

## Chapter 1

# AMERICAN INDIANS, MISSIONS, AND THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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FROM EARLY COLONIAL WRITINGS we know that many white Christian settlers were concerned about the native peoples they found living in North America. Although the violence done to indigenous peoples can never be redressed, it is important to recognize that the churches did not always accept the popular insensitive attitudes about American Indians. Indeed, stories of important Christian mission work among the Cherokee, Choctaw, Dakotas (Sioux), and Winnebago can be traced through the records of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and in the letters of Reformed Church missionaries. Recently this legacy has moved from well-meaning missionary paternalism to ecclesiastical self-determinism. Today the Council for American Indian Ministry of the United Church of Christ supports the churches and ministries of American Indians in the denomination.

## COLONIAL CONCERN

The colonial period began with the landing of the Pilgrims and ended with the American Revolution (1620—1783). Because the Pilgrims desired good relations with the Indians, a treaty of peace was drawn up between Gov. John Carver of Plimouth and Massasoit of the Wampanoag tribe, which read in part:

1. That neyther he nor any of his should injure or doe hurt to any of our people.
2. And if any of his did hurt to any of ours, he should send the offender, that we might punish him.
3. That if any of our Tooles were taken away when our people were at worke, he should cause them to be restored, and if ours did any harme to any of his, wee would doe the like to them.
4. If any did unjustly warre against him, we would ayde him; if any did warre against us, he should ayde us. (1)

During the early years the English purchased the land they needed for colonization from the Indians. However, both parties were soon involved in land disputes. The years from 1620 to 1675, when King Philip's war broke out, were dark times. The story of the mission to the Indians was "glorious and often terrible. ... Every promising beginning was brought to a sad end by the injustice of the white citizens to their red brethren." (2)

Yet the Massachusetts Bay Colony had deeply religious intentions toward the Indians. Its charter vowed "to wynn and invite the Natives . . . [to] the onlie God and Saviour of Mankinde." John Eliot, the minister at Roxbury, was concerned about the remnants of the tribal people in his area. He learned the Massachusetts language and by 1646 was preaching at Dorchester Mills and Newton. Eliot enlisted others in the mission. He believed that Christian Indians should be segregated from their tribes into towns of "Praying Indians," where they could be supervised and nurtured in Christian knowledge. Natick was the first town established, in 1651, on land provided by the General Court. A church was organized. By 1674 fourteen towns of Praying Indians, with a total population of four thousand, were in existence. Activities included preaching, teaching, catechizing, Bible reading, and devotional literature. Indians were taught English, agriculture, and domestic crafts.

John Eliot's mission attracted attention in England. A missionary society was founded in 1649 to solicit contributions for the work, which was explained in a tract titled "New England First Fruits." Parliament appropriated funds and in the same year established a Corporation for Promoting and Propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in New England.

But King Philip's War devastated the towns of Praying Indians. Caught between traditional Indians and whites who suspected them of tribal loyalties, the tribes in eastern Massachusetts and Connecticut were broken up, and the survivors were forced to move west of the Connecticut River.

The Housatonic band of the Mahican tribe was one remnant group that received mission attention. The chief welcomed John Sargent, a young tutor at Yale, as a missionary. Sargent was ordained at Deerfield, Massachusetts in 1735. He began a mission at Stockbridge, Massachusetts that was successful in establishing a church and a day school as well as in organizing a Christian town. The Indians who came together here assumed the name of Stockbridge Indians. Sargent died at age thirty-nine and was succeeded by Jonathan Edwards.

Another active missionary in the 1700s was Eleazar Wheelock. Graduating from Yale in 1733, he was ordained and called to the Second Parish of Lebanon, Connecticut. To supplement his income, he opened a boys' school in the parsonage. One of his students was Samuel Occam, a Mohegan youth. As a result of his experience with Occam, Wheelock conceived the idea of a school and mission where Indian boys and white boys would be trained together. The Indian boys would learn English and be introduced to Christianity and the skills of white society. The white youths would learn Indian vernacular and the ways of Indian life. Later the youth would be paired in the mission enterprise with remote tribes and sent out to establish churches and schools.

Wheelock's vision was ambitious. He was sent Delaware and Mohegan youth and established the Moor-Indian Charity School at Lebanon, in 1755. All students were on scholarships. By 1765 he had enrolled twenty-one Indian boys, ten Indian girls, and seven white boys. Being continually short of funds, Wheelock quarreled with his sponsors over support.

In the 1760s the flow of Indian students declined, and Wheelock turned his attention to the education of white youth. He accepted a land grant at Hanover, New Hampshire, where he received a charter for the founding of Dartmouth College. He associated the Moor-Indian Charity School with the new college. By the time of the Revolution, Indian mission work was almost at a standstill.

Wheelock must be remembered for the Calvinist he was. The wrath of God was real to him. He desired to save the perishing souls of the "heathen." He had contempt for the Indian culture — a shared view of his time — and felt that conversion of the Indians [was] easier, more effective, and far cheaper in lives and money than military conquest.

Gratitude, duty, and loyalty to the King require[d] vigorous prosecution of missions, and the King laid this duty on the colonies in the colonial charters. . . . Furthermore, the savages cannot be expected to keep treaties as long as they remain savages, for they will keep such contracts only when they have been civilized by Christian education. (3)

## **MISSION SOCIETIES AND GOVERNMENT ACTION**

During the waning years of the eighteenth century and the first three decades of the nineteenth century (1783—1830) Indian missionary activity was furthered by associations formed to provide personnel, literature, and Bibles for the expanding frontier. A fear existed that people on the frontier would be paganized. In 1787 the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Indians and Others in North America was organized and incorporated in order to give inspiration and leadership to regional societies. One such group was the New York Missionary Society, which sent a mission to the Chickasaw in the South, in 1799. At this time overseas missions were an emerging concern, but frontier settlements and Indian work were priorities. Not until the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was organized, in 1810, did foreign missions receive major focus.

The young country faced the question of relations with the tribes. The new Constitution of 1787 vested policy formation in the Congress. In 1806 the office of Commissioner of Indian Trade was established. The tribes were dealt with as foreign nations that possessed treaties with the government. Administration was placed in the War Department. Henry Knox, the first Secretary of War, shared the view of mission society executives that Christianity and civilization went hand in hand. He wrote:

Missionaries of excellent moral character, should be appointed to reside in their nations, who should be well supplied with all the implements of husbandry, and the necessary stock for a farm. . . . They should be friends and fathers.

Such a plan, although it might not fully effect the civilization of the Indians, would most probably be attended with the salutary effect of attaching them to the interest of the United States. (4)

The American Board worked closely with the government in establishing the Brainerd mission to the Cherokee in Chickamauga, Tennessee, in 1817. Cyrus Kingsbury opened the work with the tribe's consent. The government built a schoolhouse and a home for a teacher, which also boarded Indian youth. Two plows, six hoes, and six axes were provided initially. A similar plan for girls was launched with spinning and weaving equipment. An annual report from the mission to the Secretary of War was required. Congress appropriated the funds for the work on the basis that, as one of its committees wrote, "the sons of the forest should be moralized or exterminated." (5)

In 1819 Congress passed a bill providing for a "Civilization Fund." This statement of public policy provided the basis for government and church cooperation until 1873. Although the major denominations might differ in doctrine, they could enter into a partnership with the government to "civilize" the Indians. The government benefited, because the churches paid the salaries of the missionaries and, more important, provided dedicated personnel.

Government resources greatly extended the scope of mission activity. Kingsbury moved on from the Cherokee mission to the Choctaw. He proposed that the government fund four large schools and thirty-two small ones, a fourth of each to be located west of the Mississippi. The large schools would accommodate eighty to one hundred scholars; the small ones, twenty to forty. The government never funded all the schools, but their numbers increased as rapidly as the American Board found funds and government monies were appropriated.

For the most part government and church mission policy was congruent in the first twenty-five years of the nineteenth century. The westward movement of Americans, however, gave rise to a clamor for the removal of tribes settled near expanding frontier communities. On the question of removal, a minority of the missionaries spoke in behalf of Indian rights. The American Board took the leadership in opposing the removal of the Cherokee in Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama. Although the Cherokee had fought with Andrew Jackson against the Creek and the British in 1814—15, they found him no friend when he became President, in 1829. The Cherokee had made remarkable progress in self-government and in literary and economic development. In 1827 they adopted a constitution modeled after the U.S. Constitution. This act incensed the state of Georgia, which claimed jurisdiction over Cherokee lands. It clamored for removal of the tribe and blamed the missionaries for insisting on tribal rights. Jeremiah Evarts, chief executive officer of the American Board, proved a powerful advocate for the Cherokee. He

wrote eloquently in their behalf in the press of the day. The Cherokee had powerful friends in government, especially in New England, where liberals like Ralph Waldo Emerson opposed their removal. But the political tides were too strong, and the Removal Act was passed by Jackson's administration in May 1830.

Five missionaries — two from the American Board, one Moravian, and two Methodists — refused to take the oath of allegiance to the state of Georgia against the Cherokee. They were arrested and publicly maligned. All but the two American Board missionaries, Samuel Worcester and Elizur Butler, were eventually released. These two men were sentenced to four years of hard labor, but the American Board stood behind them by taking the case to the Supreme Court, which ruled in their favor in 1832. The governor of Georgia offered a pardon. Rather than accept the pardon, they were counseled by the Board to withdraw the case from further prosecution.

Even though the Supreme Court had ruled in favor of the Cherokee as a sovereign nation, President Jackson refused to enforce the law. He said, "John Marshall has pronounced his judgment; let him enforce it if he can."<sup>(6)</sup> Such was the political climate of the day.

## **MISSION TO THE DAKOTAS**

Work with the Cherokee, Choctaw, and other civilized tribes was phased out reluctantly by the American Board in the 1830s because of the removal of these tribes to land west of the Mississippi and because of the general disarray of these tribes' existence. The mainstream of mission activities moved to Minnesota and focused on the Sioux, who called themselves Dakotas. Sioux was a Chippewa word meaning snake or enemy; Dakota stood for friend, ally.

Thomas Williamson, a Presbyterian, was sent to the Dakotas by the American Board, in 1835. In these years the American Board was supported by Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Williamson was joined shortly by Stephen and Mary Riggs. Both these families were to collaborate in long careers with the Sioux. Riggs became an eminent scholar in the Sioux language, publishing a grammar and a dictionary in 1852. He and Williamson translated the Bible, which was published by the American Bible Society.

The Riggses first worked in missions along the Minnesota River, where the Sioux were congregated after cession of large amounts of Minnesota land to the United States. The Riggses felt that civilization and Christianization were "Siamese twins" in mission strategy and set out to reform Indian life. In appraising their work a contemporary scholar describes the difficulties they encountered:

Persons of mixed blood and women tended to convert almost easily, the former because of their already ambivalent status in Indian society, and the latter because the missionaries did not require a major dress and role change. In the case of males, a convert was required to dress in an alien fashion

(Western clothes) and to do work relegated to women (in the Indian's eyes). This was no subtle change... Unconverted tribesmen quite correctly viewed the whole civilization-Christianization approach as a threat to their way of life. They retaliated against converts and missionaries with such measures as ostracism, threats, cattle killing, and destruction of property. (7)

In 1862 American Board mission activity was disrupted by the Sioux uprising in Minnesota. The Lincoln administration, distracted by the Civil War, had not come through with promises of food for the 1861—62 winter. In waiting for their grants from the government, the Sioux had neglected their hunting. After a winter of great privation the warriors took supplies from government storehouses and killed several soldiers. This action ignited feelings on both sides. About 700 white settlers were killed. Indian losses were also large. Although they took many captives, the Sioux did not have the resources of the army to sustain prolonged conflict. Some of the Sioux fled to Canada. Fifteen hundred were rounded up as prisoners and three hundred were condemned to death. President Lincoln commuted the sentences of all but thirty-eight warriors, who were hanged.

The Riggses and their colleagues lived through this dangerous time with the help of new converts, such as Simon Anawangmane (Walks Galloping On), who rescued white mission personnel after their capture. More than twenty years before, Anawangmane was the first full blood to convert to Christianity. He withstood the taunts of proud Dakota braves, who reminded him that his church was made up of women. Anawangmane adopted Western dress and turned from the hunt to agriculture.

In the Riggses' account of the mission one senses the heroism of Sioux converts. Artemas Ehnmane, who became pastor of Pilgrim Church at Santee, Nebraska, had been a fine hunter and was the son of a war prophet. Before his death his father had said, "The white man is coming into this country, and your children may learn to read. But promise me that you will never leave the religion of your ancestors." (8) Ehnmane promised but reneged because "his gods were worsted by the white man's God" in the great Sioux uprising. So he believed.

The mission work had a genuine vitality among the Sioux. Eight congregations had been formed by 1871, led principally by native pastors in Minnesota and the Dakota Territory. In that year the *Word Carrier (Iapi Oaye)* was published and became important to the Dakota people. It was a four-page newspaper, with a motto in Dakota: "To help what is good, to oppose what is bad."

The Santee Normal School, on the Missouri River near Yankton, was opened in 1870 by Alfred Riggs, a son of Stephen and Mary Riggs. American Board support continued for the school through 1883, when the American Missionary Association took over. In the 1880s as many as two hundred students were enrolled yearly. A standard curriculum of reading, writing, and arithmetic was supplemented by industrial arts training and Christian education. Much of the instructing was done in Dakota, in contrast to other schools, where English was insisted on. Graduates were expected to return to their tribes in leadership roles.

The Dakota Home for Girls was started on the Santee campus in 1872. Its central purpose was the training of future homemakers: “They learn to cook and wash, sew and cut garments, weave, knit, milk, make butter, make beds, sweep floors, and anything else pertaining to housekeeping, and they can make good bread.”(9)

Theological education was organized at the Santee School during this period. Native pastors had asked for it. A short course of four weeks was devised in “Bible geography and history, in the main doctrines of the Christian faith, in the best methods of teaching Bible truth, [and in] the founding and growth of the Christian church.” (10) The school was finally closed in the late 1930s.

The Fort Berthold Reservation mission, in North Dakota, was begun by Charles Hall, who was ordained in the South Dakota mission at Yankton, in 1876. He had served a new non-Indian church at Springfield, South Dakota immediately preceding his decision to go to Fort Berthold. He had met his bride, Emma Calhoun, in the congregation. After Hall’s ordination the *Word Carrier* extended the right hand of fellowship, saying as the couple departed, “They must be part of us. They will, in fact, form a part of the Dakota Mission.... Go and plant the standard of the cross on Ft. Berthold.... You will entreat the Holy Spirit to beget in the Hidatsa and Ree and Mandan people a soul-hunger that can only be satisfied by the Bread and Water of Life.” (11)

Charles Hall was born in England, in 1847. He was educated at City College and Union Seminary in New York and at Andover Theological Seminary in Newton Centre, Massachusetts. The Halls’s mission efforts were begun at Like-a-Fish-Hook village on the Missouri River. The chiefs of the three affiliated tribes — Son of the Star, Crows Breast, and Red Cow — deeded the mission sufficient land for its work and promised to “protect the American Board and their Missionaries in their rights.” (12)

Hall worked in English, loved to sing Indian lyrics, and was called Ho Washte, or Good Voice. He did not develop indigenous ordained church leadership and used Indian people as helpers in both church and secular work. The mission developed slowly, and nine years elapsed before Hall organized the first church at Arickara, in 1885.

## **MISSION TO THE WINNEBAGO**

The nineteenth-century story of the Winnebago is a tale of broken treaties between these ancient residents of Wisconsin and the federal government. The Winnebago were removed to locations west of the Mississippi in the 1830s, but many returned to central Wisconsin in the decades that followed. By the 1870s they were permitted forty-acre homesteads in the sandy pinelands.

The German Reformed Church in Wisconsin began its mission with the Winnebago near Black River Falls, in 1878. Henry Kurtz, a Mission House College (13) professor, had been saved from

freezing to death by neighboring Indians. The Sheboygan Classis raised funds to support a missionary to bring “the Gospel also to the heathen living in our own land, the Indians; this duty, alas, we have too long neglected.” (14)

Jacob Hauser, who had been a missionary in India, began the Black River Falls mission. His work was legitimized at the lodge of the great chief Blackhawk, who said, “The words you have spoken are good. We also believe in Earthmaker. We love our children. It will make us glad to see them well taught. We are glad that you have come.” (15)

Hauser opened a school in a log building the tribe had erected. He had major difficulties because he did not know the Winnebago language, but he learned it slowly in working with the children and calling in the homes and developed a vocabulary of about 1,500 words. Before his retirement, in 1885, a chapel was built to enlarge the school facilities.

Jacob Stucki joined the mission in 1884 as Hauser’s assistant. Born in Switzerland, he came to Toledo, Ohio as a boy of sixteen, where he found the life of the Reformed Church challenging. He attended Mission House College and Seminary, in Wisconsin, and with his bride, Rachel, took over the work when Hauser retired.

## **MISSION DEVELOPMENT AFTER 1890**

Outstanding missionaries among the Sioux were Thomas and Alfred Riggs, sons of pioneers Stephen and Mary. While Alfred concentrated his work at the Santee Normal School, Thomas ranged over Indian country. He founded missions with the Teton Sioux and their many bands, progenitors of today’s Dakota Association. A graduate of Beloit College and Chicago Theological Seminary, Thomas lived with the Teton and knew their life in the declining years of their existence on tribal lands.

On the Standing Rock, Cheyenne, and Rosebud reservations young Indian leaders responded to the missionaries. Often several men in a family became pastors and community figures. The Tibbits and Frazier families were eminent in South Dakota. Arthur Tibbits became the native pastor at Cannon Ball, North Dakota. His son and daughter-in-law, Percy and Emma (Frazier) Tibbits, carried on the work on the Standing Rock reservation and at the Rapid City Indian Center under the sponsorship of the National Council of Churches. Philip Frazier attended Oberlin College and Chicago Theological Seminary and returned to South Dakota for his pastorates. He was elected to head the Dakota Mission in 1932, the first Indian to hold such a position.

Harold and Eva Case came to the Fort Berthold Mission in 1922. They were friends of Charles Hall’s son, Robert, who encouraged them to take over the Fort Berthold work. With eastern roots, Harold Case had gone into YMCA work and settled in Denver. He and Eva decided to go to Fort Berthold for one year and ended up staying for the remainder of their careers!

The Cases were genuine Christian friends to the Affiliated Tribes in troublous times — the depression of the 30s, the drought years, the uprootings of World War II, and perhaps most difficult of all, the erection of Garrison Dam. This dam, built on the Missouri River, flooded Fort Berthold, forcing people from their historic lands. The tribes were moved to higher grounds and separated by Lake Sakakawea. The Cases were indefatigable in church and community development. They advocated good schools, organized public health programs, assisted in forming libraries and cooperative laundries. They even pioneered in silent movies with portable electric power.

The Cases were proudest of the achievements of young Indian people. Emerging in their time was Robert Fox, who attended the mission school at Fort Berthold, Santee, and Cook Christian Training School, in Arizona. He served as pastor at Twin Buttes, Halliday, and his home church, Arickara. Always interested in public affairs, Fox became tribal chairman. Other Indian leaders were Ina Beauchamp Hall, elected North Dakota Mother of the Year in 1969, and the Walkers — Hans Jr., Melvin, and Tillie — who were educated for professional careers.

A similar mission development was occurring in Wisconsin. John Stacy, a young Winnebago, was challenged to Christian ministry and was one of the first four Winnebago baptized, in 1898. He had worked closely with Jacob Stucki in translating important parts of the Bible, and this translation appeared in 1907, an issue of the American Bible Society. The work was no little accomplishment because of the extreme complexity of the Winnebago language.

Mission work and church life were slow in developing because of the Winnebago style of ostracism of Christians. Stacy's children were taken by his father, a traditionalist, when Stacy declared his faith. His mother-in-law threatened to poison him and did not speak to him for years, although she was provided living space on the Stacy farm. Yet Stacy, his wife, and her brother, King of Thunder, persisted in their Christian profession and eventually won the grudging respect of the tribe. More converts joined the mission, and the Winnebago Indian Mission Church was organized, in 1922. Through the years the Indian School, supported by the Sheboygan Classis, gained acceptance by the tribe. In 1917 its support was turned over to the Reformed Church, and in 1928 the national Women's Missionary Society provided gifts for its expansion.

Benjamin Stucki, Jacob's son, fell heir to his father's work. Growing up among the Winnebago, he spoke their language and knew the tribe intimately. He directed the work of the Indian school and became the church's pastor in the early 1930s. In 1942 he was adopted into the tribe as Najkehunka — Chief in Heart — one who had demonstrated a love for the people.

Mitchell Whiterabbit grew up through the church and mission school. Having attended Mission House College, in Wisconsin, and Lancaster Seminary, in Pennsylvania, and been ordained in 1945, he became the Mission Church's pastor and served the community and Indian cause in Wisconsin with distinction. As tribal chairman, he was able to provide leadership in the 1960s, when the Winnebago won tribal recognition from the government.

## BEYOND WHITE PATERNALISM

In a sense the enumeration of Indian achievements can be a form of white paternalism. It implies that what was common for non-Indians was special achievement for Indians. An awareness of this condescension helped prepare white leaders for the 1960s. As this decade dawned three important streams came together: The white leaders discovered the racism in the church's mission; the young Indian leaders brought up through the church's ministry agreed with them; and the United Church of Christ became a reality.

Galen Weaver pioneered in recognizing white racism in Indian mission terms. He developed Indian leaders through the United Scholarship Service, a program that provided a ferment that raised fundamental questions about decision making in the church's mission. Indian leaders spoke of self-determination, a human rights concern. Wesley Hotchkiss of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries (UCBHM) had written an important position paper on the relation of Christ to culture, in 1958. He spelled out the implications of H. Richard Niebuhr's seminal work as to how the Christian faith should approach a culture: "The churches were really out to destroy the Indian culture although they proposed to do it in a most beneficent manner and under the guise of doing good for the Indian. Christ was against culture in this presupposition." (16)

Hotchkiss called for an approach in which Christ is seen as a transformer of culture, the whites' as well as the Indians'. All cultures could find fulfillment in Christ from the injustices they embody. This mission stance related anthropology to theology in a creative way. It saw mission with Indian people as a two-way bridge: missionaries able to learn from tribal life and religions while proclaiming the gospel. Hotchkiss lamented that Indian religion and culture were so devastated from Western contacts and that this new approach would not be simple or easy.

Mission workers struggled with the concept of "mission with" rather than "mission to" Indian people. In 1964 I was liaison between the Board, the conferences, and the Indian churches, assembled at Aberdeen, South Dakota, a major Consultation on a mission strategy for the remainder of the decade. All facets of Indian work were represented. The Consultation spoke to the denomination in saying: "The Church . . . is a People of compassion. . . . The United Church seeks to use skilled staff in its mission. . . . [It must be] . . . increasingly guided by Indian people. . . . The cultural gap between white and Indian people is still large." (17)

Understanding the human misery in Indian homes and communities, the Consultation sought sensitively to guide the limited resources of the church into the work with children and youth. The leaders held that major social welfare loads were the government's responsibility. A group home for high school dropouts was recommended for North Dakota. The outgrowth was the Charles Hall Youth Services. A group home was recommended for Pierre, South Dakota. The merits of the Winnebago Children's Home were recognized.

The Consultation noted the migration of Indian people to urban centers and recommended that the United Church work ecumenically in ministering to Indians in the city.

## **COUNCIL FOR AMERICAN INDIAN MINISTRY**

The ferment for self-determination in both Indian and white thinking bore fruit in the formation of the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM), in 1970. After a historic style of dominantly white decision making the mission was turned over to Indian people for shaping of basic policy. The UCBHM took the leadership in this step. Bylaws were drawn that made CAIM a nonprofit corporation in the state of North Dakota. Representatives were provided for from the three Indian associations — North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. In addition, youth and urban members were added to the board of directors.

CAIM began its work on January 1, 1971. Robert Fox was chosen as the first executive director, with Juanita Helphrey, from Bismarck, North Dakota, as assistant director. CAIM's task was many fold: to provide counsel to the reservation churches; to distribute the funds from the United Church to churches and other projects on and off the reservations that made claims on them; to relate the United Church of Christ mission to those of other denominations; and to interpret the ministry to the church at large.

In 1971 General Synod VIII increased the funding for the mission by designating an American Indian Sunday offering to be transmitted by the Executive Council to CAIM. CAIM was to report to the Executive Council regarding its ministries. In June 1974 I observed:

The reservation people would prefer to deal with the BHM for their funding rather than with CAIM. This is true of South Dakota [the Dakota Association had withdrawn from CAIM] and Wisconsin. North Dakota has more confidence in CAIM because the office is located in Bismarck and the staff is Fort Berthold people.... They see the value in a Council which has some decision-making power even though it is expensive." (18)

Non-Indian leaders in the mission were disillusioned with CAIM and probably too impatient with its difficulties. Native Americans were not adequately trained in decision making or accountability. A new set of problems faced the United Church.

General Synod X approved part of the Neighbors in Need offering as support for CAIM in lieu of American Indian Sunday and created a Strategy Assessment Team to recommend long-term Indian mission policy. The team was composed of Mitchell Whiterabbit as chairperson, Robert Fox, Carol Little Wounded, Beth Thunder Cloud, and Carol Boney, with Norman Jackson and myself as staff consultants. It reported to General Synod XI and recommended that "CAIM [be] an agency of the United Church of Christ," with four priorities for the foreseeable future:

1. The Indian congregations ... shall be the top priority for CAIM....

2. General leadership training for pastors and lay leaders of Indian congregations [be supported] through the Native American Theological Association. ...
3. Urban and conference ministries [be funded] ... such as establishing a new Indian congregation in an urban area....
4. Involve[ment] in the struggles for justice and development for Native Americans . . . in public issues. (19)

## **NATIVE LEADERSHIP AND NATIVE THEOLOGY**

CAIM and the United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities had taken an active role in creating the Native American Theological Association (NATA). The ecumenical effort grew out of extensive research at Cook Christian Training School regarding the leadership crisis in native churches. With Lilly Foundation help and Howard Anderson as executive director, NATA was launched. It sought to engage Native Americans and whites in serious theological dialogue in order to impact seminary curricula. It also commissioned courses for native students and a system of theological education by extension in which the seminary was taken to local reservation churches. NATA recruited students and raised funds for scholarships.

This development has caused denominations to rethink their non-Indian standards for the ordination of Native Americans.

After serving NATA for five years Anderson wrote: “NATA is far more successful, despite its failings, than it has any human right to be. Only the Holy Spirit could be guiding NATA to this success.” (20) He warned, however, that a major threat to NATA is, and would be in the future, a denominationalism that would fail to invest adequately in training native church leaders.

The importance of NATA for the native church cannot be overstated. At long last theological leaders are reexamining the Christian gospel in native terms. After analyzing this mission in terms of the Dakota people, Donald Gall, part Sioux and current UCBHM liaison in Indian ministry, holds that the white missionaries expected acculturation among his people; they failed to see how deeply rooted the Dakota culture was. Unable to accept Western ways, the Dakotas felt the gospel was part of the white people’s church and held it at arms’ length. Gall argues that the whites took this stance because of an unjustifiable identification of the Christian faith with their own European culture. White missionaries could not distance themselves from the assumptions of the white society, which assumed that Native Americans were “heathen, pagans or savages.” These views were ingrained in the myths of white society regarding Native Americans. Gall writes:

But what was really on the table at that first Thanksgiving besides venison and turkey? The other menu was the question of human nature, the understanding

of humanity's relationship to the natural world, the process of knowledge, the meaning of creation and the use of symbols for communication. The Wampanoags had assumptions and beliefs about all these subjects, as did the Pilgrims, but they were unable to communicate with each other. It was such a disastrous failure of communication that within a few years they were in a life and death struggle with each other for living space. That struggle continued for more than two and a half centuries, and resulted in a decimated and demoralized Indian population which has ever since suffered the effects of cultural and religious genocide. (21)

The gospel emerged from tragedy. Can it do the same in Native American missions if both white and Indian persons recognize the unique gifts of all in Christ? Such an expression of hope is the All Nations Indian Church, which was founded in 1981, in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota. At the first service Avery Post, president of the United Church of Christ, noted the significance in this congregation's joining the United Church family:

Thanks be to God for the faith and commitments of the people gathered for the first service of worship of All Nations Indian United Church of Christ. The whole family of the United Church of Christ greets you and prays for your life and mission. We rejoice in your unique gifts in the service of the gospel of peace, justice, and new life. (22)

## NOTES

1. In Amelia Bingham, *Mashpee: Land of the Wampanoags* (Mashpee, MA: Mashpee Historical Society, 1970), p. 9.
2. R. Pierce Beaver, *Church, State and the American Indians* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 6.
3. R. Pierce Beaver, *Pioneers in Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), p. 212.
4. In Beaver, *Church, State and the American Indians*, op. cit., p. 64.
5. Ibid., p. 67.
6. Ibid., p. 113.
7. Jon Willand, introduction to 1969 edition, Stephen Riggs, *Mary and I: Forty Years with the Sioux* (Congregational Sunday School and Publishing Society, 1880; reprint; Ross and Haines, Inc., 1969), p. xii.
8. Riggs, *Mary and I*, op. cit., p. 283.
9. Ibid., p. 313.
10. Ibid., p. 312.

11. Ibid., p. 315.
12. Harold and Eva Case, *100 Years at Fort Berthold* (Bismarck, SD: *Bismarck Tribune*, 1977), introductory page.
13. Mission House College and Seminary was started by German Reformed people to prepare pastors for their churches. Today its work is continued at Lakeland College, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities in Minnesota.
14. Arthur V. Casselman, *The Winnebago Finds a Friend* (St. Louis: Heidelberg Press, 1944), p. 60. A classis is comparable to an association in the UCC today.
15. Ibid., p. 63.
16. Wesley A. Hotchkiss, *Some Presuppositions in the Work of the Church Among American Indians* (Minneapolis: United Church Indian Work Consultation, 1958), p. 1.
17. Serge F. Hummon, *Mission to Indian Americans, United Church of Christ, Aberdeen Report and Mission Strategy: 1965—1970*, United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, 1964.
18. Serge F. Hummon, *The Present Situation: A Working Paper*, United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, 1974, p. 1.
19. *Minutes of the Eleventh General Synod*, United Church of Christ, 1977, pp. 79—80.
20. Howard Anderson, “NATA After Five Years: The Executive Director’s Perspective,” *NATA*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1982), p. 3.
21. Donald A. Gall, *Marginal Religion Among the Lakota Sioux: A Study of Conflict in Values and the Indian Mission of the United Church of Christ*, Eden Theological Seminary, 1982.
22. All Nations Indian Church, UCC, Minneapolis/St. Paul, vol. 1, no. 1. (1981), p. 2.