Appendix 5: Quakers, Native Americans, and Boarding Schools

As they have around the world, missionaries in North America played an important role from the earliest days of colonization in the task of subduing and assimilating indigenous people. The education of children in schools on and off the reservations occupied much of the missionaries' time. Attitudes and methods varied widely among religious groups and over time, but the consistent aim of these schools was 'uplift' or 'socialization' of people viewed as wild, savage, or, more romantically, childlike. Though perhaps a more humane approach than that of those who favored outright genocide, most missionaries nevertheless sought the suppression of indigenous culture and language and the total assimilation of indigenous people to Anglo-Saxon culture and society. In the words of Richard Henry Pratt, one of the leading advocates for Indian education and the founder of the influential Carlisle Indian School in 1879, the goal was 'Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.'

The 1819 Indian Civilization Act of the U.S. government provided for $10,000 annually to support Quakers, Baptists, Methodists, and other denominations in running schools for indigenous children on and off of the reservations. Treaties between tribal authorities and the government generally included annuities to support education, though, like so many treaty provisions, that money was not always forthcoming (DeJong 35). During the 1830s, several acts of Congress forced the removal of thousands of Native Americans from their eastern homes to reservations in the west, opening the way for an expansion of these missionary schools. Quakers had allied themselves unsuccessfully with the Shawnee in Ohio against the U.S. government to prevent their removal to Kansas. In 1837, when they were forced to move, Indiana Yearly Meeting, to which the Aldersons' own Cincinnati Meeting belonged established the Shawnee Mission School on the new reservation (Kelsey 142–150, Adkins 81).[1] This collaboration between religious organizations and the government continued as the foundation for European-sponsored Indian education until the 1870s ushered in the era of government-run boarding schools, principally off of the reservation so as to further separate the children from the culture, language, and influence of their families.

[1] For more recent work on the history of Quakers and Native Americans, see also the collection of essays edited by Gallup-Diaz and Plank, especially those by Batchelor and Palmer.

Although Quaker dealings with Native Americans are often represented as having more respectful of indigenous language, religion, and culture (DeJong 61; Reyhner and Eder 51–2, 62–3) the three accounts included here of Quaker education demonstrate a strong European chauvinism and assimilationist agenda. Paula Palmer makes the case that in the drive to "Christianize and civilize" the original inhabitants of North America, Quakers were distinguished from other denominations, not so much by a greater degree of compassion or respect for indigenous lifeways as by an emphasis on the latter of those two imperatives. While Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, made conversions their primary goal, Quakers believed that native people would fully embrace Christianity only after they had learned to embrace the English language along with English customs, values, and ways of thinking. These were the fruits of Christianity, an appreciation of which would naturally lead indigenous people to seek out and embrace Christianity as their seed (Palmer 297-8). To Quakers like the Aldersons and Mary Howitt, removal of Native Americans from their homes to reservations far out west was not only cruel, but contrary to their aims of total cultural assimilation.

'The Friends' Establishment in Kansas Territory. Personal recollections of Wilson Hobbs, M. D. among the Shawnee Indians from November 1850 to November 1852' from the *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1903–1904*. (Topeka, KS, 1904).

The establishment or mission consisted of about 250 acres of fine fertile prairie, rising to the southward of Turkey creek valley, enclosed and divided into suitable fields, with a thriving young orchard of fruit-trees. The mission house consisted of a story and a half frame, set upon a stone wall, on a hillside, so that the excavation formed a basement. This building stood north and south in its greatest direction. In the basement was a large kitchen, a large dining-room, a pantry, and a cellar. In the central portion of the second story were the offices and living-rooms of the officers – in the north end was the schoolroom and collecting-room for the boys, and in the south end the sewing- and work-room for the girls. The upper half-story was devoted entirely to sleeping apartments. The barn was a poor concern, but a good one was built soon after my time there. A most excellent spring was near by, a few rods north of the home; this doubtless determined the site for buildings. The farm was well supplied with utensils for working it, and with horses, cattle, hogs, and domestic fowls. The house was very plainly furnished, with only such furniture and conveniences as were absolutely necessary for comfort and business.

The school when I took charge of it consisted of about forty children, all of whom were Shawnees but one, who was a Stockbridge. These were fed, clothed and educated entirely at the expense of the church. They were received without preparation, and came ragged, covered with filth and vermin, with long hair, and the habits of uncivilized life upon them, and with no knowledge of the English language.

The service to a new pupil was to trim his hair closely; then, with soap and water, to give him or her the first lesson in godliness, which was a good scrubbing, and a little red precipitate on the scalp, to supplement the use of a fine-toothed comb; then he was furnished with a suit of new clothes, and taught how to put them on and off. They all emerged from this ordeal as shy as peacocks just plucked. A new English name finished the preparation for the alphabet and the English language. The children were not allowed to speak the Shawnee language among themselves except when absolutely necessary. The object of this rule was to force the knowledge and use of the English upon all as soon as possible. Our school-books were all in this language.

Our people never made a translation into the Shawnee tongue. Doctor Barker, superintendent of the Shawnee Baptist mission, translated the New Testament scripture into the Shawnee tongue, and printed the book himself, but I think it did very little service. It could only be read by those who had been taught in the schools, and these had all been taught in English.

The progress made by the children in learning was very fair. Except on Saturday and Sunday, they were kept in school six hours each day.

When not in school, it was my duty to have the boys at such work about the house or farm as was needed to be done, and the girls were under the care of my wife in the sewing room, except such as were detailed for dining-room and kitchen work. The fact is worthy of observation that the boys did not like to work, and the hardest part of my duty was to keep them at it. Besides this, it took a great stretch of forbearance on the part of their parents and Indian friends to be pleased at seeing them work. An Indian man must make a great stride toward civilization, yes, in civilization, before he can crown labor with his respect.

E.C., "The Indian Question," *Friends' Intelligencer* (1853-1910); Oct 12, 1867: 24, 32: American Periodicals pg. 508 .

From *The Moravian*.

In the Moravian burying-grounds, those "acres of God" consecrated by the ordinances of religion and by the respect for the mortal remains of fellow human creatures, whom hope, and in many instances a conviction amounting to certainty, places now in the realms of the blessed, many a modest mound covers the dust of the aborigines of this country. Just as they are buried in Christian ground, and by Christian rites, so they lived Christian lives, and died Christian deaths. The records of our church abound with examples of Indian conversion, and Indian docility, industry, and virtue. The missionaries have found innumerable instances of the susceptibility of the Indian to religious teachings, and the civilizing processes. Under their tuition the fierce son of the forest has been content to lay aside his natural promptings to revenge and cruelty, and to become forbearing and peace-loving. They have seen him leave his nomad life, to become the tiller of the soil and the constructor of houses. His unlettered state has frequently by their ministrations become one of culture and education.

And this experience of our missionaries does not stand alone. There are some other experiences to support its teachings and warrant its conclusions. That there should not be more is to be deeply regretted, but the fault lies not with the Indian. It is his white brethren, who have failed in their duty, and by their conduct have throughout more deeply engraved into his nature, the lines of revenge and of barbarism, to which he is prone. The proposition that the Indian may be educated into Christianity and civilization, is also proved by the experience of the Roman Catholic missions. We cannot be accused of any partiality for that powerful but degenerate form of the Christian church. Least of all can we for a moment excuse animus of the Society of Jesus, which has made a concreted organism of all the gradually growing corruptions and heresies of that church. Yet under the worst systems, good men have lived. Despite false teachings, and sinister perversions of the intellect, God's mercy has often kept the heart open. Compassion, unselfishness, benevolence and a pure life must not be denied to exist, because they are found in company with false tenets. On the contrary, it is a source of joy that while the disastrous results of false doctrines, if carried to their logical effects, must be so wide-reaching and fatal, Heaven

still keeps open the heart of individuals to spiritual instincts, and saves good affections from corresponding ruin. But whether we view the efforts of the Jesuit missionaries as prompted by a Christian benevolence, or by inferior motives, --and there is probably an admixture of both elements,-- their results prove the falsity of the charge that the Indian has but one career, namely, to be destroyed by the effect of his own passions. The Romish missons, too, have presented the spectacle of quiet law-abiding Indians, whose natures have been changed from roving savages to industrious citizens.

Is not the inference plain? Approach the Indian in the spirit of love and of disinterestedness, that is, of Christianity, and you exercise [sic] the demons that hold him in possession, and develop seeds of culture lying dormant in his nature, but only waiting to be nurtured by consideration and benevolence,--to grow into blessed and fruitful results.

The Indian has been well called the child of the forest. The term is a happy one, as it not only illustrates his habits, but his characteristic. He is just what nature would make man, if man were left to nature, without exterior help and supernatural assistance. He might be called with even more propriety the *slave* of nature. The first mark of advance in man, is the conquest of nature, and the subjugation of the material world around him;--and in the degree that this superiority obtains, man fulfils his true destiny, and accomplishes his real happiness. But to the Indian, the divine message to subdue the earth, to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow, has not yet come. The sorrows and the joys, the defeats and the triumphs the civilized man feels in this contest, he knows nothing of. The community of interest, the dependence of man upon man, the pleasures of amicable strife, the blessing of labor, and the joys of society, are unknown to him…. He lives for himself alone, and satisfied if the necessities of the present are at hand; he knows no maxims of conduct which provided for the future. When nature gives, he takes; when nature withholds, be starves. He vegetates rather than lives. His heart is too cold to fear or to love. His condition would speedly plunge him into ruin, and his race into spontaneous extermination, were not even his passions, in their natural condition, comparatively inert and lifeless like his good affections. He knows of the existence of a God, and of the immortality of the soul, but he reflects not upon the divine attributes, or his own responsibilities.

What is the white man's duty, when he comes into contact with these sons of the forest? They have immortal souls, they are fellow men, and they have priority of possession in the land

to which he emigrates. The spirit of the present age recognizes the rights of the weak. Today we begin to measure ourselves by the figure we will make in the eyes of posterity. We begin to fear the criticism of the wise and good; the lifted finger of duty begins to be heeded, and national interest is seen to coincide with its monitions. The nature of the Indian requires to be supplemented by the superior experience, opportunities, and civilization of the white man. –We must come as superiors, and as teachers. Our superiority must be shown by our conduct to consist in what are its essential features and foundation, namely, absolute justice, intelligent consideration, and disinterested benevolence. The duty of the Indian to himself must be enforced by a practical exemplification of the influence of duty over ourselves in all our dealings with them. So only can our civilization find commendation in their eyes. The doctrines of Religion and the teachings of Education will then have a basis to act upon; the wedge will then enter their contracted callous natures,– the product of isolation and indifference –and open their hearts and lives to humanizing influences. The sentiment of honor, which in the Indian rises sometimes almost to the dignity of a virtue, although it is based on personal self satisfaction, rather than, as it ought to be, on devotion to right, enables him to esteem correctness of dealing, and resent injustice and deception. Without a consistent course of just dealing, he cannot be approached, and without an unselfish benevolence be never can improve. Both united will settle the question of the Indian troubles, in a way which will redound to the credit of the nation, will accord with the immutable principles by which nations and individuals can alone happily progress, and will heal a sore, now suppurating with moral and financial disgrace. It is high time that this government should perceive these troths and act up to them. In dealing with inferior races, the political maxims which inculcate a negative position on the part of government to the governed, which may be entirely correct for men supposed to be able to govern themselves, and blessed with privileges of civilization, do not 'obtain. A Christian policy must influence all our legislative and executive, proceedings, one worthy the age and our opportunities. Government in its relations to the Indians must act on positive principles and become the dispenser of benefits and the guardian of strict justice.

The worst foe to our character as a nation in this respect, are the barbarous theories frequently advanced and held by many on the frontiers, which declare that the only possible solution of these troubles is the extermination of the Indian race. Their existence is declared incompatible with our civilization, and the notion of any reliable peace with them is scouted. It is

even declared that prominent senators, relying upon a partial observation of the present state of affairs on the frontiers, have given in their adhesion to this despicable and bloody policy. On the face of it, such an idea is too repulsive to be adopted by any being possessed of common humanity. That the theory is false we have already shown by the numerous entirely reliable instances of the civilization of individuals and communities adduced in the commencement of these remarks. It is entirely opposed to Christianity, philosophy, and experience to maintain that because the race is nomad and savage, there is no possibility of change. … Let us instance a case taken from the history of the Indian himself in support of our assertions. The story of the Aztecs in Mexico, and their very considerable progress in civilization and tile arts, are now pretty well known, from the history or Prescott and the researches of Schoolcraft, Squier, Catherwood, and Tylor. In architecture they equalled the Egyptians and Chaldeaus, if they did not surpass them. In metallurgy they had manipulated in profusion with gold, silver, lead, copper, tin and obsidian. They were indefatigable tillers of the soil, –ingenious floriculturists and gardeners; they invented hicro-g1yphical characters, and were adepts in astronomy. And who were these Aztecs? When first confronted by the Spaniards they had been seated in Mexico rather less than one hundred and fifty years. Towards the close of the twelfth century of our era, they had immigrated from a spot traditionally known as Atzlan, or the “country of water," most likely the territory inclosed within the angle formed by the junction of the Rio Colorado and Gela at the head of the Gulf of California. By the year 1324 they had reached the table lands of Central America. “We have an indisputable instance, therefore," remarks an Edinburg Reviewer, "of a nomadic horde suddenly suppressing the instincts of their nature, relinquishing the habits of savage life, becoming a permanently settled people, developing a capacity for political organization, raising stupendous piles or brick and stone, continually embellishing innumerable cities, cultivating the arts and sciences, and making such advancement, in astronomy more particularly, as not only to rival but to surpass that which was made by the most enlightened nations of antiquity in Asia and Europe. And all these astounding results are crowded within the limited space of a century and a half!" This Mexican empire had been built upon the ruins of another, from whom they derived much of their civilization, –the Toltecas–who themselves had originally come from the North. When we reflect that all this knowledge and advancement was associated with one of the moat abominable of religions, whose altars reeked from sunrise to sunset with the fumes of human gore, the question naturally arises, how incalculably greater would have been the result under the sway of

the Christian religion? To the desperadoes and scoundrels who infest the frontiers no answer need be given when they urge the necessity for Indian blood. The regular settler, who sees his hopes blasted and his well-earned acquisitions destroyed by the savage foray, deserves the greatest commiseration and adequate protection, but he is in fact more the victim of his own government, which has been guilty of a criminal negligence and disregard of Christian duty in its treatment of the native American, than of the inherent incapacity of the latter for the condition or a good neighbor.

Is the Indian not worthy of the interposition of some representative of the wisdom and benevolence of the nation between him and his oppressor? Or is it only when votes can be gained, and a party hue and cry raised, that we can be made to speak in the name of humanity and religion? Unless this Indian question be settled according to the dictates of high principle and philanthropy, such will be the verdict of history, and all the peans of self-glorification we may sing will not save us from being condemned in the minds of good and true men and in the eyes of Heaven. The extermination of the Indian by our instrumentality, should it happen by our faults of commission or omission, would be recorded as a lost opportunity, and a faithlessness to our trust, worthy to be stigmatized throughout all time. E. C.

From Zitkala-Ša, 'The School Days of an Indian Girl,' *Atlantic Monthly*, Feb 1900.

Zitkala-Ša (1876–1938), a Dakota Sioux writer, editor, musician, and activist, published a series of articles in the 1900 Atlantic Monthly. From 1884 to 1887, Zitkala-Ša attended White's Indiana Manual Labor Institute, a Quaker missionary boarding school in Wabash, Indiana. Later, she briefly taught music there, before continuing her studies at the Quaker Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. Much had changed in the education of Native Americans since the 1840s, when Emma Alderson was writing to her sister about the Quaker school for the Shawnee in Kansas, but clearly the assimilationist drive and some of the harsh methods had not.

THE CUTTING OF MY LONG HAIR.

A small bell was tapped, and each of the pupils drew a chair from under the table. Supposing this act meant they were to be seated, I pulled out mine and at once slipped into it from one side. But when I turned my head, I saw that I was the only one seated, and all the rest at our table remained standing. Just as I began to rise, looking shyly around to see how chairs were to be used, a second bell was sounded. All were seated at last, and I had to crawl back into my chair again. I heard a man's voice at one end of the hall, and I looked around to see him. But all the others hung their heads over their plates. As I glanced at the long chain of tables, I caught the eyes of a paleface woman upon me. Immediately I dropped my eyes, wondering why I was so keenly watched by the strange woman. The man ceased his mutterings, and then a third bell was tapped. Every one picked up his knife and fork and began eating. I began crying instead, for by this time I was afraid to venture anything more.

But this eating by formula was not the hardest trial in that first day. Late in the morning, my friend Judéwin gave me a terrible warning. Judéwin knew a few words of English, and she had overheard the paleface woman talk about cutting our long, heavy hair. Our mothers had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy. Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards!

We discussed our fate some moments, and when Judéwin said, 'We have to submit, because they are strong,' I rebelled.

'No, I will not submit! I will struggle first!' I answered.

I watched my chance, and when no one noticed I disappeared. I crept up the stairs as quietly as I could in my squeaking shoes, – my moccasins had been exchanged for shoes. Along the hall I passed, without knowing whither I was going. Turning aside to an open door, I found a large room with three white beds in it. The windows were covered with dark green curtains, which made the room very dim. Thankful that no one was there, I directed my steps toward the corner farthest from the door. On my hands and knees I crawled under the bed, and cuddled myself in the dark corner.

From my hiding place I peered out, shuddering with fear whenever I heard footsteps near by. Though in the hall loud voices were calling my name, and I knew that even Judéwin was searching for me, I did not open my mouth to answer. Then the steps were quickened and the voices became excited. The sounds came nearer and nearer. Women and girls entered the room. I held my breath, and watched them open closet doors and peep behind large trunks. Some one threw up the curtains, and the room was filled with sudden light. What caused them to stoop and look under the bed I do not know. I remember being dragged out, though I resisted by kicking and scratching wildly. In spite of myself, I was carried downstairs and tied fast in a chair.

I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingled like a coward's! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder.

IRON ROUTINE.

A loud-clamoring bell awakened us at half-past six in the cold winter mornings. From happy dreams of Western rolling lands and unlassoed freedom we tumbled out upon chilly bare floors back again into a paleface day. We had short time to jump into our shoes and clothes, and wet our eyes with icy water, before a small hand bell was vigorously rung for roll call.

There were too many drowsy children and too numerous orders for the day to waste a moment in any apology to nature for giving her children such a shock in the early morning. We rushed downstairs, bounding over two high steps at a time, to land in the assembly room.

A paleface woman, with a yellow-covered roll book open on her arm and a gnawed pencil in her hand, appeared at the door. Her small, tired face was coldly lighted with a pair of large gray eyes.

She stood still in a halo of authority, while over the rim of her spectacles her eyes pried nervously about the room. Having glanced at her long list of names and called out the first one, she tossed up her chin and peered through the crystals of her spectacles to make sure of the answer 'Here.'

Relentlessly her pencil black-marked our daily records if we were not present to respond to our names, and no chum of ours had done it successfully for us. No matter if a dull headache or the painful cough of slow consumption had delayed the absentee, there was only time enough to mark the tardiness. It was next to impossible to leave the iron routine after the civilizing machine had once begun its day's buzzing; and as it was inbred in me to suffer in silence rather than to appeal to the ears of one whose open eyes could not see my pain, I have many times trudged in the day's harness heavy-footed, like a dumb sick brute.

Once I lost a dear classmate. I remember well how she used to mope along at my side, until one morning she could not raise her head from her pillow. At her deathbed I stood weeping, as the paleface woman sat near her moistening the dry lips. Among the folds of the bedclothes I saw the open pages of the white man's Bible. The dying Indian girl talked disconnectedly of Jesus the Christ and the paleface who was cooling her swollen hands and feet.

I grew bitter, and censured the woman for cruel neglect of our physical ills. I despised the pencils that moved automatically, and the one teaspoon which dealt out, from a large bottle, healing to a row of variously ailing Indian children. I blamed the hard-working, well-meaning, ignorant woman who was inculcating in our hearts her superstitious ideas. Though I was sullen in all my little troubles, as soon as I felt better I was ready again to smile upon the cruel woman. Within a week I was again actively testing the chains which tightly bound my individuality like a mummy for burial.

The melancholy of those black days has left so long a shadow that it darkens the path of years that have since gone by. These sad memories rise above those of smoothly grinding school days. Perhaps my Indian nature is the moaning wind which stirs them now for their present record. But, however tempestuous this is within me, it comes out as the low voice of a curiously colored seashell, which is only for those ears that are bent with compassion to hear it.

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