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AN INDIAN VENTURE: THE HISTORY OF
MISSOURI SYNOD INDIAN MISSIONS IN
MICHIGAN AND MINNESOTA, 1840-1868

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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CHAPTER I

INDIANS AND MISSIONARIES

Two ideas have prevailed as to the way of making "good Indians." The first was the belief of such men as Andrew Jackson, who said that "the only good Indian is a dead one," and who, therefore, sought to carry out this mission by evicting the Indians from their hunting grounds or by exterminating them in their villages. Thus, from the Spanish conquest and rule with its massacres of thousands of Indians in Mexico to Peru, to the slaughter of 98 disarmed warriors and two hundred women and children on December 29, 1890, at Wounded Knee, this special breed of white men sought to impress upon the Indian mind that he had come to rule and that the Indian must either obey or die.¹ The other idea sought to make the Indian "good" by transforming him into a civilized creature and christianizing him by the proclamation of the Gospel. Motivated by a sentimental romanticism or by humanistic philanthropy or by a conviction of the Gospel message, men and organizations labored to save the Indian from himself and his enemies and to incorporate him into the new American society of the free. The history of the American Indian is

¹John Collier, Indians of the Americas: The Long Hope (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1948), p. 140.

the story of these two classes of men competing with each other for the life of the Indian; to make the Indian "good" by the bullet or the Book.

Roman Catholicism had been actively seeking to convert the Indians to the Roman faith before the arrival of the first English colonists on the Atlantic seaboard. This missionary interest came with the arrival of the Dominicans to Haiti and Cuba in 1510 and expanded to Latin and South America under the Spanish flag.² Outstanding among the missionaries in New Spain was Bartolomé de Las Casas, who labored to safeguard the rights of the Indians urging the Spanish Crown to forbid the entry to the continental America of any secular adventurer, of any mercenary or soldier, or of any missionary seeking to proselytize through over persuasion or force.³ But the followers of Las Casa failed to heed his admonitions and substituted "fiat leadership for native leadership, fiat forms for native forms, fiat motivation for native motivation - they substituted, in fact, a fiat society for a native society."⁴

French Roman Catholics also endeavored to convert the American Indian to the papal faith. The earliest contact be-

²William Christie Macleod, The American Indian Frontier (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. LTD. and New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928), p. 101.

³Collier, op. cit., p. 75.

⁴Ibid., p. 77.

tween the French and the Indians appears to have occurred in the early sixteenth century when French fishermen began to visit the shores of Newfoundland. In the expeditions of 1534-36, Jacques Cartier is said to have made the sign of the cross over some sick Indians telling them of the passion of Christ.⁵ Though civil wars in France prevented further expansion in the new world for some time, these efforts were resumed with the establishment of a settlement at Port Royal near the present Annapolis in Nova Scotia. Mission work among the natives was begun in 1611 when two Jesuits, Biard and Masse, arrived in Port Royal.⁶ At first the Recollets and later the Jesuits continued and expanded Roman Catholic missions, exploring and establishing mission stations. By 1674 the Jesuits had missions among the Ottawas at Sault Ste. *Marie, at Green Bay in Wisconsin, at Chequamegon on the southwest shore of Lake Superior and at St. Ignace in Michigan.⁷ Due to the missionary explorations of Father Jacques Marquette, missions were soon begun in Illinois. Nevertheless, the story of missions of the French priests in North America is one of heroism and misfortune more than of accom-

⁵Kenneth Scott Latourette, "Three Centuries of Advance A.D. 1500-A.D. 1800," A History of the Expansion of Christianity (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), III, 171.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 180.

plishment. Evaluating the mission work done by these French priests, Latourette is forced to conclude:

French rule on the North American Continent was much more brief than that of Spain or England. The Indian population was scanty, not easily reduced to an ordered life, and dwindled through war, disease and alcohol. Missions among the Indians, although their annals are marked by heroism and martyrdoms, had sparse results in the form of continuing Christian communities. . . . Christianity was forced to face intertribal wars, accentuated by the use of the white man's fire-arms, and the demoralization of the Indians by the white man's diseases and liquor -- to which the red man was unusually susceptible. Christianity, through the missionaries, helped to mitigate the asperities of war by inducing Christian Indians to forego some of the torture applied traditionally to captive foes. It also fought the use of liquor and the sale of liquor by white traders. That some remnants of Indians survived the impact of the European and persisted, often fairly happily, in the new society, was due in no small degree to the missionary and to Christianity.⁸

The Protestants who had begun to colonize the Atlantic seaboard, no less than their Roman Catholic precursors, labored to win the Indians to the Gospel, carrying on missionary efforts to the back country of the English colonies. Exhorted by the Reverend Alexander Whitaker, "Apostle to Virginia," the colonists of Virginia and the people of England were encouraged to furnish money and send men "who may venture their persons hither, and here not only serve God but helpe these poore Indians."⁹ Moved by his pleas, as well as the visit of

⁸Ibid., pp. 184-5.

⁹William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religions in America (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1930), p. 46.

Pocahontas, the first Indian convert won to Christianity through the influence of Whitaker, some fifteen hundred pounds was subscribed through several English bishoprics for an Indian college at Henreco.¹⁰ But this early interest in the Christianization and education of the Indians in Virginia was destroyed by the great Indian massacre of 1622.¹¹

Like their southern neighbors, the people of New England also endeavored to Christianize the Indians: John Eliot, called the Apostle to the Indians, preached his first sermon in the Indian language in 1646 four miles from Roxbury.¹² His arduous and sacrificial labors were not in vain, for in 1651 Eliot organized the first Protestant Indian Church in America at Natick after the manner of the Congregational churches. In September, 1661, he published the New Testament in the Indian language and three years later the Old Testament was added, so that the aborigines now possessed the whole Bible as well as a catechism and the Psalms of David in meter in their own tongue.¹³ The same year that Eliot began his work among the Indians of Massachusetts, a similar work was

¹⁰Ibid., p. 49.

¹¹Ibid., p. 226.

¹²Ibid., p. 227.

¹³Edward Payson Johnson, "Early Missionary Work among the North American Indians," Papers of the American Society of Church History, edited by William Walker Rockwell (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), Second Series, III, 30.

begun by Thomas Mayhew among the Indians on the island of Martha's Vineyard.¹⁴ After his death in 1657, the mission work was continued by John Mayhew and later by his son, Experience Mayhew, who served five or six Indian congregations.¹⁵ Nor were the early Swedish Lutheran colonists remiss in ministering to their red neighbors. John Campanius labored among the Indians in Delaware translating Luther's Small Catechism into the Indian language.¹⁶

King Philip's War (1675-1676) ended the first phase of New England Indian missions. It was the new humanitarianism arising out of the great colonial revivals that initiated the second phase of Protestant Indian missions.¹⁷ A mission was established to the Housatonic Indians in 1734 by John Sargeant, who was later succeeded by Jonathan Edwards, who served the Indians in a new settlement called Stockbridge.¹⁸ David Brainerd, Edward's prospective son-in-law, preached among the Indians in New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut until his untimely death at the age of twenty-nine.¹⁹ With the inde-

¹⁴Sweet, op. cit., p. 230.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 231.

¹⁶Abdel Ross Wentz, The Lutheran Church in American History, Second Edition (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1933), p. 42.

¹⁷Sweet, op. cit., p. 232.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Thomas C. Moffett, The American Indian on the New Trail (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1914), p. 69.

pendence of the Thirteen Colonies, the United States government determined to assist the missionaries in their efforts to civilize the Indians realizing the importance that religion must have in any such endeavors. Thus, Washington's Secretary of War recommended to Congress in 1789 that missionaries should be employed and supported in reorienting the Indian in his economic, social, political, and religious life. Thus, he suggested that:

Missionaries of excellent character should be appointed to reside in their nation, who should be well supplied with all the implements of husbandry, and the necessary stock for a farm. . . . These men . . . should in no degree be concerned in trade, or the purchase of land, to rouse the jealousy of the Indians. They should be their friends and fathers.²⁰

The War of 1812 had temporarily intervened with the Indian program initiated by the government and executed by the missionaries and their denominations. However, with the passing of the Civilization Act of 1819, new impetus was given to missionary activity, which continued until the removal policy of the thirties caused its decline. The Act appropriated an annual sum of ten thousand dollars for the civilization of the tribes adjacent to the frontier settlements and authorized the President of the United States to appoint suitable persons to teach the Indians and to instruct them in agriculture. Though nothing was said in the Act concern-

²⁰William Warren Sweet, Religion in the Development of American Culture 1765-1840 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 241.

ing the teaching of religion, since the Bill of Rights forbade Congress to pass religious laws, it was, nevertheless, understood that these appointees were to teach religion to the Indians.²¹

Numerous missionary societies organized at the close of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century rivaled with one another in attempting to conquer the Indian soul. Most of them had as one of their objectives the conversion of the heathen Indian to Christianity and the conquest of frontier paganism. One of the leaders in the missionary revival was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. In 1830 the American Board was supporting Indian missions to the Cherokees on the Tennessee and Arkansas, the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Osage mission on the Neosho, the Osage mission on the Missouri, a mission at Green Bay, at Mackinaw, at Maumee, and mission work among the New York Indians and the Indians in the Northwest.²² Denominational missionary societies worked with the American Board or alone penetrating the frontier in search of new converts and though the removal policy of the government in the thirties and forties greatly hindered and disrupted the missionary program,

²¹Everett Dick, The Story of the Frontier: A Social History of the Northern Plains and Rocky Mountains from the Earliest White Contacts to the Coming of the Homemaker (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1941), p. 123.

²²Sweet, The Story of Religions in America, p. 360.

work continued. In 1823 the Methodists opened a mission for the Potawatomies on the Fox River in northern Illinois while missions to the New York tribes were instituted in 1829 and 1830.²³ The Ohio Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church appropriated \$2,500 in 1832 to cover the expenses of establishing missions among the Chippewa Indians at Green Bay and elsewhere in the Michigan Territory and in 1833 the work was begun by the Reverend John Clark.²⁴ Missionaries reached out to the Far West when the Methodists sent Jason Lee with a missionary party to begin work among the Oregon Indians in the Willamette Valley, and two years later, in 1836, the American Board sent Dr. and Mrs. Marcus Whitman and the Reverend and Mrs. H. H. Spalding to start work among the Indians in what is now western Washington.²⁵ Thus, the missionaries penetrated the forests in search of the Indian wherever he might be found in the hope that some of them might be made "good."

Among the many Indians whom the missionaries sought to convert were the Chippewas, who, as members of the great Algonquin family, occupied the territory stretching from the At-

²³Sweet, Religion in the Development of American Culture 1765-1840, p. 248.

²⁴Wade Crawford Barclay, "Early American Methodism, 1769-1844," History of Methodist Missions (New York: The Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, 1949), I, 316.

²⁵Sweet, Religion in the Development of American Culture 1765-1840, p. 246.

lantic to the Mississippi, north to the latitude of James Bay and south to that of Cape Hatteras.²⁶ They had resided in Michigan at least a century before the coming of the whites, occupying the eastern part of the lower Peninsula and most of the Upper.²⁷ They were essentially a nomadic people given to hunting and fishing, but also cultivated * some vegetable and manufactured maple sugar. The basic political unit of these Indians was the tribe consisting of people speaking the same dialect, occupying the same territory, and possessing a feeling of kinship. Divided into anywhere from eleven to twenty clans and further divided into smaller units, they were ruled by chiefs who were elected to hold office until their death or until their tribes became dissatisfied with them.²⁸

Like the other Algonquins, the Chippewa Indians believed that a mysterious power dwelt in all objects, animate and in-
*animate. These manitos were supposed to be ever wakeful and quick to hear everything in the summer, though in the winter, after the snow fell, they were supposed to be in a torpid

²⁶J. H. Kennedy, Jesuit and Savage in New France (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 22.

²⁷Compiled by Workers of the Writer's Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Michigan, A Guide to the Wolverine State (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 24-5.

²⁸Ibid., p. 27 and Chase S. Osborn and Stellanova Osborn, Schoolcraft - Longfellow - Hiawatha (Lancaster: The Jacques Cattell Press, 1942), p. 76.

state.²⁹ Special attention was paid to the spirits inhabiting or controlling certain forces in nature and sacrifices were made to the spirits of various objects, such as rocks, rapids, and lakes in the hope of propitiating them.³⁰ Besides these numerous spirits the Chippewas also venerated Ke-sha-non-e-doo, the Benevolent Spirit and believed in Mah-je-mah-ne-doo, the Evil Spirit, who lived under the earth and caused all that which was evil such as illness and death.³¹ Believing that they could communicate with these spirits and that they would reveal themselves through the media of dreams, the Indians would fast for two or four days hoping that the spirits would communicate with them in the shape of some bird or animal.³² Medicine men, combining magic and the healing art, also directed the affairs of the believing Indians, it being supposed that they possessed special powers which could effect the desired results. Among

²⁹Osborn and Osborn, op. cit., p. 73.

³⁰W. Vernon Kintetz, The Indians of the Western Great Lakes, 1615-1760 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1940), pp. 326-27.

³¹George Copway, The Life, History, and Travels of Kah-ge-gah-bown (George Copway), A Young Indian Chief of the Ojibwa Nation, A Convert to the Christian Faith, and a Missionary to His People for Twelve Years; with a Sketch of the Present State of the Ojibwa Nation, in Regard to Christianity and Their Future Prospects. Also an Appeal with All Names of the Chiefs now Living, Who Have Been Christianized, and the Missionaries now Laboring Among Them (Albany: Weed and Parsons, 1847), p. 36.

³²Ibid., pp. 48-9.

the Chippewas the Medewiwin or grand medicine society was a powerful organization. It was secretive and highly resistant to Christian teachings.³³ The missionaries endeavoring to convert the Indians to the Christian faith had to overcome these ancient beliefs and traditions and prove to them that Christianity was superior to their religion. He had to overcome the simple beliefs of the natives and make Christianity simple. He had to undergo the numerous hardships and perils, the filth and the ignorance, the superstition and apathy, and say with Mrs. John Gill Pratt, wife of a New England missionary, that the "sacrifices and inconveniences were forgotten by us when we considered the great object for which we lived and labored -- the conversion of the Indians and their advancement to civilization."³⁴

The Lutherans were among the denominations which sent missionaries to labor among the Chippewa or Ojibway Indians. They labored among this tribe in both Michigan and Minnesota for a period of time spanning almost thirty years. The initial impetus was given by the Reverend Friedrich Schmid, whose early interest in the Chippewa Indians resulted in the establishment of two Lutheran missions at Sebewaing and Shebahyank. At the same time Pastor Wilhelm Loehe of Neuen-dettelsau, in Bavaria, Germany, lent his assistance. This

³³Osborn and Osborn, op. cit., p. 74.

³⁴Dick, op. cit., pp. 137-38.

led to the founding of the mission colony of Frankenmuth and somewhat later the mission station of Bethany. These missions were continued by the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, which acquired the missions of Schmid and Loehe in 1849 and 1850 and sought to expand the Indian mission program into Minnesota in 1856.³⁵ It is the purpose of this thesis to record the history of this Lutheran endeavor giving particular emphasis to the period of 1853 to 1868, a time of heroic efforts and sad disappointments.³⁶

The primary sources employed in recounting and evaluating the history of Lutheran Indian missions in Michigan and Minnesota are numerous and varying in importance. Church periodicals such as Der Lutheraner, Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, and the Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika have been widely employed in the writing of this thesis, the most important of these being Der Lutheraner, which objectively printed many of the mission reports of the missionaries. Besides these sources, the author has also utilized the official reports of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, the district reports of the Northern District,

³⁵Originally known as the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, hereafter referred to as the Synod and Missouri Synod.

³⁶For the earlier period, 1845-1853, see Walter P. Schoenfuhs, "The Life and Labors of Eduard Raimund Baierlein," unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1954.

and the Annual Reports of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church insofar as they were related to the Lutheran Indian missionary enterprise. Valuable information was also found in the autobiography of Missionary E. G. H. Miessler and in Eduard Baierlein's Im Urwalde. Various secondary works, too numerous to mention, have been utilized, some of the more important being several unpublished theses and the three volumes on Early Michigan Settlements by Warren Washburn Florer. Finally, special assistance was given to the author by the Reverend August R. Suelflow, Director of Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis, and by Mr. H. C. Miessler, who graciously furnished his grandfather's autobiography.

CHAPTER II

PLANTING THE SEED

The Work of F. Schmid and W. Loehe in Michigan,
1840-1849

In 1825 Michigan Territory was still virtually a wilderness beyond the bounds of civilization where Indians inhabited huge portions of their land and the settler was confronted with a land of wolves, bears, mosquitoes, and rattlesnakes.¹ Though rich in minerals, soil, and timber, its growth had been retarded by the lack of roads and it was not until the early 1830's that this handicap began to diminish. During this time and even before 1825 the United States Government signed numerous treaties with the natives securing title to thousands of acres of land and mineral rights to others. Through the initiative of Governor Lewis Cass, more than sixteen treaties were negotiated with various tribes including the Chippewas, Ottawas, and Potawatomes, which resulted in the surrender of nearly all their lands in Ohio and large districts in Indiana and Michigan constituting millions

¹R. Carlyle Buley, The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period 1815-1840 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1951), II, 80. The Michigan Territory was organized in 1805.

of acres.² Thus, with the acquisition of good land, the construction of more roads, and the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, an increasing number of settlers and immigrants began to enter the promising Territory. By 1834 the population of the territory had increased to 87,278 and in 1836, 1,475,725 acres of land were sold, more than one-third of the total sold to that date.³ One observer remarked in 1837:

This whole region (particularly the states of Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin Territory) is filling up with great and unexampled rapidity. Assuming this fact as granted that every one must be the architect of his own fortune I would refer to the superiority of the western portion of our continent over the eastern, as regards the acquisition of wealth—professional eminence—political distinction, and the opportunity offered of exercising influence on society and the destinies of our common country.⁴

While approximately two-thirds of the settlers came from New York and New England, a fair portion of the emigrants came from Ireland, England, and Germany.⁵ The most important immigration from Germany began in the period of the establishment of Michigan as a state, though some had arrived earlier.⁶ Among those who had come to Michigan before 1837 was

²Thomas McIntyre Cooley, Michigan: A History of Governments (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1906), p. 194. Lewis Cass was governor from 1813 to 1831.

³Buley, op. cit., p. 99.

⁴Ibid., p. 113.

⁵Ibid., pp. 96-7.

⁶Michigan was admitted into the Union as a state on January 26, 1837.

Pastor Friedrich Schmid, who arrived there in 1833.⁷ Born in 1807 at Walddorf, Wuerttemberg and having received his theological training in the Protestant mission school at Basel, Switzerland, he decided to heed the call of a group of German settlers who had come to America.⁸ Schmid conducted his first services on August 25, 1833, in a school-house located four miles west of Ann Arbor in Washtenaw County.⁹

Though Schmid's major efforts were directed to the Germans and in the organization of congregations, he also became interested in beginning a mission to the Chippewa Indians living near Sebewaing in Huron County, Michigan. In an effort to interest other Lutherans in his plan, he addressed a letter to the Ministerium of Pennsylvania in 1840 in which he expressed his joy in his missionary labors "and makes many proposals which may be calculated to promote the missionary work, and to awaken the missionary spirit."¹⁰ Schmid had been preparing J. Auch, F. Maier, and Georg Sinke for the Indian missions, so that when on March 24, 1842, the congrega-

⁷Albert Keiser, Lutheran Mission Work among the American Indians (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1922), p. 55.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Warren Washburn Florer, Early Michigan Settlements (Ann Arbor: Herold Printing Co., 1941), I, 12.

¹⁰Keiser, op. cit., p. 55.

tion of the "Second German Salem Society" decided to undertake missionary work among the Indians at Sebewaing, these men were ready to open an Indian mission.¹¹ Further assistance was received for the new mission in the same year when the Ministerium of Pennsylvania organized a Mission Society, which had as one of its objectives the support of the Indian mission begun by Pastor Schmid. The Society's minutes of 1844 mention:

. . . a letter from Rev. F. Schmid, Ann Arbor, Michigan, in which he states that by reason of the energy of the Missionary Society in the said state, the missionary has been sent to labor among the Indians. He requests the co-operation of our Society in the evangelizing of the Indians.¹²

Upon reading Schmid's letter it was "resolved that the Executive Committee be authorized to transmit to the Missionary Society of Michigan the sum of \$50 for Indian Missions provided the state of the treasury will bear it."¹³

It is difficult to determine the exact year when mission work was begun among the Chippewa Indians at Sebewaing, though it is certain that J. Auch went to the Indians somewhere between 1842 and 1845.¹⁴ In the biography of the Rev-

¹¹Florer, op. cit., II, 3.

¹²Keiser, op. cit., pp. 55-6.

¹³Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁴Florer, op. cit., I, 17 gives the date as 1845, but in volume three, page IV, he gives the date as 1842. Walter A. Baepfer, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 91 also gives the date as 1845.

erend Schmid written by his son, it appears that the Sebewaing Indian mission was established in 1845, for his son says that:

In the spring of 1845 three missionaries, Auch, Dumser, and Sinke were sent to the Indians at Sebewaing. Early in the morning three wagons halted before the parsonage, the neighbors appeared, and loaded the wagons with provisions, furniture, clothing, etc., which the congregation had contributed. When that work was finished, the cause of the mission was entrusted to God with song and prayer. As the party began its journey, we accompanied it with our eyes until it disappeared from view. . . . It was no easy matter to travel 125 miles leading thru the primeval forest and the swamps.¹⁵

It is quite probable, however, that Auch and Maier accompanied by Sinke labored in the mission field at Sebewaing prior to the arrival of Simon Dumser, who had received his theological training at the Basel Mission Institute before his call to assist the missionaries at Sebewaing. Here at the newly organized mission Auch organized a day school for the Indian children, and Sinke made their clothes, while Maier labored among the Indians in Shebahyonk.¹⁶ Church services *were regularly conducted by the mission which also boasted of having eighteen scholars in the "mission house," six of whom were received into the church through baptism.¹⁷ Both Schmid and his missionaries were encouraged by their success.

¹⁵Keiser, op. cit., p. 56.

¹⁶Johannes Strieter, Lebenslauf des Johannes Strieter, Pastor Emeritus, von ihm selbst erzahlt und geschrieben (Cleveland: F. M. F. Lustner, 1904), p. 22.

¹⁷Keiser, op. cit., p. 57.

Friedrich Schmid was not the only person interested in the new world, its Indians, and its German immigrants. In 1840 Wilhelm Loehe, pastor of the village church at Neuen-dettelsau, Bavaria, read an "Appeal for Aid of the German Protestant Church in North America" issued by the mission society at Stade and based upon the statements of Pastor Friedrich Conrad Dietrich Wyneken, who had arrived in America in 1838.¹⁸ Determined to aid these stranded Germans in remaining true to their faith, Loehe resolved to send pastors to America, who would organize the immigrants into congregations. It was through one of these Sendlinge, as they became known, Pastor W. Hattstaedt, that Loehe became acquainted with Schmid's Indian missions and decided to lend his assistance. In 1843 he wrote Hattstaedt requesting him to gain detailed information concerning the Indian mission possibilities and to investigate what both the Lutherans and the other denominations, especially the Moravians, had accomplished.¹⁹ Having received favorable reports and having learned of Schmid's mission work at Sebewaing, Pastor Loehe determined to participate in these missionary labors. At first he planned to open a seminary to train missionaries,

¹⁸Baepler, op. cit., pp. 65-6.

¹⁹Keiser, op. cit., p. 59.

but this idea was abandoned.²⁰ Instead he decided to establish a mission colony somewhere in Michigan, which would have as its chief purpose the conversion of the American Indian.

Resolved upon assisting Schmid's Michigan Synod in its Indian mission work, Loehe wrote to Pastor Hattstaedt about *the possibilities of settling a Lutheran mission colony in Michigan, whose colonists, together with their pastor, could influence the Indians to accept Christianity. Upon the advice of Schmid and Auch, a favorable response was given and a location on the Cass River about four miles from Tuscola was selected for the contemplated colony.²¹ Loehe now began to select a group of Christian colonists and chose a leader for the expedition. In August Friedrich Craemer, Loehe found the man who would lead the colony to the new world. Craemer was born on May 26, 1812, in Kleinlangheim, a town in that section of Bavaria which was called Unterfranken, Lower Franconia.²² He studied at the Gymnasium in the city of Wuerzburg, later matriculated to the University of Erlangen as a student of theology and of classical philology as well as

²⁰ Ibid., p. 60. Also "Verbindung der innern und aeußern Mission betreffend," Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 1 (1844), no pages listed.

²¹ Florer, op. cit., III, v.

²² Ludwig Ernest Fuerbringer, Persons and Events (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 3.

history, physics, and philosophy, and in 1840 entered the philological institute of Professor Thiersch in Munich to study the ancient and modern languages.²³ After completing his education, Craemer taught as a private tutor in the home of Count von Einsiedel for two years and later in 1843 held the same position in the home of Lord Lovelace in Devonshire, England. He remained in the services of Lord Lovelace but for a short time and then became affiliated with Oxford University as a private instructor in the German language and literature.²⁴ It was at this time that Craemer, having heard of Loche's contemplated mission venture, offered himself to Loche and was accepted as leader of the colony.

The entire undertaking was carefully planned in the winter of 1844-1845 and in the spring of 1845 the immigrants were prepared to leave Germany for the forests of Michigan. There were five couples who were engaged to be married and two bachelors besides Craemer and four candidates for the ministry in the group that were to sail for America, Craemer having been ordained in Mecklenburg before their departure.²⁵ The journey to Michigan was an adventurous one, fraught with perils and dangers. On April 20, 1845, the group set sail from Bremerhaven, Germany on the ship Caroline under Captain

²³Ibid., pp. 3-6.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 8-9.

²⁵Ibid., p. 11.

Volkman. After four hours at sea the ship hit a sandbar where it remained until noon of the following day when the voyage was resumed.²⁶ During the journey the travelers encountered six heavy storms as well as a collision with another ship. The collision occurred during the night of May 13 when an English ship rammed the Caroline damaging her prow.²⁷ Fortunately, the damage was not as serious as they had feared, so that the ship could continue on to the United States. While at sea, the passengers and crew were afflicted with smallpox causing the deaths of several adults and two children, one of whom Craemer, though himself ill, had baptized on May 20.²⁸ On June 6, 1845 the passengers sighted land and in the afternoon of the following day saw the coastline of New York. Once anchored, the passengers were examined by a doctor and several had to be taken to the hospital for further observation and treatment. Finally, on Monday, June 9, the passengers disembarked, after a fifty day voyage.²⁹ The Saxon Lutherans noted the arrival of these colonists in

²⁶ "Reiseabentheuer," Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 9 and 10 (1845), no pages listed. Keiser, op. cit., p. 61 incorrectly gives the date of departure as May 20, 1845.

²⁷ "Reiseabentheuer," op. cit.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid. Also "Neueste Nachrichten von unsern jenseitigen Freunden," Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 7 (1845), no pages listed.

America in Der Lutheraner saying that their mission venture represented a new approach toward mission work.³⁰

The colonists remained approximately three days in New York. While in the city Craemer and Dorothea Benthien were married on June 10 by Pastor Carl F. E. Stchlmann.³¹ Born of poor parents in Achim, Hanover, on February 12, 1817, she with her brother and his family decided to emigrate to America in 1845. It was on the Caroline that one of the ministerial candidates, Friedrich Lochner, made her acquaintance and noted her self-sacrificing ministrations during the small-pox epidemic. Lochner introduced Craemer to Dorothea, who first asked her if she would be willing to become a maid in the mission. When she at once consented, Craemer asked her for her hand in marriage and they were married shortly before they left New York for Michigan.³² On June 12 at seven in the evening the colonists and the young couple sailed on the steamboat Knickerbocker and arrived in Albany the following morning. Here they boarded a train for Buffalo, but before reaching their destination, the train crashed with another on

³⁰"Missionsnachrichten," Der Lutheraner, I (July 12, 1845), 90.

³¹Fuerbringer, op. cit., p. 13 and Baepler, op. cit., p. 72.

³²Baepler, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

the same tracks killing one man.³³ The immigrants finally arrived in Monroe, Michigan, on June 17, 1845, and ten days later set out for Saginaw and their new home.³⁴

Before the group had departed for America, Missionary J. Auch and Pastor F. Schmid searched for suitable land upon which to establish the mission colony. In April, 1845, they selected 680 acres of land on the Cass River at a cost of \$1,700.³⁵ While the immigrants were still in Saginaw, Pastor Graemer, accompanied by some of his men and a surveyor, traveled sixteen miles to the location chosen by Auch and Schmid and made preparations for the establishment of the mission. The women remained in Saginaw as the men began to erect the necessary dwellings. When these had been constructed, the women, the baggage, and all the household goods were loaded on ox-carts and the trip from Saginaw to Frankenmuth was successfully accomplished.³⁶

As soon as the settlement was completed, Graemer commenced his missionary activities to the Indians. While the

³³ "Reiseabenteuer," Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 9 and 10 (1845).

³⁴ "Neueste Nachrichten von unsern jenseitigen Freunden," Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 9 and 10 (1845), no pages listed.

³⁵ "Neueste Nachrichten von unsern jenseitigen Freunden," Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 11 (1845), no pages listed.

³⁶ Reiser, op. cit., pp. 62-3.

immigrant party had been in Saginaw, several Indians approached them and indicated their interest in having a school for their children. Somewhat later individual chiefs entered into an agreement with the mission colony so that the prospects for a successful missionary venture looked quite bright.³⁷

Craemer, unable to communicate with the Indians in their own language, hired James Gruett, a half-breed of French Canadian extraction, to act as interpreter. Together they visited the scattered Indian settlements on the Kawkawlin, Swan, Chippewa, Pine, and Bell Rivers telling the Indians the Gospel of the Savior.³⁸ Numerous hardships and perils accompanied the missionary as he visited these Chippewa Indians and as he dwelt with his settlers in the shabby homes which they had constructed. Once the missionary became seriously ill with fever and the colonists feared for their pastor's life. Another time Craemer almost lost his life while crossing Saginaw Bay.³⁹ Undaunted by these setbacks, Missionary Craemer continued his labors sleeping with the Indians in their smoke filled huts and eating with them out of the same meat pot.

✧ Craemer gave special attention to the Indian children

³⁷"Neueste Nachrichten von unsern jenseitigen Freunden," Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 11 (1845).

³⁸Baepler, op. cit., p. 73. The interpreter's name is also spelled "Gruet."

³⁹Theodore Graebner, Church Bells in the Forest (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), p. 37.

nourishing them in body and soul. The mission organized a school for the Indian children to give them the rudiments of education and the milk of the Word. An Indian chief, Bemassike, living with his tribe near the Pine River, was one of the first to express his interest in the mission colony and permitted two of his sons to attend.⁴⁰ Another Indian, a medicine man, Olkskim by name, also gave his consent and sent two of his children and two grandchildren to the new school.⁴¹ Dorothea Craemer assisted her husband in the arduous task of civilizing these young natives with the log cabin serving both as school and parsonage, as well as a place of worship * on Sunday. She went about scrubbing the Indian children and teaching them cleanliness, removing the dirt and the lice of the forests. Instructing them in the good manners of civilized life, the Indian children learned how to eat using the utensils of the white man, became accustomed to a clean body and neat dress, and learned to speak without the yells and shouts of the wigwam.⁴² This unselfish work bore fruit, "and the missionary and his wife were repaid by the love of the children, who clung to Mrs. Craemer as to a mother."⁴³

⁴⁰ Keiser, op. cit., p. 64.

⁴¹ Graebner, op. cit., p. 64.

⁴² "Frankenmuth, Cass River, Michigan im August, 1848," Der Lutheraner, V (September 12, 1848), 3.

⁴³ Keiser, op. cit., p. 65.

With the assistance of Teacher J. L. Flessa and the interpreter, James Gruett, Craemer instructed the Indian children in both secular and religious learning. After the singing of a hymn and a prayer, the children were taught to recite the alphabet, to read, write, and count in English and German. The children learned Luther's Catechism in their own language. During their free period the boys usually entered the woods to pick berries while the girls were taught sewing and knitting. On Sundays the children attended the German service where they participated in the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Later they worshiped in their own service singing Christian hymns in the Chippewa tongue and attentively listened to the lections and sermon.⁴⁴ As a result of patient instruction, three children were baptized on the third Christmas Day, 1846, one day after the new church had been dedicated. Both the colonists and their missionary expressed their thanksgiving to God for these first converts -- Abuiquan, a young boy about seventeen years old and his two sisters, Magdalene and Anna, whose ages were thirteen and seven, respectively.⁴⁵

The successful missionary labors and the increasing

⁴⁴"Frankenmuth, Cass River, Michigan im August, 1848," op. cit., p. 3.

⁴⁵"Neueste Nachrichten von unsern jenseitigen Freunden," Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 3 (1847), 18.

prospects for further mission expansion severely taxed the strength of Missionary Craemer. Coupled with these important duties was the fact that the Frankenmuth colony had grown considerably since its first inception, which further hindered the labors of the missionary, who was now compelled to divide his time between the Indians and his own German settlers.

The arrival of ninety persons in Frankenmuth on the Friday after Ascension Day, 1846, increased Craemer's pastoral work and greatly interfered with his missionary activities. These new German colonists had left Bremen in March. In their midst were seven men who had prepared themselves to serve the Lutheran Church in America, namely, Christian August Lehmann, Johann Georg Streckfusz, Johann Georg Boehm, Johann Lorenz Flessa, who assisted Craemer in the Indian school, Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Scholz, Ernst Otto Wolff, and Georg Tuerk.⁴⁶

Later, additional colonists arrived and settled either in Frankenmuth or founded new colonies bearing the names Frankentrost, Frankenlust, and Frankenhilf.

The difficulties in managing the affairs of the Frankenmuth congregation and at the same time caring for the needs of the Indians, caused Craemer to appeal to Loehle for an assistant. Loehle communicated his request to the Leipzig Evan-

⁴⁶ "Was ist in diesem Jahre zur Fortsetzung der begonnenen Arbeit unter den Lutheranern und unter den Indianern von Michigan geschehen?" Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 7 (1846), 51.

gical Lutheran Mission Society, which designated Eduard Raimund Baierlein to sail for America and become Craemer's co-worker. The young missionary and his wife left Germany on April 19, 1847 arriving in New York on May 31 of the same year.⁴⁷ Having reached Frankenmuth on June 10, 1847, Baierlein immediately began to assist Craemer in his labors, *studying the Chippewa language, teaching the Indian children, and with the aid of the interpreter, James Gruett, preaching to the Indians every Sunday.⁴⁸ His eagerness and initiative resulted in numerous blessings for the Indian mission and added several new converts to the young Indian church. On July 8, 1847, three Indian children were baptized and on July 26 of the same year two more Indian children, a boy and a girl, came to Frankenmuth, drenched by the rain. Their mother arrived in the mission colony on the following day bringing with her four other children whom she presented to Baierlein for Christian instruction.⁴⁹ On March 20, 1848, in a letter to the Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society

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1847

⁴⁷ "Skizzen einer Reise nach West und Ost," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 20 (October 15, 1854), 310-11. Detailed information concerning the work of Baierlein may be found in Walter P. Schoenfuhs, "The Life and Labors of Eduard Raimund Baierlein," unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1954.

⁴⁸ Charles F. Luckhard, Faith in the Forest (Sebewaing, Michigan: published privately, 1952), p. 60.

⁴⁹ "Unsere Mission in Nordamerika," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 23 (December 1, 1847), 354.

in Germany, Baierlein again joyously reported that six new converts were received into the church by holy baptism, four of them being children from ten to sixteen years of age and the remaining two being mere infants but a few weeks old.⁵⁰

Besides the daily routines of missionary work at Frankenmuth, Baierlein, like Craemer, visited numerous Indian tribes in order to interest these natives in the Gospel. Two Indian chiefs, Bemassike and Sauaban, had indicated earlier their interest in the Frankenmuth mission when Craemer had visited these two chiefs.⁵¹ Both of them had sent several Indian children to the new school, and Bemassike himself frequently visited Frankenmuth and indicated his pleasure at the progress that was being made.⁵² It was, therefore, not surprising that Baierlein resolved to visit these two chiefs who had manifested so much interest in the young German mission. Baierlein traveled to Bemassike's village in the spring of 1848 only to find the chief in deep mourning over the death of his young nephew, who had accidentally burned to death. Comforting the sorrowing chief and speaking to his Indians about Christ's second advent, he departed. After a day's

⁵⁰ "Erfreuliches und Unerfreuliches aus unserer Mission unter den nordamerikanischen Indianern," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 14 (July 15, 1848), 209.

⁵¹ "Neueste Nachrichten von unsern jenseitigen Freunden," Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 3 (1847), 18.

⁵² Keiser, op. cit., p. 64.

journey the missionary reached another Indian settlement, but here he was ill received. One of the Indians indicated that he had no desire to listen to Baierlein's religious talk and was uninterested in either heaven or hell.⁵³ Nor were his visits to Sauaban's tribe, located at Swan Creek, any more encouraging. Baierlein visited him in June of 1848, only to find a number of the Indians drunk and the chief himself hostile. He informed the young missionary that he was not interested in and felt no need for any religious ministrations, that when he died he hoped to be with his fathers, and that his people could do what they wanted in respect to Christianity. Baierlein then spoke to the Indians themselves telling them the story of salvation, and though most of the Indians remained obstinate, several young men did decide to join the mission.⁵⁴

In several conversations with Bemassike, the chief told Baierlein that he desired his presence in the village and asked him to settle among his Indians. During one of his visits to Frankenmuth, the chief invited either Craemer or Baierlein to visit his village and there to take up his abode

⁵³"Baierleins Reise zu dem Hauptling Remassike," Evan-gelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 21 (November 1, 1848), 322-23. The chief's name should be spelled with an initial P or B, the latter being preferred.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 329-30.

to "teach my people the truth."⁵⁵ As we have already seen, Baierlein visited the Indian village at Pine River in the spring of 1848 with favorable results.⁵⁶ On May 30, 1848, Baierlein started on another trip to visit Bemassike and to speak with his Indians. After three days, he reached the village of thirty huts and the next day addressed the assembled Indians. In a lengthy discourse the missionary unveiled for the Indians the fundamentals of the Christian faith, telling them that God so loved them, that He sent His only begotten Son to suffer and die, that they might be freed from the misery of sin. He told them that he had come to tell them about this Jesus and that, even as there is only one road leading to a worldly city, so also there is only one road leading to eternal life, this way being the Savior. After a prolonged period of silence, the Indians finally began to speak, saying that they would be willing to permit the missionary to dwell in their midst provided he would instruct their children. Baierlein agreed but impressed on their minds that he was primarily a preacher and that they must accept him as such. Only if they would promise to attend the church services and hear the Word of God, would he instruct their children in the school. The request granted, Baierlein considered the matter settled and promised that the next time

⁵⁵ Graebner, op. cit., p. 66.

⁵⁶ Supra, p. 31.

he would come, it would be to establish the mission and school. With these words he departed and a new mission station was begun, a mission that would experience many trials but also many blessings.⁵⁷

Baierlein, accompanied by six men from Frankenmuth, started out for the new mission on July 19, 1848, arriving at the Indian village three days later. Poverty nearing starvation greeted them, so that Baierlein named the new mission "Bethany," that is, ^{poor house (Barmenhaus)} "house of bread."⁵⁸ Once a log cabin was built for the missionary and his wife, Baierlein began to visit the Indians and opened the school for the native children. Though they had promised to send their children to the mission school, they hesitated at first to do so fearing some kind of treachery. The fact that the missionary had been unable to alleviate their hunger did not contribute to the making of a good relationship between himself and the Indians. Nevertheless, the suspicions were soon overcome and slowly the children began to attend the daily instructions. By the beginning of 1849 nineteen children had enrolled in the school and were studying the Bible stories as well as

⁵⁷"Baierleins Reise zu dem Hauptling Remassike," op. cit., pp. 325-29.

⁵⁸"Einiges ueber die Ureinwohner dieses Landes und was von der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche fuer sie gethan wird," Der Lutheraner, V (July 24, 1849), 187.

other subjects in German, English, and Chippewa.⁵⁹

Nor was the work among the adults any easier than the missionary's labors in the school. Though the services were frequently attended by fifty or more Indians, all kinds of difficulties hampered an effective presentation of the Gospel. When Baierlein would attempt to preach, the children would play on the ground and yell to one another, while their parents would converse with each other. One Indian might light his pipe during the preaching of the sermon, another might ask for a light, while a third would arise and look for some fire in order to light his pipe.⁶⁰ Complete confusion seemed to reign and it was remarkable that the missionary accomplished anything at all. Nevertheless, Baierlein's labors bore fruit. Shortly after the new year, on January 18, 1849, ten Indian children were baptized by Craemer, whom Baierlein had invited for the occasion, he himself being at that time unordained.⁶¹ During the latter part of the same year three

⁵⁹ "Bethanien am Pine River," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 9 (May 1, 1849), 131-32.

⁶⁰ "Erste erfreuliche Wirksamkeit Baierleins zu Bethanien am Pine River," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 2 (January 15, 1849), 21-2.

⁶¹ "Rueckblick auf die Entstehung und den Fortgang der Mission unter den Indianern am Pine River, Michigan," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 4 (February 15, 1856), 54-5. Craemer ordained Baierlein on September 6, 1850. See Vierter Synodal-Bericht der deutschen evangel.-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten vom Jahre 1850, p. 11.

others received baptism, among them as the first adult the widowed daughter of the old chief.⁶² The seed which Baierlein had sown slowly began to bear fruit.

The Work of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod
in Michigan, 1849-1853

The year 1849 marked the end of the Michigan Synod's control over its missions among the Chippewa Indians in Frankenmuth and Bethany as well as the authority exercised by Pastor Loehe and the Colliquim of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission at Leipzig in Germany. Three years earlier several pastors and missionaries severed their relationship with Schmid's Michigan Synod when Pastor Simon Dumser, a theological graduate of the Basel Mission Institute, refused to subscribe to all the Lutheran Confessions, not having subscribed to these at his ordination in Europe. Nor was this all. It appeared to these protesting ministers that certain irregular practices endangered the orthodoxy of the Michigan Synod itself. At the Michigan Synod's convention in June of 1846, Pastors Trautmann, Lochner, Hattstaedt, and Craemer demanded that Dumser subscribe to the entire Book of Concord of 1580. When he refused to do so and when the Michigan Synod refused to take any action, these pastors terminated their affiliation with the synod and began to associate with the

⁶²Keiser, op. cit., p. 76.

"Missouri Saxons."⁶³ With the organization of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod in 1847 efforts were begun to obtain these mission stations. At the meeting of this synod in 1848 a report was made on the correspondence with Pastor Loehe on the status of the Indian mission at Frankenmuth:

No answer has until now been received to a request addressed to Pastor Loehe with regard to sending us a formal document transferring the Frankenmuth mission to Synod. But the secretary (of the board) here takes occasion to recommend this young plant to the care of Synod. . . .⁶⁴

The following year, 1849, the Mission Board received the necessary statement of relinquishment for both Bethany and Frankenmuth signed by the Mission Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Leipzig and by Pastor Wilhelm Loehe of Neuendettelsau in Bavaria.⁶⁵ Both missionaries, Johann J. F. Auch and J. F. Maier, also terminated their membership with the Michigan Synod and replied to Schmid's charges that they and others had no genuine reasons for leaving the Synod.⁶⁶ At its synodical meeting in 1850, the Missouri Synod learned that the mission stations at Sebawaing and Shebahyank also

⁶³"Die Synode Michigan und ihre Heidenmission," Der Lutheraner, II (August 8, 1846), 98-100. Also "Neueste Nachrichten von unsern jenseitigen Freunden," Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 10 (1846), 75-6.

⁶⁴Grasbner, op. cit., pp. 68-9.

⁶⁵"Uebergabsurkunde der Heidenmissionsstationen Frankenmuth und Bethanien in Michigan," Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 11 (1849), 81-2.

⁶⁶"Erwiderung," Der Lutheraner, VI (November 27, 1849), 54-5.

had been released to them.⁶⁷

In possession of four Indian mission stations, Frank-
 *enmuth, Bethany, Sebewaing, and Shebahyank, the Missouri
 Synod now sought to continue the prosperous work that had
 been begun by Schmid and Loehe. Instead of successfully
 continuing the work, however, numerous difficulties arose so
 that at the end of 1854 only one Indian mission, Bethany,
 remained in operation. One of the first missions to be
 closed by the Missouri Synod was the one at Frankenmuth,
 which was terminated in 1851, two years after the Synod had
 received it from Loehe. Two causes resulted in Synod's ac-
 *tion to end its Indian work at Frankenmuth. The establish-
 ment of Bethany as an Indian mission in 1848 caused many In-
 dians to withdraw from Frankenmuth. Nor had the Indians any
 further need to send their children to the Frankenmuth school,
 when they could send them to Baierlein in Bethany. The re-
 sult was that in 1851 only the Indian doctor, his son, and
 son-in-law remained on the mission land.⁶⁸ The reason that
 resulted in its termination was Pastor Graemer's acceptance
 of the call as professor to the Seminary at Fort Wayne in

⁶⁷P. E. Kretzmann, "Documents and Resolutions Pertaining
 to the Lutheran Missions among the Indians in Michigan, 1844-
 1869," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, II, (January,
 1930), 104.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 107.

1850.⁶⁹ Synod thus resolved to close the mission, saying that:

Since through the removal of Pastor Graemer from this station the necessary forces for the maintenance of this mission-station were no longer available, we believe it to be the will of God that one should add this station to the other stations and no longer regard it as an independent station. . . . The land of the Frankenmuth mission is to be sold, and the proceeds are to be used to cover the extraordinary need of the other station. . . .⁷⁰

The second mission to be abandoned by the Missouri Synod was that at Sebewaing which was discontinued in 1853.

* This mission had been one of the earliest Lutheran missions organized in Michigan. When the Missouri Synod took possession of this mission station in Huron County, it consisted of eighty acres of land, a dwelling, and a school house where the missionary, Johann J. F. Auch, taught eight to sixteen pupils. In the neighborhood of Sebewaing lived another band of about one hundred Indians, whose chief had been hostile to Auch and had forbidden his Indians to become Christian. Recently, however, he had become somewhat friendlier and had permitted them to attend the school.⁷¹ Missionary Georg Sinke also labored at Sebewaing together with Auch. He had been commissioned by Schmid in July, 1845, and assisted Auch

⁶⁹Baepler, op. cit., p. 128. See also "Einiges ueber die Heidenmission in Michigan," Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 5 and 6 (1851), 33-4.

⁷⁰Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 107.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 104.

for six years, accepting a call to St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church at Helenville, Wisconsin in 1851.⁷² Dunsen also served the Indians at this location but accepted a call to Zion Lutheran Church at Monroe, Michigan, in 1849, dying there eight years later.⁷³ With the sudden death of J. F. Maier, missionary at Shebahyank, in 1850, Auch was now forced to serve the Indians for whom Maier had cared. In 1851 Synod heeded the call of the Shebahyank Indians and Auch moved there which was about six miles from Sebewaing.⁷⁴ From Shebahyank Auch now served both the Indians here and those at his former station in Sebewaing. At this time numerous German immigrants settled in the neighborhood of Sebewaing and requested the missionary's services, so that he now was faced with the problem of dividing his time between the Indians and the whites. With the increased arrival of the immigrant settlers, the Indians began to withdraw from their former homes.⁷⁵ As a result of these and other disappointments, Synod in 1853 decided to close the mission at Sebewaing.⁷⁶

One year after the Missouri Synod had discontinued its

⁷²Luckhard, op. cit., p. 30.

⁷³Ibid., p. 29.

⁷⁴Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 106.

⁷⁵Florer, op. cit., I, 17. Also "Etwas ueber die Heidenmissionsstationen in Michigan," Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika, No. 7 (1852), 54.

⁷⁶Baepler, op. cit., p. 129.

missionary activities at Sebewaing, it was compelled to abandon its work at Shebahyank. J. F. Maier had labored here a number of years and gradually gathered together an Indian congregation numbering about forty souls, including a son of the Indian chief, Me-gan-ig-isch-ik.⁷⁷ Another chief, Naktshigoma, however, did not respond to the missionary's admonitions and openly threatened the lives of some of the Indian converts.⁷⁸ As a result of the excellent progress, a church was dedicated in the summer of 1850. Pastor Auch addressed the Indians and Pastor P. Graebner spoke at the German service, while Eduard Baierlein addressed the Indians in the afternoon. A total of four pastors and three missionaries attended the dedicatory services besides the Indians from Sebewaing and Shebahyank and the German Lutheran settlers.⁷⁹

The prosperous congregation suffered a severe loss shortly after they had dedicated their church, when on November 15, 1850, Maier perished in Saginaw Bay during a violent storm.⁸⁰ Maier had been returning home from Bay City where

⁷⁷Luckhard, op. cit., p. 35.

⁷⁸"Missionsnachricht," Der Lutheraner, II (November 12, 1850), 46-7.

⁷⁹"Lutherische Missionsnachricht," Der Lutheraner, VII (October 1, 1850), 23. Also "Aus einem Briefe des Miss. Baierlein," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 3 (February 1, 1851), 36-7.

⁸⁰Luckhard, op. cit., p. 35.

he had purchased provisions for the mission, when a sudden squall capsized his boat drowning the missionary and his companion, a certain Mr. Haushan, only one-half mile from shore and six miles from their destination. Ten days later the body of the twenty-seven year old Maier and that of his companion were discovered.⁸¹ As we have already mentioned, Maier's brother-in-law, Johann J. F. Auch, assumed the responsibilities of caring for the Shebahyank mission. Here assisted by the interpreter, Jacob Graverath, and by J. E. Roeder, who labored at Shebahyank from 1851 to 1853, and who also married Dorothea Maier, the widow of the late missionary, Auch continued the labors of the faithful Maier.⁸²

In order to curtail the costs of the mission and to unify the mission program, Synod proposed in 1853 to unite the Shebahyank mission with that of Bethany. On Friday, November 4, 1853, Missionaries Miessler and Roeder, Pastors O. Cloeter and Ferdinand Sievers, and the interpreter, James Gruett, departed for Shebahyank.⁸³ Once there they sought to convince the Indians to unite with their brethren in Bethany. After several meetings, the Indians indicated their willingness to unite with those at Bethany but requested that the

⁸¹ "Missionsnachricht," Der Lutheraner, VII (December 10, 1850), 63-4.

⁸² Luckhard, op. cit., pp. 37-8.

⁸³ "Ein Besuch in Shebahyank, Mich. unter den rothen Bruedern," Der Lutheraner, X (April 11, 1854), 131.

merger take place at Shebahyank rather than at Bethany as the Synod had desired.⁸⁴ In order to determine the wishes of the Bethany Indians, a conference was held with them in February, 1854, and at that time the Indians also indicated their desire for a merger adding, however, that Bethany be chosen as the site of the merger.⁸⁵ Returning once again to Shebahyank the missionaries informed the Indians of the decision to choose Bethany as the mission for both Indian tribes. The Indians agreed to the plan but requested a delay until April at which time they hoped to be ready to migrate to Bethany.⁸⁶

* This delay, however, proved to be the ruin of the contemplated merger and the end of the Shebahyank mission, for during the interval traders induced the Indians to remain at Shebahyank and to forsake the Gospel. They told the Indians that they should not listen to their missionary, that the merger was a trick and that the Bible was a book of lies. Heeding their pernicious advice, the Indians refused to go to Bethany and defected from the faith. Evidencing their apostasy openly, Auch did everything possible to convince them that he was their friend, but they refused to return. Even

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 132-33.

⁸⁵"Besuch der Missionsstation Bethanien (Gratiot C. Mich.) im Febr. 1854," Der Lutheraner, X (May 23, 1854), 155-57.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 157.

Miessler sought to reason with them but to no avail.⁸⁷ Synod, therefore, could do nothing else but to close the mission and to sell the property. By 1855 Pastor Sievers was forced to report that "the beautiful place . . . is now in other hands having been sold to a Yankee."⁸⁸ On March 4, 1855, the faithful missionary, Johann J. F. Auch; was installed as pastor of the German Evangelical Lutheran Immanuel Congregation in Sebawaing by the Reverend Ferdinand Sievers.⁸⁹

Of the four Indian mission stations acquired by the Missouri Synod in 1849 and 1850, only Bethany manifested any degree of success. Here Baierlein labored approximately five years among the people of Bemassike preaching the Word of God and teaching the native children. Often harassed by pernicious traders and ambitious Methodists, Baierlein remained faithful to his task and planted the seed which resulted in an organized congregation of fifty-eight souls possessing their own church and school building.⁹⁰ Not only had the majority of the Indians accepted Christianity, but many of them had permanently settled on the mission land set aside for them in

⁸⁷"Der Abfall der Gemeinde zu Shebahyank," Der Lutheraner, X (August 15, 1854), 206.

⁸⁸"Ein Herbsttag in Bethanien," Der Lutheraner, XI (April 24, 1855), 143.

⁸⁹Luckhard, op. cit., p. 25.

⁹⁰"Aus Miss. Baierleins Bericht an die Synode von Ohio," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 12 (June 15, 1853), 177.

order to till the ground. The chief's daughter took the initiative in erecting the first home in 1850. Thereafter, others followed suit with Baierlein supplying much of the material which made the settlement possible.⁹¹ Baierlein could write to the Ohio Synod on January 3, 1853 that "the might of heathenism is completely broken and only one family still lives according to the old customs, with all the others either standing firm in the Christian faith or else are ready to become Christians."⁹² It was, thus, a happy and sorrowful Baierlein, who left Bethany in that same year¹⁸⁵³ to enter a new mission field in India at the behest of the Leipzig Mission Society. The Indians had come to love him and with tears in their eyes they bade him farewell. And though he never returned to his beloved Indians, he never forgot them, remembering the tender plant he had sown in the forest of Michigan -- a plant now to be nurtured by other hands.⁹³

⁹¹Eduard Baierlein, Im Urwalde (Dresden, Germany: Justus Naumann's Buchhandlung, 1889), pp. 135-41.

⁹²"Aus Miss. Baierleins Bericht an die Synode von Ohio," op. cit., p. 176.

⁹³Baierlein, op. cit., pp. 163-75 describes the departure scene.

CHAPTER III

THE WITHERING PLANT

With the departure of Eduard R. Baierlein to India, the work at Bethany was temporarily disorganized. During the interim in which the Indian mission had been without a duly called and appointed pastor, the Indians were served by Pastor G. E. C. F. Sievers, chairman of the Mission Board. Sievers remained at Bethany from the middle of May until the middle of June, 1853, preaching to the Indians in English, while an interpreter translated the sermons. Baierlein's assistants, Ernst Gustav Herman Miessler, and Mr. Eissfeldt also labored with Sievers during this time seeking to keep the Indians faithful to the Word of God, which Baierlein had preached to them. That Sievers' labors were not in vain was shown by a group of Indian women who came to Frankenlust in a canoe to visit their pastor sometime later.¹

On June 26, 1853, Ernst Gustav Herman Miessler was ordained and installed as missionary to the Indians in Bethany by President F. C. D. Wyneken assisted by Pastor Sievers.²

¹August R. Suelflow, "The Life and Work of G. E. C. F. Sievers," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXI (July, 1948), 77-8. Also Walter A. Baepler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 131, who says that Sievers served Bethany until June 26, 1853.

²Baepler, op. cit., p. 131.

Since the only order for the rite of installation was in German, Wyneken and Miessler had to translate it into English the day before the rite was to be performed, so that the interpreter would be able to translate the English into Chippewa. On Sunday morning Wyneken preached and conducted the entire rite in English, speaking only one sentence at a time and always pausing so as to give the interpreter time to translate it for the Indians. At the conclusion of the service of installation, President Wyneken admonished the Indians to remain faithful to Christ and commended them to God.³ Miessler was now ready to carry on the work of his predecessor, Baierlein, and the mission was about to enter its second phase.

Miessler was born on January 12, 1826, in the town of Reichenbach, a suburb of Gorlitz, Silesia. His father, Carl Gottlob Miessler and his mother, Augusta Miessler, nee Berger, were pious parents always interested in the spiritual welfare of their children.⁴ After young Miessler's confirmation in 1839, he decided to learn the weaver's trade, although he had longed to become a missionary to Borneo like

³E. G. H. Miessler, "Autobiography of E. G. H. Miessler," unpublished autobiography translated from the original German by and in the possession of H. C. Miessler, Columbus, Ohio, pp. 12-3. Miessler had been ordained in Germany in 1851.

⁴Ibid., pp. 1-2.

his uncle, Julius Berger.⁵ Once he had completed his apprenticeship Miessler went to Neukirsch in the Kingdom of Saxony where he found a position and lived near his father's sister and her husband who was a teacher. It was while he was living in Neukirsch that Miessler again desired to become a missionary. A farewell address by a missionary of the Dresden Mission Society, who was about to depart for East India, kindled in Miessler's heart the memories of his youth and caused him to write to his parents requesting their permission to enter into mission work.⁶

When he received the consent of his parents, Miessler notified his pastor who in turn made arrangements with Director Graul of the Dresden Missionary Society for his admission. He entered the mission school in Dresden in 1845.⁷ After several years of schooling during which time the Missionary Society moved its headquarters to Leipzig, Miessler was ready to receive his commission. In 1851 he and a certain man named Speer were ready to be ordained and commissioned for work in India. However, just before the ordination was to occur, Missionary Baierlein had placed a call for an assistant in Bethany. Miessler was chosen for the position and now prepared to go to Michigan to labor among

⁵Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁶Ibid., p. 5.

⁷Ibid., p. 6.

the Chippewa Indians.⁸

Shortly after his ordination at a Mission Festival Miessler made the necessary preparations for his trip to Michigan. He was completely outfitted and well supplied with all needs, including a gun. Late in September, 1851, Miessler sailed for the United States, traveling with a group of Bavarians bound for a colony in America and arriving in Saginaw, Michigan, one month later. Soon Baierlein arrived and together they rode fifty miles to Bethany.⁹

Once in Bethany, Miessler busied himself in studying the Chippewa language.¹⁰ By January, 1852, he began to teach the school children and made preparations to preach to the Indians in English at the noon services.¹¹ When Baierlein was in Detroit supervising the printing of his Chippewa speller and reader, Miessler conducted all the services, prayers, and meetings, although he was not ready to address the Indians in their own tongue.¹² Thus, when Baierlein accepted the call to serve the Leipzig Mission in India, Miessler had been well introduced to the work in Bethany.

⁸Ibid., pp. 7-8.

⁹Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁰"Aus einem Briefe," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 6 (March 15, 1852), 88.

¹¹"Aus einem Briefe," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 7 (April 1, 1852), 109.

¹²Miessler, op. cit., p. 11.

Miessler did not go unassisted in his missionary work at Bethany, for in 1853 Missionary J. E. Roeder came with his wife, Dorothea, from Shebahyank, working in Bethany for two years.¹³ Roeder managed the school and preached at the Sunday afternoon services, thus permitting Miessler to devote his time to other duties. For several years the Bethany Indian mission continued to prosper. The Indians regularly attended the divine services and several new converts were received into the Church. On the seventh Sunday after Trinity in 1853, Miessler baptized Misquanaquot, the father of five children who had been baptized previously. Neither the missionary nor the Christian Indians had believed that this native would ever desire holy baptism, since he was too much addicted to drunkenness and lust. However, since 1853 the Indian and his wife began to attend the church services and soon indicated their desire to become Christians, though they always delayed their baptism. Heathenism had a strong grip upon them. Nevertheless, Misquanaquot finally was baptized, though his wife remained a heathen. Another couple at this time also sought baptism, which greatly encouraged the mis-

¹³Ibid. After two years Roeder accepted a call to Fisherville, Ontario, and later served St. Petri Congregation at Arlington Heights, Illinois until his retirement in 1899. He died there on February 21, 1902. See Charles F. Luckhard, Faith in the Forest (Sebewaing, Michigan: published privately, 1952), p. 38.

sionary.¹⁴

As in the past, the Methodists now sought to interfere with Miessler's work and to disrupt the progress of the mission. When an infant accidentally fell into the Pine River and drowned, the Methodists immediately utilized the occasion to promote their own cause.¹⁵ They blamed the tragedy on the fact that the Indians permitted themselves to be taught false doctrine, which they then believed.¹⁶ Miessler used the funeral service to preach a confessional sermon to the Indians. He declared that although the Methodists had accused the grieving mother of picking berries on the Sabbath and had said that this had been the cause of God's wrath in permitting the accident, it was of greater importance to God not to become drunk than to break the Sabbath. The missionary's sermon prevented the Methodists from making any further accusations and seducing any Lutheran Indians, "their mouths being stopped."¹⁷ At this same time a Methodist chief and his wife brought their oldest daughter to Miessler for instruction.¹⁸ Thus, during Miessler's first

¹⁴"Unsere Mission," Der Lutheraner, X (October 11, 1853), 27-8.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 28-9.

¹⁶"Unsere Mission," Der Lutheraner, X (October 25, 1853), 34.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁸Ibid.

years at Bethany as missionary, the Methodists were unsuccessful in hindering the Lutheran mission endeavor.

The Indian school begun by Baierlein also continued to show promising results. In October, 1853, Miessler reported in Der Lutheraner that, since the Indians had returned to Bethany, the school attendance had increased. The sexes had been instructed separately at this time, Roeder teaching the boys while Miessler taught the girls.¹⁹ Besides separating the sexes, the school itself was divided into three classes. Miessler and Roeder taught the Indian children Bible stories by means of visual aids, showing them pictures of the stories which they were studying. While the older children learned the more difficult section of Luther's Small Catechism, the other children learned the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Sievers reported in February, 1854, that although the children had made little progress in arithmetic, they gave a good account of themselves in reading and writing, many of them already reading the New Testament in their own language.²⁰ An indication of continuing success in the Christian day school is noted in the Mission Board's recommendation to Synod in 1854 where it was suggested that Bethany receive a new school house costing approximately one

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "Besuch der Missionsstation Bethanien (Gratiot C. Mich.) im Febr. 1854," Der Lutheraner, X (May 23, 1854), 156.

hundred and twenty dollars.²¹

We have already noted in the previous chapter the Missouri Synod's plan to unite the Shebahyank Indians with those at Bethany, a plan which only resulted in failure.²² The proposal had been suggested to Miessler in 1853 by Friedrich Wyneken, President of the Missouri Synod, during a visit to Bethany. Wyneken believed that since both congregations were small, they could well be served by one missionary and one interpreter. He concluded his remarks by adding that "the Sebewaing Indians were hardly worthy of our care if they could not be persuaded to move to Bethany," a statement which Miessler considered "a rather hard remark."²³ Miessler, Roeder, Sievers, and the interpreter, James Gruett, visited the Shebahyank Indians in November, 1853 and presented Synod's proposal to them.²⁴ After the Indians indicated their desire to have the Bethany Indians move to Shebahyank, a meeting was held in Bethany in February, 1854, at which time the Indians received holy communion

²¹Achter Synodal-Bericht der Deutschen Evangelisch Lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten vom Jahre 1854, p. 14.

²²Supra, pp. 42-4.

²³Miessler, op. cit., pp. 31-2. Miessler means the Shebahyank Indians.

²⁴"Ein Besuch in Shebahyank, Mich. unter den rothen Bruedern," Der Lutheraner, X (April 11, 1854), 131-33.

for the first time. When these Indians said that they desired to remain at Bethany, Miessler and the others agreed.²⁵ But the contemplated merger never occurred, for, though the Shebahyank Indians had voted to unite with their brethren in Bethany, the lies of certain traders in Shebahyank and elsewhere resulted in their apostasy. Miessler and his interpreter visited them shortly thereafter. He emphasized that the missionaries had applied no pressure upon them to move to Bethany and that the traders had lied to them, but to no avail.²⁶ They remained adamant in their decision. The defection, however, did not affect the Bethany Indians except to cause them "terror, grief, and compassion."²⁷

Baierlein had already realized the importance of having the Indians settle on their own land, build permanent homes, *and till the soil. He, therefore, induced numerous Indians to build for themselves log cabins and to raise a few crops. In 1854 additional land was obtained for the Indians. Miessler purchased approximately eight hundred acres and most of the land was distributed in thirty to forty acre lots among the Lutheran Indian families. The sale of some of the Shebahyank mission property, amounting to \$250, greatly as-

²⁵"Besuch der Missionsstation Bethanien (Gratiot C. Mich.) im Febr. 1854," op. cit., pp. 156-57.

²⁶Miessler, op. cit., p. 33.

²⁷"Der Abfall der Gemeinde zu Shebahyank," Der Lutheraner, X (August 15, 1854), 207.

sisted Miessler in making the purchase.²⁸ In a report to Der Lutheraner in 1855 Sievers mentions the purchase of 580 acres of land surrounding the Bethany mission. This purchase probably was part of the eight hundred acres mentioned above. Sievers states that 160 acres were obtained from speculators at three dollars per acre, while an additional 420 acres were presumably acquired from the government at \$1.25 per acre. The Indians were so happy that they immediately went to the land in order to select their lots, the scene calling to mind Abraham's dealing with Lot.²⁹ They received the land from the missionary for mere cost. Many of the Indians who had accepted the land and had faithfully labored on it, were able to pay some of their debts for the first time in their lives. Stephan Bemagojing paid an old debt of forty dollars, while the widow of the former chief, Salome, raised one hundred bushels of potatoes in 1854 and no longer had to beg from others.³⁰

The first years of Miessler's full-time ministry in Bethany seemed to indicate continued prosperity, but these appearances only proved to be a mirage. Many events now occurred which eventually contributed to the cessation of mis-

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "Ein Herbsttag in Bethanien," Der Lutheraner, XI (April 24, 1855), 141-42.

³⁰ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XII (June 16, 1857), 173.

sionary work at Bethany and the removal of the mission to Isabella County in Michigan. The spiritual growth that both the missionary and the Missouri Synod had witnessed in the Bethany Indians and which had encouraged them to renew their efforts and rededicate themselves to the mission program now turned into despair. One of the earliest indications of the troubles to come occurred in 1855. The Indians, not content to grow their own food, continued to beg for supplies. They let it be known that the mission owed them something for their adherence to the Christian faith and warned that if Miessler would not comply with their demands to supply them with their material needs, they would either renounce their Christianity or else become Methodists. When the missionary called them "Brodchristen" and pointed out their sin, preaching to them the Law, they only called him a wrangler. Some even united to have Miessler removed, requesting in his place a missionary who would be more amenable to their demands. Nothing, however, seems to have come of this pernicious plan.³¹

Spiritual indifference and a number of defections also manifested themselves to the sorrow of Missionary Miessler. As early as 1855 the missionary noticed a certain apathy in

³¹ "Ein Herbsttag in Bethanien," op. cit., pp. 142-43.

church attendance as well as vanity among the women.³²

Though holy communion had been offered to the Indians since 1854, many of them no longer desired to partake of the Sacrament.³³ To Miessler's further dismay a number of the Indians returned to their heathen ways. Heathen feasts again became prevalent and the heathen medicine men found opportunity to practice their arts once more.³⁴ With the exception of Bemagojing, most of the men no longer attended the church services, so that services were attended almost predominantly by women and children.³⁵ By 1858 things had become almost intolerable, so that Miessler said "that the Lutherans should be happy for those Indians who have died in the faith and lie buried in the small church cemetery not having to experience the present trials."³⁶

The increasing apathy manifested among the Indians in Bethany hindered Miessler's labors among the heathen natives, who saw no need for belonging to a congregation where the majority of the members did not take their faith seri-

³²Ibid., p. 142.

³³"Reisebericht," Der Lutheraner, XII (April 8, 1856), 134.

³⁴"Reise Nach Bethanien," Der Lutheraner, XII (June 17, 1856), 174.

³⁵"Missionsbericht," op. cit., p. 172.

³⁶"Bericht ueber die Indianer Bethaniens, insonderheit ueber die, Selig entschlafenen," Der Lutheraner, XV (August 24, 1858), 3.

ously. When Sievers asked the heathen Indian, Wabigonschkom, why he delayed his baptism, he declared that he had not become a Christian since the baptized Christians did not live any better than he. If baptism did not effect any change in those who had already been baptized, he was certain that it would not help him either.³⁷ In the summer of 1854 Miessler had been encouraged that the Indians living near the Maple River would accept Christianity and settle at Bethany. None of them ever seem to have accepted the Christian faith, however, since nothing is said of them again.³⁸ Thus, coupled with increasing internal difficulties, the missionary was hindered from expanding his work to other Indians. The mission ceased to grow!

As if these problems were not enough, Miessler's work was also endangered by outside forces which, perhaps more than any other, finally led to the discontinuation of the Bethany mission. The increasing tide of immigration as well as the migration of many Easterners to the West brought many settlers to Michigan, depriving the Indians of their hunting

³⁷ "Missionsbericht," op. cit., p. 174.

³⁸ "Der Abfall der Gemeinde zu Shebahyank," op. cit., p. 207.

grounds and hemming in the mission.³⁹ In 1855 Sievers, chairman of the Mission Board, reported that more "Yankees" were living in the vicinity of Bethany and that their presence diminished the hunting grounds of the Indians. In the same article the chairman stated that many new farms had been established by these "English neighbors" near Bethany, and that their influence upon the mission Indians was a negative one. Their indifference in religious matters contributed noticeably to the attitude of the Indians, who, emulating their white neighbors, also became apathetic toward church and communion attendance. The female Indians imitated their white counterparts in being more concerned about their outward appearance than their appearance before God.⁴⁰ It is interesting to note, however, that although the increased number of white settlers curtailed the growth of the mission and finally resulted in its resettlement several years later, Miessler did not hesitate to recommend suitable land near Bethany to German farmers.⁴¹ Perhaps he hoped that German Lutheran neighbors might prove to be a more wholesome

³⁹ Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People. Fourth Edition (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950), p. 284. While 1,713,251 immigrants entered the United States between 1841 and 1850, 2,598,214 immigrants came to the United States in the period of 1851 to 1860.

⁴⁰ "Ein Herbsttag in Bethanien," op. cit., pp. 142-43.

⁴¹ "Fuer Colinisten," Der Lutheraner, XII (January 2, 1856), 79.

influence upon the Indians than the "Yankees."

If the farmers in the region of Bethany might prove detrimental to the welfare of the mission, the traders and the Methodists were absolutely obnoxious. From A. Craemer to E. G. H. Miessler, constant reference is made to the ungodly traders and the pernicious influence of the Methodists. Words fail to express the utter contempt that Lutheran missionaries had for these two unrelated classes of people. They had been one of the main causes for the collapse of the Shebahyank Indian mission and were one of the main reasons why, in the final analysis, the Bethany Indian mission project was forced to capitulate. Writing in 1857 Miessler says that the "godless traders and Methodists have renewed their activities spreading lies" about his person as well as his work.⁴² These "lies" directly contributed to the defection of Lutheran Indians. Thus, Miessler painfully recorded in the same year the desertion of Peter Shegonebe, son of the dead chief, and Monica, wife of a Methodist living in Bethany, to the Methodists and added that a certain young man named Johannes had also declared his intentions to join the Methodists.⁴³ In his letters in 1858 the discouraged missionary is forced to write that most of the eleven Indian families who formerly belonged to the Lutheran Church now no

⁴²"Missionsbericht," op. cit., p. 173.

⁴³Ibid., p. 174.

longer lived in Bethany, having moved to the new reservation or scattered in the forests. Of these a number had renounced their Lutheran faith and had affiliated with the Methodists. Such was the case with Louis Pimojiwon, who, having abandoned his legal wife and children for the companionship of the old widow, Constantia Wasejiwonoque, united with the Methodists. Later his legal wife also defected to that denomination.⁴⁴ Another Indian, Peter Shegonebe, had also become a prey for the Methodists as well as Miessler's Indian neighbor, Stephan Bemajojing, with his wife and children.⁴⁵ Miessler concluded that the Methodists were to blame for these defections as well as the Indians' redidivism to heathenism due to their use of "teufliches Treiben, Locken, Drohen, Luegen, Verleumden und was sonst noch genannt werden koennte . . ." ⁴⁶

If the machinations of the white settler, traders, and Methodists and the infidelity of the Indians themselves contributed to the decline of the Bethany mission, the new Indian policy of the United States government proved to be its

⁴⁴ "Unsere Mission," Der Lutheraner, XV (October 19, 1858), 34-5.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 35-6.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 36. The only allusion made to the Bethany Mission by the Methodists is found in the 35th Annual Report of the Missionary Society of Methodist Episcopal Church, 1854, p. 79 where it is reported that a portion of the Pine River Band is under the influence of the Lutheran mission.

death blow. Not anticipating any vast westward movements nor the acquisition of any further territories, the government sought to confine the Indian tribes west of the Mississippi. Thus, the Indian Intercourse Act of June 30, 1834, defined the Indian Country as:

That part of the United States west of the Mississippi, and not within the states of Missouri and Louisiana, or the territory of Arkansas, and, also, that part of the United States east of the Mississippi river, and not within any state to which the Indian title has not been extinguished. . . .⁴⁷

This vision of a truly permanent Indian frontier with the whites east and the Indians west thereof, seemed to attain a certain degree of actuality with the consummation, in about 1840, of the removal policy. But the "permanent Indian frontier" remained an actuality only during the forties.⁴⁸ A number of events occurred which would destroy the government's plan and lead to the reservation program with its blessings and evils.

The Indian frontier disintegrated under a number of influences, chief of which was the annexation of new territories by treaty or conquest. In the decade that followed 1840 the old western boundary and, with it, the Indian frontier had changed. Texas was annexed in 1845; a treaty with Eng-

⁴⁷Alban W. Hoopes, Indian Affairs and Their Administration with Special Reference to the Far West, 1849-1860 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932), p. 8.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 9.

land in 1846 secured that portion of the Oregon Country south of the forty-ninth; and the vast Mexican Cession was acquired by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.⁴⁹ The discovery of gold in California in 1849 brought a host of white men in search of fortune. Further immigrants came to other parts of the Far West obtaining land and establishing new communities. By their rapid immigration into the Far West, the whites completely surrounded the Indian Country, so that the latter became a large aboriginal island surrounded by an ever increasing number of whites. With the collapse of the Indian Country under the impact of the on-rushing immigrants, the United States government was compelled to initiate a new Indian policy which became known as the reservation system. This program separated the Indians from most of the land that had been theirs and turned it over to the whites. It was hoped that reservation life would bring to the Indians the white man's standard of living by teaching them agriculture and the various mechanic and domestic arts.⁵⁰ One of the most important institutions to bring to the Indians this "good life" was the Church, which erected schools and chapels and taught young and old the white man's religion and culture.

The Methodists early evidenced an interest in the re-

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 236-37.

servation system and made notable contributions to its organization in Michigan. In 1854 they suggested the abolishment of the old missionary policy of following the Indians in their hunts and fishing trips and proposed instead the establishment of central locations, inducing the Indians "to settle around the church, schoolhouse, and parsonage, and become tillers of the soil."⁵¹ By 1855 they had presented their plans to the Indian agents in Michigan who approved of this policy. Arrangements were made at this time to establish two Indian reservations at Iroquois Point located at the lower end of Lake Superior, Michigan and at a similar location in the Lower Peninsula.⁵² One year later the Methodists were ready to begin the work which would make these reservations a reality. Mr. Henry C. Gilbert, the Indian agent, informed the Methodists that he had advised the Indian Department that most of the treaties were about to expire "and that it was very desirable that a new treaty should be made in common with all these Indians, by which they should settle together in one or two places, and receive lands in severalty; and thus become agricultural communities."⁵³ The Indian Department agreed to this policy

⁵¹ 35th Annual Report of the Missionary Society of Methodist Episcopal Church, 1854, p. 77.

⁵² 36th Annual Report of the Missionary Society of Methodist Episcopal Church, 1855, p. 71-2.

⁵³ 37th Annual Report of the Missionary Society of Methodist Episcopal Church, 1856, p. 64.

and decided that the Indians would be concentrated in two reservations, one at Iroquois Point and the other in Isabella County. Each Indian family was to receive eighty acres and to each single Indian man and woman would be given forty acres. In addition to these grants provisions were to be made for the schools "and the most necessary mechanical and agricultural arts."⁵⁴ With the signing of the treaty by the Indians and its ratification by the United States Senate, the Indians of Michigan, including those in Bethany, were ready to migrate to their new homes.

The Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod did not approve of the Methodist-government plan to settle the Indians upon a reservation in Isabella County. They realized only too well that the reservation would be dominated by the Methodists who, with the financial assistance of the government, would soon be able to erect sufficient schools and churches and thus control the spiritual life of the Indians, the Lutheran Indians included. Furthermore, in view of the huge expenditure of funds to procure land for the Indians, Synod was naturally reluctant to encourage the Bethany Indians to accept the government proposal. In fact, they were not only reluctant, but did everything possible to discourage the Bethany Indians from moving to Isabella

⁵⁴Ibid.

County.⁵⁵

News of the contemplated removal seems to have reached Miessler sometime toward the end of 1854 or the beginning of the following year. By the fall of 1855 the missionary and others became alarmed. The preachers' conference in Frankenlust early in October decided to send a delegation of pastors to Bethany in order to warn the Indians not to leave Bethany for Isabella County, as well as to admonish them to take better care of their spiritual health. Pastors H. Fick, O. Cloeter, and F. Sievers left Frankenlust on October 11, 1855, and after a rather difficult and tiring journey finally arrived in Bethany.⁵⁶ Here Miessler informed them of the state of the mission saying that the Indians had been in Detroit and learned of the proposed reservation in Isabella County some forty miles from Bethany. A congregational meeting was called at which time the Indians were warned not to settle in the reservation for, even though they might gain materially, their spiritual life would be endangered due to their contacts with heathen Indians and the Methodists. Only a few Indians, however, seem to have been affected by the words of the commission. * The majority of them refused to commit themselves, so that

⁵⁵"Ein Herbsttag in Bethanien," op. cit., p. 141.

⁵⁶"Reisebericht," op. cit., p. 133.

the results were uncertain.⁵⁷ Sievers and Cloeter visited Bethany again in February, 1856, and read a letter to the Indians from their former pastor, Eduard Baierlein, who was serving the church in India. In his letter Baierlein told them to remain faithful to the Word of God, which he had first brought them.⁵⁸

Despite the visits of the pastors and the warnings of Miessler, the Bethany Indians remained indifferent to their spiritual welfare and obstinate in their decision to leave the mission. Either near the close of 1856 or early in the new year, Miessler called a congregational meeting and pleaded with the Indians to tell him what their intentions were in regard to the government's offer of eighty acres for each Indian family. All of them declared that they had already selected their land and only two men, both of whom were indifferent to the Christian faith, stated that they had not as yet chosen any land.⁵⁹ Because of these difficulties Sievers and Cloeter made another visit to the mission remaining two days in Bethany. When a congregational meeting was called for a Sunday afternoon, not enough Indians assembled and so the meeting had to be postponed until Monday afternoon. Mostly women attended the gathering,

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 134.

⁵⁸"Reise Nach Bethanien," op. cit., p. 174.

⁵⁹"Missionsbericht," op. cit., p. 173.

though the chief, Nagischik, and the heathen, Wabigonschkom, were also present. The majority of Indians evidenced no sincere repentance and appeared determined to move to Isabella County. When the one hundred year old Sarah and several other women pleaded with Sievers and Cloeter not to terminate the mission and to maintain it for the sake of the Indian youth, the pastors acquiesced. Perhaps the Holy Spirit might still regenerate the Indians, so that once again they would love the Lord, their God.⁶⁰

The year 1859 seemed to offer some hope for the continuance of the Bethany mission. Old Sarah's death on April 12, 1859 affected some of the Indians. She had been a faithful member and a true disciple and shortly before her death she confessed her faith, saying how needful and how necessary for salvation it was to submit one's self to God's Word. Sarah was buried on the following Friday and Miessler preached the funeral sermon using as his text Luke 2:25-32.⁶¹ In the same month Miessler baptized the infant son of Magdalena and the youngest child of the chief, Nagischik. Magdalena, since the baptism of her child, had begun to attend church services again.⁶²

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 174. Wabigonschkom appears also as Wabigomchkom, though the former spelling is preferred.

⁶¹"Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVI (March 6, 1860), 115. Sarah was 110 years old when she died.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 115-16.

In the spring of 1859 Sievers, accompanied by the secretary of the Mission Committee, J. A. Huegle, visited Bethany and was heartened to notice an improvement in the spiritual condition of the Indians. Sievers came to the mission once again in July of the same year. The Sunday service was fairly well attended by women and children, the men being absent on business. Although many Indians had moved to the reservation in Isabella County, several had returned and decided to live again in Bethany. Miessler, in a letter dated November 29, 1859, reported that the families of Wabi, Misquaanaquot, and Pierre also had returned to Bethany, so that the future appeared somewhat brighter than before.⁶³ Perhaps the most joyous news of the year came from Miessler, who announced that he had now mastered the Chippewa language sufficiently to enable him to preach to the Indians in their own tongue. The interpreter's services now were no longer required and he was dismissed. He still resided in Bethany, however, and occasionally assisted the missionary in his duties for which he received remuneration.⁶⁴

The encouragements of 1859 were short lived and the happiness which Miessler had experienced in the return of several Indian families vanished almost as soon as it had

⁶³Ibid., p. 116.

⁶⁴Ibid.

come. By the end of 1859 the Indians had elected to reside in Isabella County. That same year the elderly Wabigonschkom visited Miessler and told him that although the Indians were determined to remain on the new reservation, they were still desirous to have him as their missionary. The Indians promised to be more regular in their church attendance if Miessler would come and live with them.⁶⁵

At the tenth Synodical convention of the Missouri Synod in 1860, Pastor Sievers depicted the condition of Bethany to the delegates, saying that the Indians had taken up permanent residence on the reservation in Isabella County visiting their former mission only occasionally. The Mission Board had hoped to convince the Indians to return to Bethany but all their pleas had proven futile. As a result of the new situation, Sievers, in behalf of the Mission Board, requested information as to the policy which should be followed regarding the Indians.⁶⁶ Following Siever's report, a heated debate ensued with some of the delegates advising Synod to terminate its Indian mission program in view of the meager results and to direct its energies to the unchurched Germans. Others argued for its continuation, re-

⁶⁵ "Den lieben Missionsfreunden zum neuen Jahr," Der Lutheraner, XVII (January 22, 1861), 95.

⁶⁶ Zehnter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evan.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1860, p. 65.

minding their brethren that Synod had not entered the Indian mission field with the hope of recording great successes and mass conversions, but because God had commanded Synod to preach the Gospel to these heathen and not only to those of their own race and nationality. The defenders of the Indian mission endeavor added that Synod should rather thank God for what He had done. Instead of complaining about the heathenism of the American Indians, these delegates advised their brethren to redouble their efforts in their behalf.⁶⁷ Having concluded the discussion, the delegates cast their ballots and Synod resolved to continue the Indian missions. Miessler was advised to follow the Indians to Isabella County and there to continue his missionary labors.⁶⁸

The mission property at Bethany was not disposed of immediately. Miessler temporarily rented the mission farm to his brother-in-law, a Mr. Meyer, though it is uncertain how long this lease remained in effect.⁶⁹ In July, 1865 Sievers reported that the old church in Bethany had to be torn down and that the horses, which had been used on the

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 69.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 70. At the convention Missionary Miessler preached in the Chippewa language, with Heinrich Craemer, son of Pastor August Craemer, acting as interpreter.

⁶⁹"Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (November 27, 1861), 61. Also Miessler, op. cit., p. 39.

mission farm, were sold for \$255.⁷⁰ One year later, Pastor Sievers wrote that the mission farm in Bethany had been sold to Peter Gruett, brother of James, the former interpreter. However, the old Indian cemetery remained the property of Synod.⁷¹ Here the Indians, who had died in the faith received Christian burial. Besides the graves of nine children, there were four adults buried in the cemetery, including Miessler's first wife, Johanna, who died in childbirth on July 22, 1857 and was buried together with her child. The first Indian adult to be buried in the cemetery was Pauline, who died on June 21, 1852, while the next adult was a man, who died on June 26, 1854. The last adult to be interred was Isaak, who died on November 19, 1857.⁷²

Miessler's life in Bethany had been a difficult one. Isolated from civilization with inadequate transportation and with unreliable roads, travel was hazardous. During the warm seasons he traveled by canoe and in the winter by

⁷⁰"Bericht ueber die Mission unter den Indianern," Der Lutheraner, XXI (August 15, 1865), 186.

⁷¹"Missions Bericht des Pastor Sievers," Der Lutheraner, XXIII (November 1, 1866), 36. Baepfer, op. cit., p. 133 says that the property at Bethany was transferred to Concordia College in Fort Wayne, to be held in trust for Synod. However, only the Indian cemetery remained in synodical hands.

⁷²"Bericht ueber die Indianer Bethaniens, insonderheit ueber die, Selig entschlafenen," op. cit., pp. 4-5.

sleigh to purchase needed flour from a mill over forty miles away. Such trips were frequently fraught with danger. On one cold winter day in 1855, while riding through the dense forests, Miessler's saddle became loose and he was thrown from his horse, which immediately became shy and ran off. "Only by the grace of God," wrote the missionary later, "was I able to free my foot from the stirrups and thus save my life. I would most certainly have been killed if my foot had been caught in the stirrup."⁷³ On another occasion Miessler's sleigh struck a shovel hidden in the snow, causing his horse to run away and throwing him from the sleigh. When he arose, the missionary discovered that he had fallen in front of a large tree stump. Had he held on to the reins but a fraction of a second longer, Miessler might have been killed in the fall.⁷⁴ A state road which would run through Bethany was begun in 1859.⁷⁵ Although this might have had lessened some of the dangers of travel, Miessler was unable to enjoy its advantage, since Synod resolved to send him to Isabella County one year later.

Miessler had come to America in 1851 unmarried and re-

⁷³Miessler, op. cit., p. 15.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 45.

⁷⁵"Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVI (March 6, 1860), 116. Miessler also mentions the building of the first roads near Bethany by some lumbermen in 1855. See Miessler, op. cit., p. 44.

mained a bachelor until his marriage to Miss Johanna Pinkepank on November 23, 1854.⁷⁶ The marriage was a happy one, though brief. One year later the Miesslers were blessed with a baby daughter, whom they named Theodora.⁷⁷ Shortly after Miessler's return from Minnesota in 1857, his wife neared the time of her second confinement. Seriously ill, Miessler was unable to obtain medical help for his wife. She died before her child was born on July 22, 1857, and was buried in the Indian cemetery, the only white person to be buried there. Shortly before her painful death and being unable to speak, she noticed several squaws standing beside her bed. With her last bit of strength she raised herself and pointed upward, as if to indicate that she would soon be in heaven and to admonish the squaws to strive for that which is above.⁷⁸ Miessler remarried in 1858, taking the widow of Pastor W. Fick as his wife. After the death of her first husband, she had been living in Detroit, together with her daughter Dorothea, at the home of her brother-in-law, Pastor Herman Fick. On December 13, 1858 their first son, Carl Friedrich Otto, was born in Beth-

⁷⁶"Bethanien," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 10 (May 15, 1855), 151. See also Miessler, op. cit., p. 13. His wife's brother at this time was a pastor in Buffalo, New York.

⁷⁷Miessler, op. cit., p. 20. Theodora died shortly after her confirmation in Saginaw, Michigan.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 30-1.

any.⁷⁹

In 1855 Miessler's two brothers, Bruno and Herman, and his sister Augusta, came to America to live with their missionary brother in Bethany.⁸⁰ One year later Miessler's father, Carl Gottlob Miessler, arrived in America to live with his son in Bethany, his second wife having died on June 12, 1856 at Rothwasser near Goerlitz.⁸¹ The old gentleman brought with him the missionary's brother, Robert, with his wife and two children, as well as his younger brother Theodore, the twin brother of Bruno.⁸² These twins, Bruno and Theodore, later studied in the institutions of the Missouri Synod and entered into the ministry in which both served for more than forty-five years.⁸³ Commenting at a later date on his call to labor among the Indians in America, Miessler wrote:

The Lord gave me courage and willingness to follow His call. And today, after more than sixty years, when I think of the Lord's wondrous guidance I must rejoice with the pious writer when he says, "Gott hat es wohl bedacht und alles alles wohl gemacht, gebt unserm Gott

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 52. Her maiden name had been Hunning.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 16, 46. Miessler's sister was married four years later, on November 1, 1859, to a Mr. Meyer from Saginaw, the missionary brother himself performing the ceremonies. See "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVI (March 6, 1860), 116. Here his name is spelled "Meier."

⁸¹Miessler, op. cit., p. 1.

⁸²Ibid., p. 46.

⁸³Ibid., p. 8.

die Ehre." And what is the reason for my praise and thanks to God for His gracious and wondrous guidance which I was permitted to receive? It is two-fold: God has permitted me to reach a great age in this country while all my colleagues who went to India have long ago departed from this vale of tears into everlasting bliss. The second reason for which I owe the Lord praise and thanks is that in the course of years four of my brothers, one sister, and after the death of my mother, my father came to North America. They all left the Union Church of Prussia where they had ungodly preachers and joined the Lutheran Church of Missouri Synod. . . .⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

A FUTILE TRANSPLANTING

The Work of E. G. H. Miessler in Isabella County, Michigan, 1861-1868

E. G. H. Miessler left Bethany with a sad heart. Here he had labored with Baierlein for two years and later continued the work of his predecessor from 1853 to 1860. Here also he had laid his beloved wife, Johanna, to rest in the Indian cemetery adjacent to the mission. When he had received Synod's approval to move to the Indian reservation in Isabella County, Michigan, and live with the Chippewa Indians, the missionary had hoped to arrive at his new mission field by January, 1861.¹ Due to the impassable roads, however, Miessler and his family were unable to leave Bethany for the Indian reservation until the next month.² Once he and his family had traveled the thirty miles from Bethany to Isabella County and had arrived safely at his new mission field, the missionary purchased the claim to 160 acres for \$120. He found that the land already possessed a house and

¹"Den lieben Missionsfreunden zum neuem Jahr," Der Lutheraner, XVII (January 22, 1861), 95.

²"Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (November 27, 1861), 61.

a shaft had been sunk for a well. It was also only one mile from Mount Pleasant, the county seat, and, since various Indian families lived near Mount Pleasant, Kiessler believed that he had chosen a fine location from which to begin his missionary labors.³

* The Indian reservation contained about eight hundred Indians comprising three Chippewa tribes, namely the Saginaw, the Swan Creek, and the Black River bands. Although the government had encouraged the Indians to settle on their lands and raise crops, many of them continued to display their natural traits of roving from one place to another in search of food, thus making missionary work extremely difficult.⁴ Besides Kiessler, the Methodists were the only other missionaries who labored among these reservation Indians. When Kiessler arrived in Isabella County, the Methodists had already erected one church building and two school houses. Two white missionaries and several full-blooded Indians and half-breeds worked to make Methodism the dominant faith in the reservation and had at this time approximately one-third of the Indians affiliated with the

³ Ibid. See also "Aus Nord-Amerika," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 21 (November 1, 1861), 327, which says that the 160 acres are three-fourths of a mile from Mount Pleasant.

⁴ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (November 27, 1861), 61.

Methodist Episcopal Church.⁵ Miessler was soon to learn that Methodism would prove a force to be reckoned with.

After establishing himself in the new mission field, Miessler commenced his labors, visiting the Indians who had formerly lived at Bethany and who had worshiped at the Indian chapel. The missionary was heartened by the responsiveness of his members and hoped that he soon would be able to gather together the Indians, who had left Bethany, into a firm and faithful congregation. Wabigonschkom, who had visited Miessler in Bethany in 1859 to urge him to migrate to this new location, offered his house to the missionary as a place for Sunday worship. The attendance at divine services was generally quite good but the conditions for worship left much to be desired. Many interruptions disturbed the solemnity of the Sunday service and Miessler found himself frequently competing with the shouting of children and the barking of dogs.⁶ Miessler was particularly gratified to find that many Indians, who had formerly lived in Bethany and who had been affiliated with the Lutheran mission there, still confessed the faith wherein they had been baptized. Some of the Indians remembered Professor August Craemer when he had been their missionary in Frankenthuth and

⁵Ibid. See also "Aus Nord-Amerika," op. cit., p. 326, which lists only two Methodist schools.

⁶"Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (December 25, 1861), 77.

spoke of him as one who had brought them to the knowledge of salvation.⁷ In Niessler's mind the Lutheran mission endeavor had proven its worth and, although the Lutheran missionaries could not point to any outstanding conquests, they could always rejoice in the knowledge that a few Indians had found their Savior. As far as Niessler was concerned the Lutheran mission had been vindicated!

The missionary was further encouraged in his work when he administered holy baptism to an Indian child sometime in 1861. The parents, relatives of Wabigonschkom, had been former Methodists. For the past two years they had become dissatisfied with that denomination because they found no peace in the Methodist doctrine. Through the initiative of Wabigonschkom, they became acquainted with Niessler's services. Convinced that the missionary's words were true, they presented their child to Niessler for baptism, the first Indian to be baptized by him in the new mission field.⁸ In July, 1861, Niessler baptized the child of unnamed German parents who had come to Isabella County from Ohio where they had belonged to the "Union Church." They were happy to find a Lutheran pastor in Isabella County and indicated their de-

⁷Ibid., pp. 77-8.

⁸"Fortsetzung des Missionsberichts," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (February 5, 1862), 161.

sire to adhere to the true Lutheran faith.⁹

Encouraged by the fine progress that his mission had been making, Miessler began to plan the erection of a church similar to the one in which the Indians had worshiped in Bethany. The Indians themselves spoke to Miessler about having a church of their own, so that he made arrangements to purchase one acre of land from the Indians on which he would build his church.¹⁰ In the late fall of 1861 building operations were commenced and the work was completed soon afterward except for the interior.¹¹ In a short time this too was finished and the building was ready to be used for church services. Upon the request of the Indians, Miessler brought the church bell that had announced the time of worship in Bethany and installed the bell in the new church on Easter Sunday, 1862.¹² Although the missionary thanked God that he and his Indians possessed a house of worship, he nevertheless realized that if his missionary labors should become more effective, two mission stations, each having its own chapel, would be needed. Miessler already had two

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰"Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (December 25, 1861), 77.

¹¹"Missionsbericht ueber Gabitawigama in Minnesota und Isabella County in Michigan," Der Lutheraner, XX (November 1, 1863), 37.

¹²Ibid. See also "Nordamerika," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 13 u. 14 (July 1 u. 15, 1863), 218.

separate mission stations six miles apart from one another where he had to conduct separate services. Thus, as early as March, 1861 he suggested that two separate chapels be erected and another missionary be sent to labor on the reservation, a suggestion which unfortunately never was realized.¹³

Early in his ministry to the Indians in Isabella County, Miessler sought to open a school for the children. The fact that the Methodists already had a monopoly in educating the Indians and had received federal aid so as to operate their schools and build new ones, made it imperative for Miessler to organize his own school.¹⁴ Without a Lutheran school, Lutheran Indian children had to depend upon Methodist teachers in Methodist schools for their education. The scattered condition of the Indians and the lack of additional help, however, prevented the missionary from opening a school. It was impossible for him to minister to the Indians and at the same time to instruct the Indian children daily in a school. Moreover, prior to the erection of the church, no building was available in which he could instruct

¹³"Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (December 25, 1861), 77.

¹⁴Elfter Synodal-Bericht der allgemeinen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1861, p. 88.

the children.¹⁵ With the construction of the mission chapel, the hope of organizing a school became a reality. An Indian agent accosted Miessler and asked him if he would be willing to permit the church to be used as a school building during the week, since the Indians had requested a school in their midst. The use of the chapel was to be a temporary arrangement until a school house could be built for the Indians. Miessler naturally granted the request and as soon as the benches had been installed in the building and the mission chapel had been dedicated, the school was initiated. A teacher supplied by the Indian agent taught the children.¹⁶ Somewhat later, probably in 1865, the government asked Miessler to teach in one of the public schools, a position he accepted. Here he was permitted to teach the Catechism and Bible History, which gave him the opportunity to present the Lutheran faith to the Indian children.¹⁷

— As we have seen, Miessler had purchased a claim for 160 acres of land in 1861 and here he had established the

¹⁵"Aus Nord-Amerika," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 21 (November 1, 1861), 333.

¹⁶"Missionsbericht ueber Gabitawigama in Minnesota und Isabella County in Michigan," op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁷"Missionsbericht des Pastor Sievers," Der Lutheraner, XXIII (November 1, 1866), 35. See also August R. Suelflow, "The Life and Work of G. E. C. F. Sievers," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXI (October, 1948), 101.

mission.¹⁸ Either in 1862 or 1863 the government placed the land on open market and the missionary obtained full title to the 160 acres for two hundred dollars, which was paid from the mission treasury.¹⁹ A log church had been built in 1861 and a barn the following year.²⁰ When Miessler had acquired the property, a small log cabin was already on the land. He and his family had made it their home, but in 1862 he expressed his desire to build a larger building.²¹ Nothing materialized, however, until the spring of 1865 when Miessler began to erect a new and larger home for himself and his family.²² Miessler's new home was completed at the end of that same year, the building expenses having been paid from the money that had been received from the sale of the mission farm in Bethany. It afforded the missionary and his family considerable room, so that Miessler let it be known that he could accommodate two mission students.²³ Sad to say, however, the additional rooms would never be used for that purpose. With the exception of Heinrich Graemer, son of Pro-

¹⁸Supra, p. 77.

¹⁹"Missionsbericht ueber Gabitawigama in Minnesota und Isabella County in Michigan," op. cit., p. 38.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²"Bericht ueber die Mission unter den Indianern," Der Lutheraner, XXI (August 15, 1865), 186.

²³"Missionsbericht des Pastor Sievers," op. cit., p. 36.

fessor F. A. Graemer, who had assisted Miessler in Isabella County in the summer of 1861, no other missionary or mission student came to the reservation to labor among the Indians.²⁴

When Miessler left Bethany and followed his Indians to their reservation in Isabella County, he was full of enthusiasm and hope. He had planned to continue and enlarge his mission work among the Chippewa Indians gathering the Indians in one or more congregations. With the assistance of another missionary, he hoped to expand his work to include other Indians and to instruct the natives in one or more schools. The first few years that Miessler worked in Isabella County seemed to substantiate his fondest dreams, for the Indians gave every indication that they would remain true to the Lutheran Church and that they earnestly desired to grow in grace. Miessler was encouraged and his early letters and reports reflected that optimism. The new mission seemed to prosper; the tender plant appeared to grow and bear fruit.

It soon appeared that the first impressions, which Miessler and the others had interpreted as signs of growth and prosperity, were actually the last gasps of a dying mission. The seed which Baierlein had sown and Miessler had watered was not growing at all but was in reality at the

²⁴"Fortsetzung des Missionsbericht," op. cit., 101. Missionary Ottomar Cloeter in Minnesota complained about the fact that Heinrich Graemer had been sent to Miessler that summer and not to him. See "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (October 2, 1861), 30.

point of death. Miessler's untiring ministry had fallen on deaf ears. The Indians who had promised faithfully to attend the divine services again drifted into their former indifference. As early as 1863 Sievers reported that Miessler had complained about the small number of worshipers. At times the attendance was so poor that the services were completely disbanded.²⁵ Nor did things improve in 1864 and in 1865. Mission work became increasingly more difficult with the frequent absences of the Indians on their hunting trips and the enlistment of some Indians in the Union Army. Also at this time Miessler lost one of his faithful members, the widow of the chief, Nagischik, who died in 1864 and had been faithful until her death.²⁶ In the fall of 1866 Pastor Sievers was forced to report further distressing news. Most of the Indians, who had come from Bethany, had followed other doctrines and many of them joined the Methodists. Others had either become indifferent or had completely fallen from the faith, so that the church was empty.²⁷ In the words of the missionary, Pastor Miessler, "the Indians have left their

²⁵"Missionsbericht ueber Gabitawigama in Minnesota und Isabella County in Michigan," op. cit., p. 37.

²⁶"Bericht ueber die Mission unter den Indianern," op. cit., p. 186.

²⁷"Missionsbericht des Pastor Sievers," op. cit., p. 35.

first love."²⁸

* Miessler's health during the remaining years that he spent in Isabella County as Lutheran missionary to the Chippewa Indians had been impaired, so that he often was physically unable to perform his duties. Shortly after he had administered his first baptism in the newly erected church, Miessler became quite ill and was unable to resume his labors until the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity. As a result of his confinement the most advantageous time in which to conduct divine services was lost, for when he had recovered from his illness to take up his work again, the Indians were ready to leave for their fall hunting trip.²⁹ In February, 1867 the missionary complained about an "obstinate cold in the head" which he had caught while traveling to Saginaw City in order to attend a pastoral conference. Miessler, nevertheless, endeavored to teach in the school, though he complained that his entire nervous system had been weakened by the illness.³⁰ That he had not sufficiently recovered by the summer is seen by the fact that he was unable to attend the convention of the Missouri Synod in 1867. Besides his

²⁸ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XXIV (August 1, 1868), 181.

²⁹ "Nordamerika," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 13 u. 14 (July 1 u. 15, 1863), 218.

³⁰ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XXIV (August 1, 1868), 181.

own illness at this time, Miessler's family was also plagued with sickness, his oldest son being ill with tuberculosis.³¹

The discouraging reports concerning the Indian mission work in Isabella County, coupled with Miessler's personal difficulties, caused the Missouri Synod to restudy its entire Indian mission program in order to decide whether or not it should be discontinued. At its convention of 1866 in Fort Wayne, Synod closely examined Sievers, the chairman of the Mission Board, on the progress of the Indian missions both in Minnesota and in Michigan. In view of the meager success which Miessler had experienced, many of the delegates were in favor of terminating the entire Indian mission endeavor. Sievers, however, awakened new hope in the program and urged its continuance.³² Both Synod and Professor F. A. Craemer also reprimanded Miessler saying that he should spend more time with the Indians and not act as if he were * dealing with a German congregation. Craemer added that when he had been an Indian missionary in Frankenmuth he had found adequate time to serve both his colonists and the Indians. Surely, concluded Craemer, Miessler should be able to find

³¹Ibid.

³²Suelflow, op. cit., p. 101.

sufficient time to do likewise.³³ Synod also looked askance at the arrangement whereby Miessler taught in a public school and wondered if this was not in contradiction to his call. Sievers assured the delegates that Miessler's instruction in the public school enabled him to bring Christianity to many of the children, since the missionary had been given permission to teach the Catechism and Bible History.³⁴ Synod finally resolved to continue its Indian work in Isabella County and permitted Miessler to continue to teach in the public school provided that this would not interfere with his regular mission work.³⁵ The mission was spared for two more years.

Synod continued to have its doubts about the mission in Isabella County. The Mission Board appointed Pastor J. P. Beyer of Chicago and Professor C. A. T. Selle of Addison, Illinois to investigate the mission and to admonish the Indians.³⁶ Beyer and Selle arrived in Isabella County in the

³³Zwoelfter und Dreizehnter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1864 u. 1866, pp. 80-1.

³⁴Ibid., p. 90. See also Suelflow, op. cit., p. 101.

³⁵Zwoelfter und Dreizehnter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1864 u. 1866, p. 91.

³⁶E. G. H. Miessler, "Autobiography of E. G. H. Miessler," unpublished autobiography translated from the original German by and in the possession of H. C. Miessler, Columbus, Ohio, p. 53.

evening of July 20, 1867, and began their investigations. The following day the two men attended Sunday service and noted that thirty Indians, mostly women and children, had gathered in the chapel and that among the worshipers were many Methodists. Miessler preached to them in the Chippewa language, reading the sermon, however. At the conclusion of the service the Indians were asked to assemble in Miessler's home on the following day in order to discuss the condition of the mission.³⁷

The investigating committee had the opportunity to examine the mission records prior to the proposed meeting the next day and soon discovered that the mission was in a sorry state. Only five families and a few individuals still belonged to the Lutheran mission and only in two of the five families half of the persons were members of the Methodist Church. Church services were so poorly attended in 1866 and 1867 that they were almost discontinued. Of the fourteen pupils whom Miessler taught, only four belonged to the Lutheran mission, the remainder being Methodists. Furthermore, Miessler's frequent illnesses made mission work almost impossible. The Indians themselves evidenced no repentance and were entirely indifferent to spiritual matters. In fact, none of the Lutheran Indians in Isabella County had

³⁷ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XXIV (August 1, 1868), 181.

received holy communion and none of them ever indicated any desire to partake of the blessed Sacrament. In Miessler's six years as missionary to the Indians in Isabella County, no adults were baptized. Miessler did baptize ten children of whom four had died and had received Christian burial. The pastors observed that the large majority of the Indians had become Methodists and only a few still remained heathens.³⁸ Thus, further mission work seemed almost impossible.

Miessler and the committee met with the Indians in the missionary's home on July 22, 1867. Besides the three pastors, there were five church members, two Methodists, one of whom represented his wife, and Philip Gruett, the young man who had spent some time studying at Synod's college in Fort Wayne. Gruett acted as interpreter.³⁹ The pastors admonished the Indians to remain faithful to their Lord and reminded them once again of Christ's sacrifice in their behalf. When the delegation informed the Indians that the mission reports indicated that they had been unfaithful, one of the Indians replied that he and others had not attended the Sunday services because they could not understand what Miessler said. Old Wabigonschkom added that he could

³⁸Ibid., pp. 181-82.

³⁹"Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XXIV (August 1, 1868), 187. Philip's name is also spelled "Philipp."

follow Miessler's sermon fairly well. When the pastors asked the Indian if it would help if Miessler spoke louder and more clearly, all agreed. The committee then informed the Indians that Synod had given serious consideration to closing the mission, whereupon Wabigonschkom and the others replied that they loved the Lutheran Church. If the missionary would withdraw from Isabella County, continued the Indians, the Lutheran faith of the Indians would be extinguished. The Indians then concluded by admitting their mistake in forsaking Bethany and promised to amend their ways. They also suggested that a new chapel be built and promised to lend their aid. Thereupon the committee informed the Indians that Miessler would be permitted to remain with them for six more months after which time another inventory would be held and Synod would determine the future of its mission.⁴⁰ The meeting concluded, the mission was commended to God and the two pastors returned home with their reports.

Although the Indians had promised to reform and had pledged themselves to attend the divine services with more regularity, the reverse occurred. The Indians were frequently absent from their homes. Soon after the pastors had departed, the Indians went bear hunting. Then came the winter chase from which they did not return until February. In

⁴⁰Ibid.

March the Indians left once more hiring themselves to the lumberjacks in the vicinity. Church services were never attended by more than fifteen Indians. Several deaths also occurred at this time, namely Salome, the widow of Bemassike, and the old Pemagojin. Nor did Miessler's health improve at this time. Both he and members of his family suffered from some eye disease which forced the missionary to give up his teaching position in the public school. The very last report which Miessler sent to the Mission Board informed them that he was again ill with a fever and thus would be unable to attend Synod's convention in Milwaukee.⁴¹

The convention of Synod, which met in Milwaukee in 1868, finally decided to end its work in Isabella County.⁴² In 1869 the mission property was transferred to Concordia College in Fort Wayne. At the same time the congregations of Synod were advised to donate their mission contributions to the Hermannsburg and Leipzig Mission Societies until such time when the Missouri Synod would once again possess its own mission.⁴³ Synod advised Miessler to accept a call to a German congregation in the vicinity of the former mission

⁴¹Ibid. Pemagojin may be the Indian, Bemagojing, but there is no way of ascertaining this.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Vierzehnter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten, abgehalten zu Fort Wayne, Ind., im Jahre 1869, p. 101.

in order to serve those Indians who might indicate repentance.⁴⁴ An attempt was made to revive Synod's mission work in 1869, but these endeavors proved futile. Finally, in 1872 Sievers reported the sale of a part of the mission property, stating at the same time that the amount in the mission treasury was \$5,508.21.⁴⁵ Synod's missions to the American Indians had come to an end and would not be re-
 * opened until 1899 when a mission was organized among the Stockbridge Indians in Shawano, Wisconsin.⁴⁶

Many varying reasons have been given for the end of Lutheran mission work among the Chippewa Indians in Michigan. Some have even blamed the faithful Miessler for its failure, although this was far from the truth.⁴⁷ Miessler had spent himself in behalf of his Indians laboring under all kinds of adverse conditions. He was always the first to offer himself in behalf of the mission and always the last to murmur or complain. His parting words were that "I leave the mission field of hard labor and anxiety with a broken heart and many tears, and with fervent prayers to the God of mercy for the true repentance on the part of our poor

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 102.

⁴⁵Suelflow, op. cit., p. 101.

⁴⁶Walter A. Baepler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 240.

⁴⁷Suelflow, op. cit., p. 102.

Indians."⁴⁸ Others found the cause of the mission's demise in the "heartlessness of the government," whose agents hindered rather than helped the missionaries in their ministry.

* Finally, both the Methodists and the Indians themselves were called into judgment, the former for their obnoxious interference and the latter for their indifference and unfaithfulness.⁴⁹ Whatever the cause might have been, the work was ended. In the words of Miessler, "It was indeed sad."⁵⁰

Miessler's Remaining Years, 1868-1916

Upon the advice of Synod Miessler waited for a call to some German congregation. When the "desired call" did not materialize, he accepted a call to act as temporary teacher for the school of Holy Cross Congregation in Saginaw, remaining there until 1871.⁵¹ In that year his wife became seriously ill with tuberculosis. Miessler, his wife and children moved to New Melle, Missouri where his brother-in-law, Windhorst, lived, in the hope that a change in climate might restore her impaired health. Miessler's hope, however, was not realized for on July 21, 1871, his second wife

⁴⁸Baepler, op. cit., p. 133.

⁴⁹"Aus Nordamerika," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 6 (March 15, 1869), 85.

⁵⁰Miessler, op. cit., p. 54.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 56.

died.⁵²

Shortly thereafter Miessler himself became ill, an illness which occurred while the former missionary was visiting relatives and friends in St. Louis. The illness was severe enough to cause Miessler's physician to advise him to give up the holy ministry entirely and seek employment in some other profession. Several of his friends in the ministry concurred with the doctor so that Miessler finally felt constrained to lay down his mantel. At the age of forty-five the former pastor and missionary now resolved to study medicine, entering Hohnemann Medical College at Chicago in the fall of 1871. Two years later he graduated from the medical school and established himself as a "Homoeopathic Physician" in Chicago.⁵³ Some time in 1871 or 1872 Miessler was married for the third time. His wife was Henriette Pissel, the sister of Pastor Theodor Pissel. The marriage, however, proved to be a brief one, for on July 31, 1873 his wife died after giving birth to a son, Johannes Anton Theodor. On August 8, 1873 the little boy also died and was buried in Wunder's Cemetery in Chicago, the last resting place of his mother.⁵⁴

Miessler continued his medical practice in Chicago un-

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., p. 57.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 57-8.

till 1899 when he retired. While he was practicing medicine there, he had the joy of seeing several of his sons study at Synod's preparatory school in Fort Wayne. His eldest son, Otto, entered Concordia College, Fort Wayne, in the autumn of 1874 and in 1877 enrolled in the Hohnemann College of Homoeopathic Medicine, graduating in 1880 as a physician and surgeon. Another son, Hermann, also enrolled at Fort Wayne in 1874 and thereafter in Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. He graduated in 1883 receiving his first call to Columbus, Nebraska.⁵⁵ Miessler's youngest son, Frederick Gustav Ferdinand, entered Concordia College at Milwaukee in 1884 and three years later he matriculated to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, from which he graduated in 1892. Frederick returned a call to become a traveling missionary in Nebraska in order to visit Europe. Later, however, he accepted a call to Staplehurst, Nebraska, where he remained until the autumn of 1899.⁵⁶

After his retirement in 1899, Miessler moved to Staplehurst, Nebraska, in order to live with his son Frederick. Here the elderly gentleman sought to resume his medical practice, but shortly after his arrival his son received a call to serve the Lutheran church in Ontonoville, Illinois, which, after some delay, he accepted. After a short stay

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 59.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 63-4.

in Columbus, Nebraska, Miessler followed Frederick to Ontonoville and thereafter visited his other sons whenever that was possible. Miessler died in Chicago on March 1, 1916, and four days later the faithful missionary was buried. Pastor H. Succop spoke words of comfort at the home of the deceased's son and Ferdinand Sievers, son of the chairman of the Mission Board, addressed the mourners at the church in Hanson Park, Chicago, while the Reverend P. Luecke administered the committal.⁵⁷ The old pilgrim and faithful pastor had returned to Him who had sent him.

⁵⁷"Todesanzeigen," Der Lutheraner, LXXII (April 11, 1916), 151.

CHAPTER V

A FRUITLESS FIELD

The Work of Ottomar Cloeter in Minnesota, 1857-1862

When the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod decided in 1856 to establish an Indian mission in Minnesota, its mission program entered a new phase. Prior to this time, the Missouri Synod had been operating Indian missions which had been founded by other Lutherans and which had already been in operation for a number of years. The Saxon Lutherans had not been confronted with the various problems connected with the planting of a mission among heathen people. They did not have to search for missionaries and resources nor were they faced with the problem of having to send men into the forests to choose a suitable mission site. All this had been done by Friedrich Schmid and Wilhelm Loche, who had chosen the mission sites of Sebawaing and Shebahyok, Frankenmuth and Bethany, and who had trained their missionaries and furnished them with the necessary resources. The missions were an accomplished fact possessing missionaries and converts when they were transferred to the Missouri Synod in 1849 and 1850. This was not the case, however, when the Missouri Synod decided to bring the Gospel to the heathen Indians of Minnesota. Here were no Lutheran Indian missions to welcome the representatives of Synod; here were no Lu-

theran missionaries to direct the work of Synod. In fact, there were no missionaries at all, besides those already serving the existing Lutheran Indian missions, to volunteer for the new endeavor. The Missouri Synod had to undertake the project alone trusting in God for strength and endurance. It was a new undertaking, different in many ways from that which the Synod had been accustomed. Only time would tell if it would prove a success.

When the first white men explored the area now known as Minnesota they encountered two different Indian tribes, * which were continuously at war with each other, the Minnesota Sioux and the Chippewa. The Minnesota Sioux, more properly called the Dakotas, belonged to the great Siouan family that once occupied almost the whole of the Midwest.¹ They were forest dwellers, differing in many ways from the prairie Sioux farther southwest. Although these Indians depended upon the chase for their food and hunted the bison, bear, deer, moose, and many smaller animals, their diet also included wild rice and swamp roots, which they found in abundance.² More than many other Indians, they were most representative of the picturesque Indians of the American Wild West and their deerskin shirts and leggings, fringes

¹Compiled and Written by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, Minnesota: A State Guide (New York: The Viking Press, 1938), p. 31.

²Ibid., pp. 31-2.

and embroidered trimmings, leather moccasins and elaborate head-dress, became the almost classic Indian costume. They rode horses, hunted with bows and arrows or spears, covered their dome-shaped wigwams with skins, and crossed the lakes in awkward crafts shaped like washtubs with a wooden framework covered by skins.³ These were the Indians, who wrought havoc in Minnesota in 1862 and ruined the Lutheran Indian mission in Gabbitawigama. Together with the Chippewa, of whom we have already heard above, they roamed the forests of Minnesota contending with one another for possession of the valuable hunting grounds and presenting a bulwark against white expansion.⁴

The Roman Catholics, who had been laboring among various Indian tribes in Canada and elsewhere, were the first to penetrate Minnesota and bring Christianity to the Indians. Among the most famous of the early missionaries to explore Minnesota was Father Hennepin, who with his companions, Auquelle and Accault, ascended the upper Mississippi from the Illinois country in 1680. Although captured by a band of Sioux, he reached Mille Lacs. Turning southward Hennepin and Auquelle discovered and named the Falls of St. Anthony.⁵

³Ibid., p. 32.

⁴Supra, I, 9-12.

⁵Compiled and Written by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, op. cit., p. 44.

Other missionary explorers to visit Minnesota were Fathers Allouez, Marquette, and Jolliet, generally traveling via Sandy Lake and Mille Lacs.⁶ At what time Roman Catholic missions were established is uncertain. However, in 1833 Father F. Baraga traveled from La Pointe to Sandy Lake but was discouraged with what he saw. Later Father Franz Pierz, who had come from Austria, labored among the Indians in Minnesota.⁷

Among the Protestants who labored among the Indians in *Minnesota was W. T. Boutwell, who established a mission at Leech Lake, Cass County, in 1832. The first missionary to stop at Crow Wing was the Methodist, Samuel Spates. In 1840 he chose a site among the Indians on the shore of Little Rabbit Lake, which, however, was of short duration.⁸ Methodist missions were also founded at Fond du Lac in Minnesota about the same time. In 1843 there were seven Indian members, and in 1844 no statistics of membership were cited.⁹ A Missionary Ayer was located near the Yellow Lake trading

⁶Carl Zapffe, It Happened Here: A Budget of Historical Narratives Pertaining to Central Minnesota, but Especially Crow Wing County (Place of publication not given: Brainerd Journal Press, 1948), p. 5.

⁷Ibid., p. 13.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Wade Crawford Barclay, "Early American Methodism, 1769-1844," History of Methodist Missions (New York: The Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, 1950), II, 162.

post in 1833. He spent a considerable portion of the day reading and singing to the Indians in their own language, finding time to talk to little groups of four or five up to a dozen.¹⁰ The Presbyterians also labored among the Minnesota *Sicux* or Dakota Indians. Two stations were established among the *Sicux* -- one at Fort Snelling, where the two Pond brothers, Gideon and Samuel, together with J. D. Stevens remained, and the other at Lac qui Parle, where the missionary-doctor, Thomas S. Williamson settled. In June, 1837, the Reverend and Mrs. Stephen R. Riggs came to Lac qui Parle mission to assist Williamson in his work. Gideon Pond, Williamson, and Riggs with the assistance of Joseph Renville, the son of a Frenchman and his Indian wife, undertook to translate the Bible into the Dakota tongue. In the fall of 1839 the Gospel according to Mark was published.¹¹ John P. Williamson joined his father in the fall of 1861 after completing his theological training at Lane Theological Seminary.¹²

The work of various Protestant denominations and es-

¹⁰Everett Dick, The Story of the Frontier: A Social History of the Northern Plains and Rocky Mountains from the Earliest White Contacts to the Coming of the Homemaker (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1941), p. 128.

¹¹Clifford Merrill Drury, Presbyterian Panorama (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1952), p. 110.

¹²Ibid., p. 111.

pecially the labors of Friedrich Schmid and Wilhelm Loehe in behalf of the American Indians early excited the interest of a number of pastors of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Surely if Lutherans in Germany could manifest such an interest in the native American, Lutherans in the United States should also be able to emulate their European brethren. Thus, with the formation of the Missouri Synod in Chicago in 1847, a Board of Missions was elected. G. J. H. Fick was elected chairman, F. A. Graemer, secretary, and F. W. Barthel, treasurer. In 1850 Ferdinand Sievers was elected chairman of the Mission Board, a position which he held until 1893.¹³ Candidate C. Fricke was commissioned in 1847 as visitor and explorer and instructed to search for new mission opportunities.¹⁴ However, it appears that the Mission Board at that time thought primarily in terms of opening missions among the unchurched Germans.

In 1848 the Committee on Missions considered the possibility of establishing an Indian mission in Oregon, but no further steps were taken in realizing this objective. At this time thought was also given to stationing a candidate in St. Louis where he might contact various Indian chiefs in

* ¹³August R. Suelflow, "The Life and Work of G. E. C. F. Sievers," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXI (July, 1948), 75.

¹⁴Esther Abbetmeyer-Selke, "Missouri Synod's First Chipewa Mission in Minnesota," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, III (April, 1930), 20.

the hope of establishing a Lutheran Indian mission colony in Oregon.¹⁵ All these plans, however, were temporarily abandoned when the Missouri Synod obtained possession of Frankenmuth and Bethany in 1849 and Shebahyonk and Sebewaing in 1850.

With the acquisition of these four Indian missions in Michigan, a greater interest in the conversion of the heathen aborigines manifested itself among ministers and laymen. As a result, new mission plans were submitted. In 1852, Synod planned to establish a colony and a mission among the Chinese in California, but distance and the lack of men prevented its realization.¹⁶ Synod's interest in the welfare of numerous Germans, who had migrated to California, was partially responsible for the suggestion that a mission be located in that state, and the fact that California had been admitted to the Union as a free state in the Compromise of 1850 gave added inducement. H. Fick reminded his Lutherans in an article in Der Lutheraner in 1856 that it was time to commence work among the Germans in California and that the mission work should "be directed solely to our fellow countrymen in California."¹⁷ It is indeed significant that the

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 20-1.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁷"Aufruf zu Mission nach Californien," Der Lutheraner, XII (March 25, 1856), 123-25.

early mission work of the Missouri Synod always sought to combine heathen missions with activities in behalf of the Germans. Whenever Synod planned to establish a mission, be it for the Indians or the Chinese, the Germans always entered into consideration.

Noble as all these plans were, the Missouri Synod was in no position at this time to undertake such distant missionary enterprises. Thus, in 1854 the Mission Board suggested that plans to establish a mission in Oregon or California be abandoned, since the mission treasury could not support any missionaries laboring so far away. Instead it was recommended that Synod organize an Indian mission in the Territory of Minnesota, directing its efforts at the conversion of the Chippewa Indians, who occupied this area.¹⁸ It was furthermore suggested that an exploratory trip be made into this region in order to ascertain the mission opportunities in Minnesota, but this was tabled.¹⁹

Two years later, however, at the second convention of the Northern District, in May of 1856, steps were taken

¹⁸Achter Synodal-Bericht der Deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio, und andern Staaten vom Jahre 1854, p. 14. The Territory of Minnesota was formally created on March 3, 1849. Congress admitted Minnesota to the Union on May 11, 1858. See Compiled and Written by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, op. cit., pp. 50, 53.

¹⁹Achter Synodal-Bericht der Deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio, und andern Staaten vom Jahre 1854, p. 16.

which eventually resulted in planting a Lutheran mission among the Chippewa Indians in Minnesota. After they had discussed the possibilities of establishing a mission either in western Canada or California, the delegates decided that Minnesota would be the most suitable location. Thereupon the delegates resolved that the District president select a pastor from the District, who would leave for Minnesota that summer, if possible, in order to explore the mission possibilities. The choice fell upon Ferdinand Sievers and his congregation granted him several months' leave of absence in order to fulfill his obligations.²⁰ At this same time, in 1856, Synod's Mission Board requested E. G. H. Miessler to accompany Sievers to Minnesota. While Sievers was to locate the many scattered German Lutherans who had settled in Minnesota, Miessler was to investigate the mission possibilities among the Chippewa Indians.²¹

On August 1, 1856, Ferdinand Sievers, Missionary Miessler, and James Gruett, the Indian interpreter, left Frankenthuth for La Crosse, Wisconsin and then to Minnesota.²² From

²⁰ Zweiter Bericht des Noerdlichen Distrikts der deutschen evangel.-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten A.D. 1856, pp. 22-3.

²¹ E. G. H. Miessler, "Autobiography of E. G. H. Miessler," unpublished autobiography translated from the original German by and in the possession of H. C. Miessler, Columbus, Ohio, p. 20.

²² Suelflow, op. cit., p. 102.

thence they traveled to St. Paul, Minnesota, arriving in Crow Wing after two days of travel by stage coach. At Crow Wing the two men separated, Sievers visiting the German settlements, while Miessler visited the Indians.²³ Miessler at this time had learned that approximately five hundred Chipewa Indians, who were located on a reservation at Mille Lacs Lake about thirty miles east of Crow Wing, desired to settle down and become farmers. The missionary, therefore, considered Mille Lacs as a likely location for an Indian mission and determined to visit these Indians.²⁴ But before going to the Indian reservation, Miessler decided to visit the nearby Episcopalian Indian mission at St. Colombo. This mission, located 180 miles north of St. Paul and fifteen miles north of Crow Wing, was founded by Missionary James Lloyn Breck, who built a log structure in 1853 which he named "St. John's in the Wilderness." On December 25, 1855, a congregation was organized and the mission seemed to make good progress.²⁵ In 1856 or 1857 Missionary Breck left St.

²³Miessler, op. cit., p. 20.

²⁴"Anthony Falls, den 21. August, 1856," Der Lutheraner, XIII (September 9, 1856), 14.

²⁵"Bericht ueber eine Missionsreise ins Minnesota-Territorium im August und September 1856," Der Lutheraner, XIII (February 10, 1857), 99. Zapffe, op. cit., p. 13 spells the Episcopalian's name Brecht. Zapffe also spells the mission station as St. Columba. Breck or Brecht was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and then of a Theological Seminary. See Thomas C. Moffett, The American Indian on the New Trail (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the

Colombo after he had been abused by the Indians and had become discouraged.²⁶ Breck then went to Leech Lake in order to start another mission and was succeeded at St. Colombo by the Reverend E. Steele Peake. Peake or Peak erected the Church of the Holy Cross in Old Crow Wing in 1860. As a result of the Sioux uprising in 1862, however, the Episcopalian mission at St. Colombo was destroyed and Indian work was terminated.²⁷

Miessler remained in St. Colombo until August 19, 1856, taking every opportunity to acquaint himself with the Indian work of the Episcopalian Church in Minnesota. On Sunday morning the missionary attended the church service. Miessler observed that the divine service was well attended and that good order was maintained. As the Indians arrived at the chapel they knelt and prayed the Lord's Prayer. An indication that many of these Indians took their religion seriously was seen when a sick woman was carried to church

United States and Canada, 1914), p. 87 where the Episcopalian's name is given as "Breck."

²⁶ "Aus einem Schreiben des Mieszler vom 29. Oct. 1857," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 15 (August 1, 1858), 228.

²⁷ Zapffe, op. cit., p. 13, spells the name of Breck's successor "Peake," while Miessler refers to him as "Peak." Zapffe makes no mention of Breck being abused by the Indians but gives the impression that he left St. Colombo in 1856 in order to establish a new Indian mission at Leech Lake. See also "Aus einem Schreiben des Mieszler vom 29. Oct. 1857," op. cit., p. 229.

so that she might also experience the blessings of the proclamation of God's Word. On Monday the customary school vacation during the rice harvest began, but upon Miessler's plea the children were once more assembled. A certain Miss Frink taught the children in the English language, since they lacked suitable spelling and reading textbooks in the Chippewa language. Thereupon, Miessler acquainted them with Missionary Eduard Baierlein's reader.²⁸

While Miessler had been at the Episcopalian mission in St. Colombo, his interpreter, James Gruett, had made the acquaintance of a young man to whom he was related. This youth had an older brother and gave him the news of the arrival of a distant cousin. Upon learning the welcome news, the older brother, Manitowab, hastened to meet Gruett only to arrive too late. Gruett had already left St. Colombo journeying to Crow Wing where Miessler was to meet him later. Since Miessler had not left St. Colombo at the time, Manitowab came to the mission house and offered to accompany the Lutheran missionary to Crow Wing.²⁹

While Manitowab and James Gruett became acquainted, Miessler sought to engage a guide to lead him to Mille Lacs. In the meantime, Manitowab had informed the missionary of a

²⁸"Bericht ueber eine Missionsreise ins Minnesota-Territorium im August und September 1856," op. cit., p. 99.

²⁹Ibid.

group of Indians living at Rabbit Lake, who desired the services of a teacher. Four years before their chiefs had traveled to Washington in order to obtain a teacher and a school, but they were unsuccessful. Since Manitowab had formerly belonged to this band of Indians, he inquired whether Miessler would desire to visit them assuring the missionary that the Indians would be happy to see him. At this same time, Manitowab introduced the missionary to an Indian chief from Rabbit Lake and Miessler spoke to him concerning God's Word and the way of salvation. He informed the Indian that he had decided to visit Rabbit Lake and to tell his brethren what he had declared to him.³⁰

The next morning on August 20, 1856, Miessler began his trip to Rabbit Lake, a distance of twenty-five miles from Crow Wing. Manitowab had offered Miessler his services as a guide provided he would go to Rabbit Lake and not to Mille Lacs, since he was afraid to travel through Sioux country. The journey was a difficult one and the three men, Miessler, Gruett, and Manitowab had to traverse on unbeaten paths "through forests and over prairies that only here and there showed the tracks of a wagon, which had squeezed its way

³⁰Ibid., p. 100. In his autobiography Miessler says that the Episcopalian missionary suggested that he visit the Rabbit Lake Indians. See Miessler, op. cit., p. 21. However, in "Aus einem Schreiben des Miss. Mieszler vom 5. Nov. 1856," Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 3 (February 1, 1857), 33, Miessler says that Missionary Breck recommended Mille Lacs.

through, to our astonishment."³¹ They had hoped to arrive in Rabbit Lake before nightfall, but became lost in the trackless swamp. In addition to all these troubles, Gruett was affected with weak eyes, so that he was unable to find his way in the darkness and Miessler had to lead him with his walking stick. After several hours of precarious traveling, the wanderers saw a light and thinking that it must be a camp-fire, they began to walk toward it only to see it move from right to left and finally disappear. Nevertheless, they continued to walk in the direction of the light and finally arrived at their destination. The entire Indian camp was already asleep with the exception of three old Indians. Through his interpreter Miessler explained the purpose of his visit and that he desired to speak to the Indians in the morning. Weak from hunger, the missionary also asked the three Indians for some food only to hear one say that there was none available. One of the Indians, however, did return with a plate of maple sugar and a large spoon. After they had eaten the food, the three men were shown to their lodgings. Wrote Miessler sometime later: "My bed was

³¹H. Meyer, The Planting Story of the Minnesota District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States (Minneapolis: n.p., 1932), pp. 17-8. See also "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XIII (June 16, 1857), 175, which says that Rabbit Lake is forty or fifty miles north of Crow Wing.

about as uncomfortable as the meal had been unpalatable."³²

On the following morning the chief invited Miessler and his companions to have breakfast with him in his lodge, where they were served pork, fried fish, bread and coffee. After the plentiful meal had been digested, the Indians assembled and Miessler told them of the purpose of his visit. He informed them that he had been sent by his people who desired to preach to them the one true God and reveal to them that God in His Son had saved them from their sin. Briefly he told them of Christ's life and work, of His vicarious suffering and death on the cross through which He had atoned for the sins of the entire world, and of the Lord's resurrection and ascension. At the close of his address, the missionary requested the Indians to express their thoughts and ask any question which they desired.³³ Thereupon the chief, Mishikigishig, immediately replied:

I have listened with great joy to what you have just told us, I think too that we can believe your words, and that you tell us the truth; this I gather from the fact that you did not shirk the great hardships to come to us. Truly, I am glad that the long-expected time has finally come when the whites have pity on us and would help us. Our children grow up in blindness and ignorance as we elders grew up. That pains, but we cannot help ourselves if the whites will not support us. Therefore we journeyed to the great city beyond the water (he meant Washington) several years ago, and expressed our desires to the great Father (the President) and asked him for a teacher for us and our chil-

³²Miessler, op. cit., pp. 22-3.

³³Ibid., pp. 23-4.

dren, also for a farmer who would teach us agriculture, for we are determined to become as the whites. (Here-upon he showed us various letters and documents given them in Washington.) We were also promised the fulfillment of our wishes; but we have waited in vain from year to year and believe everything is forgotten; we are forsaken and betrayed.³⁴

The others then expressed themselves and Miessler promised to establish a mission in their midst as soon as men and means were available. Since the Indians had requested this promise in writing, Miessler gave them a signed statement, adding that he hoped a mission might be begun in the spring of 1857.³⁵ Thus, the mission trip had been successfully concluded. Synod now had the responsibility of placing a missionary into this new mission field.

The task of the Missouri Synod now was to locate a capable man who would initiate the work in Minnesota. In a letter written on August 21, 1856, Ferdinand Sievers suggested that one or two men be sent to Bethany where Miessler could instruct them in the Chippewa language. Since an experienced man would be required in Minnesota, Miessler could be sent to this new field whenever the other men had sufficiently mastered the Chippewa language so as to assume the mission responsibilities in Bethany.³⁶ This plan, however,

³⁴Meyer, op. cit., pp. 18-9.

³⁵"Bericht ueber eine Missionsreise ins Minneacota Territorium im August und September 1856," op. cit., p. 101.

³⁶"Anthony Falls, den 21. August, 1856," op. cit., pp. 14-5.

did not materialize. Instead Pastor Ottomar Cloeter of Saginaw, Michigan, volunteered his services, which were accepted and in 1857 he was called as missionary to the Indians at Rabbit Lake, Minnesota.³⁷

Ernst Ottomar Cloeter was born on April 25, 1825, in Bayreuth, Germany, where his father, Flamin Cloeter, was professor at the Gymnasium. Here he attended school, later matriculating to Erlangen and Leipzig where he studied theology. In 1849 he arrived in the United States as a candidate for the ministry, receiving a call to the newly organized congregation in Saginaw, Michigan, where he labored for eight years. While he was in Saginaw, Cloeter married Margaretha Moll of Frankentrost, Michigan, in 1852, and their marriage was blessed with fourteen children.³⁸ When Cloeter accepted the call to labor among the Indians, he became the first missionary of the Missouri Synod in Minnesota.³⁹

Shortly before Cloeter's departure for Minnesota in 1857 he visited Miessler in Bethany in order to secure some Indian spelling books and readers. After they had carefully packed their cargo in a canoe, Miessler and Cloeter started

³⁷ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XIII (June 16, 1857), 175.

³⁸ Martin R. Cloeter, "An Early Lutheran Indian Mission 1856-1868," unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska, 1948, no pages given.

³⁹ Meyer, op. cit., p. 30.

for Saginaw by way of the Pine River. The expedition almost met with disaster. Some miles below Bethany the Pine River divided into two branches. Selecting the smaller of the two, the missionaries' canoe followed it for a short distance when suddenly they were confronted by a very large tree that had fallen across the stream. Unable to clear the partially submerged obstacle, the two men jumped from the canoe, hoping to retrieve their boat somewhere downstream. Once on shore, they noticed that their canoe had capsized. The missionaries naturally assumed that their precious cargo had been lost, but upon reaching the place where the canoe had capsized, they saw that their boat had been caught fast in a shallow bed of rushes and that the supplies were still in place. With their precious cargo intact, they arrived sometime later at Cloeter's home.⁴⁰

On May 28, 1857, Cloeter left his former charge for his new home among the Chippewa Indians in Minnesota.⁴¹ Cloeter, his wife and two children were accompanied by Sophie Moll, a younger sister of Mrs. Cloeter, Heinrich Graemer, and Missionary Miessler, who led the group to the new mission station.⁴² The group boarded ship at Saginaw, their horses and wagon taken aboard also, and sailed to Detroit. From Detroit

⁴⁰ Miessler, op. cit., pp. 25-6.

⁴¹ Suelflow, op. cit., p. 106.

⁴² Cloeter, op. cit., p. 12.

the group traveled to St. Paul, Minnesota, by railroad, the Cloeter family using the regular passenger train while Miessler went by freight train in order to take care of the horses. After the group arrived safely in St. Paul, they hitched their team of horses to the wagon and commenced the last part of their journey to Crow Wing, a trip which took several days. En route the travelers stopped at a small village where they baptized a small child of a Lutheran family living nearby. The next day they were in Crow Wing where Cloeter and his family found accommodations in a small inn operated by an Irishman and his half-breed Indian wife, while Miessler and the young Craemer occupied a stable in order to guard their wagon from thieving Indians.⁴³

While they remained in Crow Wing, Miessler inquired about the Rabbit Lake Indians and learned that they had temporarily left their camp but would return at some future date. In the meantime they purchased several thousand feet of lumber for the construction of the necessary mission buildings and Miessler and Cloeter decided to lash the lumber together to form a raft and then float it down the river to Crow Wing and then to haul it by wagon to Rabbit Lake. However, another mishap occurred. Before they had lost sight of the saw mill, the raft ran aground and became stuck on a large boulder. With the aid of a mill worker, they were

⁴³Miessler, op. cit., pp. 26-7.

able to free the craft, floating it down the small river and across the Mississippi to Crow Wing on the following day. Since the Rabbit Lake Indians were still absent on their hunting trip, Miessler decided to return to Bethany, traveling by stage coach to St. Paul, then to Detroit by railroad, and finally by steamship to Saginaw and Bethany.⁴⁴ Cloeter and Craemer were ready to open the Minnesota Indian mission.

Cloeter remained for some time in Crow Wing before his selection of a site for the new mission station and during this time Heinrich Craemer gave the missionary instructions in the Chippewa language.⁴⁵ Though Miessler had promised ~~the~~ the Rabbit Lake Indians that a mission would be established in their midst, Cloeter seems to have chosen a location somewhat removed from these Indians in order to serve a greater number of tribes.⁴⁶ Thus, some time after his arrival in Crow Wing, Cloeter selected a site for his mission on government owned land just outside of an Indian reservation, which was called Gabitawigama or Parallel Waters.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 28-9.

⁴⁵ Neunter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang. Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1857, p. 63.

⁴⁶ Cloeter, op. cit., p. 12.

⁴⁷ Ibid. The site of the mission is spelled many ways as, for example, Kabitawigama, Gabitaweegama, and Gabitawegama.

This mission has been located on the farm presently owned by Marvel Severson, more specifically on Government Lot 2 in Section 9, Township 135, Range 27 of Crow Wing County, Minnesota. The approximate site is located about 150 feet west of the Mississippi River, on the yard of the Severson farm, to the right of the private driveway leading to the farm yard from County Highway #9.⁴⁸

Here in Chippewa Indian country Cloeter commenced his work and hoped that the Word which he preached would take root. But Cloeter was soon to learn how difficult it would be to establish a mission among heathen Indians. With the assistance of Craemer, the missionary began to erect the necessary buildings, but additional help was needed. Cloeter, therefore, requested Synod to send him some laymen, who could assist him in his labors. When Synod was unable to grant his request, the Northern District furnished two men, a certain Kluge and Carl Duclos, a shoemaker. A teacher by the name of Albrecht had been chosen to go to Cloeter, but when he was unable to make the journey, Kluge was to go in his place.⁴⁹ The two men arrived from Milwaukee at the end

⁴⁸ Document signed by Clarence B. Converse, August, 1952, and in the possession of the Reverend August R. Suelflow, Director of the Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

⁴⁹ Bericht ueber die Vierte Jahres-Versammlung des Noerdlichen Distrikts der deutschen ev.-luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten, A.D. 1858, pp. 34-5.

of June, 1858, while Cloeter and Graemer were hard at work erecting a log cabin and clearing the land.⁵⁰ The services of these two men and Graemer were not available to Cloeter for long. Kluge was dismissed because he proved to be unworthy and Carl Duclos married Cloeter's sister-in-law and returned to Milwaukee.⁵¹ Heinrich Graemer also left the missionary in 1859 in order to continue his studies at Fort Wayne.⁵² The difficulties in obtaining laborers proved to be an obstacle in the progress of the mission. Thus, when Graemer did not arrive in the summer of 1861 to assist Cloeter in his work but went instead to Isabella County, Cloeter registered a severe complaint.⁵³ Instead of able assistants supplied by the Missouri Synod, the missionary was forced to rely on willing helpers who resided in the vicinity of the mission. Such was the case in the summer of 1861 when a certain Mr. Smith assisted Cloeter in harvesting the crops and making necessary repairs on the mission buildings.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ "Unsere Mission," Der Lutheraner, XV (October 19, 1858), 36-7.

⁵¹ Zehnter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1860, p. 66 and "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVI (February 7, 1860), 100.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (October 2, 1861), 30.

⁵⁴ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (November 13, 1861), 52.

If Missionary Cloeter thought he had experienced difficulties in the external affairs of the mission, his task of converting the Indians was insurmountable. Cloeter's letters are full of complaints concerning the difficulties of his labors and the lack of success in his missionary endeavors.

The very character of the Indians themselves militated against the success of the work in Minnesota. In his reports and letters the missionary frequently refers to the drunkenness of the Indians, who appeared more interested in spirits than in things spiritual. Even the Indian agent at Crow Wing was powerless to prevent the Indians from obtaining their whiskey, for some of the natives traveled as far as St. Paul in order to purchase the pernicious drink.⁵⁵ As a result of their drinking habits, the Indians were naturally given to all kinds of degrading vices. In a letter of May 22, 1859, Cloeter lists some of the worst sins as fornication and card playing, adding that the Indians love to play cards all the time and usually wear their best attire for the occasion. White men were able to seduce the Indian girls in their own wigwams by merely presenting the Indian parents with some gift.⁵⁶ As a result of their addiction to the lusts of the white man, the Indians had become entirely

⁵⁵"Indianer-Mission in Minnesota," Der Lutheraner, XV (December 28, 1858), 76.

⁵⁶"Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVI (February 7, 1860), 99.

indifferent to religion. One of the chiefs told Cloeter that he was a good Indian even though he was usually drunk and later contracted venereal disease.⁵⁷

Other obstacles also made mission work quite difficult. The Indians were frequently absent from their homes either hunting for food or working at their sugar camps, so that Cloeter was usually unable to visit the Indians. Further, confusion in the mission field came as a result of the enmity between the Chippewa Indians and the Sioux, who raided each other's villages and slaughtered the inhabitants. Hostility between the two Indian nations dated from the remote past and continued well into the nineteenth century. At the instigation of the United States government, attempts were made to resolve these difficulties of the Chippewa and the Sioux by a number of treaties, but the wars continued even after the Sioux were driven from Minnesota.⁵⁸ Cloeter's life was, thus, in constant danger and his mission possibilities definitely hampered. When three hundred Chippewa warriors left their villages to raid the Sioux Indians, the missionary sought to dissuade them. He spoke to the chief, Alashoughshik, about the foolishness of such warfare and

⁵⁷ "Indianer-Mission in Minnesota," op. cit., p. 76.

⁵⁸ Harvey Wish, Society and Thought in Early America: A Social and Intellectual History of the American People Through 1865, Vol. I (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1950), 362.

reminded him that the Sioux would only retaliate. Cloeter's words, however, fell on deaf ears, for the warriors left and the raids continued.⁵⁹

In the midst of all these difficulties, Cloeter managed to visit some Indians. The missionary had made plans to visit the Indians at the falls of Bakegama approximately 250 miles north of the Lutheran mission and about thirty miles east of Leech Lake.⁶⁰ Cloeter had learned that some thirty Indian families, whose chief was Meiatchiwiwiweiatang, inhabited this region. This chief had visited Cloeter in the spring of 1858 and had encouraged the missionary to visit him.⁶¹ Cloeter and Heinrich Craemer started their trip in September, 1858.⁶² They passed numerous Indian villages and then arrived at the Indian encampment. On the following day one of the chiefs summoned a council and fifteen Indian men appeared, each bringing his pipe and tobacco.⁶³ Cloeter told the Indians that the purpose of his visit was to bring them the Word of reconciliation. When some of the Indians appeared more interested in obtaining a teacher for their

⁵⁹"Unsere Mission," op. cit., p. 37.

⁶⁰Ibid. Bakegama might possibly be located in the region of or identified with the present Lake Pokegama.

⁶¹"Indianer-Mission in Minnesota," op. cit., p. 76.

⁶²Ibid., p. 77.

⁶³"Indianer-Mission in Minnesota," Der Lutheraner, XV (January 11, 1859), 81-2.

children, the missionary was compelled to underscore the fact that he had been sent primarily as a preacher. Another meeting was held in the evening in which the Indians asked Cloeter to assure them that he would establish a mission in their midst. Cloeter answered that he would do everything possible but could not promise the Indians anything.⁶⁴

Missionary Cloeter entertained high hopes that a Lutheran mission might be established for the Indians at Bakegama. He recommended that such a mission should actually be organized and that Synod send an unmarried missionary to these Indians.⁶⁵ Nothing, however, materialized. In fact, the missionary later changed his mind concerning the advisability of such a mission. He noted that when they had been nearby, most of the Indians had become drunk and the chief himself informed him that his Indians were not interested in religion. At this same time one of the Bakegama Indians murdered a native from Leech Lake.⁶⁶ Cloeter also visited several Indian families in the vicinity of the mission at Gabitawigama but without success. He had regularly sought to visit the Indian chief, Aishougishik, but the chief

⁶⁴ "Indianer-Mission in Minnesota," Der Lutheraner, XV (January 25, 1859), 89-90.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 90.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 91.

purposely sought to avoid him.⁶⁷ Completely discouraged, Cloeter wrote that he was compelled to agree with a certain Mr. Morrison in Crow Wing, that there was a curse upon the Indians, which prevented them from ever improving.⁶⁸

* Cloeter's inability to learn the Chippewa language, his frequent letters of discouragement and hopelessness, and the constant complaints of hardships and difficulties caused many ministers to question the advisability of continuing the mission work in Minnesota. At Synod's convention in St. Louis in 1860, the delegates noted that Cloeter's mission work had been unsuccessful thus far and that the missionary had received a call to a German congregation at the close of the previous year, which, however, he had returned. Various delegates suggested that Synod terminate its Indian missions and give their attention to the German immigrants, while others argued for its continuance. Sievers admitted that Cloeter was having his difficulties but advised Synod to continue its Indian mission and suggested that Synod dispatch another missionary to assist Cloeter in his difficult labors.⁶⁹ Synod, furthermore, questioned Cloeter and asked

⁶⁷ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVI (January 10, 1860), 86.

⁶⁸ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVI (February 7, 1860), 99.

⁶⁹ Zehnter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1860, pp. 66-7.

him if he was truly happy in his work among the Indians, which he answered in the affirmative. When asked if he would desire to spend a year with Miessler at Bethany in order to learn the Chippewa language, Cloeter replied that he would be unable to leave his mission, for the Indians would interpret such an act as abandonment and infidelity.⁷⁰

After the Missouri Synod resolved to continue its Indian mission in Minnesota at its convention in 1860, Cloeter renewed his missionary labors. The missionary gave particular attention to his studies of the Chippewa language and wrote that he hoped to be able to preach to the Indians in their own language by 1862.⁷¹ Cloeter was assisted in his studies in 1861 by an Indian named Turtle, who came from Wabonabo-sagaigan Lake. Turtle proved himself quite helpful to the missionary in his linguistic studies, spending many hours together reading the New Testament in the Chippewa language.⁷² The missionary was certain that he would soon be able to master the language and then could begin his mission work in earnest.

Events occurred which ended the mission work at Gabita-

⁷⁰ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (October 2, 1861), 29-30.

⁷¹ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (November 13, 1861), 52.

⁷² "Missionsbericht ueber Gabitawigama in Minnesota und Isabella County in Michigan," Der Lutheraner, XX (November 1, 1863), 38.

wigama and dimmed the hopes of Ottomar Cloeter. Early in the morning of August 4, 1862, some 550 Sioux warriors initiated the famous Sioux uprising of 1862, when they forced an entrance into a warehouse in the Lower Agency and helped themselves to more than one hundred sacks of flour.⁷³ Six days later twenty Indians left the Lower Agency to hunt in the woods near Forest City. A week later, when within a few miles of Acton, they decided to test each other's courage by killing a white man. Entering the home of a Mr. Baker, the Indians shot and killed him and his father-in-law, Mr. Jones and his wife, as well as a certain Mr. Webster.⁷⁴ The result of this slaughter bolstered the other Indians, who determined to drive the white man from their new settlements. Led by the Indian chief, Little Crow, the Indians advanced slaying and pillaging as they went until they reached Fort Ridgely and New Ulm where they were repulsed. Sporadic fighting continued until October, 1862, when most of the Indians surrendered.⁷⁵ A trial was held at Fort Snelling, which lasted from about the middle of October until November of 1862. Of the 392 Sioux who were tried, 303 were condemned to death for their crimes. Through the

⁷³Mary Jane Bowler, "The Sioux Indians and the United States Government 1862-1878," unpublished Master's Thesis, Washington University, St. Louis, 1944, pp. 5-6.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 39-42.

efforts of the Episcopalian bishop, Henry B. Whipple, only thirty-eight Indians were executed on December 26, 1862 at Mankato, Minnesota.⁷⁶

The bloody Indian massacre, which destroyed the lives of some eight hundred white settlers in Minnesota, also annihilated the Lutheran mission at Gabitawigama and endangered the lives of Cloeter and his family. Prior to August 21, 1862, the missionary was unaware of the impending disaster. On the morning of that day the disturbance began when some Indians came and killed the missionary's cow and dog. During the previous night they had cut loose Cloeter's canoe, which they set adrift, so that he and his family would have no means of escape. At about four in the afternoon the chief, Aiashougishik, came and warned Cloeter to flee at once, since a number of Indians had already left the Gull Lake headquarters with intention to murder the missionary. Making a raft, Cloeter put a wagon and some belongings into it, while he and his family used a crude canoe which the missionary had constructed earlier in the day. In the evening they arrived with two lumbermen at an abandoned lumber camp where they made camp. Toward the evening of the third day the refugees arrived in Crow Wing. Hardly had they put their children to bed, when the commander of the fort ordered all the inhabitants to Fort Ripley for their safety. When

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 43-4.

they reached the fort at four in the morning, Cloeter and the other men had to assist in securing the defenses of the fort until they were relieved by the arrival of some soldiers.⁷⁷

The losses suffered by Cloeter and Synod were severe. Cloeter and his family lost practically all their personal possessions and Pastor Sievers appealed to all Lutherans to contribute for the relief of the destitute missionary and his family.⁷⁸ A special collection was taken throughout Synod and a sum of \$1,216.49 was given to Cloeter, which he acknowledged in a letter from Crow Wing on February 16, 1864.⁷⁹ As has already been indicated, the mission itself was totally destroyed, a loss estimated at \$2,300.⁸⁰ When a reparations committee was appointed, Synod hoped that it would be reimbursed for its losses. After several years of delay, Cloeter finally managed to obtain one thousand dollars for the abandoned mission which was then sold. This

⁷⁷ "Trotliche Nachricht unsere Missionsstation in Minnesota betreffend," Der Lutheraner, XIX (October 1, 1862), 20-1.

⁷⁸ Elfter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang. Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio, u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1863, p. 87.

⁷⁹ "Bericht ueber die Mission unter den Indianern," Der Lutheraner, XXI (July 1, 1865), 164. Also Cloeter, op. cit., p. 53.

⁸⁰ "Missionsbericht ueber Gabitawigama in Minnesota und Isabella County in Michigan," Der Lutheraner, XX (October 15, 1863), 29.

was used to pay the missionary for the expenses he had incurred during the past two years.⁸¹ Thus, with the destruction and sale of the Lutheran mission, work came to an end in Gabitawigama. Many, at this point, were ready to abandon the entire missionary endeavor in Minnesota, interpreting the destruction of the mission as a sign from God to terminate all Indian work. But others continued to hope and pray, urging their brethren to continue their efforts in behalf of the mission. Not least among those who advocated a renewal of the mission program was Ottomar Cloeter, the person who had lost most in the Indian uprising. In a letter written on December 30, 1862, the missionary assured his co-laborers that he did not intend to give up his work among the Indians, but would continue to labor in their behalf.⁸² Thus, although grievously wounded, the mission to the Minnesota Indians would continue in the hope that some would be saved.

The Futile Attempt of O. Cloeter to Continue

His Mission Work in Minnesota, 1862-1868

The Indian massacre of 1862 had completely disrupted

⁸¹"Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XXIII (November 1, 1866), 35.

⁸²"Missionsbericht ueber Gabitawigama in Minnesota und Isabella County in Michigan," Der Lutheraner, XX (October 15, 1863), 27.

the mission work of various denominations among the Indians in Minnesota and farther west. Mission stations were destroyed, the Indian converts were scattered, and the missionaries and their families were forced to flee for their lives. Even after the majority of the Indians had surrendered and the conflict had subsided, smaller bands continued to maraud and ravage isolated communities, attacking any white man who might be unfortunate enough to find himself unprotected and alone. In a letter written from Crow Wing on September 30, 1862, Cloeter mentioned that some Sioux Indians from Ottertail Lake stopped a party of travelers and held them as hostages. Among them was an Englishman, a Dr. Schulze, who had stayed with Cloeter for a brief time.⁸³ As late as June, 1863, the missionary reported that the Indians again had murdered some white persons and wondered when the United States Army would discomfort the enemy.⁸⁴ Nor were the white settlers in any frame of mind to show kindness and a spirit of forgiveness to the Indians, but instead they were ready to kill every Indian in Minnesota and drive out those who remained. The intercession of Bishop Henry B. Whipple in behalf of the Indians did nothing to endear the Church and its missionary program to the bitter

⁸³Ibid., pp. 28-9.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 30.

whites.⁸⁵ As far as they were concerned the bullet and not the Bible would restore peace and order; would pacify and civilize the American Indian.

Amidst all these difficulties the missionaries sought to reorganize their missions and salvage whatever possible from the ruins. They renewed their labors among the Indians and sought to assure them that they were forgiven. Like Bishop Whipple they interceded in their behalf and with love and kindness endeavored to win the Indians for Christ. A notable example was the Presbyterian missionary, Thomas S. Williamson, who visited the captured Indians in the prison at Mankato and preached the Gospel to them. Many Indians were converted through his efforts and wrote to their wives at Fort Snelling to destroy their sacks and charms and seek Jesus Christ.⁸⁶ As one observer concluded:

But wherever the prisoners went, they went not as the old heathen conjurers, but as converts to Christianity. And so it is that from among the Indians who had their homes in Minnesota until 1862, but were driven out on account of the massacre, the failure of the medicinemen and the glory of Christianity were published among all the lands of the Sioux nation.⁸⁷

Ottomar Gloeter was also anxious to resume his missionary labors. Thus far he had been unsuccessful in organizing an Indian congregation and an Indian school and had been

⁸⁵Bowler, op. cit., p. 44.

⁸⁶Moffett, op. cit., pp. 84-5.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 85.

unable to win any of the heathens to Christianity. But re-dedicating himself to his ministry, he renewed his work in the hope that eventually an Indian congregation would be established. After a brief stay at Fort Ripley, the missionary decided to return to Crow Wing, since his wife and children were ill and the living conditions in Crow Wing were somewhat better. Since the situation was still dangerous, he and his family were unable to remain at Crow Wing but were forced to go to Belle Prairie. Here they remained at the home of some acquaintances for ten days and then returned to Crow Wing.⁸⁸ Cloeter indicated that he planned to continue his mission visits from Crow Wing, since he believed that the mission work would be more effective and less costly if he utilized this village as his base of operations. Instead of being burdened with the management of a mission farm the missionary could visit various Indian tribes while his family remained safe in Crow Wing.⁸⁹ Cloeter rented a house for three dollars a month.⁹⁰ In the winter of 1862 he mentioned that he had the opportunity to purchase a house with four city lots for five hundred dollars, adding that the building was in excellent condition and

⁸⁸ "Missionsbericht ueber Gabitawigama in Minnesota und Isabella County in Michigan," Der Lutheraner, XX (October 15, 1863), 28.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 27.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

could hardly be erected for eight hundred dollars.⁹¹ At its convention in Fort Wayne in 1866 Synod directed Cloeter to purchase the house "in which he was presently living."⁹² This may have been the same building to which he referred in the winter of 1862.

The missionary experienced numerous personal difficulties during these last years that he acted as the Missouri Synod's missionary to the Indians in Minnesota. Frequent illness in his family necessitated his presence and prevented him from giving more time to his mission work. As a result of the destruction of the Indian mission at Gabitawigama and the loss of his personal belongings, Cloeter accrued a substantial debt. In a letter written on November 15, 1862, the missionary complained that he had to purchase thirty-five dollars' worth of blankets and that it had cost him seventy-five cents a day to feed both his horses, expenses which put him in financial straits.⁹³ Because of these privations, he sold his horses at St. Cloud where he received \$115 and a yoke of oxen and also sold his

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 29.

⁹² Zwölfter und Dreizehnter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1864 u. 1866, p. 7.

⁹³ "Missionsbericht ueber Gabitawigama in Minnesota und Isabella County in Michigan," Der Lutheraner, XX (October 15, 1863), 29.

colts for ninety-two dollars.⁹⁴

Many minor details consumed much of Cloeter's time and hindered him in his studies of the Chippewa language. X Hired help was unobtainable and the missionary did not desire to hire any Indians, since they were lazy and could not be trusted.⁹⁵ The situation was somewhat alleviated in the winter of 1864 when a male servant came from Amelith, Michigan, to assist Cloeter in his manual duties. His arrival enabled the missionary to continue his studies of the Chippewa language, but unfortunately he did not remain with Cloeter very long.⁹⁶

Although Cloeter was hampered by various household tasks, the missionary continued to pursue his language studies and hoped that he would soon be able to preach to the Indians in their own tongue. Most of his books and studies on the Chippewa language had been destroyed but Cloeter managed to obtain an old worn copy of Baraga's Indian grammar. Nevertheless, he needed an interpreter to assist him in his work, but most of them living in Crow Wing were worthless. For a brief time Cloeter utilized the services of one of these interpreters, but he had to be dismissed because he

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Cloeter, op. cit., pp. 50-1.

⁹⁶ "Bericht ueber die Mission unter den Indianern," op. cit., p. 164.

was frequently intoxicated.⁹⁷ In 1866 an Indian named Ojigwigijik from Moose Water Lake lived with Cloeter and provided him with valuable assistance in his studies of the Chippewa language. The Indian, whose name meant "Ringing of the Sky," had been baptized by a Protestant missionary and could speak English fluently so that with his instruction the missionary was able to make rapid progress in the Chippewa language.⁹⁸ By 1866 Sievers was able to inform Synod that Cloeter had mastered the Chippewa language and was able to address the Indians in their own tongue.⁹⁹

Much of the time that Cloeter had spent in Crow Wing had been occupied with menial tasks, so that he had little or no opportunity to resume his mission labors. During the autumn of 1865 he had made several trips to various Indian villages and as a result of these efforts became ill suffering from fever, fatigue, and a nervous disorder. A doctor who lived approximately nine miles on the opposite side of Fort Ripley managed to nurse him back to health, so that he gradually regained his strength and was able to continue his

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 163.

⁹⁸ "Missionsbericht des Pastor Sievers," Der Lutheraner, XXIII (November 1, 1866), 34.

⁹⁹ Zwoelfter und Dreizehnter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1864 u. 1866, p. 79.

work.¹⁰⁰ Cloeter then visited an Indian encampment at Moose Water Lake, forty miles east and fifty miles north of Crow Wing. Here several Indians indicated their desire for a missionary and asked Cloeter to live with them. The missionary visited another band of Indians at Ottertail Lake, some sixty to seventy miles west of Crow Wing and stated that if a mission were organized at Moose Water Lake, he could also minister to the Indians at Ottertail Lake.¹⁰¹

In the summer of 1867 Cloeter received permission to establish a mission at Moose Water Lake. He immediately left Crow Wing for the new location and began to build a log cabin for himself and his family, confident that the Lutheran work among the Chippewa Indians was about to enter a new era. His joy, however, was premature, for while he was in the process of building his cabin he received the news that the United States government had determined to remove the Indians to the distant reservations of White Oak Point and Red River of the North above Pokegama. The Indian agent informed the Indians that if the Indians would not move to the reservations of their own accord, force would be employed.¹⁰² Thus, the hopes of Missionary Cloeter and

¹⁰⁰ Cloeter, op. cit., p. 54.

¹⁰¹ "Missionsbericht des Pastor Sievers," op. cit., pp. 33-4.

¹⁰² "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XXIV (August 1, 1868), 180.

the Missouri Synod to organize a new Indian mission came to an end and with it the entire Indian mission program of Synod. Sadly Cloeter asked in a letter written on January 25, 1868, if God would yet show another way for the mission to realize its objective.¹⁰³

Voices had already risen by this time, which advocated the termination of all Indian mission work. At Synod's convention in 1866 the delegates critically examined Pastor Sievers, the chairman of the Mission Board, as to the progress of the Minnesota mission and asked if a mission among the Indians in Canada would not be more successful. Sievers answered saying that the mission field in Canada was closed, since other denominations had already monopolized this territory. After continued questioning, Synod finally resolved to continue to support Cloeter provided he still desired and was able to continue his work and dwell among the Indians. It further resolved that Cloeter be visited and that he be required to submit quarterly reports concerning his work, which would be published in Der Lutheraner.¹⁰⁴

Synod had hoped that Cloeter would be able to record some measure of success by 1868. When, however, no progress

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 181.

¹⁰⁴ Zwoelfter und Dreizehnter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1864 u. 1866, p. 79. Cloeter was not excused for his absence at the twelfth session.

could be shown and when Cloeter was forced to report that he was unable to establish a mission at Moose Water Lake, Synod concluded that future work among the Indians would be futile. At its convention in 1868 Synod, therefore, re-
 *solved to close its mission in Minnesota as well as in Isabella County and terminate all Indian mission work. Cloeter was advised to accept a call to a German congregation in the vicinity of his Indian labors, as was also Miessler.¹⁰⁵ The former missionary received and accepted a call to St. Peter's Congregation at Zionsberg, later called Afton, in Washington County, Minnesota, and was installed by Pastor E. Rolf on August 9, 1868.¹⁰⁶ Here Cloeter remained until his death on March 17, 1897, faithfully serving his congregation and becoming the first president of the newly organized Minnesota District in 1882, a position which he held until 1885.¹⁰⁷ Almost twelve of Cloeter's forty-eight years in the ministry had been dedicated to the conversion of the Chippewa Indians in Minnesota and, though hindered by many obstacles, he always remained faithful to his calling. Compared with the results in Michigan, the work in Minnesota

¹⁰⁵ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XXIV (August 15, 1868), 187.

¹⁰⁶ Vierzehnter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten abgehalten zu Fort Wayne, Ind., im Jahre 1869, p. 46.

¹⁰⁷ Cloeter, op. cit., no page given.

x- was devoid of progress. No Indian congregation was ever organized nor did any Indians accept the Lutheran faith. Except for a few encouraging signs, the mission never really prospered and never was really established. Thus, one observer asked if Cloeter did not labor in vain, to which he gave his own reply: "Eternity will reveal the answer. We trust the Word of the Lord: 'My Word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.'"¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸Meyer, op. cit., p. 57.

CHAPTER VI

RECAPITULATION AND EVALUATION

"The Gospel," as one historian has said, "was a religion to be propagated. It was not 'a cloistered virtue' to be cherished in secret by a body of devotees," for Christ gave His disciples the command and commission to preach it to every creature.¹ Conscious, therefore, of the Biblical injunction and having the example of the Church's early missionary zeal, the Christians who came to the New World also possessed as one of their objectives, the conversion of the heathen. Protestants and Roman Catholics alike advanced the cause of missions and encouraged their European benefactors to contribute generously for the salvation of the American Indian. Thus, for Sir George Peckham, the greatest single benefit which colonization would bring to the natives of America would be:

. . . the most gladsome and happy tidings of the most glorious gospel of our Saviour Jesus Christ, whereby they may be brought from falsehood to truth, from darkness to light, from the hie way of death to the path of life, from superstitious idolatrie to sincere Christianity, from the devill to Christ, from hell to heaven.²

¹George Park Fisher, History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), p. 2.

²William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religions in America (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1930), pp. 225-26.

Nor were the Lutherans remiss in realizing their missionary obligation to the American Indian. If the Church of the Reformation were to remain true to the theology of the Reformation--if it truly believed that all men were lost and were unable to save themselves, that God in Christ had saved man and declared him justified, and that only the Holy Ghost could convert the sinner--if the Lutheran Church were to remain faithful to this Biblical faith, then it must, of necessity, go and proclaim the Gospel to the natives of the forest. The Lutherans, in Germany and the United States, who labored among the Chippewa Indians in Michigan and Minnesota were, thus, simply realizing their Reformation faith and obeying their Lord's admonition to preach the Gospel to every creature. In America they possessed a fruitful field in which to test their mission abilities and manifest their mission faith. In Michigan and Minnesota they had the opportunity to actualize the words of Martin Luther, which he wrote in his Exposition of St. John:

For when a Christian begins to know Christ as his Lord and Savior, through whom he is redeemed from death and brought into His kingdom and inheritance, his heart is aglow with a flaming love of God and he would gladly help everyone to the same experience. For he knows no greater joy than that he possesses this treasure, that he knows Christ. Therefore he goes out and teaches and exhorts other people, praising and testifying to it before all men, praying and yearning that they too might

attain to such grace.³

Motivated by a zeal for the conversion of the American Indian and partially prompted by an awareness of the white man's contribution to the Indian's degradation, Lutherans sought to establish a mission outpost on the American frontier. This mission project, however, was never viewed exclusively as a foreign mission endeavor but was usually associated with "inner" or home mission and generally took the form of a mission colony. Wilhelm Loehe was largely responsible for such an arrangement, hoping thereby to serve both the Indians and the Lutherans. He believed, therefore, that home missions should lead to foreign missions and that a mission congregation and not an individual missionary should be the means employed in winning the heathen for Christ.⁴ The example of Frankenmuth with its German Lutheran colonists and its missionary-pastor remained the hope and ideal for later Lutheran missionaries. Thus, sometime after the Sioux uprising in 1862, Ottomar Cloeter wrote from Crow Wing suggesting that some German Lutherans migrate to Minnesota and establish a colony in his vicinity, which he could then

³Margarete Steiner and Percy Scott, compilers and translators, Day by Day We Magnify Thee: Daily Meditations from Luther's Writings arranged according to the Year of the Church (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1950), p. 217.

⁴Ludwig Ernest Fuerbringer, Persons and Events (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 10-11.

utilize as a base for his mission operations.⁵ Perhaps E. G. H. Miessler had this in mind when he placed a notice in Der Lutheraner in 1856 informing the Lutherans that land was available at fifty cents an acre in the vicinity of the Bethany mission.⁶

One of the major problems faced by the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod in operating its Indian missions was the lack of missionaries, a shortage which the Synod was never able to overcome. In fact, it is remarkable that the Missouri Synod could continue its mission work until 1868 at all, since after 1855 only Miessler and Cloeter remained actively at work among the Chippewa Indians. Prior to this date Synod had the services of August Craemer, J. F. Maier, Georg Sinke, Eduard R. Baierlein, Johann J. F. Auch, J. E. Roeder, and E. G. H. Miessler, but when five of these men accepted calls to serve the Church elsewhere and another, Missionary Maier, accidentally drowned, only Miessler remained to continue the work. Synod had thus far largely depended upon other Lutherans to furnish the missionaries, the candidates being supplied either by Pastor Friedrich Schmid in Michigan or by Wilhelm Loehle of Neuendettelsau and the

⁵"Missionsbericht ueber Gabitawigama in Minnesota und Isabella County in Michigan," Der Lutheraner, XX (October 15, 1863), 28.

⁶"Fuer Colinisten," Der Lutheraner, XII (January 2, 1856), 79.

Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society in Germany. Indeed none of the men laboring in Michigan had received their ministerial training at an institution operated by the Missouri Synod with the exception of Roeder and even Ottomar Cloeter, who initiated the work in Minnesota, received his theological training in Germany. As a result of this dependence upon other Lutheran organizations, the Missouri Synod found itself unable to meet the critical shortage of missionaries when the need arose. Doctrinal differences with Schmid's Michigan Synod and with Wilhelm Loehe brought to an end the supply of missionaries from these two sources, while the expanding mission program of the Leipzig Mission Society prevented that organization from sending any men to America after 1854. Thus, the Missouri Synod was compelled to look elsewhere for trained personnel!

The Mission Board had frequently sought to encourage young men to prepare themselves as Indian missionaries and Miessler and Cloeter had often called Synod's attention to the need of additional workers, both lay and clerical, to assist them in their labors. In February, 1856, Pastor Ferdinand Sievers, chairman of the Mission Board, pleaded for "pious Lutheran boys" who would be willing to go to Bethany and learn the Chippewa language and, thus, prepare them-

selves for the Church's Indian missions.⁷ As a result of his and Miessler's exploratory trip to Minnesota, Sievers informed Synod that two missionaries could be utilized in Minnesota as well as in Michigan, adding, however, that if two men could not be supplied, they would be content with one.⁸ Somewhat later in 1860 Sievers renewed his plea for additional missionaries, urging Synod to send another missionary to Cloeter.⁹ Neither Cloeter nor Miessler received an assistant but were forced to continue their mission work alone. Although a number of men like August Craemer were in a position to train ministerial candidates for work among the Chippewa Indians, nothing was done and no additional missionaries were placed into the field. The Indian work in Michigan and Minnesota was stymied and eventually forced to capitulate.

The missionaries received some encouragement in the knowledge that several young men were preparing themselves to serve the Indian missions. Of these, Heinrich Craemer, son of the famous missionary at Frankenmuth, appeared to be best suited for the difficult work, having already mastered

⁷"Reisebericht," Der Lutheraner, XII (April 8, 1856), 135.

⁸"Anthony Falls, den 21. August, 1856," Der Lutheraner, XIII (September 9, 1856), 15.

⁹Zehnter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1860, p. 67.

the Chippewa language. He had lent valuable assistance to Missionary Auch and later to Miessler and Cloeter, remaining with the missionary in Minnesota for two years and instructing him in the Chippewa language.¹⁰ Craemer graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in 1866, but never became an Indian missionary!¹¹ Besides Heinrich Craemer, two Indian youths, Philip Mashuk and a certain Paulus, had enrolled in Synod's practical seminary at Fort Wayne by 1857 and it was naturally hoped that these two young men would prove to be a great asset in the missionary field.¹² In this the Lutherans were imitating other denominations who had successfully employed Indian converts as missionaries and teachers. The Methodists especially had utilized native converts to great advantage, and such Indians as John Sunday, John Taunchy, John Cahbeach, George Copway, and Peter Marksman made significant contributions to the cause

¹⁰Walter A. Baepfer, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 128, 132-34.

¹¹"Kirchliche Nachrichten," Der Lutheraner, XXII (July 15, 1866), 174.

¹²Neunter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1857, p. 64. Philip also spelled "Philipp" had entered Fort Wayne in 1856. His name is also given as "Philipp Gruett." See "Missionsbericht des Pastor Sievers," Der Lutheraner, XXIII (November 1, 1866), 35. Paulus entered Fort Wayne one year later in 1857.

of Methodist missions among the Chippewas.¹³ But the Lutherans were not as successful as their rivals, for both Philip and Paulus were later forced to discontinue their studies. Paulus had proved to be unworthy, for he stole from his classmates and later left Fort Wayne. Miessler failed in his efforts to regain him for the Church.¹⁴ Philip continued his studies for a while, but was forced to leave sometime in the latter part of 1861 or early in 1862, since he had contracted syphilis from his parents.¹⁵ However, he continued to correspond with his friend, Miessler, and never forgot what the missionary and his friends in Fort Wayne had done for him.¹⁶

Numerous problems plagued the Missouri Synod as it sought to operate its Indian missions in Michigan and Minnesota, and not the least of these was inadequate financial support. Funds were largely raised by appeals to friends

¹³Wade Crawford Barclay, "Early American Methodism, 1769-1844," History of Methodist Missions (New York: The Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, 1950), II, 154, 156, 158.

¹⁴Zehnter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1860, p. 67. Also "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVI (March 6, 1860), 115-16.

¹⁵"Missionsbericht ueber Gabitawigama in Minnesota und Isabella County in Michigan," Der Lutheraner, XX (November 1, 1863), 38.

¹⁶"Bericht ueber die Mission unter den Indianern," Der Lutheraner, XXI (August 15, 1865), 186. Also "Missionsbericht des Pastor Sievers," op. cit., p. 35.

and fellow Lutherans, and contributions were received from interested persons in Synod and donators in Europe. Such appeals for money were usually printed in Der Lutheraner. Thus, August Craemer appealed to the "Lutherans in America" for financial assistance, stating they could no longer depend upon their friends in Germany for such aid.¹⁷ A stirring appeal for funds was directed to all Lutherans in October, 1850. They were admonished not to neglect their mission contributions and were urged to read Mark 12:41-44, so that the story of the widow's mite would induce them to emulate her sacrificial devotion.¹⁸ That these contributions were inadequate, however, was noted by Missionary Eduard Baierlein in an article which was directed to all the readers of Der Lutheraner in April, 1853. Baierlein exhorted the Lutherans to increase their financial support regardless of their other contributions. He cited the example of several Prussian churches, which contributed to missions inspite of their heavy indebtedness and other obligations as well as the example of the Indians themselves. "Surely," concluded the missionary, "if these German and Indian Christians can give so generously of their material wealth to the mission of the Church, then the readers of Der Lutheraner

¹⁷"Missionsnachrichten aus Frankenmuth," Der Lutheraner, V (March 6, 1849), 109-10.

¹⁸"Dringende Bitte um Unterstuetzung unserer Missions-Casse," Der Lutheraner, VII (October 29, 1850), 40.

will, yea, must do likewise."¹⁹ Nevertheless, the Lutheran missionaries continued to labor under financial hardships and the necessary funds were often lacking. In fact, the situation in 1862 was so serious that W. Sihler had to make a special appeal to the congregations of Synod, since the mission treasury was empty.²⁰

The mission festival was frequently employed as a means of encouraging the Lutherans to contribute to the support of Synod's Indian missionaries and to stimulate interest in the Indian mission program. Such a festival was celebrated in Collinsville, Illinois, in 1857. The service was well attended and the band of the Collinsville congregation accompanied the singing. C. F. W. Walther based his sermon on Acts 16:8-10, choosing as his theme: "The great need of the heathen world still crying loudly for help." In the afternoon Professor August Craemer told the congregation about the beginning of Synod's work among the Indians.²¹ The first mission festival in Wisconsin was celebrated in 1859 by the congregations of Watertown and Lebanon. At this service Pastor F. Lochner of Milwaukee lectured on the Indians

¹⁹"Fuer und ueber Mission," Der Lutheraner, IX (April 12, 1853), 107-8.

²⁰"Herzliche Bitte an die Gemeinde der Synode," Der Lutheraner, XIX (November 12, 1862), 45.

²¹Paul F. Koehneke, "Joint Mission Festivals in The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod till 1868," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXIV (April, 1951), 28-9.

and the missionary endeavors among them, after which the offering was gathered, which amounted to \$30.01.²²

Occasionally individuals or societies supplied the missionaries with special items. Baierlein was, thus, able to furnish and beautify the interior of the Bethany chapel through the efforts of friends in Europe. Lutheran friends in Dresden, Germany donated altar vestments, and the Graf von Einsiedel presented the Indian congregation with a beautiful crucifix.²³ The missionary also received gifts from Russia, Latvia, Germany, and congregations in the United States to assist him in the erection of the Indian chapel.²⁴ When Ottomar Cloeter accepted the call to Minnesota, the ladies' aid societies in Frankenlust and Monroe, Michigan, supplied many of the furnishings of the new household.²⁵ Somewhat later Cloeter petitioned Synod to furnish his wife with a sewing machine. The request was granted sometime in 1861 and the various ladies' aid societies of Synod were approached to contribute to the cost of the sewing machine, a

²²Ibid., p. 30.

²³Eduard Baierlein, Im Urwalde (Dresden, Germany: Justus Naumann's Buchhandlung, 1889), pp. 152-55.

²⁴"Rueckblick auf die Entstehung und den Fortgang der Missions unter den Indianern am Pine River, Michigan," Evang. gelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt, No. 4 (February 15, 1856), 58-60.

²⁵"Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XIII (June 16, 1857), 175.

plea which did not go unanswered.²⁶ Nor did the women of the church forget the Indians, frequently sending them gifts in the form of clothing.²⁷ Such efforts by these and other interested persons greatly alleviated the shortages of the missionaries and the Indians and added that personal note, which encouraged the laborers to continue to work in the vineyard.

Missionary work among the American Indians in the mid-nineteenth century was no easy task. The men who left the comfort of their homes and the companionship of their friends entered a land which to a large degree was still void of the niceties of life. Confronted by numerous difficulties and obstacles, missionaries like Miessler and Cloeter continued to work in the hope that some would be saved. Living in primitive conditions, laboring among indifferent if not hostile Indian tribes, and hindered in communicating the Gospel because of their inability to entirely master the difficult Chippewa language, the missionaries occasionally became discouraged. This was particularly true when members of their own race sought to destroy their labors and when members of their own Church evidenced a lack of interest. It is a testimony to their courage and faith, that they

²⁶ "Missionsbericht," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (November 13, 1861), 53.

²⁷ "Reise Nach Bethanien," Der Lutheraner, XII (June 17, 1856), 174.

continued to labor among the Indians as long as they did, and that they sought to encourage Synod to continue its work even as late as 1868.

It is always difficult to evaluate things spiritual and to determine to what degree the proclamation of the Word has met with success, for one cannot simply measure the things of the spirit in terms of numbers. Certainly this must be remembered when one seeks to determine whether or not the Lutheran Indian mission was successful. The historian, therefore, can only form an opinion from the facts as he has found them and on the basis of these formulate an opinion.

When one examines the Lutheran mission work among the Chippewa Indians in Michigan from 1840 to 1868, one is inclined to come to the conclusion that it was unsuccessful. Unlike the Methodists, who labored in the same area, no permanent mission stations were established and no individual band of Indians were wholly converted. Conversions were to be found among individual Indians rather than tribes and frequently these were of short duration. Missionaries like Miessler could only record individual conversions and never were able, with the possible exception of Baierlein, to claim that an entire tribe had been won for Christ. Even more disconcerting is the fact that those who had become Lutherans, finally defected either returning to their pagan ways or affiliating themselves with the Methodists.

The scene in Minnesota was even more pathetic, for here Cloeter failed to establish an Indian mission in the true sense and was unable to point to any success whatsoever. Finally, the most damaging commentary on the Lutheran Indian mission enterprise was the Missouri Synod itself, for it came to the conclusion that its Indian missions were a failure and, therefore, terminated all Indian work in 1868. Certainly if the Synod which operated the Indian missions came to such a conclusion, an impartial historian would also be inclined to label the mission program a failure.

Nevertheless, there are other tangible indications which enable one to conclude that the Lutheran mission among the Indians was not totally unsuccessful. Miessler himself acknowledged this when he directed the readers of Der Lutheraner to those Indians who had died in the faith and were buried in the small cemetery in Bethany. These were a positive indication that the Word, which he had preached, had born fruit. When in Isabella County this same missionary stated that many Indians who had formerly resided in Bethany still confessed the faith wherein they had been baptized, even though they now belonged to the Methodist Church. Thus, he could take comfort in the knowledge that some remained faithful to the Gospel which he, their former missionary, had proclaimed. The seed had been sown and some had brought forth fruit.

It must not be forgotten that the Lutheran missionaries

were part of that large number of faithful laborers who brought the Gospel to the aborigines of America. Their contributions, though not startling, were, nevertheless, significant. It certainly was noteworthy that German Lutherans confronted with numerous personal problems in a new land, did not consider their difficulties so enormous that they could not take a vital interest in their Indian neighbor. Instead of bemoaning their difficult conditions, they rose to the occasion and sent men to labor in the vineyard; sent men who had to experience innumerable hardships and personal handicaps in order to minister to the American Indian. Through diligent study they learned the Chippewa language, making notable contributions to the study of that language and producing some fine translations of the Bible and other religious books. And finally, through perseverance and self-denial, they helped in their own small way to dispel the superstitions and fears of the Indian mind and replace them with "the religion of the Book, the redemption of the Savior of mankind, the true worship of the Father in heaven, the one living and true God."²⁸

²⁸Thomas G. Moffett, The American Indian on the New Trail (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1914), p. 278.

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