with Indian communities for the National Church's Christian Education Movement. Mouzon, recognizing that the Brewer was "loved and respected by the Indians as no other man in Oklahoma" due to his years working near Muskogee at the old Harrell International Institute and as a former presiding elder in the old Indian Mission Conference, asked the aged minister "to do some very important work" and ask Indian donors "for large contributions to Christian Education" during a six-week swing through Indian congregations.[35] Mouzon conveyed his urgency in the matter when he instructed Shay "to drop almost everything else and attend to this with Dr. Brewer. We have not a day to loose [sic]….This great thing must be done."[36]

A more egregious example of how whites exploited Indian wealth for their own benefit during the time period occurred in the case of Jackson Barnett, in which the Southern Methodist Church was one of several parties trying to gain access to his fortune. An illiterate full-blood Creek Indian who worked as a laborer, Barnett received his allotment arbitrarily from the allotting agent in 1903. His land, near the north-central Oklahoma community of Cushing, was part of the lucrative, oil-producing Cushing field and it became the source of Barnett's nickname "World's Richest Indian." Due to his illiteracy, Okmulgee County courts declared the nearly-sixty year old

[35] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to T.F. Brewer, April 15, 1921," Box 268 - Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1916-CA1933, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.
[36] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to Orlando Shay, April 15, 1921," Box 268 - Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, CA1916-CA1933, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

Barnett an "incompetent" in 1912 and appointed a guardian to oversee his wealth. For the next two decades, various interests conspired and fought over access to Barnett's money. The federal government used his money to purchase Liberty Bonds during World War One, while local church organizations pressed for donations for their own construction projects and ministerial needs. In the 1920s, Anna Laura Lowe, a white woman with a teenage daughter, married Barnett under dubious circumstances and eventually moved the old man out to California to live off of his wealth. After Barnett's death in 1934, nearly one thousand "heirs" came forward from across the country trying to claim a piece of his estate.[37]

The Southern Methodist Church became involved in the Barnett affair in 1919 largely due to denominational competition and fears of being left out of a potential windfall. In December of that year, a white Southern Methodist preacher from Henryetta, Oklahoma, J.C. Curry, asked Bishop Mouzon to use his influence with Commissioner of Indian Affairs Cato Sells on behalf of the Henryetta congregation. Curry related to the bishop stories of Barnett's personal fortune and the reported $50,000 a month pouring in from oil-rich allotment. Curry wanted a piece of Barnett's wealth, but was unable to circumvent the guardianship arrangement on his own. Evidence suggested that the guardian and Commissioner Sells, who had final approval over any allocation of Barnett's wealth, were willing to separate Barnett from his

[37] Tanis C. Thorne, The World's Richest Indian: The Scandal over Jackson Barnett's Oil Fortune (Oxford, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2008); Debo, And Still the Waters Run, 338-342, 346-350; "Jackson Barnett," Oklahoma Biographies – A-B, Box 19, Works Project Administration Historic Sites and Federal Writers' Project Collection, WHC, OU.

money, Curry told the bishop, as was shown when they allowed Barnett to purchase over $1 million in war bonds a few years earlier. Mindful of this, a nearby Baptist preacher had already pressed Commissioner Sells for $25,000 of Barnett's money for his own congregation's building project.[38]

Curry explained that his frustration in the matter was in being left out of any distribution of Barnett's riches, not that churches were taking advantage of an "incompetent" Indian under the care of white guardians. Initially, Curry and other Christian leaders in town, including the representatives from the Church of Christ and Catholic congregations, wanted their share of Barnett's money, but were convinced to wait by the Baptist preacher for fear that Sells would bar any future gifts if too many churches asked at once. However, the Baptists had actually increased their request to $200,000 in the mean time, and Curry was angry at their perceived underhandedness. He wanted Mouzon to press Sells on the behalf of the local white Southern Methodist congregations and get $25,000 from Barnett's estate.[39] The Bishop responded to Curry that he would, once the presiding elders from the East Oklahoma Conference forwarded him the request in writing.[40]

More pressing issues that directly affected the Indian Mission's own ministers and members concerned the National Church's restrictions on their

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[38] "Letter from J.C. Curry to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, December 9, 1919," Box 261 - CA1910-CA1935, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas; Debo, And Still the Waters Run, 338-339.
[39] "Letter from J.C. Curry to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, December 9, 1919," Box 261 - CA1910-CA1935, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.
[40] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to J.C. Curry, December 13, 1919," Box 261 - CA1910-CA1935, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

authority, especially in comparison to other mainstream Southern Methodist congregations. When it created the Indian Mission in 1918, the National Church did not grant the mission the same status as a regular conference, which severely curtailed its independence from white oversight. If the Indian Mission had been created as a regular conference, much as the old Indian Mission Conference had been in the nineteenth century, then the new mission's subordinate institutions, like Quarterly and District Conferences, would have had authority over certain clerical issues. In a regular conference at the time, for instance, Quarterly Conferences recommended individuals to the District Conference for licensing, and that body then had the authority to grant licenses to its ministers, elders, and deacons.[41] But this was not the case in the new Indian Mission.[42] White officials maintained oversight with regards to licensing and similar issues, presumably to make sure that the Indian Mission's personnel fit the approved mold of mainstream Southern Methodist society (or, at least, did not deviate too far or in unacceptable ways from the norm).

Within weeks of the creation of the new mission, its Indian members complained to Bishop Mouzon over their lack of authority when it came to licensing their own ministers. In January 1919, Johnson Tiger wrote to the bishop and asked for his decision regarding the Indian Mission's District Conferences, to which Mouzon replied bluntly that "your District Conference

[41] Gilbert Rowe, ed., The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1922 (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South), 91.
[42] Missionary Yearbook: Eighty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1930), 420-421.

will not have the full authority of a regular District Conference."[43] District Conferences within the Indian Mission could recommend individuals as ministers, elders, or deacons, Mouzon decided, but it could not officially license them. Instead, the white-dominated East Oklahoma Conference had the authority to license the mission's personnel, perhaps to guarantee that the ministers were not promoting ideas counter to the mainstream church and its overtly assimilationist agenda.[44] Members of the Indian Mission recognized that they were still handicapped and asked the National Church to elevate it to the level of a regular conference because of the "real need of District Conference."[45]

In addition to problems over licensing its own preachers, a second major issue affecting the Indian Mission at this stage was the matter of educational requirements for the ministry. Educational standards as laid out by the National Church for its Indian ministers in the Course of Study had been a longstanding source of contention for Southern Methodist leaders. Almost since the beginning of the old Indian Mission Conference in the 1840s, local and national officials weighed in on the substandard accomplishments and knowledge of ecclesiastical and religious instruction by the region's native preachers. This had been one of the reasons that whites began to

[43] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to Johnson E. Tiger, January 28, 1919," Box 262 - CA1914-CA1925, Correspondence and Clips, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.
[44] Eightieth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 187.
[45] Minutes of the Fourth Session of the Brewer Indian Mission of Oklahoma of the MECS, Salt Creek Church, near Holdenville, Oklahoma, Sept 16, 1921.

shunt Indian congregations to the side once they gained control over the conference in the 1890s.

Several members of the Indian Mission believed that the current Course of Study was unacceptable for their use. J.J. Methvin wrote to Bishop Mouzon that the material "seems to be too difficult for our Indian brethren. Their knowledge of English is too limited to make a successful study of the course." As their presiding elder, Methvin believed that the ministers in the Kiowa District were "doing excellent work – up to the measure of their ability," though Methvin implied that different standards applied to Indians and whites.[46] "If we can develop among them a couple of well instructed, consecrated workers, the future of the work will be secure," he stated.[47]

With the sole authority to develop a Course of Study, Bishop Mouzon created a standard that openly recognized the differences between the Southern Methodist Church's Indian members in the Indian Mission and its mainstream congregations throughout the region and rest of the United States.[48] In regular conferences, the multi-year level of examinations as set for ministers in the Course of Study required an extensive knowledge of various theological articles relevant to Methodism and Wesleyan studies, in addition to an in-depth understanding of the Bible and The Discipline,

[46] "Letter from J.J. Methvin to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, February 5, 1920," Box 261 - CA1910-CA1935, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.
[47] "Letter from J.J. Methvin to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, February 5, 1920," Box 261 - CA1910-CA1935, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.
[48] "Letter from Bishop Collins Denny to Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, January 26, 1920," Box 261 - CA1910-CA1935, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

Southern Methodism's official manual of rules and beliefs. In stark contrast, Mouzon's plan for the Indian Mission was significantly less exhausting. According to the 1922 edition of The Discipline, the first edition published after Mouzon developed the program, a license to preach in the Indian Mission required only a vague understanding of "Christian doctrine" from the New Testament while simply having access to The Discipline replaced any need for an exhaustive knowledge of Southern Methodist rules and beliefs. Further licensing renewals, which occurred annually for the next four years, added more expectations in small increments, but never required Indian ministers to submit written sermons or have the same understanding of Biblical and Wesleyan scholars like white ministers in other conferences were required to do.[49]

The Course of Study designed by Mouzon for the Indian Mission reflected the differences between the mission and regular conferences. The standards for regular conferences were extensive in order to ensure legitimate ministers, at least according to the expectations of mainstream Southern Methodist congregations. Creating a homogenized pastoral class among mainstream ministers ensured that individuals could transfer from circuit to circuit, from district to district, or from conference to conference and still preach the same basic tenets. The Indian Mission, however, operated with a different set of standards. Its ministers were not expected to ground their sermons in minute theological points that emphasized a "correct"

[49] Rowe, ed., The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1922, 399-404, 409-410.

interpretation of the Bible. As long as the National Church struggled to find appropriate materials, like the Bible, The Discipline, or more basic study material in translated form for its Kiowa, Creek, Choctaw or other native ministers, it could not reasonably expect them to follow Southern Methodist doctrine to the letter.

Instead, Indian preachers were expected to attract new members through broader generalizations that distinguished Christianity from native beliefs considered to be "heathen" or "pagan" in design such as dancing or peyote use. This gap in expectations allowed Indians significant room to influence the mission in ways acceptable to them and connect it to Indian culture, while it also continued the pattern of segregation that differentiated their congregations from white churches in Oklahoma. Converts could reasonably tie older native traditions that had existed long before the introduction of Christianity into their society, such as the placement of the teepee door in Kiowa culture, to the machinations of the Christian God and still be seen as promoting Christianity.[50] Holding Indian ministers to a different standard also assumed that they would be limited to only Indian congregations and would have little influence on the rest of the National Church.

The reasons Mouzon gave for creating a Course of Study significantly different from the rest of Southern Methodist society, particularly at the end of such a strong assimilationist era within the United States, depended upon who asked. To a white official from the National Church, Mouzon was blunt in

[50] "Interview with Rev. Cecil Horse," Oral History Program, OHS, OKC, OK.

his assessment of Indian ministers and his own low expectations for their work. "This simplified Course of Study was necessary as the Indian preachers were entirely unable to do the work that the members of our white conferences were called upon to do," he stated.[51] That same day, Mouzon wrote Superintendent Shay and was slightly more optimistic and encouraging in his outlook on Indian ministers. "This simplified Course of Study is given not to relieve our Indian brethren from doing the proper work," Mouzon told the superintendent of the Indian Mission, "but to enable them to do the kind of work they are prepared to do."[52]

Just as Mouzon wanted to influence the direction of the mission through his administrative decisions, so too did Indian members shape it in their own particular ways. In some cases, native congregations introduced elements into their worship or church services that were distinct from their white counterparts in the rest of Oklahoma. At other times, they fostered communal gatherings in a church setting, which many white congregations had moved away from by the early-twentieth century. Finally, native practices seen as at odds with Christianity still permeated certain areas of the mission's work. Whatever the reason might be, the new Indian Mission took on a decidedly more native appearance due to its members' activities than it had in previous years. An unintended consequence of the National Church's

[51] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to Frank E. Thomas, December 29, 1919," Box 261 - CA1910-CA1935, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.
[52] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to Orlando Shay, December 29, 1919," Box 261 - CA1910-CA1935, Correspondence, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

segregation of its white and Indian congregations had been creating an atmosphere for native customs to continue in the face of a strong assimilationist agenda.

With much of the Southern Methodist Indian population scattered across rural areas, camp meetings became a central communal event for native congregations. These meetings allowed communities to gather for several days at a time, and it was not uncommon for congregations to build facilities around their churches to accommodate the campers. Often, these meetings occurred in conjunction with church-sponsored activities such as Quarterly Conferences and District Conferences, or at other times around holidays like Christmas. The Indian Mission's superintendent discussed one camp meeting in 1926 that featured preaching from Creek and Choctaw ministers before the assembled crowd comprised of six different tribes.[53] Bishop A. Frank Smith, who presided over the Indian Mission from 1930 to 1944, described Indian camp meetings as a "world within a world," where they met "in some historical camping place for a week each year and a thousands [sic] of them will be camped there and three or four thousand on the grounds on Sunday."[54]

The proliferation of Southern Methodist Indian camp meetings came at a time when Indian communities faced increasing difficulties in having communal gatherings free from white influence or oversight, especially those that incorporated their own customs. For Indians among the Five Tribes, the

[53] W.U.Witt, "Among the Indians" The Missionary Voice 16 (October 1926): 300-301.
[54] "Travis Park Chapel, San Antonio, Sunday, Sept 3, 1944," Box 598, Bishop A. Frank Smith Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

steady encroachment of whites into the region over the previous decades led some native communities to use Christianity to insulate themselves from outsiders and maintain some control over their own beliefs.[55] After allotment, many individuals found their land in lightly populated or isolated places with only limited means of income and survival.[56] One Southern Methodist Choctaw preacher testified before a Congressional sub-committee on Indian affairs that camp meetings allowed Choctaws to pool their resources, especially in terms of food, for the church community.[57]

Plains Indians near the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency experienced similar problems in communal gatherings. The federal government's assimilationist agenda of the late-nineteenth century included a concerted effort to stamp out dancing, though tribal leaders made attempts to hold various dances over the next several decades.[58] White Christian missionaries did their part to suppress dancing by labeling it a sin, while the federal government blacklisted individuals and withheld rations and money in order to discourage the activity.[59] Atwater Onco, a Kiowa elder, remembered that in the 1920s and 1930s, the lack of dancing as a communal outlet

[55] Angie Debo, The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934), 229.
[56] Debo, And Still the Waters Run, 379-380; Clara Sue Kidwell, The Choctaws in Oklahoma: From Tribe to Nation, 1855-1970 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 195.
[57] Survey of the Conditions of the Indians of the United States: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee of Indian Affairs, United States Senate, Seventy-First Congress, Part 14 – Oklahoma (Five Civilized Tribes) (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931), 5698.
[58] Clyde Ellis, "'There Is No Doubt…the Dances Should Be Curtailed": Indian Dances and Federal Policy on the Southern Plains, 1880-1930" Pacific Historical Review 70 (November 2001): 543-544.
[59] William C. Meadows, Kiowa, Apache, and Comanche Military Societies: Enduring Veterans, 1800 to the Present (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 121.

resulted in Baptist and Southern Methodist Kiowa reorienting their social gatherings around camp meetings.[60]

From the perspective of mainstream Southern Methodist society, native use of camp meetings harkened back to an earlier generation of the Church, during a time when white congregations were more focused on modern issues like church buildings and construction projects in urban areas.[61] This perception promoted dual assumptions about Southern Methodist Indians. First, they were "backwards" and out-of-date with modern sentiments of the Church, different enough that they required special rules and help to operate. Second, they were still on the path (albeit delayed considerably) to Christianity shared by mainstream society, which only confirmed the effectiveness of the current assimilationist agenda.

But within the veil of Christianity of these meetings that kept whites from intervening directly, they were also becoming Christian-sponsored events that reinforced certain aspects of native culture. Oscar Goddard, secretary of the Home Department for the Board of Missions, recognized that in the Indian Mission, "Indian customs" dictated the flow and length of events like Quarterly Conferences and not white expectations.[62] Their popularity as a gathering was evident as Church officials estimated that sixty percent of the mission's membership attended District Conferences, and more than one-

[60] Meadows, Kiowa, Apache, and Comanche Military Societies, 382.
[61] Grover C. Emmons, "The Indian Mission of Oklahoma" World Outlook 30 (March 1940): 96-97.
[62] Seventy-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 44; Seventy-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 45-46.

third attended its annual meeting, a sizable accomplishment considering the rural distribution of the congregations, their overall poverty, and the expense of traveling across Oklahoma.[63]

Simon Atohka, a full-blood Choctaw, detailed how camp meetings had evolved over the previous decades and grown into an important communal event for native congregations. A deacon in the Indian Mission's Salem church, Atohka stated that his church initially had a one-room building, but that the increase in camp meetings led to more and more rooms being added to the church. As the meetings grew, the congregation built more facilities such as corrals for horses and bathrooms and kitchens for families to accommodate those staying for an extended period of time.[64] Church officials noticed both the popularity of these events as well as their distinct Indian appearance. A mission superintendent said that all of these buildings and the ensuing crowds made "the church resemble a little village" when camp meetings were being held.[65]

The explicit focus in these communal gatherings was on the fellowship and interaction among Indians, though whites were welcome to attend as well. Atohka discussed how young men, sent to keep an eye on the horses in the corrals, used the opportunity to court women without adult interference.[66] Others, like full-blood Choctaw preacher Ben Benjiman, described the food as

[63] "The Indian Mission of Oklahoma," Pamphlets, Box 1, William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[64] "Interview with Simon Atohka," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collection, OU, Norman, OK.
[65] "The Indian Mission of Oklahoma," Pamphlets, Box 1, William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[66] "Interview with Simon Atohka," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, OU, Norman, OK.

a prime attraction and stated how no one was turned away from the gathering regardless if they were white or Indian.[67] Yet, while whites might visit these meetings, they often found the services conducted in native languages by Indian preachers for a distinctly native audience.[68]

In at least one instance, the federal government sought to break up Indian camp grounds and disrupt these types of meetings. For several years after the closing of the Methvin Institute in Anadarko, some Kiowa camped near the old school on weekends in anticipation for Sunday services at their church, which was now on the outskirts of newer white settlements. Previously, the government agent and Southern Methodist missionaries worked in conjunction to eliminate native gatherings like the Sun Dance, but apparently the agent, Ernest Stecker, also opposed the Kiowa who camped on the school's old property. At first, Stecker tried to have the buildings torn down after claiming the facilities were dilapidated. Benjamin F. Gassaway, who kept up the Kiowa work for the Indian Mission during this time, successfully appealed to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Cato Sells and saved the buildings. Gassaway and Methvin claimed that Stecker's motivation was not to disperse Indians gathering outside the watchful eye of the Indian agent, but rather because he was a Catholic-supporter on the agency who wanted to squash Southern Methodist influence among the

[67] "Interview with Ben Benjiman," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, OU, Norman, OK; "Interview with James Felix," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, OU, Norman, OK.
[68] "Interview with Ben Benjiman," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, OU, Norman, OK; "Interview with F.L. Anderson," Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection, Western History Collections, OU, Norman, OK.

Kiowa. With his efforts to close the school thwarted, Stecker responded by having the land around the school plowed up and cultivated in order to stop the Kiowa from camping there for future church services.[69]

Within the Indian Mission, the Kiowa were noted especially for their camp meetings during the Christmas season. Shay's replacement as superintendent, William U. Witt, wrote in 1927 that "[i]t has been the custom for a number of years… for the Kiowas to camp at their churches Christmas week and have a general good time feasting and fellowship."[70] The white preacher in charge of the Kiowa work, Robert M. Templeton, described the Christmas gatherings as overtly native affairs infused with Christianity that gave congregations an opportunity to share Kiowa hymns with one another.[71] Kiowa ministers Ted Ware and Matthew Botone recounted the camp meetings around Christmas 1928 as large gathering of hundreds of Kiowa in more than two dozen camps. Ware, pastor of the Stecker church, reported that "$90 was subscribed for next year, also three beeves." [72]

By the 1920s and 1930s, the Indian Mission faced a series of issues that complicated questions of autonomy and authority. The National Church wanted to structure the mission in ways that allowed white officials to direct and regulate the behavior of Indian members, such as the restrictions Bishop Mouzon placed on licensing and administration, and that would move the

[69] Luke Eric Lassiter, Clyde Ellis, and Ralph Kotay. The Jesus Road: Kiowas, Christianity, and Indian Hymns (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 38-39.
[70] The Indian Methodist, February 1, 1927.
[71] Robert M. Templeton, "Christmas Among the Kiowas" The Missionary Voice 14 (December 1924): 385.
[72] The Indian Methodist, March, 1929.

Indian Mission toward mainstream conferences. To do so, Southern Methodist officials once again turned to educational methods in order to train a generation of Indian ministers. This alternative, however, was fraught with complications because the school's plan for a student body comprised of both Indians and whites left its intentions mixed from the start. Furthermore, mission officials found Indian ministers asserting their own plans for the Indian Mission that conflicted with the plans of Church officials. In expressing their autonomy in little ways, such as joining individual churches or starting new congregations in areas typically under the domain of other denominations, Indians refused to act exactly how whites wanted or expected.

As in earlier years, proper education for its class of ministers emerged as a primary concern held by Southern Methodist leaders and Indian Mission officials. The old Indian Mission Conference, its subsequent conferences, and the National Church's Board of Missions officially eliminated Indian schools from the state more than a decade earlier after a slow and steady decline in results, and what schools those organizations did operate in Oklahoma were aimed fully at white communities. But with the new Indian Mission emphasizing the work and importance of Indian ministers, church officials wanted an opportunity to train its future workers according to the assimilationist demands of the era as well as their own desire for promoting a legitimate church culture. Even before the National Church was able to finalize its plans for a new school, mission leaders had used Indian camp

meetings at Quarterly Conferences as opportunities for training institutes in order to bring some semblance of proper education to the mission.[73]

The timing for a new school for the Indian Mission coincided with a boom in fundraising by the National Church and an increased awareness of the place of Indians in the American society following the First World War. In 1918, the National Church embarked on its Centenary Campaign, a large-scale fundraising venture designed to commemorate the centennial of Methodist missions in the United States and inspired by the federal government's "Creel Committee" and its drive for bonds during the war.[74] For the Indian Mission, the Missionary Centenary Commission specifically wanted to "[p]rovide a school to train religious teachers, leaders, and preachers for the Indians of all tribes" and to "[p]ut our Indian Work on a basis commensurate with the claim upon our Church and our capability to meet that claim."[75] In a statement in its official publication, The Missionary Voice, the Board of Missions asked church members to "remember how the Indian did his part for us on the fields of France and cheerfully, gladly do our part for him."[76]

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[73] Seventy-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 45-46.
[74] Robert W. Sledge, "Five Dollars and Myself": The History of Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South 1845-1939, (New York: General Board of Global Ministers, The United Methodist Church, 2005), 315-316, 334-335. George Creel, an advertising executive, led the Committee on Public Information during the First World War. Commonly referred to as the "Creel Committee," it was responsible for promoting and publicizing war efforts like Liberty Bond drives at home and abroad.
[75] Missionary Centenary, 1819-1919, World Survey: A Program of Spiritual Strategy and Preparedness (Nashville, Tn: Missionary Centenary Commission, 1919), 82.
[76] "The American Indian on the Fields of France," The Missionary Voice 9 (May 1919): 134.

The result of this campaign for the Indian Mission was the Folsom Training School in Smithville, Oklahoma.[77] Named after the nineteenth century Choctaw minister Willis Folsom, the school was located in southeast Oklahoma deep within the old Choctaw Nation.[78] The Board of Missions pledged $150,000 for the school's operation and church officials bragged about Folsom's potential as its property values topped more than $200,000.[79] "It is a light on the mountain top which sweeps the valleys below and radiates through every point of the compass far out over this neglected country," wrote one school official.[80]

The rhetoric surrounding the need for an Indian school and the reasoning as to why the National Church was involved in the first place concerned its focus on Indian communities. "It has been evident for some time that a native leadership must be developed and trained if we were to render the largest service," William B. Hubbell, the school's superintendent for most of its existence, told the Board. "The Fulsom School will help in a large

[77] Seventy-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 44-45; "Quarterly Bulletin, Fulsom Training School, June 1924," Fulsom Training School Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

[78] Records show that the National Church and local officials spelled the school's name as "Fulsom," "Folsom," and "Fulsome" with little consistency. The school's own publications often refer to it as "Fulsom." See "August 19, 1919," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 09: August 19, 1919-April 29, 1922, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

[79] "August 19, 1919," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 09: August 19, 1919-April 29, 1922, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ; "Fulsom Training School," Fulsom Training School Collection, OHS, OKC, OK; Missionary Yearbook: Eighty-First Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1927), 319-320.

[80] William B. Hubbell, "Fulsom Training School" The Missionary Voice 15 (September 1925): 10.

way to meet this need."[81] A few years later, he wrote that "[t]he purpose of the Fulsom Training School is to seek out promising Indian boys and girls and train them for leadership among their people. For this reason a very careful selection is made."[82] The Board of Missions agreed with these statements, saying that "we regard Fulsom Training School as a very valuable and necessary means for the training of adequate leadership among our Indian people."[83] The superintendent of the Indian Mission was "promised" support by the Board's secretaries and "special help in carrying out a program worthwhile" of training Indian ministers.[84]

But from the beginning, Southern Methodist officials were conflicted in their initial purpose for Folsom and expectations for the student body. Though founded by Southern Methodists with an emphasis on Indian education, the school almost immediately became more inclusive. "It belongs to no conference but to the whole church," the Fulsom Training School newsletter announced. "It is nonsectarian. It is serving the whole territory in which it works regardless of political or religious affiliations. It is built for Indians and Whites on equal basis."[85]

The inclusion of poor whites from the mountainous region in southeast Oklahoma and McCurtain County into Folsom's student body seemed to

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[81] A.J. Weeks, ed. Seventy Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1923), 35.
[82] William B. Hubbell, "Indians and Fulsom" The Missionary Voice, 16 (January 1926): 10.
[83] "January 14, 1926," Minutes of the Executive Committee Meetings File 03: October 9, 1924-April 26, 1926, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[84] "Report to the Indian Mission, Reports, Box 1, William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[85] "Fulsom Training School," Fulsom Training School Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

contradict the initial impetus that the Board of Missions laid out for improving its Indian work. However, school officials thought this would serve the best interests of its Indian students. Hubbell noted in his report to the Board of Missions that the "ideal of the institution is to have an equal number of whites and Indians, each one having every privilege that the other enjoys."[86] "[T]he future of the Indian is bound up with the future of the white man," Bishop Mouzon said in justifying the integrated student body at Folsom.[87] The plans for the mixed school reinforced ideas of assimilation that favored white culture. Much like earlier boarding schools, Folsom would have a curriculum strong in basic education like English along with teaching the fundamentals of Christian training. Including whites would only be one more way of further distancing Indian students from their native communities. It was also unclear what Indian "privileges" white students would enjoy in the tradeoff.

School officials like Hubbell were quick to promote the dual educational format as beneficial to whites and Indians and that the two groups were "close competitors in scholarship and in Christian culture." Folsom's white students "have a broader experience with the ability and merits of another race which tends to broaden their sympathies, increase their tolerance, reduce their prejudice, and give them a better preparation for life." Similarly, Indians "learn that whites are their friends and have many interests in them that are much

[86] Missionary Yearbook: Eighty-Second Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1928), 405.
[87] Gilbert T. Rowe and Curtis B. Haley, eds., Journal of the Nineteenth General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1922), 487-490.

deeper and broader than those practiced by many of whites who dealt with them in the earlier days."[88]

And, as the school made pains to show, Indian students themselves allegedly saw the benefits, too, of an educational environment that placed Indians side-by-side with whites. Johnson Bobb, a Choctaw student, wrote that Indians at government-run boarding schools "go back to the blanket, for instance among some of the western tribes. There is only one way to educate them to be loyal citizens and that is with the Whites."[89] Alice James, another native student, wrote in a piece titled "Why Fulsom is a Good Place for Indian Students" that "Fulsom does not show a distinction between the two races, there is perfect harmony between students, and they enjoy their work together."[90]

Johnson Bobb was a public symbol of both the success that Folsom brought to native communities and the impact that natives themselves could have on the school. The school described Bobb in its newsletter as "a Choctaw of rare gifts." "He is a Methodist preacher," the newsletter continued, "a good interpreter, a good soloist, a bright student, has a cheerful even temperament, is of fine Christian character, is thoroughly dependable, and is loved by all who know him."[91] Bobb came to the school in 1919 to start 9th grade at the age of 27, considerably older than most of the students at

[88] "Fulsom Training School," Fulsom Training School Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[89] "Quarterly Bulletin, Fulsom Training School, June 1924," Fulsom Training School Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[90] "Quarterly Bulletin, Fulsom Training School, June 1924," Fulsom Training School Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[91] "Fulsom Training School," Fulsom Training School Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.

Folsom at the time.[92] He was a student for his first three years at Folsom, served as Indian sponsor in his third and fourth year, and also became a faculty member during his fourth year.[93] Additionally, Bobb was the only Indian representative on the school's advisory board.[94] He left the school in 1925 after receiving an appointment from the Indian Mission to serve as preacher at its Broken Bow church in Choctaw country, though Folsom officials remained close to his work.[95]

In its operation of Folsom as a mixed school, Southern Methodist leaders were in essence trying to appeal to two distinct groups for support of the school. This became more apparent in how school officials framed Folsom's impact as equally beneficial to the surrounding white communities as its intended Indian targets. Its newsletter referred to statements from the attorney for McCurtain County, L.E. Mifflin, who said that since the school opened "the moonshiners and bootleggers have practically left the territory and Smithville is one of the quietest and best governed little towns in our country today."[96] Hubbell reflected Mifflin's comments when he told the Board of Missions that "[l]ocal Folsom enthusiasts enumerate with pride that nineteen stills have moved away since the coming of Folsom."[97] Furthermore, other non-Southern Methodist school leaders noticed the success that Folsom had. As Folsom officials pointed out, an unnamed Dean

[92] "Ledger Book, 1919-1920," Folsom Training School Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[93] "Folsom Forum, October 1, 1925," Fulsom Training School Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[94] "Quarterly Bulletin, Fulsom Training School, June 1924," Fulsom Training School Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[95] "Folsom Forum, October 1, 1925," Fulsom Training School Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[96] "Fulsom Training School," Fulsom Training School Collection, OHS, OKC, OK.
[97] Missionary Yearbook: Eighty-Second Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 404-405.

of Education from a local state university wished that his own children had the opportunity to attend Folsom Training School.[98]

The pride that Hubbell and his fellow church officials took in the inclusion of white students and its integrated educational curriculum seemingly contradicted many of the reasons for the founding of Folsom Training School in the first place, and it was a contradiction not missed by the native members of the Indian Mission. The school could, and did, promote its success among white communities, but officials also acknowledged that it struggled with attracting Indians to Folsom (though "failure" was a more apt description). By 1926, Hubbell admitted that white students outnumbered Indian students by a ratio of three-to-one.[99] Considering how much the Board of Missions and other church officials relied upon Indian communities for the founding and support of Folsom Training School, their measured response and secondary position in the school's makeup was troublesome.

Some Indian reticence toward the school was evident from very beginning, which underscored how church officials ignored Indian input during Folsom's planning stages and proceeded with their own ideas. "I am quite sure that if we are to succeed with this school," Bishop Mouzon wrote to the Goddard at the Board of Missions, "we must do something to interest the Indians."[100] The problem, however, was that little was done to actually attract

[98] "Folsom Training School," Typescripts by Thelma J. Reynolds, Box 62, Works Project Administration Historic Sites and Federal Writers' Project Collection, WHC, OU.
[99] Hubbell, "Indians and Fulsom," 10-11.
[100] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to O.E. Goddard, September 28, 1920," Box 260 - CA1913-CA1937, Correspondence and Reports, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

Indian support. In fact, their exclusion from the school's Advisory Committee led to their lack of enthusiasm, Mouzon believed, as well as Indians taking the initiative and electing their own representative without the approval of the committee or the presiding bishop.[101]

More importantly, National Church officials were willing to exploit Indian wealth and landholdings in order to promote a school that came to cater primarily to whites. The land used for the school was owned by full-bloods and was non-taxable and "inalienable," as the Board of Missions mentioned, which meant that the Board was able to make use of the peculiar legal standing of Indians in Oklahoma for its own economic advantage.[102] When an internal Board of Missions committee recommended raising a $500,000 endowment for Folsom in 1924 from among the region's Indian population, the larger Board concurred with the suggestion and stated that the endowment was "to be made among the Indians."[103]

That Indians were expected to pay for the school, even as the number of white students grew, was a constant theme, particularly once national funds began to dry up in the mid-1920s. The National Church's Centenary Campaign resulted in an exuberance of appropriations during the school's

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[101] "Letter from Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon to O.E. Goddard, September 28, 1920," Box 260 - CA1913-CA1937, Correspondence and Reports, Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon Papers, Bridwell Library, SMU, Dallas, Texas.

[102] Seventy-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 46.

[103] Quote from "May 9, 1924," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 10: May 20, 1922-April 27-29, 1926, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ; A.J. Weeks, ed. Seventy-Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1924), 31.

early years, but by the middle of decade, these appropriations declined as general funding for the Church returned to its pre-Campaign levels.[104] During this period, Indian congregations were the scapegoat for many of Folsom's funding problems. Writing to the superintendent of the mission in 1926, Hubbell chastised Indian members for not "helping to take care of themselves" at the school. "If the Indians were unable to take care of themselves somewhat," he believed, "I would feel a little differently about it."[105] Hubbell echoed these remarks in The Indian Methodist, the Indian Mission's official newspaper. Whites did their part and funded Folsom, he claimed, while Indian churches were "doing little along these lines." "[T]he time has come when the Indians in Oklahoma if they love the Methodist church should begin to do what they can themselves," he wrote.[106] Hubbell ranted against Indian apathy toward the school to National Church officials as well. To the Board of Missions, Hubbell reported that Folsom had been "thwarted many times in its efforts… [The school] certainly is not satisfied with the response which the Indian gives to the efforts of the institution."[107]

Officials within the Indian Mission noticed this disparity in enrollment and the fact that Indians were being overlooked while they criticized the school's efforts. In a report to the Board of Missions, the Indian Mission's superintendent, William Witt, complained that the school reached only a

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[104] Sledge, "Five Dollars and Myself," 430.
[105] "Letter from W.B. Hubbell to W.U. Witt, June 16, 1926," W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[106] The Indian Methodist, March 1, 1927.
[107] Missionary Yearbook: Eighty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1929), 405.

limited number of Indians.[108] In later reports, Witt blamed the cost of attending the school as the primary reason more Indian students did not attend, a point lost on those officials who continued to press Indian congregations for financial support.[109] J.J. Methvin was equally as critical as Witt when he complained about the larger number of white students at the school than Indian students. Because he believed that Folsom was in the best position of all the Methodist schools in Oklahoma to help the Indian Mission and its membership, Methvin admonished church officials to do more to attract Indian students.[110]

The financial difficulties of the Great Depression in addition to administrative problems surrounding its operations put an end to Folsom Training School in 1933. Hubbell resigned the year before due to conflicts with the Board of Missions, and the Board had hoped to replace him with someone "who will give more attention to the Indians and make the School more serviceable to them."[111] Meanwhile, officials tried two plans to keep the school afloat. One suggestion included appeals to federal authorities to take Indian students from government schools and send them to Folsom, thus

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[108] Missionary Yearbook: Eighty-Second Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 401.
[109] Missionary Yearbook: Eighty-Fifth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1931), 392.
[110] Missionary Yearbook: Eighty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1930), 427.
[111] "Letter from J.W. Perry to W.U. Witt, May 14, 1932," Correspondence, Box 1, William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

underwriting their budget with federal funds.[112] This plan, some argued, had the support of Choctaw Chief Ben Dwight, who had also showed his support by promising to send Choctaw students (at $125 a head) to a school closer to their home. [113] The second option was to appeal to the Oklahoma Conference[114] for assistance, particularly since Folsom had become an all-white institution by 1932. [115] The Board and the Oklahoma Conference initially agreed to a deal that stated that that the management of the school "shall be wholly in the hands of the Board of Managers of the Oklahoma Annual Conference."[116] Under this potential arrangement, Folsom would, in essence, officially move from a mission project for Indians to a conference-controlled school focused on whites. When the Board refused to bow to the conference's request in early 1933 to increase its annual appropriation, the school closed for good.[117]

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[112] "Letter from J.W. Perry to W.U. Witt, May 20, 1932," Correspondence, Box 1, William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[113] "Letter from R.S. Satterfield to W.G. Cram, July 25, 1932," Correspondence, Box 1, William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ; "Letter from J.W. Perry to W.U. Witt, July 29, 1932," Correspondence, Box 1, William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[114] In 1930, the East Oklahoma Conference merged with the West Oklahoma Conference to form the Oklahoma Conference.
[115] Missionary Yearbook: Ninetieth Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1936), 313.
[116] Quote from "Lease Contract," Fulsome Training School, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ; "September 8, 1932," Minutes of the Executive Committee Meetings File 07: September 8, 1932-February 22, 1934, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ; "Lease Contract," Fulsome Training School, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[117] "February 3, 1932," Minutes of the Executive Committee Meetings File 07: September 8, 1932-February 22, 1934, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

Even so, members of the Indian Mission pressed the Board to reopen the school and maintain it solely for the benefit of Indians. The mission's 1933 annual meeting lamented that while other denominations continued educational programs aimed at Indians, the National Church "has withdrawn from this field of effort and left us with nothing but our Christian Education program in the local church, to meet this our greatest problem." Mission officials asked the Board to make Folsom into an Indian-only boarding school because underprivileged white students in southwest Oklahoma had public high schools in every part of that district that they could attend while Indians did not.[118]

The Indian Mission asked again in 1938 that Board reopen Folsom as an Indian boarding school in order to meet the mission's need for an educated pastorate. Once again, the Board rejected the mission's request. "While deeply sympathetic with the need for making provision for a better trained leadership for the Indians," the Board responded, "the lack of finances and inaccessibility of location, make it impossible to reopen the school."[119] With the Board eliminating any future hope that it might operate Folsom again, members of the Indian Mission could only reflect on another missed

[118] The Indian Mission of Oklahoma, Minutes, 16th Annual Session, 1933-1934, Sept 21-24,1933, New Town, Oklahoma, 23.
[119] "April 22, 1938," Minutes of Annual Meetings and Executive Committee Meetings File 16: May 4, 1937-Janauary 31 1939, Methodist Episcopal Church, South Mission Administrative Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

opportunity. "Folsom," Witt bluntly told the Board in 1937, "was never operated to meet our needs."[120]

The Folsom Training School was an attempt by Southern Methodist officials to create a generation of properly trained Indian ministers for the Indian Missions, though their shift in focus toward white students undercut their intentions. Indian congregations recognized their lack of autonomy with the school even though they were expected to support it financially and, as a result, they reacted with a large amount of indifference. In other cases, however, Indian members worked through the system of the Southern Methodist Church to assert their own needs. This could happen by organizing groups and congregations on an Indian-only basis or by pushing the mission into territory typically controlled by other denominations. These actions showed that Indians could express their autonomy within the mission, and that they would promote Christianity in ways that appealed to Indian communities regardless of the consideration of the larger mainstream Southern Methodist society in Oklahoma.

One smaller example of this need for creating Indian-only organizations within the Southern Methodist Church, especially at a time when the National Church was more concerned with assimilating them into the mainstream church society, occurred in the late-1920s. For many years, Indian women had been cut off from the Women's Missionary Society in the East Oklahoma Conference and West Oklahoma Conference due to several

[120] Missionary Yearbook: Ninety-First Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1937), 326.

reasons, which, according to a report at the 1929 Indian Mission's annual meeting, included "[t]hat they speak little English, rendering attendance upon the annual Missionary Conference of no practical value, rather an embarrasment [sic]."[121] Since they were excluded from the white-dominated missionary societies in the rest of Oklahoma, native women within the mission worked for their own missionary society that would "give them an autonomous organization with proper relation to the Council in order easily to develop Women's Work among the Indian Women."[122] In this case, Indian women went through the proper channels to found an organization that resembled mainstream Southern Methodist society in form, though the focus was clearly on a non-mainstream Southern Methodist community. Eventually, the larger Indian Mission agreed with these organizers and recommended to the National Church that the mission needed its own Women's Missionary Society.

More prominent examples of Indian ministers and congregations asserting their own autonomy in Oklahoma, especially in ways that combined native needs with mainstream church organization, occurred in the western half of the state among the mission's Kiowa and Comanche churches. The Plains Indians work had always represented the smallest minority of Indian efforts for the National Church and the Oklahoma conferences. Unlike missions among the Five Tribes, which extended back to the early-nineteenth

[121] The Indian Mission of Oklahoma, Minutes, 12th Annual Session, 1929-1930, Sept 13-15, 1929.
[122] The Indian Mission of Oklahoma, Minutes, 12th Annual Session, 1929-1930, Sept 13-15, 1929.

century, work with the Plains Indians began in 1887 with J.J. Methvin near Anadarko, and was conducted initially on a group of Indians only recently relocated to a reservation and brought under the federal government's assimilationist agenda. Other elements differentiated this work from the rest of the Indian Mission as well, including its lack of written languages, different cultural practices and less acculturation to white society, and a smaller population dispersed throughout the southwest portion of the state. These various factors had resulted over the years in Plains Indians efforts occupying a place almost secondary to the rest of the Indian Mission.[123]

By the 1920s and 1930s, the class of native ministers working among the Plains Indians created new church traditions that embraced elements of Indian cultures. One prominent element of Kiowa churches specifically was the use of Kiowa hymns. Superintendent Witt later described the importance of Indian singing in practical terms that underscored the economic status of native congregations. "[I]n altar calls and altar services, they do not have to bother about a pianist or hymnbook," Witt wrote, gently overlooking the fact that pianos were expensive and that hymnbooks were printed in English. "[T]hey just sing the old songs they all seem to know and which were born in their hearts."[124] John Tsatoke, a third-generation Kiowa Methodist, saw deeper connotations to Kiowa hymns. The songs were "inspired by our Great

[123] Native leaders that did emerge in the Indian Mission during this time, like Johnson Tiger or Johnson Bobb, were more likely to come from the Five Tribes than the Plains Indians. Their secondary position was also shown by the creation of districts. The Creek and Choctaw always had their own districts, while Plains Indians work wavered between having their own district to being included as a smaller unit in other Indian work.

[124] "Evangelism in the Indian Mission," Printed Matter – Magazines and Newspapers, William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

Father, God," he said, "who inspired some of our elder Indian people."[125] For Tsatoke, songs allowed connections to an older generation of Kiowa and their traditions while also infusing these traditions with Christianity for a younger generation.

In the 1930s, Kiowa ministers led quarterly signing conventions that allowed Kiowa congregations to come together within yet another church-sponsored gathering that promoted elements of their culture.[126] Linn Pauahty, a young Kiowa Southern Methodist minister and later holder of two Kiowa medicine bundles, initially organized the events held on Sundays after regular church services.[127] These meetings became inter-congregational gatherings that brought communities together across generational lines in ways that combined Christianity with traditional elements. "Each church is represented and they sing in groups, and solos, and trios, and quartets, and often the whole congregation join together in a great volume of music," Andres Martinez reported to the Indian Mission. "One of the gracious blessings of these conventions is the conserving of the interest of the young people as well as the more mature."[128] Methvin, by now nearly ninety years of age, was especially impressed in these services and the direction shown by the Indians themselves. "It was wonderful to hear them sing," Methvin wrote in his journal after one service. "Belo Cozad represented the old times

[125] "Interview with Rev. Cecil Horse," Oral History Program, OHS, OKC, OK.
[126] The Indian Mission of Oklahoma, Minutes, 17th Annual Session, 1934-1935, Oct 5-7, 1934 at Middle Sans Bois Church near Quiton, OK.
[127] Maurice Boyd, Kiowa Voices: Myths, Legends and Folktales Volume II (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1983), xxvii, 102-104.
[128] The Indian Mission of Oklahoma, Minutes, 17th Annual Session, 1934-1935, Oct 5-7, 1934 at Middle Sans Bois Church near Quiton, OK.

by some music on an old time Indian flute."[129] Methvin was particularly excited by the potential to reach younger Kiowa through singing conventions, which came to be held outside of Southern Methodist churches and in places like the federal government's Riverside School. "It was a real religious service in song," he wrote after the Cedar Creek youth put on their own convention.[130]

For National Church officials and mission leaders, one of the more frustrating examples of Indian autonomy were problems between Southern Methodist Indian congregations in southwest Oklahoma and neighboring denominations working among the Kiowa and Comanche. Efforts by Indians themselves to expand the mission frustrated Southern Methodist church leaders who, over the years, experienced increasing tensions with other Protestant denominations. Individual Indians cared little for these "restrictions" and, instead, followed whatever path promised the best for themselves and their communities. This put the National Church on the defensive with other Christian groups, who condemned the Southern Methodist Church for both its poaching from other denominations and its perceived poor performance in the state.

Southern Methodist work among the Comanche struggled for several years after Methvin's arrival at the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency in 1887. Methvin used the agency headquarters at Anadarko as his base of operations

[129] "Methvin, Hotch-Potch by Rev. J.J. Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.
[130] "Methvin, Hotch-Potch by Rev. J.J. Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.

and spent much of his time reaching out to the Kiowa who camped nearby. In contrast, most of the Comanche camps were to the south near Fort Sill, and though both the old Indian Mission Conference and Methvin sent workers to the area, Comanche congregations were small. Further complicating Southern Methodist work was the prevalence of peyotism among the Comanche and the influence of leaders like Quanah Parker who were skeptical of the denomination's efforts. It was not until after the allotment period in the early-twentieth century that Christianity took hold among the Comanche, though divisions between Christians and peyotists remained in the tribe. By the 1930s, the main peyote users were the older generation of Comanche, while younger Comanche turned to Christianity and the various denominations that had worked in the area for decades.[131]

This new generation of Comanche within the Indian Mission included Norton Tahquechi. Tahquechi was born in 1894, attended Carlisle Industrial School in his youth, and served in the First World War. Eventually, he was as a translator for ethnographers like E. Adamson Hoebel who came to study the Comanche in the 1930s, as well as being a member of the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Business Committee.[132] Much like Guy Quoetone's experience among the Kiowa, Tahquechi had embraced elements of Southern Methodism, became an influential individual within the tribe as it maneuvered

[131] Morris W. Foster, Being Comanche: A Social History of an American Indian Community (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1991), 119-123.
[132] William C. Meadows, The Comanche Codetallkers of World War II (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 247 f33; Thomas W. Kavanagh, ed., Comanche Ethnography: Field Notes of E. Adamson Hoebel, Waldo R. Wedel, Gustav G. Carlson, and Robert H. Lowie (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 14-15.

through the federal government's agenda in the post-allotment period, while still maintaining ties to the traditional life and customs of his tribe.

By the 1930s, the Indian Mission was embroiled in a series of conflicts as to its historical place among the Comanche, which arose partially out of Tahquechi's work. Initial Southern Methodist work near Fletcher, Oklahoma faded during the post-allotment period when funds dried up and the small congregation found its land under threat from white homesteaders. Shortly thereafter, according to Methvin, the Reformed Church moved into the area and began work among the Comanche.[133] In the 1920s, a young Comanche, Alfred Wells, claimed to be a member of the Methodist Church and tried to start a new church, though his support for peyote meant that few white missionaries were willing to grant him any authority.[134] Even so, within a few years, a Comanche congregation at the Little Washita Church grew and Indian Mission leaders were optimistic. "Since the work has been renewed and seems to be in a promising condition," Methvin wrote to Superintendent Witt, "…we would commit a grievous sin to abandon that work now."[135]

At the same time that the Little Washita congregation encroached upon the Reformed Church's work near Fletcher, Tahquechi's efforts around Mt. Scott were also complicating the mission's relations with other denominations. Tahquechi recently received his license to preach, and though not given an

[133] "Letter from J.J. Methvin to W.U. Witt, April 25, 1931," Correspondence, William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[134] "Fletcher Indian Mission," Early Churches, Missions, and Schools – F, Box 13, Works Project Administration Historic Sites and Federal Writers' Project Collection, WHC, OU, Norman, OK.
[135] "Letter from J.J. Methvin to W.U. Witt, April 25, 1931," Correspondence, William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

assignment, “he had the Pauline passion for souls and was not long in making an appointment for himself.”[136] However, according to Witt, a “gentlemans agreement [sic]” existed between the Indian Mission and other denominations around Mt. Scott, which was the reason why he rejected any calls for a Southern Methodist church in the area despite Tahquechi’s enthusiasm.[137] Undeterred, a group of Comanche led by Tahquechi built a “temporary tabernacle” and drafted their own petition for a congregation, signed by forty-two individuals, to send to Witt.[138] Even Andres Martinez, who was in charge of the Kiowa-Comanche work for the Indian Mission at the time, was “surprised” at “how much interest those Indians are taking to have a Methodist Minister to preach for them especially of their own tribe.”[139]

Witt initially rejected the petition and asked Tahquechi to stop because the Indian Mission “had plenty of trouble in the past” from encroaching on other denominations’ territory.[140] The trouble created by Tahquechi’s work and the Comanche congregation’s desire for their own church eventually reached officials outside of the Indian Mission. One official from another denomination, R.C. Adams, admitted to Witt that Tahquechi’s “work has caused a rather tense situation in a field which has been considered as

[136] “Indian Mission News” The World Outlook 23 (January 1933): 37.
[137] “Letter from W.U. Witt, n.d.,” Correspondence, 1930-1936, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[138] “Letter to the Supt of Indian Mission W.U. Witt, November 9, 1931,” Correspondence, 1930-1936, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[139] “Letter from Andres Martinez to W.U. Witt, November 10, 1931, Correspondence, 1930-1936, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[140] “Letter from W.U. Witt, n.d.,” Correspondence, 1930-1936, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

belonging to the Reformed Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church."[141]

White officials from the various denominations involved in the area wanted to solve these problems without Indian input. The Home Missions Council, an organization comprised of several denominations, held a meeting in Washington D.C. in which, according J.W. Perry, the Home Secretary of the Board of Missions for the Southern Methodist Church who attended the meeting, the council decided to give the Kiowa to the Southern Methodists in exchange for the Southern Methodists leaving the Comanche field. The Council then called for another meeting in Lawton to work "out some agreement by which we might avoid any over-lapping or conflict among the churches working among the Indians."[142] Writing Witt in regards to the Lawton meeting on behalf of the Council, H.F. Gilbert said "I am asked to invite local white missionaries… No Indians are invited whatever their official standing. This must be strictly white missionaries, directors and secretaries…The presence of others besides those specified above would embarrass the discussions."[143] Methvin was unimpressed with what he heard at the Lawton meeting, which organizers decided should be held in a local funeral home. "The meeting was a fissle [sic]," Methvin wrote in his journal.

[141] "Letter from R.C. Adams to W.U. Witt, Nov 19, 1931," Correspondence, William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[142] "Letter from J.W. Perry to W.U. Witt, Dec 11, 1930," Correspondence, 1930-1936, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[143] "Letter from H.F. Gilbert to W.U. Witt, March 26, 1931," Correspondence, 1930-1936, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

"To follow the plan of some of the missionaries of the different churches in this Indian work will lead you to a funeral home indeed."[144]

Regardless of any decisions made by white officials, Norton Tahquechi and the Comanche congregation around Mt. Scott succeeding in creating their own church. This "miracle church," as Witt called it, had organized without official help, built their own building from discarded material from Fort Sill, and petitioned the Indian Mission and Southern Methodist Church all on their own.[145] This was not the only example from the area of Indians acting to expand the church in ways that flustered white officials. Similar events involving the Kiowa and ministerial recruitment also created conflicts between the Southern Methodist Church and other denominations.

One reason for these problems was that other denominations feared the degree of autonomy that Indian ministers had in the Indian Mission. Over the years, mission officials and National Church leaders mixed a large amount of pressure to conform to mainstream standards with a healthy dose of indifference toward their Indian ministers. Shunting them to the side and creating their own mission was one way of recognizing the importance of the work while not causing too many conflicts with Oklahoma's white communities.

But this move also enabled Indian ministers to take the lead in their mission, which not all other denominations favored. Prominent Christian reformers from other Protestant churches had advocated a policy of

[144] "Methvin, Methvin's Daily Journal," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[145] "Our Specials," The World Outlook 24 (March 1934): 100.

assimilation dominated by a white leadership, even after Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier and the rest of the Bureau began promoting cultural pluralism after 1933. Old-line missionaries and prominent reformers, such as G.E.E. Lindquist, feared that Collier's agenda would reverse their decades of working toward assimilation. Lindquist, working through the Home Missions Council of the Federal Council of Churches, represented the feelings of many mainline Protestant missionaries who continually opposed Collier's work. For individuals like Lindquist, missions remained a vital tool in promoting assimilation and they worked best when they were directed by whites who protected against any undue native influence.[146]

Viewed in this light, the Southern Methodist Church's reliance upon Indian workers was fairly progressive though certainly that was not their intention. The National Church's motivation for the Indian Mission was a strange mix of responsibility for decades of work coupled with a growing indifference for the actual continuation of that work. However, the resulting action did return authority and autonomy to Indian congregations and ministers. By being left alone or with only minor interference, Indian congregations could develop along their own path at their own speed. This left the Southern Methodist Church and the Indian Mission open to criticism that they were putting too much of their work into the hands of Indians, who, according to the standards of mainline Protestants, were not adequate ministers. Lindquist, who spent much of the mid-twentieth century studying

[146] David W. Daily, Battle for the BIA: G.E.E. Lindquist and the Missionary Crusade against John Collier (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2004), 3-6.

Indians for various national organizations, complained that Southern Methodists were using "an untrained leadership, poorly paid and undermanned" in their mission. "[I]t is recommended that efforts be made towards encouraging the attendance and participation of whites [in the Indian Mission], without in any way weakening the Sprit de corps of the Indian group," Lindquist argued. "It is believed that the work as a whole would profit from the infiltration of new blood and a 'mixed' membership."[147] Closer to the mission field than Lindquist, Perry Jackson, a Baptist missionary to the Kiowa at Saddle Mountain Baptist Church, complained that his work suffered because the Southern Methodists "expand their work by using many young Indian men as local ministers." Jackson told other Baptist officials that he would "give them some of their own medicine" by using young men "who are not capable enough to be ordained." Jackson defended his plan of using untrained Indian ministers in order "to keep up and get ahead of the Methodists."[148]

National organizations and their leaders continued their bitter back-and-forth because Indians at the local level directed some of the missionary activity in the Indian Mission. But as the cases of Albert and Cecil Horse demonstrated, Indian ministers and congregations saw this debate in very different terms than white missionaries and organizations. For Baptist and Southern Methodist officials, these brothers were part of the larger issue of

[147] "Mr. Lindquist's Secret Report to the National Council of Home Missions," Reports, William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[148] "Letter from Perry Jackson to Bruce Kinney, March 2, 1931," Correspondence, 1930-1936, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

encroachment and “over-lapping” by missionaries, and the two denominations traded their share of barbs over who could “claim” them as members. For those groups, the men were part of a larger turf war between rival denominations. But for the Horse brothers, the issue was much simpler. Their religious affiliations over the years had been tied to family issues, and their decision to join the Indian Mission was based on what they thought was best for them.

Albert and Cecil Horse had a long connection to the Southern Methodist Church’s work among the Kiowa, though that was not their only exposure to Christianity. Their father, Hunting Horse, joined the Southern Methodist Church in 1900 and became friends with Methvin, who also convinced the elder Kiowa to send his two sons to the Methvin Institute in Anadarko. Hunting Horse was a prominent support of peyote until finally abandoning the practice in the late-1930s. His children, in the meantime, remained connected to the Southern Methodist and Baptist communities, even as they practiced peyote use alongside their father. At various times, they attended Southern Methodist and Baptist schools and served as interpreters for various congregations. Eventually, Cecil and Albert accepted posts in the Indian Mission as ministers.[149]

In 1931, Albert left Saddle Mountain Baptist congregation and joined the Mount Scott Kiowa church in the Indian Mission. This individual event set off a series of accusations among various Baptist and Southern Methodist

[149] “Interview with Cecil Horse,” Vol 34, T-27, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU; “Interview with Cecil Horse,” Vol 34, T-30, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU; “Interview with Rev. Cecil Horse,” Oral History Program, OHS, OKC, OK.

officials from across the country. In a letter to Bruce Kinney, Director of Indian Missions for the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Saddle Mountain minister Perry Jackson railed against Albert and other Southern Methodists for their actions. "We all knew he was going after the money in it," Jackson wrote. "Albert always wanted to be paid for interpreting and was never satisfied to work for his Lord without pay."[150] Jackson was bitter because, according to him, this whole issue was over money. He said that the Southern Methodists were willing to bribe Kiowa Baptists away from their churches and work for the Indian Mission, and he framed Albert's actions as a byproduct of greed. Jackson believed that representatives of the Indian Missions had tried to bribe John Aunko and Sherman Chaddlesone, also members of the Saddle Mountain church, as well, but that only Albert had accepted their offer. "Johnny [Aunko] told me that he [Albert] often tried to get him to join in with him and stick or strike for pay refusing to interpret without pay…," Jackson told Kinney. As for Cecil and the rumors that Indian Mission officials were after him, too, Jackson's opinion was not much better. "He [Cecil] would wreck any church he had charge of and Albert knows it. But he wants Cecil to get the money too."[151]

Jackson's letter set off a flurry of angry responses between Baptist officials and their Southern Methodist counterparts that strained the facts of the situation with each step. "[W]e are also seemingly reliably informed that it

[150] "Letter from Perry Jackson to Bruce Kinney, March 2, 1931," Correspondence, 1930-1936, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[151] "Letter from Perry Jackson to Bruce Kinney, March 2, 1931," Correspondence, 1930-1936, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

is the deliberate formulated policy of your Church there to hire ten Baptist members to work for them in the hope of building up the Methodist membership at the expense of the Baptist cause," Kinney wrote to J.W. Perry at the Board of Missions for the Southern Methodist Church. "If this is to continue we shall be obliged to adopt some vigorous defense measures."[152] Andres Martinez, the Indian Mission's appointed minister for the Kiowa, thought that the rumor was "imagination" on the Baptists' part.[153] Perry's response to the situation was simple and revealing of the position Indians occupied in the Church. "[W]e had neither the money nor the disposition to do anything of the kind," Perry wrote to Superintendent Witt, who had been referred to as the person responsible for bribing Albert in Jackson's earlier letter.[154]

Comments among the white missionaries and National Church leaders showed the disconnect between their expectations for Indian missions and the desires of Indians themselves. Denominational rivalries were common place and various different church officials sought a policy that carved out territory for each denomination in order to avoid perceptions of overlapping. Several church leaders suggested coordinated plans that embraced a larger, Protestant-dominated mission, and their anger was with Southern Methodists

[152] "Letter from Bruce Kinney to J.W. Perry, Mar 7, 1931," William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[153] "Letter from Andres Martinez to W.U. Witt, March 23, 1931," Correspondence, 1930-1936, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[154] Letter from J.W. Perry to W.U. Witt, March 18, 1931," William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

for working in competition with other Protestant groups.[155] Lindquist was especially harsh toward Southern Methodist mission work and blamed them for most of the denominational fighting in Oklahoma. He accused them of "introducing the competitive element in the western church work, resulting in overlapping and duplication of effort. A glance at the church map of today compared to the one 1918 would seem to bear out this criticism."[156] Southern Methodists viewed comments like this from Lindquist as more attacks by elitists and outsiders. "Some of those Yankees just like to make trouble for Southern people. They are ready to believe any kind of story they hear about us, even though it is absolutely foolish," Perry wrote to Witt.[157]

Indians, who were at the center of these problems, were largely unconcerned with denominational rivalries. Jenny Horse, Cecil's wife, recalled that the Kiowa typically fellowshipped across denominational lines in the early-to-mid twentieth century, unlike whites who saw denominational boundaries as more firm.[158] Instead, Albert and Cecil's decisions to join the Indian Mission appeared to be motivated by community concerns and issues of autonomy, though there were some financial benefits. The strict denominational differences seen by whites in the region seemingly did not extend into Indian communities in the same way.

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[155] "The Proposed Indian Mission of Oklahoma and Bible Training School," Miscellaneous, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK; "Letter from Mark A. Dawber to W.U. Witt, n.d.," Indian Mission: 30-44, Oklahoma, BD. Of Missions: 40-60, Box 600 – Bishop A. Frank Smith, 1940-1964, Bishop A. Frank Smith Papers, Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.
[156] "Mr. Lindquist's Secret Report to the National Council of Home Missions," William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[157] Letter from J.W. Perry to W.U. Witt, March 18, 1931," William Umstead Witt Collection, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.
[158] "Interview with Cecil Horse," Vol 34, T-30, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU.

"[T]here was some surprise to me…," Albert wrote in response to the issue and the attention it had attracted, "…about my own free will and accord to join back to my own home church." Albert wanted to be clear that he based his decision to leave the Saddle Mountain Baptist Church and join the Mount Scott Kiowa Church on spiritual advice and not monetary gain. "I depended on God and Jesus for my leader," he said, "[l]ed by the spirit when I came back to my mother church last August." According to his comments to Superintendent Witt, Albert learned about Christianity through the Methvin Institute, which gave him his religious foundation, and he later attended the Baptist Church only "because I was near that church."[159]

Albert's comments framed his decision as a matter of family and community, with his re-joining the Indian Mission as a return to his Christian roots. No doubt this did play a role, but there were other factors that made the move to the Southern Methodist Church attractive for an aspiring Indian preacher. "[Y]ou Baptist have Bars against Indian's be License to Preach no matter how faithful[,] he can't be License to Preach," wrote one Kiowa Baptist named Lowensoh. "Methodists don't do that way[,] gives a man chance and therefore if others want Preach and heart alright, will be License[.]"[160] Cultivating Indian ministers had long been the hope of Southern Methodist efforts among the Indians and the Indian Mission was finally achieving that goal, though largely out of necessity for the field. They were developing a

[159] "Letter from Albert Horse to W.U. Witt, March 27, 1931," Correspondence, 1930-1936, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[160] "Letter from Lowensoh, April 13, 1931," Correspondence, 1930-1936, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.

"license first, train second" policy toward native minister. Still, individuals noticed that the Indian Mission provided opportunities that other denominations did not. "You Baptist ….bar our Indians," Lowensoh wrote, "and we can't Blame Methodists for helping them."[161]

Indeed, Cecil Horse's joining of the Indian Mission seemed directed by the opportunity it provided him as opposed to his limited options with the Baptist Church. As a young adult, Cecil had been active in peyote meetings alongside his father before eventually leaving the "idol worship" and turning to Christianity in 1926.[162] For several years, Cecil was an interpreter, along with his brother Albert, for the Saddle Mountain Baptist Church, though it was not until the death of his son in 1934 that Cecil decided to become a minister. "I began to think different on how I used to live in life and I began to work in the church work," Cecil recalled, "and then I asked to become ordained minister in the Methodist church or in the Baptist church."[163] While the Baptists promised him a license to preach after he first completed two years of training, Superintendent Witt offered Cecil the chance to get licensed immediately. Cecil did not want to wait the two years that the Baptists asked and ultimately accepted Witt's offer, which soon led to his first appointment at Cache Creek Church. In time, Cecil attended the University of Oklahoma for a few weeks at a time over the next three years to receive some pastoral

[161] "Letter from Lowensoh, April 13, 1931," Correspondence, 1930-1936, W.U. Witt Personal Papers, OCU, OKC, OK.
[162] "Interview with Cecil Horse," Vol 34, T-27, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU.
[163] "Interview with Cecil Horse," Vol 34, T-30, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU.

training, though he continued to preach multiple times a week at Cache Creek when not in school.[164]

After several requests, Mary Beth Littlejohn finally received an appointment in 1938 to Anadarko to work among the Indians as a Deaconess. The Deaconess program had developed in the early-twentieth century as an outlet for women workers and its adoption by the Southern Methodist Church was one of the more progressive steps that the church took in the era. As a result of her lobbying, Littlejohn became the first Deaconess sent specifically to work with the Indians near Anadarko. Though sent "without too much idea of what was expected," Superintendent Witt consulted with some of the workers in the field and decided upon using Littlejohn to help with the Indian Mission's Christian Education programs. In this task, Littlejohn helped local church teachers become acquainted with Southern Methodist literature and tools in order to become as effective as possible in reaching their students. The next few years of working closely with Indians, in which she taught them the educational principals laid out by church officials, gave her a unique perspective on the differences between white and Indian communities. "In our culture we stress the importance of working with children and youth," Littlejohn wrote when recalling her time spent with native congregations. "But Indians lay great stress on the value of age….We used to laugh at comments

[164] "Interview with Cecil Horse," Vol 34, T-30, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, WHC, OU.

concerning certain 'young preachers' – when we found these 'mere infants' were 45 and above."[165]

Littlejohn's comments on the "young preachers" in the Indian Mission showed the different expectations that National Church officials and Indian congregations had toward ministers. In the 1930s, the National Church clung to ideas of reaching youth in the Indian Mission through educational programs and schools in order to create a generation of native preachers. Doing so ensured that white officials maintained some control and oversight over Indian congregations while trying to push Indian ministers into the assimilated mainstream of church society. This had been the overall policy of the Church's Indian work for decades and the current approach of the new Indian Mission was yet another attempt at the old ideal. Other aspects of the Indian Mission during this time, such as its ministers being licensed by an outside conference and not by the Mission itself, reinforced the position of white oversight.

But no matter what their object had been, the organization of the Indian Mission was the initial step in giving Indian congregations more autonomy and authority over their churches. Programs designed by white officials like the Folsom Training School adhered to popular attitudes of Christian reformers in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. These operations were largely top-down projects in which white officials took Indian support for granted or, worse still, exploited it whenever possible. Yet

[165] "Concerning Woman's Work in the Indian Mission of Okla.," Historical – Oklahoma Indian Mission 1941-1960, Records of the National Division, Global Board of Ministries, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

they also recognized that differences existed between mainstream congregations in regular conferences and the churches in the Indian Mission. The demand for and Bishop Mouzon's creation of a separate course of study for Indian ministers confirmed this contradictory position of promoting assimilation by way of segregation.

While the National Church struggled for a coherent approach to the work, Indians themselves began pushing Christianity into their own communities in their own ways. The longstanding Southern Methodist position of utilizing native ministers coupled with a growing white indifference toward the actual work gave Indians room to construct their own space within a larger church society by the 1920s and 1930s. With more autonomy, Indian congregations created their own institutions and practices within a Christian and Southern Methodist context. As long as Christianity remained at the center of their activities, such as camp meetings held during revivals or quarterly singing conventions where entire congregations celebrated God in their native tongues, then church officials could condone the actions of Indian members and keep their interference to a minimum.

Conclusion

J.J. Methvin had been in failing health for some time before his death on January 17, 1941. His wife, Ida Mae, wrote to their sons living in Washington D.C. that the end had not been unusual, only that the ninety-four year-old former missionary had "collapsed" shortly before his passing. The presiding bishop for the West Oklahoma Conference, Bishop Charles C. Selecman, sent a telegram of condolence to the family, while Methvin's older sons, Glover and Marvin, helped with the funeral arrangements.[1]

In the years before his death, Methvin suffered from several personal and professional complications that came with his advancing age and the Great Depression. Never one with great means or financial opportunities, the economic turmoil of the 1930s left him dependent on others and, at times, living hand to mouth. One observer noted that Methvin's house "looked pinched from poverty within, everything being of the plainest and cheapest and much worn."[2] Glover lived nearby and regularly sent money to support his father, while in other situations, Andres Martinez bought meals for his friend. "I felt like it was an imposition but I had only one penny in my possession," Methvin wrote in his journal. "Bro. Martinez is too generous, but he enjoys it. Blessings on him."[3] Methvin became increasingly melancholy and contemplative about his life's work as time passed. "Could I but leave

[1] "Letter from Ida Mae Swanson Methvin, January 1941," Folder - Letter, Paul and Lee Methvin from J.J. Methvin, 1941, J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
[2] "Report of Dr. Hume," Box 9, Folder 1 – Interviews, Lida White Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[3] "Methvin, Hotch-Potch by Rev. J.J. Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.

some worthy record to be read by those to come after me, that would be an inspiration to them to an onward and outward and upward reach, I should die content," he wrote in 1933. "No higher honor could I, or do I, desire than just to be identified along with Jesus Christ as a friend and lover of my fellowman."[4]

Methvin outlived most of his generation of Southern Methodist ministers, and his death signaled the end of an era for Methodist Indian missions in Oklahoma. Gone were old friends like Milton A. Clark, who managed to secure a pension for Methvin five years after the National Church had forced him into retirement and forgotten about him, or Andele, whose death Methvin revealed would make him feel "lonesome."[5] These individuals had seen the changes that Oklahoma Indians experienced in the late-nineteenth century and into the early-twentieth century. They saw the Five Tribes struggle to maintain their tribal sovereignty even as the federal government and white population pressed upon them. They watched as the Plains Indians transitioned from a life on the Southern Plains to the enclosures of a reservation and the cultural assault of reformers and missionaries.

Now, the members of the Indian Mission were men and women who came of age in the years after Oklahoma statehood in 1907. These people were in a position to build upon the work of earlier generations and continue

[4] "Methvin, Hotch-Potch by Rev. J.J. Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.
[5] "Methvin, Hotch-Potch by Rev. J.J. Methvin," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.

to shape Christianity to fit the needs of Indian communities. But mainstream Methodism in the state was still dominated by white-interests, and they would not relinquish real power even though they would maintain their overall indifference to native needs.

Methvin's funeral in Anadarko brought together various church officials and members, though "Indian men and women constituted a considerable part of the congregation that filled the church."[6] His pallbearers were native ministers from the old Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Agency, including Cecil Horse, Ted Ware, Henry Ware, Matthew Botone, Oliver Woodard, and Charley Aphkone. "After the benediction, an aged Apache rose in the balcony," a local newspaper account reported. "'I want to say something,' he said. 'I owe everything to that good man. This isn't a time to grieve. He has gone home to God. He was like a father to me and my people."[7]

Events in the wake of Methvin's death were further proof of the limitations that mainstream, white-dominated Methodist churches in Oklahoma tried to place on the secondary, yet autonomous, Indian congregations. Much like they had for over a century with other missionaries, church officials used Methvin's life as a way to stress the one-way process of elevating Indians to Christianity and the altruistic commitment of whites in church society toward their native brethren. His obituary in the West Oklahoma Conference's 1941 annual journal said that Methvin "heeded the

[6] "Printed Materials, Clippings, 1941," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.
[7] "Printed Materials, Clippings, 1941," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.

call of the church to work in the old Indian Territory" and that "[t]his call became the challenge which sent him to his God for help in a way he had never gone before."[8] Writing in the Oklahoma Historical Society's The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Sidney Babcock, a fellow white Methodist minister, further developed Methvin's status as a humble ambassador of Christ. "Slowly but surely," Babcock wrote "the kindly heart, the quiet demeanor, the simple earnestness, the patient constant toil of this man of God in the interest of the Indians won his way into their hearts."[9] In time, Methvin's myth grew as church leaders elevated him from the "simple" and "kindly" man of Babcock's writing to "the prophet of the blanket Indians" in literature that the Church distributed nationwide.[10] Whites discussed Methvin's life in ways that emphasized the goals and ethnocentrism of their denomination while placing Indians in a marginalized context as a group of non-believers to be acted upon. They romanticized a bygone era while continually overlooking Indians still among them. The fact that Anadarko, the community that Methvin had lived and labored in for more than fifty years and that served as the headquarters for the old KCA Agency, no longer had a Methodist Indian church only underscored this attitude.

Methodist Indians in southwest Oklahoma, on the other hand, saw Methvin as an individual that empowered their own Christian experience. The

[8] Journal of the West Oklahoma Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, 1941, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.
[9] Sidney H. Babcock, "John Jasper Methvin, 1846-1941," The Chronicles of Oklahoma 19 (June 1941): 116.
[10] "The Romance of Indian Missions: Methodism Among American Indians," Indians, North American, Methodist Work Among, 1956-1969, Mission Geographical Reference Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

Indian Mission's obituary eulogized Methvin for his lifelong Christian service in the area while also showing the importance of Indian communities to Christianity in general. "Christ's kingdom may come increasingly throughout the length and breadth of our ever growing Indian mission," the obituary stated, clearly showing the independence of the Indian Mission that its members desired and the belief that Christianity and Indian culture were not irreconcilable.[11] Shortly afterward, Rev. Ted Ware, who credited Methvin with starting "me on the right way,"[12] organized a Kiowa congregation in Anadarko, even as white church officials believed that his efforts would fail. The group met in private homes, other churches, and a creamery, before eventually moving into their own building.[13] This had been a difficult process, as press reports stated, because the church and parsonage were "to be built on a pay-as-you-go basis."[14] But in 1945, the J.J. Methvin Memorial Methodist Church was officially organized. Today, its current building, constructed in twenty years later, sits across the street from the entrance to the county fairgrounds, where each August, Indians from all over the region meet for the week-long celebration of native culture at the American Indian Exposition. It is worth noting that one of the original organizers for the American Indian Exposition

[11] Indian Mission Conference Minutes, 1941, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.
[12] "Printed Materials, Clippings, 1941," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.
[13] Luke Eric Lassiter, Clyde Ellis, and Ralph Kotay, The Jesus Road: Kiowas, Christianity, and Indian Hymns, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 40.
[14] "Printed Materials, Clippings, 1941," J.J. Methvin Personal Papers, Oklahoma City University, OKC, OK.

was Guy Quoetone, the Methodist Kiowa minister and former pupil/employee of the Methvin Institute.[15]

Methvin's death and Ware's organization of a new Indian congregation in Anadarko came during an era of great change for American Methodism in general and, more specifically, of Methodist Indian communities in Oklahoma. After nearly a century of separation, the Northern Methodist Church and the Southern Methodist Church formally reunited in 1939 during a ceremony in Kansas City and created a new denomination called, simply enough, the Methodist Church.[16] Congregations that had been rivals for generations were now joined together in a new denomination that shared much for the same Wesleyan theology and Christian outlook. This unification had come only after decades of debate as leaders from both groups tried to reconcile lingering animosities and sectional strife. From an administrative perspective, it would take years for church-run organizations, like boards of missions and various overlapping conferences, to coordinate and combine their efforts effectively as their new church moved into its next phase.

Oklahoma's Methodist Indian communities saw their own dynamic change as a result of the merging of the two largest branches of Methodism. Southern Methodist efforts had dominated in the region ever since the creation of the Indian Mission Conference in 1844 and its subsequent

[15] Maurice Boyd, Kiowa Voices: Myths, Legends and Folktales Volume II (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1981), 290-292.
[16] Besides the two largest Methodist organizations, a third group that broke off from mainstream Methodism in the early-nineteenth century, the Methodist Protestant Church, also joined the new Methodist Church. The Methodist Church operated until 1968 when it joined with several smaller branches, most notably the Evangelical United Brethren Church, to form the United Methodist Church that exists today.

inclusion in the Methodist Episcopal Church South the following year. Northern efforts did not develop until after the 1889 Land Run, and for much of the early twentieth century, the two groups vied for prominence among the region's growing white population. For a brief period, Northern Methodists even operated their own Indian-centric conference, also named the Indian Mission Conference, in the territory, though their membership numbers never came close to matching the Southern Methodists. Indians from several northern tribes removed to Oklahoma brought with them their northern-leaning Methodist congregations, much like the Five Tribes had in the 1830s and 1840s with their southern counterparts. After reunification, these native churches, primarily among the Pawnee and the Ponca, joined with the Indian Mission and created even more diversity within an already eclectic organization. In 1941, the Creek District of the Indian Mission reported on its efforts to reach Indians within its boundaries, which now included Creek, Shawnee, Sac and Fox, Osage, Kaw, Seminole, Euchee, Ponca, and Pawnee.[17]

The early-1940s serves as the end point for this study largely because of the changing organizational structure of Oklahoma's Methodist Indian communities. With the idea of Indians asserting their own autonomy through church-created structures being a central component of this overall argument, the change in these structures, and the introduction of new groups into the dynamic, signals a natural end for this dissertation. For the next several

[17] Indian Mission Conference Minutes, 1941, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

decades, the Indian Mission continued its work while it pressed the National Church for better representation and more rights within the denomination. It was not until 1972 that the National Church finally elevated the status of its Indian work in Oklahoma to match the rest of its mainstream congregations when it created the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference.

Reunification in 1939, however, did not immediately end several of the issues that had plagued Southern Methodist Indian efforts for years. G.E.E. Lindquist and other reformers pressed on with their attacks against Methodists as being divisive to the overall missionization process and for giving too much authority to native ministers.[18] Racial tensions remained, as evident when a group of Euchee boys asked the presiding bishop to investigate allegations of discrimination at the white Sunday School they attended.[19] Financial concerns were still paramount for the Mission as Indian ministers received significantly less pay than their white counterparts in the Oklahoma conferences. Citing the fact that five Creek preachers were paid less than $60 a year, Superintendent William Witt feared for the future of the work when he wrote to the Board of Missions. "Of course they have to work and draw on their own resources to live…," Witt wrote. "It is evident that they

[18] "Letter from Don Klingensmith to Dr. Kohlstedt, Nov 29, 1941," Folder – Indian Mission: 30-44, Oklahoma, BD. Of Missions: 40-60, Box 600 – Bishop A. Frank Smith, 1940-1964, Bishop A. Frank Smith Papers, Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas; "Letter from Don H. LaGrone to W.U. Witt, April 1942," Folder – Indian Mission: 30-44, Oklahoma, BD. Of Missions: 40-60, Box 600 – Bishop A. Frank Smith, 1940-1964, Bishop A. Frank Smith Papers, Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas

[19] The Indian Mission of Oklahoma, Minutes, 21st Annual Session, 1938-1939, Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

cannot render efficient service with the scant support they receive."[20] "Our people for the most part are making great sacrifices to carry on," Witt reminded National Church officials in 1939 just months after reunification, "and under present conditions there is no great hope of material financial increases."[21]

Yet Indians continued to lead the Indian Mission in ways that best fit their needs and pursue the opportunities that their denomination provided even as white officials discouraged this behavior.[22] Robert Pinezaddleby, a descendent of Kiowa chief Stumbling Bear and a Methodist minister, had a chance to work for an oil company after World War II, but instead he "committed to this clergy work." Not content with his basic understanding of Christianity, he wanted to enroll in the seminary at Southern Methodist University for further education. Church and mission officials tried to dissuade Pinezaddleby and told him that "'you preachers don't need any trained person. Just get up there and use your Bible and preach.'" "[B]ut that wasn't enough for me…," he recalled, "so I told them 'I want to take that training.'"[23] Bishop W. Angie Smith, who replaced his brother A. Frank Smith in 1944 as presiding bishop over the Indian Mission, saw Pinezaddleby's push for seminary training as nothing but a ploy to get a higher salary. "'I'll be

[20] Missionary Yearbook: Ninety-Third Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, Tn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1939), 321.
[21] The Indian Mission of Oklahoma, Minutes, 22nd Annual Session, 1939-1940, Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
[22] "Letter from Don Klingensmith to Dr. Kohlstedt, Nov 29, 1941," Folder – Indian Mission: 30-44, Oklahoma, BD. Of Missions: 40-60, Box 600 – Bishop A. Frank Smith, 1940-1964, Bishop A. Frank Smith Papers, Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.
[23] "Interview with Rev. Robert Pinezaddleby," Oral History Program, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

watching you,'" he told Pinezaddleby when the young minister entered Perkins School of Theology at SMU in 1950.[24]

The experience of Oklahoma Indians in the Southern Methodist Church from the 1860s to the 1940s reveals the ways that native communities created their own religious space even as ethnocentric pressures of assimilation marginalized Indians in American society. This was not a one-sided process; it evolved from action and, in some cases, inaction by both sides. Whites envisioned missionary efforts as noble and their cause as good, but individuals in the field encountered daily struggles that left them doubtful of themselves and Indian communities. They longed to recreate a church society similar to what they experienced back home and stop being the "lonely picket in the field" facing down a vast swath of heathenism. The longer that took, the less enthralled with Indian missions they became. When the tipping point in population occurred in the 1890s and whites came to dominate membership in the Indian Mission Conference, local and national officials could formally push native communities to the side. The fact that Indians had embraced Christianity to some degree made this segregation easier for church officials to accept. They could be content in knowing that they had succeeded to some limited degree in their original intention of "uplifting" Indians through Christ, and they could justify their shift in focus (and funds) away from Indians to the larger community "that needed them more." It was, after all, for the good of the Church, they believed. As Indians receded

[24] "Interview with Rev. Robert Pinezaddleby," Oral History Program, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

from the public eye in the early-twentieth century, white congregations and church officials remained indifferent to Indian needs at best, and, at worst, took advantage of them just like the rest of Oklahoma.

But in this growing indifference, Indians found ways to assert themselves and claim Christianity for their own purposes. By taking advantage of church-sponsored structures, individuals could harness the prestige and authority of a denomination for their personal use or for the benefit of the tribe. This was as true in the 1870s, when white officials complained of Indians among the Five Tribes using their ministerial-training to become political officials and judges, as it was in the 1930s, when Plains Indians pushed the denomination into new regions and built their own churches despite objections of "overlapping" from high-minded white reformers. In embracing elements of Christianity, native congregations created a distance from white-dominated society for their own autonomy that whites were more than willing to allow. Christian Indians resembled whites in general appearance and that was the point of their decades of work; that these congregations actually reinforced native culture through language or communal gatherings was quickly overlooked. Christian Indians found a third alternative between complete acceptance and outright rejection of white society.

As is often the case, reality is murky and not pretty. There were, no doubt, individuals within the Southern Methodist Church who promoted the assimilationist agenda of the nineteenth century with great zeal and saw

Indian culture as evil. They were intolerant toward native communities as they moved from simple ethnocentrism toward full-blown racism, and these people were all too willing to ignore Indians to focus on whites. But there were also individuals who were committed to the concept of Christianity and believed that they were doing "the Lord's work." For them, Indians could not only control Christianity among their communities, they were necessary if Christianity were to take hold at all. Understanding how religious beliefs can motivate people, rather than judging these beliefs on more modern, ethnocentric terms, can show a broader picture of the missionization process and reveal ways that individuals exploited religion and church structures for their own purposes.

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[1] The following church records were all issued in published form, though often in small numbers. As a result, incomplete runs are scattered across various libraries. The Bridwell Library at Southern Methodist University and the archives at Oklahoma City University were especially useful in tracking these sources down. They are arranged chronologically and divided into sub-groups based on which organization printed them.

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