

## MISCELLANEOUS.

*Written for this Paper*

## GOSPEL TO THE INDIANS.

The following address was given by Elder Andrew Kimball, at the Indian Territory Mission reunion, in the Fifteenth ward hall, Salt Lake City, Thursday evening, Oct. 4th, 1894:

Long before the Cherokees and other civilized tribes immigrated to their present homes, west of the Mississippi, the Gospel was proclaimed to the inhabitants of the Indian Territory, then occupied principally by the Osages, Shawnees, Delawares, Comanches, Kiowas and other wild tribes.

At a three days' conference held in Fayette, New York, Sept. 1, 1830, the second conference held in the Church, two revelations were given, calling a number of brethren on missions, (as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants, section 30 and 31). Soon after the adjournment of conference, Elders Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Ziba Peterson and Peter Whitmer made preparations to carry the Gospel to the Lamanites. Near Buffalo they presented the glad news to the Catteraugus Indians, and at Sandusky, in the western part of Ohio, they preached to the Wyandottes. After four months' hard travel on foot from New York to Independence, Mo., they had preached to thousands of their own race, two nations of Lamanites, baptized many hundreds of people, and organized a branch of the Church at Kirtland.

Leaving their companions at Independence, Elders Pratt and Cowdery crossed the borders into the Indian Territory. After visiting the Shawnees, they called on the chief of the Delawares, and by aid of a friendly interpreter presented the Gospel to this sachem of ten tribes, who received them kindly. To a council called together by the chief, Elder Cowdery spoke on the principles of salvation, presenting the Book of Mormon, and testified to its divine authenticity and the restoration of the everlasting Gospel.

During their short stay of only several days the interest became intense, and spread to the whole tribe. When denominational ministers and Indian agents heard of the excitement, the Elders were declared peace disturbers and ordered out.

In the spring of 1839 the Cherokees, the leading nation of the five civilized tribes, moved west from Georgia, crossed the Mississippi and settled in Indian Territory. It was not until the year 1845 that the Choctaws were settled permanently in their new home. Representatives of the tribe, however, were in the territory at an early date. The Chickasaws, like their neighbors, the Choctaws, and formerly a part of them, also came from Mississippi about the same time. The Muskogees, or Creeks, the most powerful of the tribes living east of the Mississippi, were first heard of about the time of the Spanish invasion, but being unwilling to submit to Spanish tyranny they moved east. The Muskogees are a great confederation, comprised of several small tribes which they subjugated and adopted at an early day, among these being the Alabamas, Uchees, Tuckobaches, Tuskogees,

Ozeills and Natchez. Springing out of the Creeks are the Seminoles, a small band which ran away from the original tribe, and thus obtained that name which means deserters. Besides the five civilized tribes and the others already named, there are a great many nations and remnants of Indian tribes living in the western part of the Indian Territory.

Twenty-five years elapsed from the time of the visit of Elders Cowdery and Pratt before the Lamanites of the Indian Territory again heard the Gospel preached, save when the seeds of truth were dropped by emigrating Saints en route for the West across their country. In the spring of 1855 the messengers of salvation were again sent to them. Shortly after the April conference in that year, two wagons might have been seen wending their way towards the Indian Territory, both loaded with missionaries, one from a branch of the Church in St. Louis, Mo., and the other from Utah. Earlier in the season Elders Orson Spencer and James McGaw visited that field, it being a portion of the Mississippi valley conference, over which Elder Spencer presided. The sending of more missionaries into the field was the result of their investigation.

On arriving in the Cherokee nation, the two companies named, eight Elders in all, found a little band of Saints already situated on the Spovino, a tributary to Grand river. Pretending to have received a revelation through the Prophet Joseph Smith, Lyman Wight had led away a company of Saints and settled in Texas. After deserting him they stopped to recruit in the Cherokee nation on their return to Missouri. All but one family were re-baptized and joined the little company of workers in the Indian Mission. Elder Jacob Croft, in company with the Saints, built a prosperous town. The old mill erected nearly forty years ago stands there today as a monument of Mormon industry.

It was during this sojourn of the Elders and Saints in Indian Territory that Elder Parley P. Pratt was assassinated near Van Buren, Arkansas. Elder George Higginson, who recently died at his home in Santaquin, Utah county, acted as body guard for the beloved Apostle, and when Elder Pratt was arrested at Fort Gibson and taken to the state for trial, Brother Higginson was handcuffed with him and dragged across the country. He was with him until his death, and amidst a mob of wicked men buried his companion.

During the year 1860 all the surviving Elders except John A. Richards returned to their homes. Elders Cook and Petty were buried in Indian soil, laying down their lives for the Gospel's sake.

The indifference of the little flock, left without shepherds, together with the devastating effects of the war, broke up our branches and scattered the Saints to the four winds. Elder John A. Richards, who had by this time abandoned the ministry, enlisted in the confederacy, and after the war settled down as a citizen in the quiet life of husbandry.

In the year 1877 Robert Lake, purport-

ing to be a Kiowa Indian, called upon President Brigham Young, and represented that he had been sent by his tribe to the Mormon chief. Mr. Lake claimed that some travelers had awakened a lively interest for the investigation of the Gospel among his people and he asked that some representatives be sent to them immediately. President Young was impressed by the report, and sent Elders M.W. Dalton and John Hubbard, accompanied by Robert Lake, to the Indian Territory to investigate the apparent interest.

On arriving at Vinita, Mr. Lake deserted his companions and proved to be a fraud.

Elders Dalton and Hubbard met Brother Antony Navarr, a Pottawotamie Indian, who had been baptized in Utah in early days, and had been sent on a mission to his people. The Gospel was presented to several tribes. The Elders met with considerable encouragement from some, but not among the Kiowas. Elder Hubbard died in the field and was buried near the Washita river. Elder Navarr returned to his tribe, and Elder Dalton to his home in the fall of the same year.

For six years the inhabitants of Indian Territory were again left without the Gospel, until the spring of 1883, when President John Taylor called upon Elder George Teasdale to re open that field. Accompanied by the veteran of six years before, Elder Teasdale landed in Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, April 21st, and went to work. During their stay of six months, Elders Teasdale and Dalton traversed an area of over one hundred miles, visiting the people and holding meetings, but with no apparent interest manifest by the inhabitants. No doubt both Elders had passed through many trying scenes in their eventful lives, but the writer will take occasion to say that those six months were among the most trying they ever experienced.

Elder Joseph H. Felt succeeded Elder George Teasdale, and for a short time had charge of the mission. After parting with Elder Teasdale, who returned home to attend the October conference, the Elders resumed the labor, and soon after baptized the first converts, partially in fulfillment of dreams which Elder Dalton had while traveling with his former companion. On returning home in the spring of 1884, they felt the time had not come for opening the mission.

Overcome by chills and fever, the two succeeding Elders, Israel Bole and Frank Teasdale, returned home September 4th of the same year, having filled a short, though eventful and trying mission.

It was not until February 2nd, 1885, that the work was again renewed. The adversary seemed determined to stop its progress. In midsummer, Elders West and Kimball, who were meeting with some success, were prostrated with chills and fever. President Taylor, knowing well what was needed to enable the Elders to maintain their position, urged the brethren to stay, saying: "The cool weather will soon come, and a healthier season commence; you will be able to overcome the difficulties and establish yourselves in that mission."

Elder West being well advanced in life, and suffering with illness, was re-