



## Revivals And Church History :: Native American Christianity

### Native American Christianity - posted by Compton (), on: 2008/3/22 0:30

Recently I came across a collection of Hymns written in phonetic Ojibwe and English published in 1877. I must admit that I soon discovered pronouncing the hymns in Ojibwe (Chickawaw) was curiously, and surprisingly moving to me. I do not assume there is a 'mystical' reason for this. I suspect that my emotion is due to the fact that the old hymn book caused me to question a great divide that has been articulated and ratified by politically correct elitists; I have always wondered if there could be a bond of Christian fellowship between Native Americans and imperialist 'anglophiles' like myself. ;-)

Real history is always more complex than popular history. Within the preface of this old book, a native pastor introduces the hymns and perhaps provides a small glimpse of a history I've not read about in books; a sincere fellowship between the Indian and the White Christian that modern scholars have found all too easy to airbrush out of their modern rendering. This is not to say that there was no colonization and horrible mistreatment of native people...but to say that not all Native American Christians confess Christ as victims of 'cultural eradication', just as not all Anglo-Americans who embrace Christ do so according to some mindless cultural pattern. As many modern historical scholars simply do not believe there is a real Jesus to encounter, they construct their histories of religion upon cultural premises, giving no credence for real Christian fellowship based upon the indwelling life of Christ that creates a new transcendent heavenly cultural bond.

That is why this simple preface of the Ojibwe hymnbook written in 1877 blessed me so...

I have received repeated and earnest solicitations from the converted Indians at the various Wesley Ojibway Mission Stations to have it (this hymnbook) reprinted, stating as their main reason that as the Great Spirit has made their hearts to rejoice whilst singing his praises in the language of those hymns, they still wished to retain what had been made a blessing to them in their first efforts to serve the Lord.

Feeling a desire to aid, as far as I am able, this part of the solemn worship of Almighty God, I have been induced, not only to fall in with their desires, but also to translate a number of additional hymns, all of which I hope and pray may be a great blessing to my Indian brethren.

In order to have the hymns as correct and intangible as possible I have availed myself of the advice and suggestions of my Native American brethren. For the accommodation of our white friends who occasionally worship with us, the English hymns are printed on the opposite pages...

Within all societies, including 19th century Native and Anglo Americans, there is a cultural 'spirituality' that keeps today's scholars at Harvard busy writing books and seminar lectures. Yet, within the cracks of our various religious cultures, there are those men and women who truly are graced to see Jesus and to believe him for salvation.

My little Ojibwe hymnbook reminds me once again that God has created a single people for himself, though we can become divided simply because we accept the roles of mistrust and unforgiveness others have handed to us.

I am curious if there are Native American brethren visiting Sermon Index. It would be wonderful for me to know.

I'll end this rambling post with the first verse to "Oh for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" spelled out phonetically in the Ojibwe tongue.

Oh uh pa-gish ke che ingo' dwok,  
Neej uh ne she nah baig,  
Che nuh nuh guh mo tuh wah wod  
Nig e zha Mun e-doom.

MC

**Re: Native American Christianity - posted by repentcanada, on: 2008/3/22 0:38**

outstanding post!

does anyone on SI know anything of the Native Reserves here in Alberta, Canada?

thank you

(as well, I know Leonard Ravenhill in his sermon "Hell Has No Exits" speaks briefly on the lack of missions Native Reserves in both America and Canada, which is appalling sad)

**Re: - posted by iansmith (), on: 2008/3/22 1:33**

(<http://www.naim.ca/index.html>) NAIM: North America Indigenous Ministries A great missions agency that works exclusively with indigenous tribes in the USA and Canada.

**Re: - posted by iansmith (), on: 2008/3/22 1:37**

Directory of different missions working among indigenous Americans.

<http://www.missionfinder.org/nativeamer.htm>

**Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2008/3/22 10:40**

Many thanks for the links Ian. I spent some time this morning hyperlinking and discovering.

For what it's worth Repentcanada, the old book I mentioned was printed in Toronto.

MC

**Re: Native American Christianity, on: 2008/3/24 11:47**

From the preface

Quote:  
-----*In order to have the hymns as correct and intangible as possible I have availed myself of the advice and suggestions of my Native American brethren. For the accomodation of our white friends who occasionally worship with us, the English hymns are printed on the opposite pages...*  
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This reminds me of my childhood in an international community, where we were all the same denomination (knew the same tunes) but everyone sang in their mother-tongue, to be free to worship God most naturally. Reading this, brought back comfortable memories.

Quote:  
-----*My little Ojibwe hymnbook reminds me once again that **God has created a single people for himself, though we can become divided** simply because we accept the roles of mistrust and unforgiveness others have handed to us.*  
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This is profound.

**Re: - posted by repentcanada, on: 2008/10/5 11:24**

it is time for myself to stop talking and act. A brother here in Edmonton and myself are preparing to outreach at a large Native reserve here in Alberta in several weeks, God willing. I rarely ask this, but brothers and sisters could you please pray for us concerning this. thank you dearly. i wrote a small piece on this on my blog, the address is just below.