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JOHN STEWART -- FIRST AMERICAN M. E. MISSIONARY
Compiled and Edited By Duane V. Maxey

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Part 1
INTRODUCTION

This compilation was taken mostly from the writings of Nathan Bangs and Abel Stevens. Other sources were also used in a lesser degree. I freely mixed these writings together, using at times some of my own wording. All of the data in this file came from our HDM Digital Library. I claim to be nothing more than the compiler and editor of this publication. John Stewart, the subject of this compilation was an humble man whom God greatly used. The accounts of his ministry are well worth the reading.

John Stewart, born about 1787, was an African American and the first American Methodist Missionary. Though he died in the seventh year of his work, he was the founder of that series of Indian missions which afterward extended to most of the American Indian tribes, which rescued thousands of immortal souls, and which opened the whole "missionary" career of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Stewart was converted under the ministry of Marcus Lindsey, who was born in Ireland, and brought to this country when just a boy. Lindsey's parents were Protestants ... belonged to the Church of England, and, of course, young Marcus was trained up in the peculiarities of that faith. Being of a naturally-reflective turn of mind he was early impressed with religious thoughts, and convinced of the depravity of his young heart, as its waywardness manifested itself in disobedience to God and his parents. His convictions in regard to his sinful state were greatly increased in being permitted occasionally to hear Methodist preaching. The sermons that young Lindsey heard from Wesley's missionaries resulted in his awakening and conversion to God.

It was not long after this event that he felt deeply impressed with the belief that it was his duty to exhort sinners to flee the wrath to come, and be saved from their sins. After exercising

awhile in this relation, and his brethren being convinced, by the gifts and grace which he possessed, and the fruits much attended his labors, that he was called of God to devote himself exclusively to the work of calling sinners to repentance, he was recommended to the conference, and accordingly received into the traveling connection in 1810. After successful labors in Kentucky and Virginia, Lindsey was sent into Ohio, and stationed on the Union circuit.

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Part 2

1815 -- JOHN STEWART'S CONVERSION

In 1815 Marcus Lindsey was removed to the Marietta circuit, where he was made the instrument of much good. While on this circuit he was instrumental, in the hands of God, in the conversion of John Stewart, the colored man, who went out as the first missionary among the Wyandotte Indians.

Stewart had been a very dissipated man. On a Sunday in 1815, he was in one of his drunken fits of delirium tremens, and he had started to the Ohio river to drown himself. On his way he had to pass by the place where Lindsey was holding meeting. Being attracted by the sound -- for Methodist preachers generally cry aloud, and spare not -- he drew up, and stood by the door, where he could distinctly hear all that was said. The preacher was describing the lost sinner's condition, his exposedness to death and hell; and then he presented the offers of mercy, showing that Jesus died for all, and the worst of sinners might repent and find pardon.

It was a message of mercy to that poor, forlorn, and ruined soul. It turned his feet from the way of death to the path of life. He returned to his place, and falling upon his knees, he cried for mercy. God heard the poor Ethiopian's prayer. While piteously he pleaded for mercy, salvation came to his heart.

At the next meeting he was found at the church, sitting in the back corner, but clothed in his right mind. When the invitation was given to persons to join the Church, he went forward, and the preacher received him and instructed him more perfectly in the way of the Lord. He had received some education, and was enabled to read and write. Like most of his brethren of the African race, he was an admirable singer, possessing a voice of unusual sweetness and power, and he took great delight in singing the hymns and spiritual songs of the Church.

Some time after his conversion he became greatly exercised on the subject of preaching. So intense and all-absorbing became his thoughts on the subject that he could neither eat nor sleep. He was continually engaged in reading the Bible and in prayer for weeks. His long fasting and almost ceaseless vigils were broken by a vision which he told us came to him one night. Whether awake or asleep he could not say; but in the transition he heard a voice distinctly saying, "You must go in a northwesterly direction, to the Indian nation, and tell the savage tribes of Christ, your Savior." He had this vision for three successive nights. The wonderful and extraordinary thing in the dream, was the specific nature of the call, designating, as Paul's vision of the man of Macedonia, the very place to which he should go.

Stewart was poor, and destitute of friends, with the exception of the Methodists, who received and treated him as a brother; but, even among his brethren, who could he get, by any possibility, to believe that he was called to go on a mission to preach the Gospel to the Indians? Firmly impressed, however, with the belief that a dispensation of the Gospel had been committed to him, he made all the preparation his circumstances would allow, and, with his Bible and hymn-book, started out, not knowing whither he was going, save that the vision directed him to the northwest. Abraham, when called from the Ur of the Chaldees, had, doubtless, much greater faith when he entered upon his journey than this sable son of Ham; but there was not less uncertainty in regard to the unknown destination.

Stewart continued his travels; and hearing of the Delaware Indians, on the Muskingum, he directed his course thitherward. When, he arrived among them he commenced singing, and praying, and exhorting, but it was in an unknown tongue. The peaceful Indians gazed upon the dark stranger with silent wonder, but were not moved by his tears and entreaties. Being impressed that this was not the tribe to which he was called he hurried on.

After a fatiguing journey, he arrived at Pipetown, on the Sandusky river, where he found a large concourse of Indians engaged in feasting and dancing. They were in the very midst of their wildest mirth and revelry when he appeared among them. Being a dark mulatto, he attracted their attention, and they gathered around him, and asked him to drink of their fire-water but he to well knew the fatal effects of the deadly draught to allow it to pass his lips.

At this refusal the Indians became angry and were beginning to manifest signs of hostility; but he commenced, in a clear, melodious voice, singing one of the songs of Zion. Its strains rose above the din and uproar of the multitude. They were strangely enchanting, and, like the voice of Jesus on stormy Galilee, they calmed the tumult of passion which threatened his destruction. The war-dance and song ceased. The multitude gathered around him, and hung upon his lips in breathless silence, as if enchanted by the sound.

When he ceased he fell upon his knees, and poured out his heart to God in prayer for their salvation. There stood by him an old chief, who understood his language, and as word after word escaped his lips he interpreted it to the listening hundreds. When his prayer was ended, he arose and exhorted them to turn away from their drunken revelry, and Indian ceremonies, to the worship of the true and living God, assuring them that if they continued in this course they would be forever lost.

As the earnest entreaties of the colored preacher were communicated by the old chief, many were deeply impressed with the truths which he uttered, and the work of God might have then and there at once commenced, but for the interference of Captain Pipe, the head chief, who became violently enraged, and, brandishing his tomahawk, swore if he did not cease he would kill him on the spot. John ceased his exhortation, and turned, with a sorrowful heart, away.

The Wyandotte Indians, called by the French Hurons, were once a powerful nation, the most ancient settlers and proprietors of the country on both sides of the Detroit river, extending northwest as far as Mackinaw. By frequent wars, however, and the destructive influence of those

vices contracted by their contiguity to the white population, they had now become greatly reduced in number and influence, and were at this time settled on a reservation of land in Upper Sandusky.

This reservation was about nineteen miles in length from east to west, and twelve in breadth from north to south, containing in all nearly one hundred and fifty thousand acres of land. This tract, through which the Sandusky river winds its way, together with five miles square at the Big Spring, includes all the soil remaining to this once numerous and powerful tribe, whose dominion had extended, in their more palmy days, over such a vast region of country. Their chief settlement, where the mission was commenced, and the mission premises have been established, is about four hundred and seventy miles north of Columbus, the capital of the state of Ohio.

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Part 3

NOVEMBER, 1816 -- JOHN STEWART'S LABOR AMONG THE WYANDOTTES BEGINS

Being ordered to leave the Delaware Indians immediately, on pain of death, John Stewart pursued his journey, guided by an invisible hand, toward Upper Sandusky, where he found a band of the Wyandotte Indians. He went to the house of Mr. Walker, United States sub-agent, and related his Christian experience, and the reasons which had induced him to come among them. Being finally satisfied that he was actuated by pure motives, Mr. and Mrs. Walker, both of whom could speak the Wyandotte language, encouraged and assisted him much in his work.

Here he also found a black man named Jonathan Pointer, who had been taken prisoner by them at the mouth of the Big Kanawha, in Virginia, when a boy. He was a good interpreter. John Stewart and Jonathan Pointer soon became friends, and procuring Pointer's services, Stewart went with him to attend a great Indian festival. When he arrived he begged permission to speak to the assembled multitude; but they paid little attention to his request. He still pleaded for the privilege; for his heart burned to tell the wandering savage of Jesus and His love. After much entreaty, through his interpreter, they agreed to let him speak to them the next day.

The time and place of meeting were fixed, and when Stewart, with his interpreter, appeared, how was his heart chilled and discouraged only to find one old Indian, by the name of Big Tree, and an old Indian woman, called Mary! To these, however, he preached Christ and the resurrection. God attended his word; and though small and feeble was the beginning, yet the labors of Stewart were blessed.

In this small way, and by these comparatively inefficient means, the work of revival and transformation began among these people in the month of November, 1816. By the faithful labors of Stewart, assisted occasionally by some local preachers, who took an interest in their spiritual welfare, before any regular missionary was pointed to take charge of them, a large society of converted natives had been formed, all zealous for the salvation of their heathen brethren.

A heroic woman, Harriet Stubbs, sister-in-law of Judge McLean, went to their aid as teacher of Indian girls. "She possessed," says Finley, "more courage and fortitude than any one of her age and sex that I have been acquainted with. In a short time the intrepid female missionary

was warmly accepted by the whole nation. They looked upon her as an angel-messenger sent from the spirit land to teach them the way to heaven. They called her the 'pretty redbird,' and were only happy in the light of her smiles. This most amiable young lady took charge of the Indian girls, and began to teach them their letters, and infuse into them her own sweet and happy spirit."

It was not long before five leading chiefs, Big Tree, Between-the-Logs, Mononcue, Hicks, and Peacock, joined the Church. Big Tree was the first convert of his tribe. Between-the-Logs became a powerful preacher; but Mononcue excelled him in the peculiar aboriginal eloquence, and "was," says Finley, "a son of thunder." All these, and hundreds more, after useful lives, died in the faith, but not till they saw Methodist missions established among their people from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

In about three years after Stewart went, solitary and unsupported, on his mission, the "Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church" arose. Its necessity had become obvious. It threw its protecting arms around all the Indian missions, and has since reached them out, with the gospel of peace, to nearly all the ends of the earth.

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Part 4

A CHALLENGE MET AND OVERCOME

In his missionary work, Stewart fearlessly denounced the absurdities of the Romish Church, and appealed to the Bible in support of his affirmations. Those uninformed natives who had been instructed by Roman priests concluded that there must be a discrepancy between his Bible and the one used by the priests. To decide this question it was mutually agreed by the parties to submit it to Mr. Walker, the sub-agent. On a day appointed for the examination, Stewart and the adverse chiefs appeared before the chosen arbiter. A profound silence reigned among the numerous spectators who had assembled to witness the scene. Mr. Walker carefully compared the two Bibles, and examined the hymns, each party looking on with intense anxiety for the result. At length the examination closed, and Mr. Walker declared to the assembly that the Bible used by Stewart was genuine, and that the hymns breathed the spirit of true religion. During the whole transaction Stewart sat with great tranquillity, eyeing the assembly with an affectionate solicitude, conscious that innocence and truth would gain the victory -- and when it was declared, the countenances of the Christian party beamed with joy, and their souls exulted in God their Saviour -- while their opposers stood rebuked and confounded.

Though the assembly before whom Stewart appeared in Upper Sandusky was less august and imposing than the one before whom Luther appeared, at the Diet of Worms, yet the question to be decided at the former was no less momentous to the interests of Stewart and his party than the one which hung suspended during the admirable address of Luther was to him and his party. While, therefore, we may contrast in our minds the two personages who had submitted their cause to the decisions of others, we may not unprofitably compare them as being analogous in their consequences to their respective nations. Luther, towering above his fellows in learning, in eloquence, in piety, and in evangelical knowledge, was pleading the cause of truth before one of the most august assemblies ever convened to decide the fate of an individual. Stewart, unlettered,

rude in speech, limited in knowledge, though humble and devout, was silently looking on while his fate hung suspended upon the decision of a single man. How striking the contrast! And yet how analogous the cause and its results Luther, surrounded by princes, nobles, judges, bishops, and priests, awed by the presence of the emperor of all Germany and Spain combined, in one of the most magnificent cathedrals in the kingdom, stood firm in the strength of his God, and fearlessly advocated his cause in the face of that imposing array of civil and ecclesiastical authority which was leagued against him. Stewart, on the contrary, accompanied by a few converted Indians, stood in the presence of the chiefs of the nation, most of whom had declared themselves adverse to his doctrines and measures, surrounded by an assemblage of rude barbarians in the rough cabin of an American Indian! Those Germans, however, who had embraced the principles of the Reformation were not more interested in the fate of Luther, than the trembling Indians who had embraced Christianity were for the result of the deliberations of Mr. Walker.

But while Luther and his doctrines were condemned by a decree of the Diet of Worms, Stewart was acquitted by the decision of the umpire to whom the question had been submitted. Luther, therefore, had to act in opposition to the highest authority of the empire, with the fulminating sentence of the pope ringing in his ears, while Stewart went forth under the protection of the chief council of the nation, patronized by the Church of his choice, preaching Jesus and him crucified. Was not God's hand alike visible in each case? Nor was Stewart more contemptible in the eyes of the pagan chieftains than Luther was in the estimation of the pope and his obsequious cardinals and bishops. And perhaps the time may come when the name of John Stewart, as humble as were his claims in his lifetime, shall beheld in as high estimation by the descendants of the converted Indians, as is that of Martin Luther by the church which bears his name. They both had faults, because they were both human beings; but let their faults be buried beneath the same turf which hides their moldering bodies from human view, while their spirits, alike indebted to the blood of the Lamb for their deliverance from the slavery of sin, shall shine amidst the heavens for ever and ever.

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Part 5

1819 -- TESTIMONIES OF CONVERTS UNDER STEWART'S MINISTRY

In 1819, the very year in which the Methodist Missionary Society was formed, Stewart's Wyandotte mission was taken under the superintendence of the Ohio Conference. On August 7th the conference was held in Cincinnati. James B. Finley was appointed to the Lebanon district, and took the Wyandotte mission under his care.

At a quarterly meeting, held in November of this year, on Mad river circuit, forty-two miles from Upper Sandusky, about sixty of these native converts were present, among whom were Between-the-logs, Mononcue, Hicks, Scuteash, and the two interpreters, Pointer and Armstrong. And that the reader may judge respecting the genuineness of the work which had been wrought in the hearts and lives of these people, following is an account of the manner in which some of them related their Christian experience.

Between-the-logs arose first in the love-feast, and lifting his eyes to heaven, streaming with tears of penitence and gratitude, said: --

"My dear brethren, I am happy this morning that the Great Spirit has permitted us to assemble here for so good a purpose as to worship him, and to strengthen the cords of love and friendship. This is the first meeting of the kind which has been held for us, and now, my dear brethren, I am happy that we, who have been so long time apart, and enemies to one another, are come together as brothers, at which our Great Father is well pleased. For my part, I have been a very wicked man, and have committed many great sins against the Good Spirit, was addicted to drinking whiskey and many evils: but I thank my good God that I am yet alive, and that he has most perfectly opened my eyes by his ministers and the good book to see these evils, and has given me help to forsake them and turn away from them. Now I feel peace in my heart with God and all men; but I feel just like a little child beginning to walk; sometimes very weak, and almost ready to give up; then I pray, and my Great Father hears me, and gives me the blessing; then I feel strong and happy; then I walk again; so sometimes up and sometimes down. I want you all to pray for me, that I may never sin any more, but always live happy and die happy. Then I shall meet you all in our Great Father's house above, and be happy for ever."

This speech was attended with great power to the hearts of the people.

The next who arose was Hicks, who had become a most temperate and zealous advocate for the Christian religion. His speech was not interpreted entirely, but after expressing his gratitude to God for what he then felt, and hoped to enjoy, he exhorted his Indian brethren to be much engaged for a blessing, and enforced his exhortation in the following manner:--

"When I was a boy, my parents used to send me on errands, and sometimes I saw so many new things to attract my attention, I would say, By and by I will ask, until I would forget what I was sent for, and have to go home without it. So it may be with you. You have come here to get a blessing, but if you do not ask for it you will have to go home without it, and the wicked Indians will laugh at you for coming so far for nothing. Now seek, now ask, and if you get the blessing you will be happy, and go home light, and then be strong to resist evil and to do good."

He concluded by imploring a blessing upon his brethren.

Scuteash next arose, and, with a smiling and serene countenance, said:

"I have been a great sinner, and such a drunkard as made me commit many great sins, and the Great Spirit was very mad with me, so that in here" (pointing to his breast) "always sick -- no sleep -- no eat -- walk -- walk -- drink whiskey. Then I pray to the Great Spirit to help me to quit getting drunk, and to forgive me all my sins; and God did do something for me -- I do not know from whence it comes nor where it goes, but it came all over me." (Here he cried out, "Waugh! Waugh!" as if shocked with electricity) "Now me no more sick. Me sleep, eat, and no more get drunk -- no more drink whiskey -- no more bad man. Me cry -- me meet you all in our Great Father's house, and be happy for ever."

At the conclusion of the love-feast there were not less than three hundred white people assembled from the neighboring frontier settlements, to whom Mr. Finley preached with great effect. The manifest attention in the appearance and general deportment of the Indian converts, together with the preaching, had a most salutary effect upon the audience.

The next evening, at the earnest request of the natives, the meeting was resumed. After an exhortation from Mr. Finley, Mononcue arose and exhorted his brethren to look for the blessing they sought now. He then addressed the white brethren as follows:--

"Fathers and brethren, I am happy this night before the Great Spirit that made all men, both red, white, and black, that he has favored us with good weather for our meeting, and brought us together that we may help one another to get good and do good. The Great Spirit has taught you and us both in one thing, that we should love one another, and fear and obey him. Us Indians he has taught by his Spirit; and you, white men, he has taught by your good book, which is all one. But your book teaches you, and us by you, more plainly than we were taught before, what is for our good ... Our feasts, rattles, and sacrifices, and dances ... we now see were not all right. Now some of our nation are trying to do better; but we have many hindrances, some of which I mean to tell.

"The white men tell us they love us, and we believe some do, and wish us well; but a great many do not, for they will bring us whiskey, which has been the ruin of our people. I can compare whiskey to nothing but the devil; for it brings with it all kinds of evil -- it destroys our happiness; it makes Indians poor; strips our squaws and children of their clothes and food; makes us lie, steal, and kill one another. All these and many other evils it brings among us; therefore you ought not to bring it among us ... Now this whiskey is a curse to yourselves why not quit making it? This is one argument used by wicked Indians against the good book; If it is so good; why do not white men all do good?

"Another hindrance is, white men cheat Indians, take away their money and skins for nothing. Now you tell us your good book forbids all this; why not then do what it tells you? then Indians do right too.

"Again, you say our Great Father loves all men, white, black, and red men, that do right; then why do you look at Indians as below you, and treat them as if they were not brothers? Does your good book tell you so? I am sure it does not. Now, brothers, let us all do right; then our Great Father will be pleased, and will make us happy in this world, and when we die then we shall all live together in his house above, and always be happy."

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Part 6

1820 -- THE WYANDOTTES ALSO BECAME MISSIONARIES

Converted Wyandottes bore, in 1820, the news of their evangelization to a portion of their tribe, near Fort Maiden, in Canada; two Indian preachers went thither, converts were multiplied, and, twelve years later, there were nine aboriginal missionary stations in Upper Canada, two thousand adult Indians, and four hundred youths were receiving instruction in eleven schools, and

the names of John Sunday, Peter Jones, and other native evangelists, became eminent in the Church and in Europe.

At the Ohio conference, which was held in 1820, in Chillicothe, the chiefs of the Wyandottes presented a petition to the conference for a regular missionary to be appointed over them. It will doubtless be both pleasing and edifying to the reader to know the orderly method by which the whole affair of preparing and presenting this petition was conducted, as it will show that these people were governed by the principles of democracy in coming to a final determination of any important question, while the executive authority was confided to their chief men. The following is Mr. Finley's account of this transaction:--

"Sunday, 16th July, in the Wyandotte council house, Upper Sandusky, at the close of public worship, was my last address to the Wyandottes by the interpreter. 'My friends, and you chiefs and speakers in particular, I have one word more to say; I expect to meet our good old chiefs and fathers in the church at Chillicothe before I come to see you again, and they will ask me how you come on in serving the Lord, and if you want them to keep sending you preachers any longer, to tell you the good word, or if you have any choice in preachers to come and teach you.'

"The answer -- 'Our chiefs are not all here, and we must have all our chiefs and queens together, and they must all speak their minds, and then we will let the old father know.'

"They appointed to meet me at Negro town on Wednesday evening, on my return from Seneca town; and, having returned, found them assembled and prepared to answer. On entering in among them a seat was set in the midst of the room, and I requested to take the seat, which I declined; but took my seat in their circle against the wall, and directed the interpreter to take the middle seat, which was done. After a short silence I spoke. 'Dear friends and brothers, I am thankful to find you all here, and am now prepared to hear your answer.'

"Mononcue, chairman and speaker for them all, answered:--

" 'We let our old father know that we have put the question round which was proposed on Sunday evening in the council house, and our queens give their answer first, saying,

" 'We thank the old father for coming to see us so often, and speaking the good word to us, and we want him to keep coming and never forsake us; and we let him know that we love this religion too well to give it up while we live, for we think it will go bad with our people if they quit this religion; and we want our good brother Stewart to stay always among us, and our brother Jonathan too, and to help us along as they have done. Next we let the old father know what our head chiefs and the others have to say. They are willing that the gospel word should be continued among them, and they will try to do good themselves and help others to do so too; but as for the other things that are mentioned, they say, We give it all over to our speakers; just what they say we agree to; they know better about these things than we do, and they may let the old father know their mind.'

"The speakers reply for themselves:--

" We thank the fathers in conference for sending us preachers to help our brother Stewart, and we desire the old father to keep coming at least another year when his year is out; and we want our brother Armstrong to come as often as he can, and our brothers Stewart and Jonathan to stay among us and help us as they have done; and we hope our good fathers will not give us up because so many of our people are wicked and do wrong, for we believe some white men are wicked yet, that had the good word preached to them longer than our people; and our great heavenly Father has had long patience with us all; and we let the old father know that we, the speakers, will not give over speaking and telling our people to live in the right way; and if any of us do wrong we will still try to help him right, and let none go wrong; and we will try to make our head chiefs and all our people better, and we are one in voice with our queens, and we all join in giving thanks to our good fathers that care for our souls, and are willing to help our people; and we want them all to pray for us, and we will pray for them, and we hope our great heavenly Father will bless us all, and this is the last.' "

Their request was granted, and Moses Hinkle, senior, was appointed a missionary to Upper Sandusky. Being aided and encouraged by so many influential chiefs, and others of the tribe who had embraced the Christian faith, the missionary entered upon his work with a fair prospect of success; nor was he disappointed in his expectations, though it required much labor and skill to bring them into gospel order, according to our disciplinary regulations.

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Part 7

1822 -- BISHOP MCKENDREE'S REPORT ABOUT THE WYANDOTTE WORK

The aboriginal missions, which had been begun under such favorable auspices, and which promised so much good to the wandering tribes of our wildernesses, continued to prosper this year more than ever. These, together with the exertions which were made in their behalf, tended powerfully to awaken a deep and lively interest through the ranks of our Israel in favor of prosecuting the cause with increasing zeal and energy. The Wyandotte mission, which had been committed to the care of Mr. Finley, was this year visited by Bishop McKendree, who entered most heartily into the cause of missions, contributing to its support, and giving, by his example, an impetus to the work in every direction. And as his testimony is that of an eye-witness, capable of estimating the nature and importance of the reformation which had been effected among these people, the reader will be pleased to read it in the bishop's own words. It is as follows:

"On Saturday, the 21st of June, about ten o'clock in the morning, we arrived safe, and found the mission family and the school all in good health; but was much fatigued myself, through affliction and warm weather, which was quite oppressive to me in crossing over the celebrated Sandusky Plains, through which the road lies.

"In the afternoon we commenced visiting the schools, and repeated our visits frequently during the five days which we stayed with them. These visits were highly gratifying to us, and they afforded us an opportunity of observing the behavior of the children, both in and out of school, their improvement in learning, and the whole order and management of the school; together with the proficiency of the boys in agriculture, and of the girls in the various domestic arts. They are

sewing and spinning handsomely, and would be weaving if they had looms. The children are cleanly, chaste in their manners, kind to each other, peaceable and friendly to all. They promptly obey orders, and do their work cheerfully, without any objection or murmur. They are regular in their attendance on family devotion and the public worship of God, and sing delightfully. Their proficiency in learning was gratifying to us, and is well spoken of by visitors. If they do not sufficiently understand what they read it is for the want of suitable books, especially a translation of English words, lessons, hymns, &c., into their own tongue.

"But the change which has been wrought among the adult Indians is wonderful! This people, 'that walked in darkness, have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.' And they have been 'called from darkness into the marvelous light' of the gospel. To estimate correctly the conversion of these Indians from heathenish darkness, it should be remembered that the Friends (or Quakers) were the first to prepare them in some degree for the introduction of the gospel, by patiently continuing to counsel them, and to afford them pecuniary aid.

"The first successful missionary that appeared among them was Mr. Stewart, a colored man, and a member of our Church. The state of these Indians is thus described by him, in a letter to a friend, dated in June last:"

" 'The situation of the Wyandotte nation of Indians when I first arrived among them, near six years ago, may be judged of from their manner of living. Some of their houses were made of small poles, and covered with bark; others of bark altogether. Their farms contained from about two acres to less than half an acre. The women did nearly all the work that was done. They had as many as two plows in the nation, but these were seldom used. In a word, they were really in a savage state.'

"But now they are building hewed log houses, with brick chimneys, cultivating their lands, and successfully adopting the various agricultural arts. They now manifest a relish for, and begin to enjoy the benefits of civilization; and it is probable that some of them will this year raise an ample support for their families, from the produce of their farms.

"There are more than two hundred of them who have renounced heathenism and embraced the Christian religion, giving unequivocal evidence of their sincerity, of the reality of a divine change. Our missionaries have taken them under their pastoral care as probationers for membership in our Church, and are engaged in instructing them in the doctrine and duties of our holy religion, though the various duties of the missionaries prevent them from devoting sufficient time for the instruction of these inquirers after truth. But the Lord hath mercifully provided helpers, in the conversion of several of the interpreters and a majority of the chiefs of the nation. The interpreters, feeling themselves the force of divine truth, and entering more readily into the plan of the gospel, are much more efficient organs for communicating instruction to the Indians. Some of these chiefs are men of sound judgment, and strong, penetrating minds; and having been more particularly instructed, have made great proficiency in the knowledge of God and of divine truths; and being very zealous, they render important assistance in the good work. The regularity of conduct, the solemnity and devotion of this people, in time of divine service, of which I witnessed a pleasing example, is rarely exceeded in our own worshipping assemblies.

"To the labors and influence of these great men, the chiefs, may also in some degree be attributed the good conduct of the children in school. Three of the chiefs officiate in the school as a committee to preserve good order and obedience among the children. I am told that Between-the-logs, the principal speaker, has lectured the school children in a very able and impressive manner, on the design and benefit of the school, attention to their studies, and obedience to their teachers. This excellent man is also a very zealous and a useful preacher of righteousness. He has, in conjunction with others of the tribe, lately visited a neighboring nation, and met with encouragement.

"On the third day after our arrival we dined with Between-the-logs and about twenty of their principal men, six of whom were chiefs and three interpreters, and were very agreeably and comfortably entertained. After dinner we were all comfortably seated, a few of us on benches, the rest on the grass, under a pleasant grove of shady oaks, and spent about two hours in council. I requested them to give us their views of the state of the school; to inform us, without reserve, of any objections they might have to the order and management thereof, and to suggest any alteration they might wish. I also desired to know how their nation liked our religion, and how those who had embraced it were prospering.

"Their reply was appropriate, impressive, and dignified, embracing distinctly every particular inquiry, and in the order they were proposed to them. The substance of their reply was, that they thought the school was in a good state and very prosperous; were perfectly satisfied with its order and management, pleased with the superintendent and teachers, and gratified with the improvement of the children. It was their anxious wish for its permanence and success. They gave a pleasing account of those who had embraced religion, as to their moral conduct and inoffensive behavior, and attention to their religious duties. They heartily approved of the religion they had embraced, and were highly pleased with the great and effectual reformation which had taken place among them.

"In the close they expressed the high obligations they were under to all their kind friends and benefactors, and in a very respectful and feeling manner thanked their visitors, and the superintendent and teachers, for their kind attention to themselves and to their children; and concluded with a devout wish for the prosperity and eternal happiness of them and all their kind friends. It was an affecting scene, and tears bespoke their sincerity.

"To this school there are Indian children sent from Canada. Others which were lately sent were detained and taken into another school, at the rapids of Maumee, under the direction of the Presbyterians. An apology was written by the superintendent thereof to ours, stating that the detention was made on the presumption that our school was full, &c.

"When we reflect upon the state of the Wyandottes, compared with their former savage condition, we may surely exclaim, 'What hath God wrought!' 'The parched ground hath become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; the wilderness and the solitary place is made glad, and the desert blossoms as the rose.' The marks of a genuine work of grace among these sons of the forest accord so perfectly with the history of the great revivals of religion in all ages of the Church, that no doubt remains of its being the work of God.

"That a great and effectual door is opened on our frontier for the preaching of the gospel to the Indian nations which border thereon, and that we are providentially called to the work, I have no doubt. The only question is, Are we prepared to obey the call? The success of our missionary labors does not depend on the interference of miraculous power, as in the case of the apostles, but on the ordinary operations and influences of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of a gospel ministry, supported by the liberality of a generous people.

"We have lately received an invitation from a distinguished officer of the government to extend our missionary labors to a distant nation of Indians. A gentleman of this state who has visited New Orleans has taken a deep interest in its favor; and from the great increase of population from other states, and the great probability of doing good at least among them, he urges another attempt. And from his influence, his ability, and disposition to minister to its support, we entertain a hope of success.

"From a general view of our missions, and of what the Lord is doing by us, we certainly have abundant cause to 'thank God and take courage,' and to persevere faithfully and diligently in the great work, looking to the great Head of the Church, that he may bless our labors and crown them with success.

"Yours in the bonds of the gospel of peace."

Nor is the following account less interesting and illustrative of the power of gospel truth. It is from the pen of the Rev. G. R. Jones, who was present and witnessed the ceremony which he describes in the following words:--

"At our late Ohio annual conference, held in Urbana, there were several of the red, and one or two of the colored brethren present, from the Wyandotte mission at Upper Sandusky. Several interviews took place between our general superintendents and them, during the sitting of the conference, at Bishop McKendree's room, at one of which I was present part of the time.

"A few friends were invited to be present at this interview. As breaking bread together has been a token of hospitality and friendship among most nations, a cup of tea was prepared by the family, and at a suitable time they were waited on with it. Bishop McKendree, without any previous arrangement or design, appears to have been made a kind of master of ceremonies -- he was waited on first. The sagacity of the red brethren was quite observable; they kept their eye on him, and conformed in every particular. Jonathan, a man of color, (who has served the mission from the beginning as an interpreter, and who, while engaged in this work, became convinced of sin, and happily converted to God,) was one of the company; he modestly declined partaking with them, but, being pressingly solicited by Bishop McKendree, yielded. After the repast was over, the red brethren joined in singing several hymns in their own tongue, during which a number in the house within hearing crowded into the room, until there might have been as many as forty present; Mononcue (a chief) rose, and, approaching Bishop McKendree respectfully, held out the hand of friendship, which was cordially received, and a warm embrace took place; this appears to have taken off all restraint. Between-the-logs (another chief) followed his example, and they proceeded round to all in the room, while sighs and tears witnessed the feelings of most who were present;

but they were sighs of gratitude and astonishment, and tears of joy. The spirit of hostile foes in the field of battle was lost in the spirit of harmony and Christian love, which appeared to fill the room. I have witnessed few scenes which carried stronger conviction to my heart of the truth and excellence of the religion of the meek and humble Jesus. I was ready to cry out and say, 'What hath the Lord wrought!'

"A worthy gentleman, high in office and respectability, had received an invitation, and was present at the interview. It seems he had imbibed an opinion, which is perhaps prevalent among politicians, that it is impracticable to Christianize the aborigines of our country. He was placed in a part of the room farthest from the door. When the chiefs approached him all his unbelief appears to have, given way, his arms were open to give the friendly embrace, while the flowing tear bore witness to a reciprocity of feeling. He was heard to exclaim, a day or two afterward, 'I am fully converted!'

"At the close of the singing by the red brethren Bishop Roberts made a few appropriate remarks, and we all joined him in singing, at the close of which, from the fulness of his heart, he offered up a fervent prayer. We again joined in singing, and one of the chiefs, (Between-the-logs,) being called on, prayed in a very feeling manner, while every heart appeared to respond the hearty amen! The meeting was then drawn to a close."

The mission now contained one hundred and fifty four members of the Church and sixty scholars, who were taught letters and the duties of domestic life.

John Stewart continued to hold forth the word of life to the Wyandottes as opportunity favored, and as the product of his labors and instrumentality, the mission to the Wyandottes was established by the Methodist Church.

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Part 8

DECEMBER 17, 1823 -- JOHN STEWART'S DEATH

Among others who departed to another world this year [1823] was John Stewart, who first carried the gospel to the Wyandotte Indians. Of his early life we have seen something in our account of the Wyandotte mission. He seems to have been peculiarly fitted for his work. Sincere, simple-hearted, much devoted to the cause in which he had engaged, he adapted himself with a ready and willing mind to the condition and circumstances of those people, won their confidence and affection by his honest simplicity, and, by the blessing of God on his exertions, conducted them away from the absurdities of heathenism by the charms of gospel truth and love.

His entire devotion to the interests of the mission, his intense application to meet its spiritual wants, and the privations to which he was subjected in his early residence among them, so wore upon his constitution, that in the course of this year it became manifest that his health was fast declining, and that the days of his pilgrimage were near their end.

When so exhausted in his physical powers as to be unable to labor for his support, his temporal wants were provided for by his friends. About fifty acres of land, on which was built a cabin for his accommodation, was secured to him in without charge. Here he lived the remainder of his days, and on his demise the property was inherited by his brother. In this place, loved and honored by those who had been benefited by his evangelical labors, he lingered along the shores of mortality until December the 17th, 1823, when he fell asleep in Jesus, in the thirty-seventh year of his age, and the seventh of his labors in the missionary field. On his death-bed he gave the most consoling evidence of his faith in Christ and hope of immortality, exhorting his affectionate wife to faithfulness to her Lord and Master, and testifying with his latest breath to the goodness of God.

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Part 9

1824 -- THE INFLUENCE OF JOHN STEWART'S MINISTRY LIVED ON

During a visit to the Wyandottes in 1824, bishops McKendree and Soule were greatly delighted at the change which had resulted from the labors of the missionaries among the Wyandottes, both in the temporal and spiritual condition of this people. Their religion had consisted of paganism and some of the ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church. They were really pagans, although baptized by the priests and claimed by them as Christians. They kept up their heathen worship their feasts, songs, and dances; and so strong was their belief in witchcraft, that numbers had been put to death as witches under this belief. Drunkenness, poverty, nakedness, and misery abounded. Hunting was their chief, if not their only resource, for a living. But now a large majority had renounced their old faith and practices. Many had joined our Church and were strictly attentive to the means of grace. The tomahawk and the scalping knife, the rifle and the bow, had been substituted by the ax, the plow, and the hoe. The habits of Christian, social, and domestic life prevailed. At the manual labor mission school a fine farm was in full operation, supplying abundantly the wants of the mission family and school with corn, wheat, oats, rye, flax, and a great variety and profusion of vegetables. The Indians were imitating this model establishment.

On the Sabbath both of the bishops preached to a large assembly through the interpreter. By appointment, they met a number of the leaders of the Nation -- the chiefs and the moderator of the national council. Bishop McKendree, after addressing them, invited them to inform him of their views in relation to the mission and the general interests of the Nation.

Menoncue, Punch, Gray Eyes, Peacock, Between-the-Logs, Driver, Washington, and Big Tree replied. They gratefully adverted to the change in the creed, manners, morals, and condition which had resulted from the mission, and earnestly asked that it might be continued. "Bishop McKendree," says Bishop Soule, "continued visiting from house to house, attended by an interpreter," explaining experimental religion and enforcing its practical precepts.

On August 14 they left, impressed and delighted with the visit. Bishop Soule, who had never before been among the Indians, was especially surprised and pleased; and both of them, through the remainder of their lives, often adverted to the scene, which seemed to linger in their memories like the echo of an enchanting song heard long ago.

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Part 10

IN CONTEMPLATION OF JOHN STEWART

In the contemplation of such a man, we cannot but admire the wisdom of God in the selection of means to accomplish his designs of mercy toward the outcasts of men. Born in humble life, destitute of the advantages of education, unauthorized and unprotected by any body of Christians when he first entered upon his enterprise, influenced solely by the impulses of his own mind, produced, as he believed, and as the event proved, by the dictates of the Holy Spirit, Stewart sets off on an errand of mercy to the Indian tribes of the wilderness. Here he arrives, a stranger among a strange people; and opens his mission by a simple narration of the experience of divine grace upon his heart, and of the motives which prompted him to forsake home and kindred, and devote himself to their spiritual interests. Having gained their attention, he explains to them, in the simplest language of truth, the fundamental doctrines of Jesus Christ, contrasting them with the absurdities of heathenism and the falsehoods of a corrupted form of Christianity.

No sooner does the word take effect, than a violent opposition arises against this humble and unpretending servant of Jesus Christ, which he meets with Christian courage, and bears with the fortitude of a well-trained soldier of the cross. By the strength of God resting upon him, he manfully buffets the storms of persecution which raged around him, and calmly guides his little bark over the threatening billows until it is conducted into a harbor of peace and safety. Seeking for the wisdom that cometh from above, he is enabled to unravel the sophistry of error, to refute the calumnies of falsehood, to silence the cavilings, and to establish firmly the truth as it is in Jesus. Did not God "choose the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty?"

Who does not look on with a trembling anxiety for the result, while the umpire was deliberating upon his fate, at that memorable time when he submitted his Bible and Hymn Book to the inspection of Mr. Walker, that he might determine whether or not they were genuine! And who can forbear participating in the general shout of exultation when the momentous question was decided in his favor! During these anxious moments the heart of Stewart must have beat high amidst hopes and fears, while the fate of his mission apparently hung poised upon the decision of a question which involved the dearest interests of the nation for whose welfare he had risked his all! But the God whom he served pleaded his cause, silenced the clamor of his enemies, disappointed the machinations of the wicked, and gave a signal triumph to the virtues of honesty, simplicity, and godly sincerity. In this triumph was fulfilled the inspired and inspiring declaration, "One shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight."

In all the subsequent conduct of Stewart we behold a combination of those excellences which the Spirit of God alone can engraft and nourish in the human heart. "The excellency of the power," therefore, which was conspicuous in the life and conduct of Stewart, reflected the rays of Him who had most evidently made him "a chosen vessel to bear his name unto the Gentiles" in the American wilds. Humble and unpretending as he was, his name will ever be associated with those men of God who had the high honor of first carrying the light of divine truth to the darkened tribes of our forests. And this record is made as a just tribute of respect to the memory of one whom God

delighted to honor as the evangelical pioneer to the Methodist Episcopal Church in her career of usefulness among the long neglected children of our own wide domain.

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THE END