

# TIMELY TOPICS.

POLITICAL, BIBLICAL, ETHICAL, PRACTICAL.

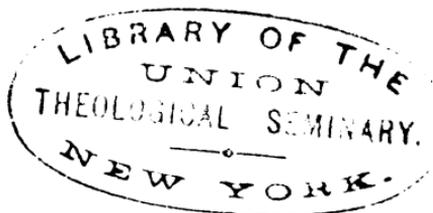
DISCUSSED

BY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS, PROFESSORS AND EMINENT  
WRITERS OF OUR TIME.

---

*A series of specially contributed and  
copyrighted papers.*

---



NEW YORK:  
E. B. TREAT, 5 Cooper Union,  
1892.



## THE INDIAN QUESTION:—THE FRIENDLIES.

BY PRESIDENT W. M. BLACKBURN, D.D., PIERRE  
UNIVERSITY, E. PIERRE, SO. DAKOTA.

---

**T**HE giving of this good name to the peaceable Indians of South Dakota is a notable event in the history of a word and of a people. It originated naturally enough when they declined to join the hostiles in taking arms against the federal government. They were worthy of it.

A few months ago their position, spirit and numbers were generally misunderstood. They were almost unreported. At a distance they were classed with enemies, as if every Sioux was a foe; or regarded as exceptional—an undefined party, timid, trustless, restrained from war by coming winter, and quite ready to prove the assertion that efforts to civilize their people have been disheartening failures. In their behalf certain statements, based upon my personal observation and trustworthy replies to inquiries, are here tendered.

I. The Friendlies have been, and they now are, the vast majority. Exact figures are not now attainable, but competent teachers and missionaries make the following estimates: Ninety-five-hundredths of the Indians west of the Missouri river meant at first to be friendly, although some of them were drawn, or driven, into the hostile ranks; “a large majority in the Pine Ridge district were friendly, though some got mixed up in the last stampede; only a minority of the Rosebud Indians came into the fight”; very few from other agencies were hostile; “in general, those who had shown evidence of a real hearty acceptance of Christianity were friendly and loyal”; “you can safely say that the effect of Protestant Christian missions has been to cut the nerve of the war instinct”; “the Indians among whom the Gospel has had time to work were not in these troubles.” East of the Missouri river there were no fighting hostiles. It was not a war upon settlers, although foraging bands carried

off property. Instances of kindly warning given by Indians to white ranchmen are noteworthy. The main conflict was centred at one point, near Pine Ridge, and the military reports, when published, will probably show the comparatively small number of Indians engaged in it.

II. The Friendlies were artfully tempted, and their loyalty was severely tested. The hostiles, whatever the purpose at first, sought to arouse their pride of race, their spirit of clanship, their respect for the chiefs, their sense of deprivation and poverty, and their love for the old freedom, customs and associations. The dance was fascinating, and why should it be thought uncivil or unchristian if white people could have a "ball" upon so many public occasions without relapsing into barbarism? The Messiah dance appealed to their Christian hope until it betrayed itself as the old ghost-dance, or war-dance. Its tendency was to mislead and "enthuse" the young men and "the Sioux of the old style." It drew hundreds away from their homes, broke up schools, depopulated villages, and brought excited bands together in threatening wildness. The religious nature of the craze was tempting even to the more civilized Indians, so long as the pagan and disloyal elements of it were concealed. The purpose of the leaders seems to have been to restore the old spirit of independence and the glory of nationality in a people who have had a pride in being called "the Sioux nation." As earnest was the effort of the hostile chiefs to nurture discontent on account of alleged ill-treatment, reduction of rations, and non-fulfilment of pledges by the Government. The Indian would naturally look at these alleged wrongs from his point of view. The Friendlies were thus tempted to revolt and resistance by an appearance (at least) of reasonable grievances; and writings from white hands could be quoted to inflame their minds and give them "bad hearts." Let those who stood such tests and remained loyal have large credit for their fidelity.

III. When the moral line was drawn between the hostiles and the peaceful, the Friendlies refused to cross it. The real causes of the outbreak seem to have been opposition to Christianity and to the civilization produced by it. Aversion to the Severalty Bill, which requires the Indians to abandon their tribal relations, take lands, cultivate them, gradually attain self-support and become citizens, had its effect. "It figured considerably," says a missionary who ought to know. When Sitting Bull, the archconspirator, said, "as a citizen I must be no more than any other man; as Indian chief, I am big man," he expressed the ambition of the hostile chiefs. Other leaders were probably more pagan in their sentiments. The natural Indian is very religious in his way. Every day he "sees God in clouds, or hears Him in the wind," regards himself as under the control of a spirit whom he consults, and from whom his enthusiasms are supposed to come. He is a spiritist without intentional imposture. When hostile to the Government, his old religion moved him to revolt. His recent war, then, has a parallel in the spasmodic reaction or paganism against Christianity in the times of the Roman Emperor Julian, of the fiery Penda in Mercia, of the Saxons under Charlemagne, and of a modern queen in Madagascar. A competent witness wrote: "This is not a race war. It is a war of barbarism against civilization."

The Friendlies resisted this complex hostility. They valued the benefits already received from "the pale faces." In their dress, their houses, their furniture, their farms and their modes of life, they were conforming to those of the white people. They were using the sewing-machine and the reaper. They were becoming useful citizens of the State, patrons of the schools, supporters of the Church, some of them contributing annually eighty cents a member to missions. They proved the elevating power of Christianity. It had not been a failure. It did not fail them when

the test of religion came. When the Messiah craze proved to be the heathen war-dance, it had no charm for them. As a rule, no Indians at any mission station joined the hostiles. Where a village had a missionary the villagers remained friendly. Out of 1100 communicants in a single denomination, only one is known to have been hostile. Out of 127 young people, who had been in the Indian school at Carlisle, Pa., only seven became ghost-dancers. These are samples of fidelity.

IV. The resumption of civilizing work. During the conflict nearly all the village schools on the reservation west of the Missouri river were suspended. The prospect of resuming them was dark and doubtful. A letter of the time ran thus: "How long it will take to recover from so great a drawback in the work of civilizing the Indians!" But the recovery has already begun. The Friendlies have had "light in their dwellings." They want the schools restored, and where it has been possible in the winter they have been resumed. The missionary schools, of at least one denomination, are better attended than last year. The new Indian school (government) at Pierre is daily receiving new pupils. One overseer of mission work says that the demand for churches is increasing, and that there have lately been more applicants for admission to church membership than at any time for years. Thus the pagan reaction has "stirred up the Friendlies to a higher appreciation of education and Christianity," and been the storm before a revival of light and life. These encouraging facts have parallels in the history of successful missions.

The much-discussed Indian question will never be justly solved unless the Indians become active and influential in its solution. They must be kept from pauperism and from sole dependence on the Government. They must learn to labor, engage in various employments, earn a living, gain property, know the value and right uses of wealth, un-

derstand their real needs and be free to supply them in all honest ways. The aversion to work is not so peculiar to them, nor so inveterate, as most people suppose. The obstacles to labor and its profits come mainly from the old tribal relation or clanship. This relation gives undue power to the chiefs and to men ambitious to maintain the tribe as a sort of nation with which the Government must continue to make treaties for the purchase of peace ; it nurtures pride, prejudice and ignorance : it makes labor appear contemptible, and so long as it exists there must be trouble. Destroy it, not by proclamation, but by persuasive measures (rather strictly urged), so that land will be taken by individuals or families who will settle on it and thus become separate from the tribe. Kinship will thus give way to neighborhood, or grow into it, as it did among the Anglo-Saxons when the tun, or clan-village, became the township with its organized society, meetings, and laws.

Who of the Sioux are most ready for all these changes ? Evidently the Friendlies. The civilizing movement depends on them. They have begun it. The school and the Church have led them to it. Many of them are now settled on farms and ranches ; others are locating lands. Neighborhoods of farmers are forming ; the township, school district, village, voting-places and due number of elect officials will follow. Pride of tribe will yield to privilege of town. The leading Friendlies perceive this result of the severalty law, if it be wisely carried out, and they wish it for their children. Their eye is upon citizenship. Through them, under the educative and Christianizing agencies at hand, the law may become effective. It is a timely, wise and great law ; just, generous, protective and competent to solve the Indian problem. The Friendlies can give it power. It can give them power, for under it a citizen will be mightier than a chief.