

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE INDIANS OF THE PLAINS

#### § I. THE BLACKFEET

At the time Bishop Miége, Vicar-apostolic of the Indian Territory east of the Rocky Mountains, first arrived in his vicariate, which was in 1851, there were only two Catholic Indian missions, those among the Osage and Potawatomi, in its whole vast range from the Missouri River to the Rockies "As to possible missions," he had written to the General from St. Louis before his consecration, "there are as many as there are Indian nations", but "one cannot establish such without great resources in men and money" <sup>1</sup> For this reason Father Roothaan had suggested more than once in the course of 1850 to Cardinal Barnabo, Prefect of the Propaganda, the expediency of uniting under one and the same jurisdiction "the missions to the east of the Rocky Mountains and those in the heart of those same Mountains where now there are eleven Fathers" The Cardinal replied, August, 1850, that the Propaganda would take the proposed plan under consideration <sup>2</sup> But the plan did not commend itself either to the bishops of Oregon or to Father Accolti, superior of the Oregon Missions The latter expressed the opinion that a single vicariate would not suffice even for the region east of the mountains, where there was a very numerous Indian population, "the Sioux alone counting at least 80,000," which figure, however, was an overstatement <sup>3</sup> In the end Father Roothaan advised Cardinal Barnabo, December, 1850, that the proposal to unite the missions east and west of the Rockies under a single vicariate had met with disfavor and that he would urge it no longer <sup>4</sup>

That efforts be made to evangelize the Indians of the plains was a plea persistently made by De Smet both with his superiors and with the bishops In 1850, at the request of Archbishop Purcell of Cincinnati, he drew up "a brief memorial of the Indians who inhabit the Great Desert and on the means of coming to their aid in a religious way" He calculated, roughly it would appear, the entire Catholic Indian

<sup>1</sup> Miége à Roothaan, February 13, 1851 (AA)

<sup>2</sup> Barnabo à Roothaan, August, 1850 (AA)

<sup>3</sup> Accolti à Roothaan, January 22, 1851 (AA)

<sup>4</sup> Roothaan à Barnabo, December 1, 1850 (AA)

population east of the Rockies at only six thousand, of which number twenty-eight hundred were Osage and Potawatomi, the rest being for the most part children baptized by him in visits to Indian tribes of the upper Missouri. There were great tribes still awaiting the gospel message, as the Comanche, twenty thousand, the Sioux, thirty-five thousand in forty bands, the Assiniboin, six thousand, the Crows, eighty-five hundred, and the Blackfeet, twelve thousand.<sup>5</sup> Sporadic attempts were made to extend the missionary activities of the vice-province of Missouri above the line of the Osage and Potawatomi, but without result. The Indian missions established by it in the remote Northwest were all situated to the west of the main ridge of the Rockies. No permanent establishment had been made by it among the Indian tribes dwelling on the great plains east of the continental divide. But the seeds of future missionary harvests were planted by De Smet and one or other of the Missouri Jesuits in occasional travels through the upper Missouri country and it is with this phase of the missionary activity of De Smet and his associates that the present chapter purposes to deal.

Conspicuous among the Indian tribes of the eastern slope of the Rockies were the Siksika or Blackfeet. They were of Algonkian origin and consisted of three sub-tribes, the Siksika proper or Blackfeet, the Kainah or Bloods, and the Piegan, the whole body generally going under the popular name of Blackfeet. Their habitat in the last century, before they were gathered into reservations, included the greater part of the vast plains extending "almost from the North Saskatchewan river in Canada to the southern headstreams of the Missouri in Montana and from about longitude 105° to the base of the Rocky Mountains."<sup>6</sup> Closely allied with the Blackfeet, though of different stock, were the Sarsi and the Atsina or Gros Ventres of the Plains.

Between Flatheads and Blackfeet, though separated by the main ridge of the Rockies, relations were those of chronic hostility. Encounters between their warriors were frequent and bloody, especially in the plains east of the mountains, whither the Flatheads journeyed every year to hunt the buffalo that roamed in innumerable herds over that grassy region. "The buffalo hunt is attended with dangers," wrote Father De Smet from Madison Forks, August 15, 1842, "but the greatest of these does not consist in the mere pursuit of the animal, but proceeds rather from the bands of Blackfeet who constantly lurk in these regions, especially when there is some prospect of meeting with the larger game or stealing a number of horses. Of all the mountain savages the Blackfeet are the most numerous and wicked and the great-

<sup>5</sup> (AA) De Smet in 1866 computed the Sioux population at "from 35,000 to 40,000 souls" CR, *De Smet*, 4, 1328.

<sup>6</sup> Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, art. "Blackfeet."

est thieves Happily, however, from having been often beaten by the smaller tribes they have become so dastardly that unless they are twenty to one they confine their attention to the horses, which, thanks to the carelessness of their courageous enemies, they go about stealing with so much dexterity and success, that this year, while our good Flatheads were asleep, they discovered their animals as often as twenty times and carried off more than a hundred of them ”<sup>7</sup>

To bring about peace between Flatheads and Blackfeet and evangelize the latter tribe were ambitions of the missionaries resident at St Mary's in the Bitter Root The baptism at the mission on Christmas Day, 1841, of a Blackfoot chief, Nicholas, together with his family gave promise of what might be expected from future missionary labor in behalf of that truculent tribe Father Point especially was eager to go among them In the summer of 1842 he and De Smet accompanied the Flatheads on a buffalo hunt as far east as Madison Forks on the Missouri, but without meeting any Blackfeet on the way In an attempt to come into touch with the latter and induce them to make peace with the Flatheads De Smet undertook in the fall of 1845 the most adventurous journey of his whole missionary career (*supra*, Chap XXIV, § 10) Setting out for the Blackfoot country, he travelled north to a point beyond the American line, crossed the continental divide and made his way some distance south along the east slope of the Rockies But he failed to find the object of his search, the Blackfeet, and was obliged to retrace his way over the Rockies to the Flathead country, which he reached only in the spring of 1846

In the fall of 1846 De Smet undertook for the third time the long journey back to St Louis to obtain supplies and discharge other important business in connection with his Oregon missions Having failed in his attempt of the preceding winter to reach the Blackfeet, he determined to take advantage of his passage through their country on the way to St Louis to search them out and persuade them to live on terms of peace with the Flatheads He left St Mary's Mission August 16 in company with Father Point It happened that a Flathead hunting party reenforced by thirty Nez Percé lodges and, curiously enough, by a few Blackfoot lodges, were at this time in the Yellowstone Valley in the immediate vicinity of the Crows De Smet knew what would happen if the hunters came into contact with the Crows, for the latter were then at war with the Nez Percés and Blackfeet He appears to have been moving towards the Flatheads and their friends when news of the critical situation reached him He at once sent his two interpreters, Gabriel and Charles, to the allied camp to announce his ap-

<sup>7</sup> CR, *De Smet*, I 363

proach Shortly before the arrival of the interpreters a Crow party had come up to the Nez Percés and Blackfeet, and, greatly outnumbering them, were eager to give battle, a step they were restrained from taking only by the interposition of the Flatheads The news of De Smet's approach also served for the moment to check them In the end, however, the chiefs could no longer restrain the martial ardor of the younger Crows, who fell with vigor upon the allies But the latter had been able to fortify themselves and succeeded in throwing back the Crow attack with great success The Crows lost fourteen men, the allies only one, a Nez Percé When the two missionaries arrived on the scene, the battle was over and the Crows, to his great disappointment, had disappeared in the direction of the Wind River Mountains The aftermath of the incident is told by De Smet

Shortly after my arrival the Blackfeet came in a body to my lodge to express in a manner truly eloquent their admiration of the Flatheads, with whom in future they desired to live on terms of the closest friendship "To their prayers," said they, "must this extraordinary victory be attributed While the battle lasted, we saw their old men, their women and children, on their knees, imploring the aid of heaven, the Flatheads did not lose a single man—one only fell, a young Nez Percé, and another mortally wounded But the Nez Percé did not pray We prayed morning and evening with the Flatheads and heard the instructions of the chiefs" They then beg of me in their own affecting way to take pity on them and be charitable to them, they are now determined to hear the words of the Great Manitou of the whites and to follow the course which the Redeemer had marked out on earth Having addressed them on the nature of the life they had proposed to adopt, they all without exception presented their children for baptism to the number of eighty

From the Yellowstone Valley the allied camp withdrew in a north-westerly direction to the Judith Basin and thence to Fort Lewis on the Missouri, a few miles above the later Fort Benton Father De Smet accompanied the Indians on this occasion, making the acquaintance of Piegan, Bloods, Blackfeet proper and Gros Ventres As a result of his five weeks' stay with them, he had the consolation of seeing a solemn peace established between the Flatheads and Blackfeet With this result accomplished, he resumed in September his journey to St Louis, leaving Father Point to prosecute the work of evangelizing the Indians. De Smet's impression of the Blackfeet and the prospects of missionary work among them were summed up by him as follows

From all that I have seen and heard of the Blackfeet, during the five weeks I have spent among them, I am firmly convinced that a mission to this tribe would produce results very fortunate and very consoling for religion

It is assuredly a task full of difficulties and obstacles, requiring the zeal and courage of an apostle, one must be prepared for a life of crosses, privation and patience, they are savages in the full meaning of the word, accustomed to wreak vengeance on their enemies and wallow in blood and carnage. They are plunged in coarse superstitions which brutalize their souls, they worship the sun and the moon and offer them sacrifices and propitiation and thanksgiving. Now they cut deep gashes in their bodies and catch the blood, now they strike off joints of their fingers and present them to their divinities, crying "I do thee this favor Apistotokio (God Spirit), I give thee my blood, do me also a favor on the war-path, and when I come again I will worship thee with scalps that I take from my enemies."

Despite their cruelties and abominable superstitions, a bright light is beginning, it would seem, to dispel the shadows under which these poor pagans have lived for so many ages. During the five weeks that I stayed among them they were as assiduous and attentive as possible to the instructions I gave them, and seemed to listen with pleasure to the consoling truths of the gospel.<sup>8</sup>

Of the earliest trading-posts of the American Fur Company on the upper Missouri, Fort Lewis stood furthest up the river. At the time of the arrival of Fathers De Smet and Point at this fort, September 24, 1846, Alexander Culbertson, noted frontier figure, was in command. Point has listed the personnel in his memoirs: "Mr Culbertson, bourgeois or Captain, Mr [Malcolm] Clark, *commis* or lieutenant, A Hamel, interpreter, J Berger, trader, Michael Champagne, storekeeper, J B Champagne, son of the preceding." For a period Charles Larpenteur, later in charge of Fort Vermilion, relieved Culbertson as head of the post. "I wish to finish my days," he confided to Father Point, "as a good Christian and with that end in view to retire from civilization." In the May of 1847 Culbertson closed Fort Lewis, transferring the post to a point about three miles below on the opposite bank of the Missouri. Both at Fort Lewis and at the new post, known as Fort Clay, subscription-lists were opened on behalf of the projected Catholic mission among the Blackfeet. Some forty-one names were entered, among them those of Culbertson and Clark. The relations between the missionaries and the officials of the fur companies were apparently of the best, while the influence exercised by the latter upon

<sup>8</sup> The account of De Smet's experiences with the Blackfeet is based on CR, *De Smet*, 2: 570-599. A missionary from the Red River district appears to have visited the Montana Blackfeet and administered baptisms among them before the arrival of De Smet and Point. For data on the ministry of Pembina (Red River) missionaries who accompanied hunting-expeditions to the buffalo region east and north of the Missouri in the thirties and forties, cf Mary Aquinas Norton, *Catholic Missionary Activities in the Northwest, 1818-1864* (Washington, 1930) p. 91 *et seq*.

the Indians was beneficial. Point, in announcing later to De Smet his high hopes for the conversion of the Blackfeet, wrote "What most consoles us is that the regeneration, if things go on as they are, will be due in great measure to the present exemplary conduct at the fort"<sup>9</sup> Father De Smet himself remained only four days at Fort Lewis, setting out thence on September 28, 1846, for St. Louis<sup>10</sup>

The series of over six hundred baptisms administered by Father Point in the Blackfoot country, lying in what is now eastern Montana,

<sup>9</sup> "I am assured that there is no liquor (always the cause of most Indian troubles) in this year's shipment [to Fort Lewis] and that this injurious traffic is to be discouraged from now on" De Smet to Van de Velde, September 26, 1846 CR, *De Smet*, 2 595

"Father Point was furnished quarters and a room for a chapel and school. He was a man of great austerity and severe in the practice of his religion. He had daily service in his chapel and Mass upon Sundays attended by all the squaws and most of the white employees of the fort, Major Culbertson himself setting the example. The Father was filled with zeal for their conversion to the holy faith, sternly reprov'd every exhibition of profanity and rebuked every immorality and gradually made himself feared but respected by every inmate of the fort, over the squaws in particular gaining a complete ascendancy. Even Major Culbertson was not exempt from his denunciation when occasion rose. His influence at the fort had been decidedly for good, among the reforms which he accomplished was a change of relations between the white employees of the fort and the squaws living there. When the former were willing to become lawful husbands of their squaws, he solemnized marriages between them, and when they would not consent to do this, he induced the squaws to leave them and return to their respective tribes." "Affairs at Fort Benton from 1831 to 1869 from Lieut. Bradley's Journal," in *Montana Historical Society Contributions*, 3 201-287. Bradley's notes were taken down at Alexander Culbertson's dictation. Cf. Chittenden, *Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River*, 1 222-235.

Unpublished material from Father Point's pen, practically all dealing with his Rocky Mountain experiences, includes (1) Memoirs in French (*Souvenirs des Montagnes Rocheuses, Séjour au Fort Louis etc.*), filling three bulky volumes, with original drawings. Archives of St. Mary's College, Montreal. Selections tr. in *WL*, XII (2) Letters and numerous pen-and-ink sketches in the Archives of the Missouri Province, S. J. (St. Louis University) (3) Baptismal records (1846-1847) in the Jesuit General Archives, Rome (4) A few pages of a journal kept in the Blackfoot country and now in the Biblioteca Nazionale (*Fondo Gesuitico*), Rome (5) *Voyage en beige depuis le fort des Pieds Neufs [Fort Lewis] jusq' à celui des Assinaboines* [Fort Union]. Journal of Point's descent of the Missouri in 1847 from Fort Lewis to Fort Union. Tr. in *Mid-America*, 13 236 *et seq.* (1931). Cf. also Garraghan, "Nicholas Point, Jesuit Missionary in Montana of the Forties," in Willard and Goodykoontz (eds.), *The Trans-Mississippi West* (Boulder, University of Colorado, 1930), p. 43 *et seq.*

<sup>10</sup> For traditions of the presence of De Smet among the Blackfeet in 1846 cf. McClintock, *The Old North Trail, Life, Legends, and Religion of the Blackfeet Indians* (London, 1900). The Blackfeet appear to have called De Smet Innu-e-kinni (Long Teeth) "because of the appearance of his teeth." Big Lake, the Piegan chief mentioned in Point's journal, figures also in McClintock's book.

was inaugurated at Fort Lewis on St Michael's day, September 29 "Twenty-two baptisms," records his journal, "were administered to Blackfeet children in the isle [*sic*] of the fort May this bouquet, which the missionary offers to St Michael, merit for him his protection, he has great need of it in the country where he is" Having remained at Fort Lewis up to the fall hunt Father Point started on October 18 for the camp of the Piegan, "the first to receive us" "A Creole of thirty" and a metif interpreter, Jean Baptiste Champagne, a boy of twelve, were his companions The Piegan chief, Le Grand Lac or Big Lake, had come to Fort Lewis to meet the Jesuit Among the Piegan there were numerous baptisms, as there were also among the Gros Ventres, the Bloods (*Gens du Sang*), the Blackfeet proper, and the Crows The missionary's journal for October 28 noted that two hundred lodges of the Gros Ventres were approaching to have their children baptized These particular Indians are described by the missionary as "naturally good as is proved by the fact that when drunk they think only of showing one another marks of friendship"<sup>11</sup> The baptisms and marriages which Point performed among these Indians of the plains are apparently the earliest church ministrations recorded for eastern Montana The register in which they are entered with meticulous accuracy and neatness is extant<sup>12</sup> With its aid one may follow Father Point from camp to camp as he made his way among the various groups of the great Blackfoot tribe The one or other Canadians who accompanied him on his missionary trips in the capacity of interpreter or engagé also lent him their services as god-fathers in his numerous baptisms or as witnesses to marriages The names of Jean Baptiste Champagne, Honore Arnault, Jean Baptiste Deschamps, Pierre Choquette and Augustin Hamelle thus occur in the records

Father Point's relation of his experiences among the Blackfeet goes into much interesting detail Some passages are cited

I think I can say, to the glory of the only Author of all good, that with his grace I have not lost my time among the Blackfeet I have performed 667 baptisms, the records of which are in due form, I have taken notes of whatsoever appeared to me suitable for interesting the curious or edifying the pious During the winter I was accustomed daily to give three instructions or catechetical lessons proportioned to the three very different classes of

<sup>11</sup> Journal in the Biblioteca Nazionale (*Fondo Gesuitico*), Rome

<sup>12</sup> (AA) Father Point's register includes also a few marriages Thus, at Fort Lewis, December 27, 1846, he officiated at six, all of them between white attachés of the Fort and Indian squaws, the latter baptized the same day on which they were married On the day named Michael Champagne, son of Louis Champagne, was married to the Piegan woman Marie Nitchetoaki The marriages of December 27, 1846, are apparently the first recorded for Montana east of the mountains

my auditors. It is unnecessary for me to say that the prayers have all been translated into Blackfoot and learned in Fort Lewis and in the camp of the Piegans, and there is scarcely any camp among the Blackfeet in which the sign of the cross is not held in veneration and even practised, at least among those individuals who have had any intercourse with the missionary.

Of the twenty-five or thirty camp-leaders or chiefs who visited me or whom I have visited, there is not one who has not given me ideas of his people or tribe less disadvantageous than those generally entertained, and of course among the whites who inhabit the Indian Territory as elsewhere. Among the different camps, there is a species of emulation as to which shall have the Black-robe or rather the mission on its lands. Concerning this article I have decided nothing. I have only said that in case a Reduction were formed, it would be built in the position or locality which would afford the greatest advantage to all the tribes taken collectively. All found this idea reasonable and have promised that they would exert their utmost endeavors to satisfy the Black-robbers.

The Gros Ventres of the Plains appear to me to have the advantage over the others in being more adroit, docile and courageous, but they are more strongly attached to their old superstitions and are terrible *demandeurs*, as the Canadian employees here call shameless beggars, happily, they are not offended when refused. The Piegans are the most civilized, but the most noted thieves. The *Gens du Sang* [Bloods] are well made, of fine blood, and are generally less dirty. It is said that the Blackfeet proper are most hospitable.

I have been on a six weeks' hunt with the fifty lodges of the Piegans, which are under the command of the chief, Amakzikinne or "Big Lake." This camp is one of the seven or eight fractions of the Piegan tribe, amounting in all to about 300 lodges. This tribe forms a part of the four known under the generic title of Blackfeet. I have spoken of them already. The Piegans are the most civilized on account of the relations of a portion of their people with the Flatheads. If the Gros Ventres were less unfortunate, I would willingly entitle them the Flatheads of the Missouri. They have something of their simplicity and their bravery. They are improperly ranked among the Blackfeet, besides the fact that they did not originate in the country [of the Blackfeet], they do not speak their language and are different in many respects.

However this may be, these four tribes may contain about 1,000 lodges or 10,000 souls. This is not half what they were before the contagion of smallpox introduced among them by the whites. I believe that women constitute more than two-thirds of them, if not even three-quarters. This inequality, so baneful to morals, is the result of war. In the visit I paid to the Gros Ventres, divided into two camps, I counted 230 lodges. I visited or received visits from several fractions or detachments of Blackfeet and further from an entire camp of *Gens du Sang*, and all were in such dispositions that only a word on my part would have been necessary to enable



me to baptize, with their consent, all the children from the largest down to those of only a day old, which the mothers brought me of their own free will <sup>13</sup> I could have baptized a great number of adults, they even seemed to desire it ardently, but these desires were not yet sufficiently imbued with the true principles of religion I could not content myself with the persuasion generally existing among the savages, that when they have received baptism they can conquer any enemy whatsoever The courage and the happiness of the Flatheads have inspired them with this belief This explains why some wretches, who seek only to kill their neighbors, were the first to petition for baptism

I have yet one consoling piece of news to announce On my route, traveling with the Piegan camp, I baptized fourteen little infants of the Crow nation, so well did I find them disposed—these were on their way to visit the Gros Ventres <sup>14</sup> They desire to see you [De Smet] among them again Indulging this hope, they will go to meet you in the spring <sup>15</sup>

Before leaving the Flathead country Father Point had written to the Father General asking permission to be allowed to go to Canada where French Jesuits had recently opened a mission Though applying himself all along to his missionary tasks with unremitting and really extraordinary zeal, he was never at ease in his own soul since his removal from the presidency of St Charles College, Grand Coteau, Louisiana (*Infra*, Chap XXXII, § 2 ) From the Flathead Mission he penned a long letter to Father Roothaan to justify his course at that institution The General was surprised, he had himself forgotten the affair long ago "*Recedant vetera, nova sint omnia*," he quoted from the breviary hymn Point's petition for Canada was dated April 14,

<sup>13</sup> Father Point's total of six hundred and fifty-one baptisms shows only twenty-six adults baptized, four men and twenty-two women, the rest being children, three hundred and thirty boys and two hundred and ninety-five girls "As to the adult Indians no attempt was made, except in a few exceptional cases to baptize them, as in their present environment and without the ministerial aid supplied by a permanent mission, there was little prospect of their continuing to live as Christians Moreover, an adult Indian rarely showed the moral dispositions required for the licit administration of the sacrament 'I could have baptized a great number of adults,' comments Father Point in reference to the numerous visits he received from Blackfoot camps, 'they even seem to desire it ardently, but these desires were not yet sufficiently imbued with the true principles of Religion' Even in the case of the children it would appear that they were not baptized unless they were in some danger of death from sickness or unless there was some reasonable prospect of their being reared as Christians" Garrighan, "Point," *Trans-Mississippi West*, p 55

<sup>14</sup> The Crow baptisms are dated June 9, 1846

<sup>15</sup> CR, *De Smet*, 3 949-956

114	Gros Ventre in 1846	Souls	Mimiva	oswasi	Gros Ventre	Aug	14	Amelle	1
115		Raymond	Nuru	anoka					3
116		Gilles	islo	otloa					3
117		Justinien	islotot	Jlanilla					3
118	Gros Ventre	Berthe	Wataras	Nisone	Gros Ventre Plump				5
119		Nicolas	St. Justa	Wakiana					2
120		Theodore	Wakianos	Jonabel					4
121		Ferdinand	Jonabel	aamie					7
122		Edouard	Meena	atenimbi					1
123		Amédée	Basiaa	natakia					5
124		Corneille	of	of					7
125		Thomas	Estimaria	Estimaria					7
126		Mathieu	Gene Chiquille	liche					3
127		Ferdinand	Nikawa	Jila					2
128		Simon	Nakarian	lava					4
129		Cyprien	Nakarian	Jila					4
130		Coine	Ikimnok	unakush					7
131		Damien	kemenok	alachaia					3
132		Basile	Oloott	Wat sinent					2
133		Michel	Wakakene	Wanika					2
134		Gabriel	Amimadit	neatta					2
135		Gaphael	onilla	Siehe					7
136		Selome	Jtanonkiat	Nat's imou					3
137		Gerni	Snok	Jinash					1
138		Bruno	anette	Naiette					4
139		Denis	anette	neimé					1
140		Francis	Jichy	Netchatita					3
141		McCaule							1
142									
143									
144									

A page from Father Nicholas Point's autograph record of baptisms by him during his residence, 1846-1847, in the "Blackfoot Country", in what is now eastern Montana. The baptisms here listed were administered in Gros Ventre camps, December 11 and 12, 1846. Data recorded are place, date, names of person baptized, father, mother, "nation", god-parent, age. General Archives of the Society of Jesus, Rome

Voyage en Berge  
Depuis le fort des Pieds noirs  
Jusqu'à celui des Assiniboines —

Donné à la révision du R. P. Supérieur  
des missions des montagnes & de l'ouest  
avec prière de vouloir bien le faire  
parvenir au P. P. Provincial du Missouri

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Voyage en Berge sur le Missouri  
Depuis le fort des Pieds-noirs jusqu'à  
celui des Assiniboines.

Particularités édifiantes ou curieuses

Le fort Louis qui est le point de notre départ fut bâti par M<sup>r</sup> Colberson, Bourgeois de la compagnie américaine, avant que le fort Clay qui lui succéda. Il étoit situé sur la rive gauche du Missouri, au centre à peu près du pays Pied-noir. — Jusques là peut-être un steamboat eût pu monter le fleuve sans les plus hautes cascades, c'est à dire depuis mai jusqu'en juillet, mais au de-là toute navigation devient impossible à cause de ces chutes qui se succèdent dans un espace de huit milles. En hyver elle l'est presque partout à cause des glaces qui ont de deux à trois pieds de profondeur. — Dans la saison des secheresses qui dure depuis août jusqu'aux gelées, le berge ne monte mais il n'est qu'un moyen de toutes les forces qui sont à bord, rarement le vent en poupe permet à l'équipage de se reposer et certaines années on échoue jusqu'à dix et douze fois par jour, alors il faut frapper à l'eau et faire des cordes au tirage de la corde les forts coups de paube, ce qui fait de la manœuvre de ces passages un métier si rude que le fort des Pieds noirs qui a besoin de plus de bras que les autres, est encore obligé de les payer plus cher. Un simple engagé lui coûte annuellement de 150 à 200 piastres, sans compter le logement, le chauffage et la nourriture qui est celle du pays; les charpentiers, forgerons, chasseurs tous les gens de métier dont on ne peut se passer, sont encore mieux nourris et mieux payés que les autres. Les commis, le principal interprète et les traiteurs sont admis à la table du maître. En sus le fort se charge bénévolement de nourrir les malades, les infirmes, les femmes, les enfans, les visiteurs en un mot toutes les bouches inutiles qui montent communément à bord de son

Title and first page of Father Nicholas Point's journal of his Missouri River trip from Fort Lewis to Fort Union, 1847. General Archives of the Society of Jesus, Rome

1845 Not until ten months later, February 18, 1846, could the General return an answer, so long had it taken the missionary's communication to bridge the long distance between what is now western Montana and Rome "May you find peace of mind there," Father Roothaan wrote in granting Point's request to attach himself to the Mission of Canada "There is nothing I more desire you to have and therefore do I beg you *in visceribus Christi* entirely to forget the past." Father Roothaan's communication of February, 1846, reached Point among the Blackfeet early in the spring of the following year

On May 19, 1847, all the movable effects of Fort Lewis and even, it seems, the building materials were transported to the recently opened Fort Clay Three days later at 8 A M, May 21, Father Point set out from the latter post by barge for Fort Union where he caught the steamer *Martha* for St Louis Of his trip down the Missouri as far as Fort Union he has left an interesting account<sup>16</sup> The barge was in charge of Michael Champagne, storekeeper at Fort Lewis On June 16 he baptized some Assiniboin children at Fort Union at the mouth of the Yellowstone, which place had been reached May 31 Baptisms are also recorded for Fort Pierre (June 29), Fort Vermilion (July 2), and Bellevue (July 5) Westport was reached July 7 and at the beginning of August, 1847, Point was in St Louis On the 5th of that month Father Van de Velde wrote to a correspondent "Father Point arrived here from the Blackfeet, where he has done much good and baptized more than 600 persons He has left for Sandwich in Canada"<sup>17</sup> From his new station Point was at pains to inform the General that he had been able to defray the entire expenses of his stay of eight months with the Blackfeet "including interpreter and engag e" and of the long journey to Canada without help from St. Louis and, in fact, had been able to leave a surplus of some hundred dollars with Van de Velde

Shortly after his return to Canada Father Point submitted to the Father General a report on the prospects for missionary work among the Blackfeet. He began by pointing out the existing deplorable condition of the tribe The buffalo was gradually disappearing and the number of hunters was increasing in direct proportion to the disappearance of the animal. No other alternative, should conditions continue as they were, seemed to face the Blackfeet but exile or death "The buffalo is their bread" The surest means of guaranteeing the future of the tribe would be to organize a Catholic reduction on their lands. Point then discussed the relations that would probably exist between the fur-companies and the missionaries The bourgeois, the traders proper, who bought the robes direct from the Indians, were a doubtful quantity

<sup>16</sup> *Voyage en Berge depuis le fort des Pieds Noirs* Cf note 9

<sup>17</sup> Van de Velde   ———, August 5, 1847 (AA)

The Chouteaus and other *fournisseurs*, who supplied goods to the bourgeois for their trade with the Indians, appeared better disposed to the missionaries. Whether it was better that there be only one trading company operating on or near the reduction was also made the subject of discussion.<sup>18</sup> Father Point thus concluded his report:

Supposing the favorable dispositions of all the traders, what are the best steps to take to assure the success of our undertaking? I leave the solution of this important question to the proper authorities. The only thing I ought to say to enlighten superiors in their government is that Father De Smet has acquired a great popularity both among the officials of the company and among the Indians, at first no doubt by his courtesy towards all strangers but above all by the generosity of his gifts, promises, etc. Were he and *a fortiori* others not to come with more means than he left behind for me, they might as well, unless a miracle occur, think of returning immediately they arrived. The post which I have filled and which others will have filled provisionally better than myself would not be tenable the next year. A promise to construct a village has been made by Father De Smet to the Blackfeet (and very positively). This promise I have renewed everytime I had the opportunity and this by order of Father De Smet. It must then be executed, otherwise the Black Robes will pass in the eyes of the Indians as liars. The greatest obstacle to the entire conversion of the Indians of the Missouri is the inequality of the sexes, this will diminish only with the diminution of wars, which are here wars of extermination.<sup>19</sup>

Obviously there were reasons why the project of a Blackfoot mission should not be allowed to lapse. The Indians had been assured a resident missionary and a fund, albeit of very modest proportions, had been gotten together to finance the venture. Van de Velde wrote in August, 1847: "I expect him [De Smet] back about the beginning of April, in order that, should it be agreeable to your Reverence, he may go to the Indians commonly known as the Blackfeet and reside among them with a companion." The following November Van de Velde wrote again: "We ought not neglect the mission among the Blackfeet as Father Point has promised them that I would send one or other Father next spring."<sup>20</sup> In June, 1848, Father Elet, who had just taken up the duties of vice-provincial, informed Father Roothaan that the

<sup>18</sup> The two companies then operating among the Blackfeet were the American Fur Company and a group of former employees of that company, as Messrs. Harvey and Primeau, who left it to go into business on their own account with the backing of Col. Robert Campbell of St. Louis. Garraghan, "Point," *Trans-Mississippi West*, p. 52.

<sup>19</sup> *Opinion du P. N. Point Relativement à la Mission Commencée des Pieds Noirs* (AA).

<sup>20</sup> Van de Velde ad Roothaan, August 13, 1847, November 13, 1847 (AA).

mission would probably be delayed until April of the following year, as there was war on between the Indians and the whites and De Smet had returned from Europe too late to reach the Blackfoot country by water.<sup>21</sup> In December, 1849, De Smet himself wrote to Charles Larpen-  
 teur "We contemplate starting out next spring for the Indian Territory, but have not as yet determined the spot where we shall establish ourselves. The whole season may probably be spent in visiting the various tribes and sounding their dispositions before any decision will be taken on this subject. Once determined upon, we will then take the necessary measures to form a settlement and most of the halfbreed families on the upper Missouri have promised me already that they are willing to join with us in the undertaking. Your presence and experience among the Indians will, no doubt, further our own endeavors in converting and civilizing the heathen nations—such being the principal object we have in view in penetrating and settling upon their lands."<sup>22</sup>

In the sequel the Missouri Jesuits were at no time to establish themselves among the Blackfeet though in 1855 De Smet was writing that the project of a mission on behalf of that tribe had never been abandoned. As a matter of fact, men and money adequate to the purpose could scarcely be said to have been available, but probably what militated most of all against the proposed mission was the positive discouragement by Father Roothaan of all expansion of activities on the part of the Missouri Vice-province.<sup>23</sup> In the meantime government officials were appealing to De Smet to do something on behalf of the Blackfeet. In May, 1857, Agent Vaughn proposed to him that a mission be opened on the Judith River.<sup>24</sup> In July of the same year Col. Cummings, head of the western superintendency of Indian affairs, was asking for a mission among the Blackfeet. "I prefer Jesuits to all other missionaries."<sup>25</sup> Finally, in 1858 Father Adrian Hoecken, a member of the

<sup>21</sup> Elet à Roothaan, June 7, 1848 (AA)

<sup>22</sup> CR, *De Smet*, 4: 1471

<sup>23</sup> "It is impossible that the new mission among the Blackfeet, Crows, Snakes, etc., be continued without funds. It is essential therefore that Father De Smet take advantage of his stay in Europe to promote the interests of the mission and that he obtain authorization from your Paternity to this effect." Memorial, Elet à Roothaan, 1848

<sup>24</sup> De Smet à Beckx, June 29, 1857 (AA)

<sup>25</sup> Cited in De Smet à Beckx, August 3, 1857 (AA). Cf. also Cummings to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Denver, August 20, 1857. "By the provisions of the Treaty of the Judith [October 17, 1855] liberal arrangements are made for the advancement of the Blackfeet Nation in educational and other useful employments. No portion of that fund has yet been expended, I would therefore recommend that contracts be made with suitable persons to carry into effect the provisions of that treaty.

An admirable institution for the education of the Indians on the western slope

vice-province, who had remained in the service of the Rocky Mountain Missions after their detachment from Missouri, carried out a commission he had received from his superior, Father Congiato, to open a mission among the Blackfeet "This move," commented Congiato, "takes the missions out of the stationary condition in which they have been" The new mission was first located on the Teton River near the present town of Chouteau, Montana This site was abandoned in March, 1860, for one on the Sun River, near Fort Shaw, which latter site was in turn abandoned for a location on the left bank of the Missouri River about six miles above the Sun River Finally, on April 27, 1866, the Blackfoot Mission, named St Peter's in honor of the Jesuit General, Peter Beckx, was transferred to a site near the Bird Tail Rock between the Dearborn and Sun Rivers <sup>26</sup>

Though lending himself with characteristic zeal to his new duties in the Jesuit residence of the Assumption in Sandwich, Ontario, directly across the Detroit River from Detroit, Father Point cherished for years a longing to return to the Rocky Mountains "When I left them [the Flatheads] for the last time in company with Father De Smet," he wrote to Father Beckx, in April, 1854, "from conquerors of their most deadly enemies they had become their saviors, since by example and counsel they had worked so far upon the Blackfeet as to bring them to petition for a Catholic missionary Chosen as I was for the work, I should still be there were it not for a very positive promise given by Father De Smet that I should be given a substitute I baptized eight hundred [?] infants there in a single winter" <sup>27</sup> "Ever since then the Flatheads and the Blackfeet have been uppermost in my thoughts The interior movement which draws me to them is so imperious that I should think myself doing violence to the will of heaven if I did not renew the offers I have already made to all my Superiors in regard to this mission I am convinced that events have rid the excellent Father

of the Rocky Mountains at St Mary's in the Bitter Root Valley has been conducted with singular success by certain Jesuits who manifest peculiar adaptation to the duties of education in those remote regions At this institution many of the Nez Percés and Flatheads are highly educated—all seem intelligent, moral and observant of the forms of Christian worship

The Blackfeet are intelligent and tractable and could they enjoy the benefits of a similar institution, would become equally distinguished" (H)

<sup>26</sup> Palladino, *Indian and White in the Northwest*, p 168 *et seq* A detailed and accurate discussion of the successive locations of St Peter's Mission is to be found in a ms account prepared in 1914 by Father Francis Kuppens, S J, one-time missionary among the Blackfeet, "Remarks concerning the account about St Peter's Mission among the Blackfeet Indians in *Indian and White in the Northwest*" (A)

<sup>27</sup> An overstatement Father Point's own total in his register is six hundred and fifty-one

[De Smet] of the doubts he entertained concerning my intentions and attitude of mind, and these doubts once dissipated there are perhaps in the Rocky Mountains no two hearts more naturally drawn one to the other than would be ours" <sup>28</sup> In 1860, "despite the solace and edification he is finding among his brethren in Canada," nothing has made it possible for him to forget the Rocky Mountains, "they are at the bottom of all his thoughts, their cries have gone deep into his soul. If he forgets them, he has reason, to fear, so it seems to him, that God may forget him" <sup>29</sup> He was ready accordingly to return to the mountains and under any superior, even Father De Smet, especially now that he had addressed a letter to his one-time leader "to make him forget the unpleasant impressions of other days"

Father Point in his mountain days had on occasion been strangely intractable. De Smet had the Father General's authorization to send him away from the mission and even out of the Society, and on one occasion instructed Father Joset to serve papers of dismissal upon him, but he pleaded so vehemently to be spared this extreme penalty that Joset thought it wiser not to proceed to it. In view of Point's personal piety and capacity for effective work his lapses now and then from the deference due to superiors seemed curiously inconsistent. But it had an explanation. He appears to have suffered at times from abnormal psychic states, which rendered him more or less irresponsible while under their influence. Already, while in his company along the Oregon Trail in 1841, De Smet noted his "sombre and melancholy humor" <sup>30</sup> At St. Mary's in 1842 Mengarini observed, "this good father is under delusion or there is something wanting in his head" <sup>31</sup> In 1848 Father Joset wrote that opinions regarding Father Point were contradictory. "Now it was said of him that he was extraordinary, now that he was intolerable. He was disturbed over the Louisiana affair and always seemed afraid of being sent away from the Society and had recourse to apologies and recriminations in the hope of staying in. He would allow no exception to be taken to anything he did. For the rest, he would have been a man very well suited for the Mission, a lover of poverty, generally obedient in executing orders, zealous and pious" <sup>32</sup> Twenty years later Father Joset suggested an explanation of the oddities that marked his former associate. "What did he not do for the poor Indians? His zeal and courage were above his strength. Besides, he

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<sup>28</sup> Point à Beckx, April 17, 1854 (AA)

<sup>29</sup> Point, *Quelques notes sur les Missions des Montagnes* (AA)

<sup>30</sup> De Smet made Point diarist of the 1841 journey over the Oregon Trail and this "to distract him"

<sup>31</sup> Mengarini à Roothaan, March 10, 1842 (AA)

<sup>32</sup> Joset ad Roothaan, March 18, 1848 (AA)



suffered other privations and heart-breakings which added greatly to his crown I think that God in the riches of his mercy sometimes reserves for his servants whose merit he would increase infirmities which are real sicknesses and yet do not pass for such and expose the individual to criticism I have never known a more devoted missionary than Father Point ”<sup>33</sup> A similar appraisal of Point’s difficult personality was made by one associated with him in Canada, Father Joseph Hanipaux

Father Point is equipped with all sorts of virtues, is inspired with a boundless zeal and has the deepest love for the Society, but he is very often especially at certain periods submitted by Divine Providence to a very painful trial, painful for himself as for those about him who cannot comprehend why he entertains such ideas of them as those to which he gives expression He has times when the cross relaxes, at least sensibly, but it is not slow in making itself felt again When he is in this state he cannot be persuaded that he is dealing not with realities, but with phantasms of the imagination, trials of Divine Providence, which makes certain souls pass through this state in order to have them arrive at great consolations In spite of these torments he works and renders good service to the Mission He has a great and ever increasing desire to return to the Rocky Mountains, where many of his former neophytes are in the greatest desolation He would not do well there except with adequate support while this condition of trial is upon him<sup>34</sup>

Father Point never had his wish to return to the Rocky Mountains gratified, he continued to labor with devotion among his brethren of Canada, dying at sixty-nine, at Quebec, July 4, 1868 In the romantic attempt made by the middlewestern Jesuits in the forties to evangelize the Rocky Mountain tribes he had a distinguished share Moreover, to his ready pen we are indebted for interesting and informing memoirs on this initial period of his missionary career Not only did he sketch in writing the story of his Rocky Mountain experiences, but having some ability as an artist he enriched his work with pen-and-ink drawings and sketches in colors Numerous aspects of American frontier life,

<sup>33</sup> Joset à Beckx, December 27, 1868 (AA) According to Father Adrian Hoecken as reported by Father Vercruyse, Point “loved the Indians and was loved by them ” Vercruyse à Roothaan, April 25, 1851 (AA)

<sup>34</sup> Hanipaux à Beckx, May 1, 1854 (AA) “I will observe in the first place that I have always highly esteemed the good Father [Point] and have ever considered him as a strict and good religious man His character, human, was such that since my acquaintance with him, I have known none of Ours with whom he could live in peace or they with him All the troubles that seemed to surround him wherever he went were more to be attributed to something wrong in his mind, of which he was not master, than to his will Nevertheless the troubles existed and hindered in a great measure the progress of the mission At the same time by his zeal and fervor, his deeds of mortification, etc, he has certainly done a great deal of good among the Indians ” De Smet to Sopranis, February 1, 1860 (A)

secular and religious, are thus preserved, from the buffalo hunt to the trading-posts of the upper Missouri and their personnel and the first church on the site of Kansas City, Missouri<sup>35</sup>

§ 2 GROS VENTRES AND OTHER TRIBES

With other Indians of the plains besides the Blackfeet Jesuit missionaries came into contact in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. At the time De Smet and Point visited the Blackfeet there was living in close association with the latter the tribe known as the Gros Ventres of the Prairie or Atsina, a detached branch of the Arapaho. That they had no racial kinship with the Blackfeet was known to Father Point, who performed numerous baptisms among them<sup>36</sup>. Thus, on October 13 and 14, 1846, he baptized at Fort Lewis eighty children of the tribe, twenty-eight of them boys and fifty-two girls, the names of the parents being in most cases entered in the records. The roll-call of the saints of the Catholic Church was drawn upon heavily to provide names for these numerous neophytes. Thus, Felicité, Appoline, Skolas-tique, Opportune, Onesime and Jovile occur in the register. The ages of the infants are almost invariably given as are also the names of the parents, it being noted in some cases that "the parents went away without giving their names." Some forty-six additional baptisms among the Gros Ventres, these taking place in one of the camps, are recorded by Point for December, 1846<sup>37</sup>.

The name of Gros Ventres ("big bellies") as applied to the Atsina or Gros Ventres of the Prairie, owes its origin to the sign by which the tribe is designated in the Indiana sign-language, this being a sweeping pass made across the abdomen by both hands to convey the idea of "always hungry," i.e. beggars. It is to be noted that the name Gros Ventres was applied by the French traders and voyageurs and after them by others to two entirely distinct tribes, the Atsina or Hitunena, a detached band of the Arapaho, and the Hidatsa or Minitaree, a Siouan tribe. Atsina and Hidatsa were often distinguished as the Gros Ventres of the Plains or Prairie and the Gros Ventres of the Missouri<sup>38</sup>. The Gros Ventres of the Prairie were subsequently gathered with the

<sup>35</sup> Two of Father Point's drawings are reproduced in Garraghan, *Catholic Beginnings in Kansas City, Missouri* (Chicago, 1919).

<sup>36</sup> "They [the Gros Ventres] are improperly ranked among the Blackfeet, besides that they did not originate in the country, they do not speak their language and are different in many respects." CR, *De Smet*, 3: 952.

<sup>37</sup> Point, *Registrie des Baptêmes, etc.* (AA). In 1862 Father Giorda, S. J., administered 162 baptisms among the Gros Ventres of the Prairies. Palladino, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

<sup>38</sup> Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, art. "Gros Ventres."

Assiniboin on the Fort Belknap reservation and for the united tribes the Mission of St Paul was established in 1886 by the Jesuits of the Rocky Mountain Mission

As to the Minitaree or Hidatsa, nicknamed the Gros Ventres of the Missouri, De Smet, according to his own account, visited them in his first journey to the mountains in 1840 though under what circumstances is not noted<sup>39</sup> On his way to the Great Council of 1851 he visited the Minitaree village at Fort Berthold on the Missouri, meeting the great chief Four Bears, whom he calls "the most civil and affable Indian that I met on the Missouri"<sup>40</sup> Four Bears requested the missionary to baptize his two young sons and other members of his family All the children of the tribe at this time appear to have been baptized by Father Belcourt, a priest of the Vicariate-apostolic of the Red River, who visited the Minitaree on several occasions De Smet visited the tribe again on his upper Missouri journeys of 1862, 1864, 1866 and 1867 "At the post of Berthold [1864] there are three tribes (Minitaree, Arikara, Mandan) united in one large village, numbering about 3,000 souls They welcomed me with the greatest cordiality"<sup>41</sup> In his visit of this year, 1864, he baptized at Fort Berthold two hundred and four children of the Minitaree and Mandans, his description of the ceremony being a vivid one "Through the constant bending of my somewhat obese body to give the baptism, I was scarcely able to move for several days afterward, '*met het geschot in den rug,*' which is Flemish for with a 'crick in my back'"<sup>42</sup> Fort Berthold, successor of Fort Clark, was on the Missouri River in what is now North Dakota

The Arikara are a tribe of Caddoan stock, whose language differs only dialectically from that of the Pawnee<sup>43</sup> Early in the nineteenth century they became neighbors and finally allies of the Mandans and the Minitaree, the three tribes living together in close confederacy in the neighborhood of Fort Berthold, where they were sometimes described collectively as the Fort Berthold Indians De Smet met the Arikara and their allies for the first time on his return trip from the mountains in 1840 "The next day we passed through a forest on the banks of the Missouri, which had been in 1835 the winter quarters of the Grosventres [Minitaree], Aricaras and Mandans, it was there that these unfortunate nations had been attacked by that epidemic, which, in the course of a year, made such ravages among the Indian

<sup>39</sup> CR, *De Smet*, 1 277

<sup>40</sup> *Idem*, 2 651 For an account of the Great Council of 1851, cf *infra*, Chap XXX, § 1

<sup>41</sup> *Idem*, 3 834

<sup>42</sup> *Idem*, 3 829

<sup>43</sup> Hodge, *op cit*, art "Arikara"

tribes, several thousand of the savages died of small-pox. We observed in passing that the corpses, wrapped in buffalo hides, had remained bound to the branches of the largest trees. This savage burial-ground offered a very sad and mournful sight, and gave my travelling companions occasion to relate anecdotes as deplorable as they were tragic. Two days later we came to the miserable remnants of these three unfortunate tribes. The Mandans, who today scarce number ten families, have united with the Grosventres, who themselves have joined the Aricaras, altogether they are about three thousand of them."<sup>44</sup>

Father De Smet met the Arikara again in 1846 while returning to St. Louis from the upper country.<sup>45</sup> In 1851, while on his way to the Great Council, he baptized about two hundred children of the tribe, which was terrified at the approach of the cholera. These were apparently his first baptisms among the Arikara. "Not long after I heard that the cholera had swept through the village of the Aricaras and that many of the children had fallen victims. What a consolation that by the sacrament I unlocked the gates of heaven to them."<sup>46</sup> In 1862 the missionary again visited the tribe.<sup>47</sup> In 1864 he was with them still again, baptizing one hundred and three children. As a result of this visit, he even planned a mission among the united Arikara, Mandan and Minitaree.<sup>48</sup> In 1866 he was with the Arikara for the fifth time. "At Forts Berthold and Sully sickness has carried off a majority of the children of tender years. Fortunately the greater part had received baptism at the time of my last visit. They rejoiced at my presence and hastened to bring me all the newly born of the three tribes, the Gros Ventres, the Aricaras and the Mandans begging me to grant them the holy sacrament of regeneration."<sup>49</sup> De Smet met these tribes for the last time in 1867.<sup>50</sup> As late as 1870 a mission among them appears to have been under consideration.<sup>51</sup>

The Cheyenne, an important plains tribe of the Algonkin family, once occupied the country of the upper Mississippi, whence they were driven westward by the advancing Sioux, separating into two bands, the Northern and the Southern. The Northern Cheyenne lived for a con-

<sup>44</sup> CR, *De Smet*, 1 245

<sup>45</sup> *Idem*, 2 606

<sup>46</sup> *Idem*, 2 650

<sup>47</sup> *Idem*, 2 786

<sup>48</sup> *Idem*, 3 835

<sup>49</sup> *Idem*, 3 857

<sup>50</sup> *Idem*, 3 882

<sup>51</sup> *Idem*, 4 1591. F. F. Gerard writing to De Smet May 1, 1870, advises him that the Berthold Indians would readily move from the fort to a point opposite the Little Missouri, which is suggested as a good location for a mission. "The Berthold Indians have been expecting you for the last two seasons." *Loc. cit.*

siderable period on the head waters of the Cheyenne River in South Dakota, to which they gave their name, which is of Sioux etymology and signifies "people of alien speech" De Smet first made the acquaintance of the Cheyenne in 1840 near Fort Laramie A party of them made up of about forty lodges listened to the missionary's discourse "I took the opportunity to speak to them of the principal points of religion, I explained to them the ten commandments of God and several articles of the Creed I made known to them the object of my journey to the mountains, asking whether they also did not desire to have Black-robos among them, to teach their children to know and serve the Great Spirit The proposition seemed to please them greatly, and they answered that they would do what they could to render the stay of the Black-robos among them agreeable I believe that a zealous missionary would meet with very good success among these savages Their language is said to be very difficult, they are about 2,000 in number The neighboring nations consider these Indians the most courageous warriors of the prairies" At the Great Council of 1851 De Smet baptized two hundred and fifty-three Cheyenne children In the early nineties there were living many Cheyenne Indians who remembered him and took pride in the fact that they were baptized by him.<sup>52</sup>

The Crows or Absaroka are a Siouan tribe allied ethnologically to the Hidatsa, from whom they separated, according to their own traditions, about 1776 They were then living on the Missouri River and the band which became the Crows withdrew to the plains east of the Rocky Mountains, through which region they roamed until gathered into reservations Their country extended from the mouth of the Yellowstone south along the sources of the Powder, Wind and Big Horn Rivers as far as the Laramie fork of the Platte The name Crows is a translation through the French, *gens de corbeaux*, of their own name Absaroka, Crow, "sparrow-hawk or bird people" <sup>53</sup>

Father De Smet first met the Crows on his return trip from the Northwest in 1840

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<sup>52</sup> CR, *De Smet*, 1 212, 2 679 The Mission of St Labre "among the Cheyennes on Tongue River near the mouth of Otter Creek, some 75 miles south of Miles City in Custer County, Montana," was founded in 1883 "These Indians are a small fraction of the Northern Cheyennes and number close on 1000 They live grouped in little settlements in the Upper Tongue country and along the Rosebud" From De Smet's time there was apparently no evangelical work among these Indians until 1882-1883, when Father P Barceló, S J, visited them from Helena and spent several months among them Palladino, *op cit*, p' 203 St Labre Mission was for some years a charge of the Jesuits of the Rocky Mountain Mission

<sup>53</sup> Hodge, *op cit*, art "Crows"

Presently we perceived a considerable troop of savages some three miles off They were in fact Crows returning to their camp, after having paid the tribute of blood to forty of their warriors, massacred two years before by the Blackfeet Since they are just at present allies of the Flatheads, they received us with the greatest transports of joy Soon we met groups of women covered with dried blood, and so disfigured that they aroused at once compassion and horror They repeat this scene of mourning for several years, whenever they pass near the tombs of their relations and so long as the slightest spot of blood remains on their bodies they may not wash themselves The Crow chiefs received us with cordiality and gave us a great feast The conversation was really pleasing, the languages of the two nations being different, it was carried on by signs All the tribes of this part of America know the system and understand one another perfectly

The main wealth of the western Indians consists of horses, every chief and warrior owns a great number of them, which may be seen grazing in herds about their camps They are objects of trade for them in time of peace and of booty in war, so that they often pass from one tribe to another at a very great distance The horses that the Crows have are principally from the wild races of the prairies, but they had stolen some from the Sioux, the Cheyennes and other tribes of the southwest, who in turn had got them from the Spanish in their raids into the Mexican territory The Crows are considered the most indefatigable marauders of the plains, they cross and recross the mountains in every direction, carrying to one side what they have stolen on the other This is how they get the name of Absaroka, which signifies "Crow" From their childhood they are practiced in this kind of larceny, they acquire an astonishing ability in it, their glory increases with the number of their captures, so that an accomplished robber is in their eyes a hero Their country seems to stretch from the Black Hills [of Dakota] to the Rocky Mountains, embracing the Wind River Mountains and all the plains and valleys watered by that stream [Wind River], as well as by the Yellowstone and Powder rivers and upper waters of several branches of the Platte The soil and climate of this country are very diverse, there are vast plains of sand and clay, there are springs of hot water and mines of coal, game is very abundant throughout These are the best-formed savages I have met on my travels <sup>54</sup>

Shortly after this first meeting with the Crows De Smet came up to a second camp of the tribe on the Big Horn, the largest tributary of the Yellowstone. "There we found another camp of Crows, to the number of about 1,000 souls. They too received us with the greatest demonstration of friendship and again it was necessary to pass the day in going from one feast to another I took a favorable occasion to speak

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<sup>54</sup> CR, *De Smet*, I 237 *et seq*

to them upon various points of religion”<sup>55</sup> In the fall of 1842, De Smet met the Crows again on the Yellowstone It was a notable meeting, the Indians manifesting great eagerness on the occasion to listen to the missionary’s appeal<sup>56</sup> Later, while returning to St Louis in the fall of 1846, he arrived at a Flathead camp just after it had been attacked by a band of marauding Crows He was anxious to meet the latter and sent messages ahead of him at the utmost speed to advise them of his coming, but failed to get into touch with them Father Point, however, was more fortunate On his journey from Fort Lewis to St Louis he visited near Fort Union a camp of Crows, whose good dispositions so impressed him that he baptized fourteen of their children, June 9, 1847 These are the first recorded baptisms among the Crows<sup>57</sup> In 1855 the tribe was petitioning De Smet for a missionary Fourteen years later, 1869, General Sully tried to interest him in doing something for the Crows “I think there is a good opening for your party there and if you think the matter worthy of trial, I will do all in my power to assist you”<sup>58</sup> Nothing, however, was done for these Indians until the establishment in their behalf in 1886 of St Xavier Mission in Custer County, Montana, not far from the scene of Custer’s memorable defeat by the Sioux<sup>59</sup>

The Arapaho are a typical plains tribe of the Algonkin family closely associated at one time as allies with the Cheyenne They are divided into two bands, the Northern and the Southern Arapaho, the first residing in Wyoming, the latter in Oklahoma The Arapaho are the parent stock of the Atsina or Gros Ventres of the Plains, the two tribes speaking practically the same language De Smet met the Arapaho at the Great Council in 1851, on which occasion he baptized three hundred and five of their children<sup>60</sup> This was the first and apparently the only time he came into contact with the tribe, at least in an apostolic way The Arapaho were not to be evangelized systematically by Catholic missionaries until the establishment among them of the Jesuit Mission of St Stephen’s in 1884<sup>61</sup>

<sup>55</sup> *Idem*, 1 239

<sup>56</sup> *Idem*, 1 393

<sup>57</sup> *Idem*, 3 955 Point, *Registre des Baptêmes, etc* Palladino (*op cit*, p 220) inclines to the view that the Indians met by Point were River Crows (so called because they lived along the Missouri) and not Mountain Crows, among whom the Mission of St Francis Xavier was later established

<sup>58</sup> Sully to De Smet, December 8, 1869 (A)

<sup>59</sup> Palladino, *op cit*, p 223 “His [De Smet’s] name is inseparably connected with the Big Horn country” Coutant, *History of Wyoming* (Laramie, Wyo, 1899), p 236

<sup>60</sup> CR, *De Smet*, 2 679

<sup>61</sup> The Jesuits at St Stephen’s were preceded by a diocesan priest, Rev Thomas

Living with the Arapaho today on the same reservation in western Wyoming, though for a long period their inveterate enemies, are the Shoshoni or Snake Indians. These are the most northerly division of the Shoshonian family, consisting of two groups with the same general characteristics, a western one with habitat along the Snake River in southern Idaho and an eastern one residing chiefly in western Wyoming. The Snake River Shoshoni were also known as Root Diggers, a name suggesting the chronic destitution in which this group appeared to live. Father De Smet made acquaintance with the Snakes at the Green River rendezvous on his first visit to the mountains in 1840. At the invitation of thirty of their chiefs he addressed them on the subject of religion.

The savages paid the greatest attention and appeared struck with wonder at the holy doctrine that I had been explaining to them. They then took counsel among themselves for the space of half an hour, when the spokesman, in the name of all the chiefs, addressed me in the following words: "Black-gown, your words have entered our hearts, they will never go out from them. We wish to know and practice the sublime law that you have just made known to us, in the name of the Great Spirit, whom we love. All our country is open to you, you need only choose to settle an establishment. We will all of us leave the plains and the forests to come and put ourselves under your orders, about you." I advised them, while awaiting that happy day, to choose wise men in their several camps, to perform the prayers in common evening and morning, since thereby the good chiefs would find occasion to incite all the people to virtue. That very evening they assembled and the head chief promulgated a law that whoever in future should steal or commit any other scandal should be punished in public.<sup>62</sup>

Colonel Ermantinger, the commandant at Fort Hall, assured De Smet in 1841 that he would use his good offices to promote the latter's ministry among the Snakes, with whom that functionary had marked influence. But no apostolic work among them appears to have been attempted by the missionary or his associates. Representatives of the tribe were present at the Great Council of 1851, but De Smet performed no baptisms among them, as he did on that occasion among the Arapaho, Cheyenne and Sioux.

The Ponca, a Siouan tribe closely related to the Omaha, Kansa and Osage Indians, were visited by De Smet in 1848 in their village near the mouth of the Niobrara River in what is now Nebraska.

In none of my preceding voyages had I met the Poncas, this time I found the whole of this nation assembled at the mouth of the Niobrara—

Moriarity, who took preliminary steps towards starting the mission. Cf. *Illinois Catholic Historical Review*, 9, 18.

<sup>62</sup> CR, *De Smet*, I, 218, 262.



their favorite haunt during the fruit season and the gathering of the corn harvest

They besought me to visit their village, four miles from our camp, in order to pass the night with them. I accepted the invitation the more willingly, as it would afford me an opportunity of announcing the truths of Faith. In fact, I lost no time, and shortly after my arrival the whole tribe, numbering more than 1,000 persons, surrounded the "Black-Robe." This was the first time that the Poncas had heard Jesus Christ preached by the mouth of his minister. The holy eagerness and attention which they lent to my words induced me to prolong my instructions until late in the night. The next day I baptized their little ones, and when the time of separation arrived they besought me with the greatest earnestness to renew my visit, and to fix my residence among them. "We will cheerfully listen to the Words of the Great Spirit," said they, "and submit to all his commands that you manifest to us." Until their wishes can be gratified, I consider myself happy to find among them a Catholic half-breed, tolerably well instructed in his religion, who promised me to serve as catechist.

The language of the Poncas differs little from that of the Otoes, the Kansas and the Osages. Of intrepid and tried courage, they have, notwithstanding the paucity of their numbers, made themselves feared by their more numerous neighbors. They may with justice be styled the Flatheads of the Plains, on account of their bravery. Although attached by taste to the wandering life, they have begun to cultivate some fields of corn, or pumpkins and potatoes.<sup>63</sup>

The Omaha, a Siouan tribe, whose village was on the west bank of the Missouri, twenty-five miles below the present Sioux City, came in touch with Father De Smet in 1838, while he was stationed among the Potawatomi at Council Bluffs.

This tribe has a population of about 2,000 souls. Two of their chiefs, Kagggechinke and Ohio, with two-score warriors, came to dance the calumet or their dance of friendship for us. Such a dance is really worth seeing, but it is not easy to give one an idea of it, because everything seems confusion. They yell and strike their mouths, at the same time performing leaps of all descriptions, now on one foot, now on the other, always at the sound of the drum and in perfect time, pell-mell, without order, turning to the right and left, in every direction and in every shape, all at once. They all evinced the greatest affection for us and prayed us to smoke the calumet with them. I showed our chapel to the chiefs, who appeared to take great interest in the explanation I gave them of the cross, the altar and the images of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Afterward they urgently begged me to come

<sup>63</sup> *Idem*, 2 625-627

and make them a visit, to baptize their children, and they made me a present of a fine beaver skin for a tobacco-bag. I in turn gave them some chaplets for the children and to each one a fair copper cross, which they received with great gratitude, kissing them respectfully and putting them around their necks. When speaking, they addressed me in the most cordial manner. They are scarcely more than a hundred miles from Council Bluffs.<sup>64</sup>

This appears to be the only occasion on which De Smet met the Omaha. In 1855 an unsuccessful attempt was made by the tribe to have Bishop Miége send them missionaries.

Like the Omaha, the Pawnee Loups were visitors at the Council Bluffs Mission. "Three of the head chiefs of the Pawnee Loups came to pay us a visit [June, 1838] and lodged in our cabin. They noticed the sign of the cross that we made before and after our prayers and our meals, and when they went home, they taught all the inmates of their village to make the same sign, as something agreeable to the Great Spirit. They begged us, through their interpreter, to come and visit them. The Government had sent them a Protestant minister, but they did not choose to keep him."<sup>65</sup> In 1858 De Smet met a camp of Pawnee Loups near Fort Kearney where he baptized two hundred and eight of their children.<sup>66</sup>

The Assiniboin, a detached tribe of the Sioux, were met for the first time by De Smet in 1840. The impression they made was not a favorable one, he called them cowards. He made contact with parties of them also in 1846 and 1862.<sup>67</sup> In 1866 he baptized a great number of Assiniboin children at Fort Union and in the following year forty-seven children of the same tribe received the sacrament at his hands at Fort Buford near the mouth of the Yellowstone.<sup>68</sup> In 1851, on meeting some Assiniboin at Fort Union, he had held out hopes to them that a missionary would be sent them within a few years. In 1854, the Assiniboin chief, Crazy Bear, whom he had come to know at the Great Council of 1851, recalled to him the promise he had made. "All my nation call aloud for the Black-gown and invite him to come with all speed." Crazy Bear's appeal, addressed to "The Medicine Man of the White Nation," is a fine specimen of the Indian's native vein of poetry and eloquence.<sup>69</sup> Together with the Gros Ventres of the Plains, the Assiniboin are today

<sup>64</sup> *Idem*, 1 165. The Maha or Omaha were one of the first tribes known to the French explorers, being indicated on Marquette's map as also on DeSisle's map of 1703, at which time they occupied lands east of the Missouri.

<sup>65</sup> *Idem*, 1 165.

<sup>66</sup> *Idem*, 2 722.

<sup>67</sup> *Idem*, 3 857. De Smet baptized Assiniboin children on his visit of 1862.

<sup>68</sup> *Idem*, 3 857, 883.

<sup>69</sup> *Idem*, 3 934.

(1936) under the spiritual charge of the Jesuit fathers at St Paul's Mission on the Fort Peck Reservation in Montana <sup>70</sup>

### § 3 THE WINNEBAGO

The Winnebago are a tribe of the Siouan linguistic family and dialectically are close of kin to the Iowa, Oto and Missouri <sup>71</sup> The explorer, Jean Nicolet, met them in the neighborhood of the present Green Bay on the occasion of his historic visit to that locality in 1634. By the French they were called "*les Puans*," "people of the fetid water," probably, it has been suggested, owing to the circumstances that the first white men to make their acquaintance noted along the shores of the Bay the odor of putrid fish. A Jesuit map of date 1670 designates Green Bay as "*Baye des Puans*," and the map published with Marquette's *recit* in 1681 shows a village of the "*Puans*" near the northern end of Lake Winnebago in Wisconsin. From the Mission of St Francis Xavier at De Pere, near the mouth of the Fox River, Jesuit priests began to evangelize the Winnebago as early as 1669. Ceding their lands east of the Mississippi in 1837, the latter removed first to Iowa Territory and later to northern Minnesota, where in 1848, they began to occupy Long Prairie Reservation, bounded by the Crow Wing, Watab, Mississippi and Long Prairie Rivers.

The question of a Catholic school for the Winnebago in their new home was quick to engage the attention of Bishop Loras of Dubuque, whose jurisdiction extended over the whole of Minnesota Territory. The prelate wrote March 12, 1847, to his vicar-general, Father Joseph Cretin, subsequently first Bishop of St Paul, who was at that moment in Rome.

Since your excellent confrères of Lyons cannot be granted to us nor probably the Marists, and since we are in absolute need of missionaries for the more than 30,000 Indians whom we have in our diocese, it will be necessary to address ourselves to the worthy Jesuit Fathers who after all are the most competent in this sort of ministry. Our Winnebago, Sioux and others will sooner or later be driven towards the Rocky Mountains, there they will find Father De Smet and the companions of his apostolate. Their

<sup>70</sup> Palladino, *op cit*, p. 197. For the story of Tchatka, famous Assiniboin chief, with interesting notes on the tribe, cf. CR, *De Smet*, 3, 1108. Cf. also, *op cit*, 3, 936 for religious views of the Assiniboin. For a retelling of Tchatka's story, based on De Smet's account, cf. Marius Barbeau, *Indian days in the Canadian Rockies* (Toronto, 1923).

<sup>71</sup> Hodge, *op cit*, art. "Winnebago" "Winiwag, filthy water" (Chippewa), *wimpyagohag*, "people of the filthy water (Sauk and Fox)." Cf. also report, October 17, 1849, of Alexander Ramsay, Indian superintendent for Minnesota Territory (RCIA, 1849).

success here is assured because these masters in the great art of the missions succeed always<sup>72</sup> They can count on my entire devotion [to them] and cooperation as well as yours Dubuque will always be for them a place of refuge and generous hospitality, being as it is so close to the first theatre of their apostolic labors<sup>73</sup>

In May of the following year Father Cretin petitioned the Winnebago Indian agent, J. E. Fletcher, on behalf of Bishop Loras "I make a new and last application to know if we can expect any assistance from the Government to establish a school among the Winnebagoes in their new home The desire of the Indians to have teachers of this denomination has been enough manifested, and no doubt can be entertained about the wishes of the half-breeds, who are all Catholics" Father Cretin's petition was transmitted by Fletcher to Major Harvey at St. Louis with the comment "I would recommend that Mr. Cretin be permitted to try his hand at civilizing and christianizing the Winnebagoes and if he accomplishes one-tenth of the good he has promised me that he can and will accomplish among them in elevating and improving their morals, he will have more than realized our expectations" Cretin's petition was in turn forwarded by Harvey to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Medill at Washington with an indorsement "From all the observations I have been able to obtain from a slight personal observation and from other sources, I am convinced that the heavy expenditure for the education of the Winnebago Indians has been productive of no moral good whatever. I think the system should be entirely changed (to manual labor system) I would think it advisable that the Catholics should have the management of one of the schools Two, I should think, would be sufficient"<sup>74</sup> A petition signed, February 1, 1849, at Long Prairie by L. J. Alexander and thirteen other half-breeds and addressed to Major Harvey at St. Louis manifested the persistent desire of the Winnebago for a Catholic school

We, the undersigned, members of the Catholic faith respectfully represent to your Honor that the school now in operation among the Winnebagoes

<sup>72</sup> Complimentary to the Jesuits but not historically true Not all Jesuit missions have been successful in the sense of converting the Indians in large numbers or ameliorating their condition in any notable way For Catholic missionary work among the Winnebago prior to 1849, cf. M. M. Hoffman, "The Winnebago Mission a Cause Célèbre," *Mid-America*, 13, 26 *et seq.* (1930)

<sup>73</sup> Loras à Cretin, March 12, 1847 (AA) On becoming Bishop of St. Paul Cretin appealed to Father Villefort, assistant to the Jesuit General, for five or six men, "for the 30,000 Sioux, Chippeway and Winnebago" in his diocese and for work among the whites, a college in St. Paul being even proposed "St. Louis always answers—no men" Cretin à Villefort, April 18, 1851 (AA)

<sup>74</sup> Cretin to Fletcher, May 28, 1848, Harvey to Medill, June 14, 1848 (H)

is of little benefit <sup>75</sup> We do think that we should have a Catholic school for the benefit of our children, as we are connected with the Winnebagoes and that it would be no more than right and just that we should have a Catholic school as we number over 50, besides a great many of the Indians that would be glad to have such a school in operation We the undersigned think that we could procure teachers that have education enough to do all that is required, with the exception of a priest to superintend the school It is the wish of three-fourths of the Indians to have another school established among them to see if it would not be better than the one now in operation and at much less expense The chief braves and head of the Winnebago nation have repeatedly requested the Agent, J E Fletcher, to abandon the school now in operation among them They have signed a great many petitions to have the school changed, but for some cause or other they have not yet learned why it is not done <sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Conducted since 1842 by the Rev Mr Lowry, a Protestant clergyman

<sup>76</sup> (H) The grant made to the Catholics of part of the Winnebago school-fund was protested by the Rev Mr David Lowry and his friends and efforts were made by them to have it revoked As appears from their correspondence in the files of the Indian Office, Washington, the curious charge was made by them that the grant was motivated by a desire on the part of the Polk administration to gain the Catholic vote of Iowa Louis A Lowry, of Uniontown, Pa, a son of the Winnebago school-head and also a minister, appealed personally in the matter to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Orlando Brown "The views of Mr [Louis] Lowry," wrote John C Young (also a "preacher," as he describes himself) to Commissioner Brown, July 1, 1849, "in regard to what is desirable for the good of the Indians to keep them from falling under the dominion of the counters of beads and worshippers of crucifixes, he will explain—and by hearing his statements and reading a few papers which he will exhibit, you will be put in possession of facts sufficient to enable you to see both the importance and mode of keeping the relics of this unfortunate tribe from becoming the prey of those sons of superstition and intrigue—the Jesuits" Charges were made by the younger Lowry that the Indians and half-breeds in signing the petition of February 1, 1849, for a Catholic priest were mere tools in the hands of the Winnebago agent, J E Fletcher, who, as alleged, was appointed by Polk to win the support of the Catholic voters of Iowa, the elder Lowry, to whom the position of agent was said to have been virtually promised by the administration, being rejected "This request [Winnebago petition, February 1, 1849] was sent on to Washington backed by the influence of the agent and others upon the eve of the Presidential election [this had actually taken place the preceding November, 1848] while the report of my father made out at the instance of the Department was secretly laid aside until the request of a few Indians, who did not know what they were doing, could be acted on Mr Polk, however, being personally acquainted with my father, who was backed by a strong influence from political parties in Tennessee and being pressed so hard by a Roman Catholic influence from Iowa with such false representations as had been made, very imprudently if not unfeelingly split the education fund in two, half to the Cumberland Presbyterians and half to the Roman Catholics The latter have taken care, as you will see, to have the matter so hurried that their contract might be signed and sealed before ever the facts could come before the present administration" L A Lowry to Orlando Brown, July 11,

Towards the close of 1848 the Indian Office took favorable action on Father Cretin's petition and forwarded to Bishop Loras a contract for a manual labor school among the Winnebago. The Bishop, however, in anxiety over the small number of priestly workers in his diocese, declined eventually to enter into an obligation which it was doubtful whether he could satisfactorily discharge. But, not to lose for the Church so welcome an opportunity for spiritual good among a destitute and neglected portion of his flock, he determined to enlist, if he could, the services of the Jesuits of St. Louis in behalf of the enterprise. Visiting that city in person, he there succeeded in inducing the vice-provincial, Father Elet, to take in hand the projected Winnebago school.<sup>77</sup> By a contract signed February 19, 1849, by Elet and Commissioner Medill, the former agreed to educate eighty Winnebago children, (to be equally divided as far as possible between the two sexes), or a smaller number if more could not be induced to come, to erect or cause to be erected a suitable building for a manual labor school in the country occupied by the Winnebago, to clear, fence and put under cultivation at least fifty acres of land and as much more as might be necessary for pasture, to procure such stock animals and farming utensils and such tools for the workshop to be connected with said school as might be necessary for the instruction of the scholars in agriculture and the mechanical arts, to instruct the male students in agriculture and the practical use of agricultural implements and in certain mechanical arts. Government, on its part, undertook to contribute four thousand dollars to cover the cost of

1849. Even the recently inaugurated president, Zachary Taylor, was appealed to by the elder Lowry, who had made his acquaintance at Fort Crawford, Prairie du Chien. Lowry's letter to Taylor, May 7, 1849, reads in part "Three [two] Catholic priests recently paid a flying visit to this place evidently on a secret mission. They left yesterday morning with a list of names showing that they have a church here of 80 members. One of these gentlemen is going immediately to St. Louis and the list will doubtless soon find its way to Washington perhaps accompanied by an expression from some of the Indians in behalf of the Black Gowns and another attempt will be made to mislead the Department. It is admitted that the present dominant party in Iowa have been and still are kept in the ascendancy by the Catholic votes of the state. It is an incident too that perhaps a politician would understand that the favor of controlling the school-fund in question was proposed to that church just before the political struggle in Iowa in November last." No action was taken by President Taylor on the protests filed against the proposed Catholic Winnebago school, Fletcher retaining his post, while in 1851 the Reverend David Lowry withdrew definitely from educational work among the tribe. That the Catholic Winnebago school was a bid made by the Polk administration for Catholic political support in Iowa was apparently a mere assertion without any known evidence to support it.

<sup>77</sup> The minutes, March 19, 1849, of the mission-board at St. Louis speak of the Winnebago mission as already accepted. There is no entry indicating the date of acceptance. (A)

the buildings and one thousand dollars for the clearing of the land and the purchase of agricultural implements, workshop tools and stock-animals. Moreover, a subsidy of fifty dollars a year was to be allowed for each pupil educated.<sup>78</sup>

On March 25 De Smet wrote to Bishop Loras

I have the honor of acquainting your Lordship that one or two days after your departure from St. Louis, Reverend Father Elet signed the contract and accepted the Winnebago Mission. The Superintendent of Indian Affairs forwarded the document immediately to Washington for confirmation and on receiving its ratification, we will commence the mission—all is ready for it. We were requested by Major Harvey not to proceed to the Indians before this document arrives. The fact of your Lordship not having signed the contract, as agreed on, leaves its acceptance on the part of the Government rather doubtful, as the Government is not acquainted with Father Elet. The Metifs among the Winnebagoes have sent lately a new petition to Major Harvey (who certainly is very friendly to Catholics), urging the acceptance of a Catholic mission among them, which he immediately forwarded to Washington. Please to present my best respects to the Reverend Mr. Cretin, who will accept of this, I hope, as an answer to his very kind letter, as likewise to the Reverend Mr. Donohoe, to whom we will apply in due time for Sisters for the new Winnebago Mission.<sup>79</sup>

The contract for the Winnebago school having been confirmed at Washington, measures were at once taken to inaugurate the work. On April 18, 1849, Father Ignatius Maes accompanied by Father John Baptist Miége, left St. Louis for the Winnebago country, which lay

<sup>78</sup> Harvey to Medill, February 19, 1849 (H)

<sup>79</sup> De Smet to Loras, March 25, 1849 (A). Father Donaghoe was the founder of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin established in Dubuque in 1844. He had written to United States Senator G. W. Jones of Iowa expressing the readiness of his sisterhood to undertake the education of not more than thirty Indian children for the first year, an improved property near Prairie du Chien which belonged to the nuns being available for the purpose. "What I propose is simply this—to accept a certain sum appropriated by the Department for Indian Affairs—to educate as many girls and boys, if wished, by our community, the Sisters of Charity at St. Joseph's. I can bring them down the Mississippi and go myself and make the proper selection [and] obtain them from their Parents, which is difficult by any other than a Black Gown, even should the Department expend thousands in magnificent buildings, as indeed they have already done in some [places?] for the Indian children. I shall not wish to be confined to the Winnebagoes alone as I'm better acquainted with the Sioux. The Sisters have had the desire for a long time to be engaged in the care of the poor Indians." T. J. Donaghoe to G. W. Jones, St. Joseph's Academy, January 30, 1849 (H). According to Father Donaghoe, Bishop Loras had rejected the offer made to him by the Indian Office as unsatisfactory. "I [Donaghoe] would not consent under the conditions to give the Sisters of Charity."

north of St Paul<sup>80</sup> Maes was commissioned to select a site for the buildings and to superintend their construction Miége, to whom had been entrusted the task of opening a mission among the Sioux on the upper Missouri, was not assigned to the Winnebago Mission, but undertook this journey north chiefly with a view to meeting the venerable Sioux missionary, Father Ravoux, from whose counsel and direction he expected to derive help for his own contemplated missionary venture among the Sioux<sup>81</sup> Father Sautois and later Father Truyens were to be held in reserve at St Louis as assistants to Maes among the Winnebago What befell Maes and Miége on their arrival among the tribe is detailed in a communication addressed by De Smet to D D Mitchell, superintendent of Indian affairs at St Louis

After having accepted the contract of the Government for the establishing of a Manual Labour School among the Winnebagoes, two Missionaries went out immediately on a visit to those Indians to examine the position and to choose a favorable spot where the intended establishment might be raised Seventy-seven miles above St Paul they found a number of Indian lodges opposite a place called the Sauk rapid and met General Fletcher, the Government Agent among the Winnebagoes He had the great kindness to convene the chiefs in the presence of the Missionaries and made known to them his desire of moving 57 miles higher up to a place called the *Round Prairie*, about four miles distant from *Long Prairie*, where already another portion of the same tribe has already located His proposition did not meet with ready approval and he, on his part, did not readily grant another place the Indians proposed—for they expressed the desire that Government should buy from the Sioux a tract of land, to be occupied by them, a few miles distant from the Sauk rapid It was not in the power of the Agent to grant them such a request for it would, at the same time, have placed the Missionaries in the necessity of postponing the intended Manual Labour School till said request had obtained the sanction at Washington This band of Indians appeared unwilling to leave the borders of the Mississippi on account of the great facility they thus possess of obtaining whiskey

The Missionaries, of course, have not been able to come to any conclusion as to the location of the school I must remark that the chiefs of this band of the Winnebago tribe are the very ones who asked for Catholic teachers of Government together with the half-breed Winnebagoes, and it is to these Indians likewise that the Agent counselled the missionaries to devote their care The Missionaries by the advice of General Fletcher visited Long Prairie, where the Reverend Mr Laury [Lowry] of the Presbyterian church has established a school In that place are eighty half-breeds, who are all Catholics and who sent the Government several petitions to obtain

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<sup>80</sup> "Fathers Truyens and Maes will commence the Winnebago mission" Flet à Roothaan, March 25, 1849 (AA)

<sup>81</sup> The Sioux mission project was not carried through



Catholic ministers These manifested a strong desire that the Missionaries should locate among them—possessing a very suitable spot for the erection of a Manual labor school The reasons why the Missionaries would feel inclined to establish in Long Prairie are 1st because a great number of the Catholic half-breeds families are located in it 2<sup>o</sup> because a band, as stated above, of Winnebagoes have expressed the intention of settling in it and actually occupy it Rev Lowry, no doubt, will endeavor to prevent this if he can and as the Catholic Missionaries wish to avoid being the occasion of any difficulty, I, in their name beg of you, Honorable Sir, to manifest your intentions on this subject and to tell us what may be the best course for us to pursue in the actual circumstances—we will abide by and follow your decision <sup>82</sup>

A few weeks after the date of the above letter, General Fletcher, the Winnebago agent, was in St Louis, where he met De Smet and conferred with him on the projected mission No satisfactory arrangement regarding it could be reached and in July Fathers Maes and Miége were back in St Louis Bishop Loras had without intending it overstated the prospects for successful missionary work among the Winnebago “Maes does nothing among the Winnebagoes,” De Smet reported to Father Elet, June 19, 1849, “not by his fault, [but] owing to certain local difficulties I fear good Bishop Loras has put us completely in the sack This will turn out another Miami mission if not worse ” The Winnebago after being forcibly removed from Minnesota in 1863 were finally settled on a reservation in northeastern Nebraska and no further attempt to evangelize them was made by the Jesuits of the West

#### § 4 THE SIOUX

Probably the earliest extant notice of the Sioux occurs in the Jesuit Relation of 1640 where mention is made of the Winnebago (Ouni-pigou), Naduesiu (Sioux), Assinipour (Assiniboin) and Pouutouatom (Potawatomi) <sup>83</sup> In 1641 St Isaac Jogues and his companion, Charles Raymbaut, the first Jesuits to reach the Middle United States, planted the cross at Sault Ste Marie, their eyes, we may surmise, turned still farther to the west in the hope of some day evangelizing the distant Nadouessi or Sioux <sup>84</sup> In 1689 Father Joseph Marest was “missionary to the Sioux,” being, as far as record attests, the first priest after Father Hennepin to attempt the conversion of the tribe He was one of the Frenchmen present at the famous *prise de possession* of Nicholas Perrot on Lake Pepin in 1689 when that picturesque pioneer took formal pos-

<sup>82</sup> De Smet to Mitchell, May 16, 1849 (A)

<sup>83</sup> Thwaites, *Jesuit Relations*, 18 231

<sup>84</sup> *Idem*, 23 225

session of "the Sioux country" in the name of Louis XIV.<sup>85</sup> In 1727 a Sioux mission named for St. Michael the Archangel was opened by the Jesuit, Michel Guignas, on the west or Minnesota side of Lake Pepin, it had been maintained only a few years when the unfriendly attitude of the Indians necessitated its suspension.<sup>86</sup> The notoriety which the tribe acquired for cruelty and bloodshed dates from the time when white men first made their acquaintance. Their bloody forays carried them down the Mississippi as far as Cahokia, which within a few years of its founding in 1699 saw its citizens threatened and sometimes massacred by these murderous marauders of the North.<sup>87</sup> The memory of these Sioux invasions of the lower Mississippi country lives on in the name of the village of Portage des Sioux in St. Charles County, Missouri.

Relations between the Sioux and the restored Society of Jesus were renewed in the person of Father De Smet. In the latter years of his career they were the tribe uppermost in his thoughts and plans. He died, it is true, without the satisfaction of having opened a mission on their behalf, but his influence over the tribe, in the opinion of his biographers, Richardson and Chittenden, had come to be the greatest ever wielded by any white man.<sup>88</sup> His life-long ambition to organize effective missionary work among the Sioux began with the first personal contact he ever made with them. This was in May, 1839, when he visited from Council Bluffs the Yankton Sioux, who were settled in the vicinity of Fort Vermilion on the upper Missouri. In the early summer of 1840 Father Christian Hoecken, De Smet's successor at Council Bluffs, undertook a missionary trip up the Missouri as far as Fort Union, the baptisms he administered on this occasion being, as far as known, the earliest recorded for the Missouri River country above Council Bluffs.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle France au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, I 188

<sup>86</sup> *Idem*, I 182 et seq., Louise Phelps Kellogg, "Fort Beauharnois," in *Minnesota History*, 8 232-246. The Ursuline Convent at Frontenac, Minnesota, is close to the site of the mission.

<sup>87</sup> G. J. Garraghan, "New Light on Old Cahokia" in *Illinois Catholic Historical Review*, II 132 (1928)

<sup>88</sup> CR, *De Smet*, I 254

<sup>89</sup> An autograph record (*Register Baptismorum diversarum nationum aboriginensium anno Domini 1840*) of the seventy-eight baptisms administered by Christian Hoecken on this occasion, ranging in date from May 30 to July 19, 1840, is in the Archives of St. Mary's College, St. Marys, Kansas. These are apparently the earliest recorded church ministrations for North and South Dakota. On May 30 there were two baptisms at the Vermilion (*au Vermilion*), Louise, daughter of William Dickson, born June 5, 1839, god-father, H. Angé, and Victoire, daughter of H. Angé and of Marie, born August 15, 1839, god-father, C. Hoecken and god-mother, Jeanne Dickson. These would seem to be the first baptisms known to have taken place within the limits of South Dakota. Three baptisms "at the village of the Yan-

In October of the same year, 1840, while journeying back to St. Louis from the first of his many visits to the Far West De Smet passed through the Sioux country, where he met several bands of prowling Indians "The inhabitants of the fort [Clark] had carefully recommended to us to avoid meeting the Yanktonnais, the Santees, the Hunk-

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tons" are recorded for June 3, and thirty-two "at the Little Missouri" for June 13 and 14, the names of the sponsors at the last named place including those of Baptiste Constant, Joseph Allerow, Joseph Oitebize, Antoine de Rencontre, François Le Picotte, and Messrs Papin, Kipp and Chartron [Chardon] The baptisms at the Little Missouri are the earliest for North Dakota unless it be that they are antedated by extant church records of the Catholic settlement at Pembina on the Red River (Cf Sister Mary Aquinas Norton, *Catholic Missionary Activities in the Northwest, 1818-1864* (Washington, 1930), pp 28-45) Further, it is to be noted that Hoecken records seven baptisms, June 22, at "Fort Clarke," which place he must have reached before coming to the Little Missouri Seven baptisms were administered June 28 at Fort Union at the mouth of the Yellowstone just within the western boundary of North Dakota Among the baptized were Elizabeth, "daughter of Mr Robert and of a squaw (*sauvagesse*), Robert, son of Mr Edouard Denis [Denig], Jean Baptiste, six-year old son of Mr Michael Champagne "and of a squaw," and Joseph, "son of Mr Bonaventure le Brun and of a squaw" On his return trip down the Missouri Hoecken baptized at Fort Clark, July 4, Marguerite, aged thirty-eight years, wife of "Mr Garnière," Marguerite Marie, aged twenty-five, wife of "Mr Chardon [Chardon?]," and two children of Pierre Garreau, Paul, eleven, and Rosalie, seven On July 16 there were four baptisms at Fort Pierre, all children of Joseph Le Compte "and of a squaw" At Fort Lookout, July 17, there were four baptisms, three of them of children of Xavier Rencontre "and a squaw" At the Vermilion, July 19, five persons were baptized, four of them children of Olivier Le Clerc

The earliest known Nebraska baptisms are the eight administered by Father Christian Hoecken at Bellevue, June 4, 1846 (*Sugar Creek Baptismal Register* (F) Among the eight was Emilie, daughter of Logan Fontanelle and Depeche, an Omaha squaw Baptisms and marriages performed by Hoecken in his last missionary trip up the Missouri were recorded by him in the above-mentioned register November 11, 1850, he baptized thirteen at the mouth of the Big Sioux (*à la grande rivière des Sioux*) These are the earliest recorded baptisms for the locality of Sioux City "On reaching Bellevue I learned from Mr Sarpy that Messrs Bruyère and Argot had started the day before and that I could easily overtake them, that there was no guide for me, and that they knew none about there I bought the necessary utensils, a little pot, tin-pans, provisions, etc, and started in pursuit of the gentlemen who live about thirty miles below Fort Vermilion at the mouth of the Great Sioux I overtook them the next day at Boyer River I travelled in their company seven days when we reached the Great Sioux I spent three days there instructing the people and baptized fourteen persons They treated me with great kindness and expressed their extreme delight at the prospect of the establishment of a Sioux Mission They promised to pay for their children's board They are not only full of good will, but capable of acting" Hoecken to Elet, Territory of the Platte, December 28, 1850 CR, *De Smet*, 4 1255 The children baptized on this occasion were all the offspring of Frenchmen and Sioux women Five of the number had for god-father Theophile Bruyère (Brughier), first white

papas, the Ogallalas and the Blackfeet Sioux. Still we had to traverse the plains where they range. On the third day, a party of Yanktonnais and Santees, who were in hiding behind a butte suddenly surprised us, but they were so far from meaning any harm that they loaded us with kindness, and after smoking the calumet of peace with us, furnished us provisions for the road. The next day we met several other

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resident of the Sioux City region, who settled near the mouth of the Big Sioux in 1849, marrying the daughter of War Eagle, a Sioux chief. The earliest recorded baptisms at Sioux City after it became a settlement (1855) were administered by Father De Smet in 1867, entries of them in the missionary's own hand being in the cathedral register (Mariana and Sophia Versani, August 4, 1867, are the first names recorded). The fourteenth baptism in Christian Hoecken's list of 1850 is dated Vermilion, December 15, and is that of Louis Benoit, two years and nine months old, son of Charles Larpenteur and an Assiniboin squaw. "Mr Charles Larpenteur, whose hospitality you often enjoyed when travelling in the desert to visit the Indian tribes, is now in charge of the post [Fort Vermilion] and he received us with all the goodness of a father. He procured for us all he could. May the Lord bless him, for he deserves it. I shall spend some days instructing and baptizing a score of people who live around here." Hoecken to De Smet, Sioux country, Fort Vermilion, December 11, 1850. CR, *De Smet*, 4 1250.

"I have left the Vermilion Post on the 3rd Sunday of Advent, came down as far as the mouth of the Big Sioux river where I met with Major Holton, Agent for the upper Missouri. He tried very much to prevail on me of accompanying him to the Little Missouri Post called Ft Pierre. He is to stay there probably to the middle of January before he will be able to start—God knows what kind of weather it will be then. He made me a present of a beautiful buffalo robe and told me if we established a mission there that he would contribute to it out of his own pocket \$100 per annum. Another replied, I have 3 children to send to it, I will give \$300 and so every one will do,—the one in money, the other in other things—each one according to his abilities. The Brules and the Yanton of the Sioux nations have said that the missionary would not starve, that they would bring him plenty of meat and buffalo robes to enable him to buy clothes for their children, which they would place under his care." Hoecken to Elet, December 23, 1850 (A).

The first priests known to have visited Nebraska were the chaplains of the so-called "Spanish caravan," massacred August 11, 1720, by Loup and Oto Indians within the confines of the state. Cf *Nebraska History and Record of Pioneer Days*, 4 1. Only one of the chaplains escaped. After these Spanish missionaries De Smet was apparently the first priest known to have visited Nebraska, relating somewhere that while attached to the Council Bluffs Mission (1838-1840) he said Mass on the west side of the Mississippi, on or near the site of Omaha. Moreover, he journeyed a considerable stretch through the state on his Oregon Trail trips of 1840 and 1841. But his earliest Nebraska baptisms (Fort Robidoux, Drips's Fort, Fort Kearney) belong to September, 1851. Father Hoecken baptized December 26, 1850, at Bellevue, Susanne, "daughter of Logan Fontanelle and an Omaha squaw, born February 8 of the past year, godfather, Mr Bruyere," as also Marie, another child of Fontanelle, born December 21, 1848. On December 27, also at Bellevue, was baptized Louis, "son of Joseph La Flèche and an Omaha squaw, born the middle of last May, god-father, Mr Bruyere."

parties who showed us the same friendliness and the same attentions, they shook hands with us and we smoked with them”<sup>90</sup> On October 11, in the course of the same trip, De Smet fell in with a band of Blackfoot Sioux. On this occasion occurred a well-known incident in his career. Twelve warriors of the tribe presented themselves before him with an uncommonly large buffalo robe, which they spread on the ground, at the same time inviting him to be seated. The missionary accepted the invitation. Scarcely, however, had he seated himself on the robe when the twelve warriors suddenly grasped its sides and corners and then lifting him from the ground, bore him off in triumph to the Sioux village where every honor was lavished upon him. The chief harangued the guest in his most eloquent vein: “Black-robe, this is the happiest day of our lives. Today for the first time we see among us a man who comes so near to the Great Spirit. Here are the principal braves of our tribe. I have bidden them to the feast that I have had prepared for you, that they may never lose the memory of so happy a day.” As no interpreter was at hand competent to render Father De Smet’s instruction into Sioux, he lost this opportunity of imparting to his auditors some little knowledge of the Gospel message. When he left the Indians to pursue his journey, he was accompanied by a son of the Sioux chief and two other young men of the tribe.<sup>91</sup> This same homeward journey of Father De Smet brought him past Fort Vermilion on the Missouri. Here he met a Santee war-party, just back from a scalping expedition against the Potawatomi of Council Bluffs. He upbraided the Santees for their cruelty and succeeded in making them thoroughly ashamed of themselves and ready for peace-terms with the Potawatomi.

The frequent meetings which De Smet thus came to have with the

<sup>90</sup> CR, *De Smet*, I 251

<sup>91</sup> CR, *De Smet*, I 251 *et seq.* At Westport, April 20, 1840, just before setting out on his first journey to the mountains De Smet baptized two children of Andrew Drips, chief of the American Fur Company expedition with which he travelled on this occasion. A record of these baptisms is in the *Sugar Creek Baptismal Register* (F). Thereafter records of De Smet’s church ministrations are missing until 1846, in which year he administered a number of baptisms in his descent of the Missouri, leaving behind him a memorandum of the same. These took place at Fort Union, October 12, Fort Pierre, November 4, Medicine Creek, November 5, Fort Lookout, November 6, and Fort Vermilion, November 13. At Fort Pierre he baptized “54 children of which number eleven were half-breeds.” At Medicine Creek he baptized among others Jane, daughter of Antoine Bouis, Alexis, son of Zephyr Antoine Rencontre, and Emilia, Paul, Susanne and Marie, children of Joseph Picotte. At Fort Lookout he baptized Maria Culbertson, aged 11, Fanny Cardinal Geant, aged eighteen years, six months, Ferdinand Cardinal Geant, aged eleven (god-father, Campbell), William and Zoe Cancellor (Kanzler), children of William Cancellor, and Louis and Honore Le Clair, children of Grand Le Clair. (A)

Sioux of the upper Missouri led up to the idea of a permanent mission on their behalf. With a view to ascertain its prospects of success he undertook a journey to the upper Missouri in the summer of 1848. Travelling by steamboat to Bellevue on the right bank of the Missouri, he went overland from that point to the mouth of the Niobrara and thence to Fort Pierre in the heart of the Sioux country. Here he met an Oglala chief, Red Fish, whose daughter had been carried into captivity by the Crows. The missionary, at the urgent entreaty of the chief, promised to pray for her deliverance, which occurred shortly after to the great joy of Red Fish. "The report flew quickly from village to village, and this coincidence that Divine Providence permitted for the good of the Ogalalas was to them a certain proof of the great power of Christian prayer, and will, I hope, contribute to confirm these poor Indians in their good dispositions."<sup>92</sup> On occasion of this meeting with the Oglala Father De Smet baptized six adults of the tribe, all of advanced age, but no infants. Among the Brulés he administered the sacrament to a large number of children, as also to a half-idiot boy, about fifteen years of age, whose pathetic attachment to the person of the missionary is recorded by him in one of the most engaging of his letters.<sup>93</sup> As a result of this trip of 1848 to the Sioux tribes of the upper Missouri De Smet came to realize the great difference in degree of religious susceptibility that separated them from his beloved Flatheads of the mountains. There was little in what he saw, so he reported, to encourage the missionary. Still, with Divine Providence to rely upon, he had hopes for the success of the enterprise and wrote in 1849 as though he expected to see the work taken in hand before the end of that very year.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> CR, *De Smet*, 2 631

<sup>93</sup> *Idem*, 2 632

<sup>94</sup> *Idem*, 2 635 "The Rev. Mr. De Smet, of the Catholic Church, is now [1848] on a visit to the Sioux, his plan is, if he can carry it out, to introduce among them a number of clergymen, in order, as far as practicable, to travel with them in their hunts, and exercise among them their ministerial functions. Taking into view the admitted influence of Catholic clergymen (black-gowns, as the Indians call them) over the Indians, such a course would have a most salutary effect in curbing and holding in check the untamed spirits of these wild Indians. Rev. Mr. De Smet is the great missionary pioneer of the Rocky Mountains, his high character, energy, and devotion to the improvement of the red man, should strongly recommend himself and his plans to the favorable consideration of the government. In the spring he intends establishing a mission among the Blackfoot Indians." Report of the secretary of war, 1848-49. Executive Doc. No. 1, p. 438. Cf. also *RCA*, 1849, p. 131, for an appeal made by Superintendent of Indian Affairs Mitchell, St. Louis, for government aid on behalf of De Smet's projected missions on the upper Missouri.

At the Great Council in 1851 two hundred and eighty children of the Brulé and Oglala Sioux were baptized by De Smet

They [the Oglala] besought me to explain baptism to them as several of them had been present when I baptized the half-blood children I complied with their request and gave them a lengthy instruction on its blessings and obligations All then entreated me to grant this favor to their infants The next day the ceremony took place, two hundred and thirty-nine children of the Ogalalas (the first of their tribe) were regenerated in the holy waters of baptism to the great joy and satisfaction of the whole nation I held daily conferences on religion, sometimes with one band of Indians, sometimes with another They all listened with great attention and unanimously expressed the wish to be supplied with Catholic missionaries <sup>95</sup>

The year following the Great Council De Smet in a letter to the Assiniboin trader, Edwin T Denig of Fort Union, assured him that the project of a mission in the upper Missouri country had by no means been abandoned Two years later, in 1854, he returned to the topic in a letter to the same friend <sup>96</sup> Again he wrote in 1855 to Denig "I hope I shall see you perhaps in the course of the next year Assure the Indians that the Black-robe has not forgotten them and try your best to prepare the way" <sup>97</sup> The following year he wrote to Joseph Rolette at Fort Union "Continue to encourage them [the Indians] I have little doubt that in the course of next spring either myself or some other Black-robe of my friends will leave St Louis for the Upper Missouri with the intention to carry out the long projected mission" <sup>98</sup> In 1858 De Smet, while on his way to Utah in the capacity of army chaplain, met thirty lodges of Oglala at Cottonwood Springs, "two days' march above Fort Kearney" "At their request I baptized all their children In 1851, at the Great Council on the Platte, I had brought them the same blessing They told me that a great number of their children had died since, carried off by epidemics which had raged among the nomadic tribes of the plains They are much consoled at the thought of the happiness which children obtain by holy baptism They know its high importance and appreciate it as the greatest favor which they can receive" <sup>99</sup> In

<sup>95</sup> *Idem*, 2 678

<sup>96</sup> *Idem*, 4 1482, 1492

<sup>97</sup> *Idem*, 4 1494

<sup>98</sup> *Idem*, 4 1497

<sup>99</sup> *Idem*, 2 722 De Smet's autograph register of his baptisms on the journey of 1851, which were 1856 in number, bears the caption, "List of persons baptized by me in my late journey among the Indians on the Upper Missouri and its tributaries addressed to the Right Revd Bishop Miege Vicar Apostolic of the Indian Territory

1862 Father De Smet went up the Missouri as far as Fort Benton, baptizing on this trip more than nine hundred infants and a great many

East of the Rocky Mountains" (A) The series begins June 29 at Medicine Creek and closes September 25 at Fort Kearney At Fort Pierre, July 2, there were twenty baptisms, among those receiving the sacrament being Samuel T Gilpin "I baptized on the same day (July 2) in the two kettle Band of the Sioux nation near Fort Pierre, at the request of two chiefs named Grand Mandan and Puckawagan Rouge, 162 little children under 7 years of age" Ten baptisms followed, July 7 at Fort Mandan or Ricaries (Arikari) "July 7, I baptized one hundred and eighty-six children belonging to the tribe of the Ricarie (Arikara) nation, of whom a great number died a month after having recd Baptism, of Cholera" On board the steamer St Ange, July 10, five children were baptized, among them Joseph and Marie Quatre Ours (Four Bears), "children of the great Minitree Chief" At Fort Union, July 20, there were eight baptisms of children, among them Nancy and Francisca Culbertson Baptisms followed at Harvey's Fort opposite the mouth of the Yellowstone, July 25, and "in the camp of L'Ours Barbouille," September 9 In the latter place the sacrament was conferred on fifty-six Indian children, as also on Louisa Kipp, aged two years, Henry St Pierre, two years, and Marguerite, a Sioux, six years and ten months These would seem to be the earliest recorded baptisms for Wyoming, at least none prior to this date are known to the writer Twenty-five baptisms are recorded for September 12, "at the mouth of the Horse Creek on the Platte River," the first of the series being that of Andrew Jackson Fitzpatrick, born October 8, 1850, god-father P J De Smet This was a son by an Indian squaw of Thomas Fitzpatrick, one of the commissioners presiding over the council Fitzpatrick himself appears as god-father to Joseph Tesson, baptized on September 14 While the council was in session at Horse Creek large numbers of Indian children received the sacrament "September 15 In the great camp of the Rapahos 305 children September 16 In the great camp of the Ogallalla Sioux 239 little children In the great camp of the Sheycannes 253 little children September 18 In the United camp of Brules and Osage [*sic*] Sioux 280 little children" Baptisms are also recorded in the course of De Smet's return journey from the council "September 24 I baptized at Fort Robidoux two children of Mr Robidoux and two children of persons engaged at the post (names lost) September 24 I baptized one child at Dripp's Fort September 25 On the borders of the Platte I baptized Louis Vasquez born July 7, 1847, MARIANA Vasquez, born 25 July 1849, Sara Ellen Vasquez, born 14 July 1851, children of Louis Vasquez and Narcissa, who on this day renewed their marriage vows in my presence Witness Alexander Gameau, Marquis Spencer" "September 25 at Fort K[e]arney, I baptized the twin children of Sergeant Fox God-father, Mignon" As far as can be ascertained, the above-mentioned marriage is the earliest Catholic one certified for Nebraska

A brief memorandum of baptisms administered by De Smet on the journey of 1858 is in the St Mary's (Kansas) *Baptismal Register*, Vol 11, 1851-1871 "1858 About June 17 at Mary-ville near Blue River two young daughters of Mr McClauskey and his wife of the Sioux Ogallalla band 14 July Ft Kearney 3 sons of Sergeant Butler, his wife (Irish), about 7, 5 and 3 years 12 July near Cottonwood Springs 35 infants of the Ogallalla tribe and band of the chief Titankakaioutaka or le Boeuf debout 17 July, 160 infants of Loup band of Pawnees The principal chiefs are le Petit Couteau and le cheval caille July 30, 3 children of Pierre Cajeux and his Kickapoux wife"



adults "of the sick and aged" <sup>100</sup> Some of these baptisms were among the Yankton, but he was unable to penetrate any distance into the Sioux country, as he had intended, the tribe being at the moment on the war-path. In 1863 he again ascended the Missouri to Fort Benton on a missionary excursion but owing to the continued hostile attitude of the Sioux failed to meet with the success he had expected. Yet the excursion was not fruitless, he administered baptism to more than five hundred persons, most of them Indian children <sup>101</sup> The next year he made still another journey up the Missouri, going as far as Fort Berthold and visiting near Fort Sully some Two Kettle and Yanktonnais Sioux, one hundred and sixty-four of whose infants he baptized. The Yankton chief known as Man Who Strikes the Ree begged for a resident missionary, a favor which De Smet could promise only with reserve <sup>102</sup> But these annual excursions into the Indian country, however productive of good results, were no adequate substitute for a permanent mission. Both Indians and government officials were appealing to De Smet to undertake such, but year after year he was finding his hands tied for lack of funds and

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<sup>100</sup> *Idem*, 2 784, 786 De Smet left St. Louis early in May, 1862, on the *Spread Eagle*, Charles P. Chouteau, Captain. On June 30 he was one of a party of eleven to visit the Great Falls of the Missouri. "Madam La Barge and Margaret Harkness, leaving the ambulance, ran to the point from which the first glimpse could be had and are the first white women to have seen the Great Falls of the Missouri." "Diary of James Harkness of the Firm of La Barge, Harkness and Company," *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana*, 2 350

<sup>101</sup> *Idem*, 2 788

<sup>102</sup> *Idem*, 3 826 De Smet's baptisms during his western trips of 1846, 1851, 1864, 1866, 1867 and 1868 were entered in the St. Mary's Mission (Kansas) *Baptismal Register*, Vol. 11, 1851-1871 (E). The entries for the four trips of the sixties are in his own hand. The baptisms for 1864, six hundred and twenty-three in number, run from May 3 (Marguerite, daughter of Antoine Plante and his Indian wife, "on his farm near Sioux City") to July 15 at Yankton Agency. Among the baptized were "5 children belonging to the scattered Winnebago tribe along the shores of Missouri River," and at Yankton city, May 16, Noel, Henry, Peter and Charles, children of Charles Picotte. "May 31, of the Blackfoot tribe and of the two Kettle Band I baptized one hundred and sixty children. The two tribes form portions of the great Dacotah nation. June 10 I baptized in their own permanent village on the banks of the Missouri 1916 miles above its mouth the young children and infants of the Hedatzas (*Gens de Saules*) [the Willow People], commonly called Gros Ventres and of the Mandan tribes to the number of two hundred and ninety-two. June 12 At the same place and village near Fort Berthold I baptized one hundred and three little children belonging to the tribe of the Riccaries [Arikara]. July 9 On board steamer Yellowstone, Emma, about 6 months old, d. of Hodgkins and his Sioux wife Fanny four months old d. of agent Vaughn. July 11 Yellowstone steamer about Little Cheyenne River baptized Mary about 25 years of age of the Upper Blackfoot tribe. Same day she was married by me to Robert Meldrum, Indian trader. Witnesses and sponsors of Mrs. Meldrum were Mr. Roelotte and Mr. Culbertson."

personnel In February, 1866, Brigadier General Alfred Sully, special Indian commissioner, made a definite proposal to him for the opening of two missions on the upper Missouri

Knowing the great interest you take in the welfare of the Indians, I write you in their behalf that you may interest yourself and such as may so be disposed to assist in the establishment of religious missions in the Indian Country

I would suggest as a commencement such institutions be established, one at the [?] village, Fort Berthold, another at the Yankton Agency, Dakota Territory I would recommend the establishment of others as soon as the means could be procured In making this request I am only asking what the Indians at these two above mentioned places have repeatedly requested me to do Their predilections are decidedly in favor of the Catholic religion to the exclusion of any other As I do not profess myself to be a Catholic, I can speak of the great good they have done towards civilizing the savage without fear of being accused of prejudice In fact, I can say that the priests are the only missionaries I have ever seen who have been successful in improving the condition of the Indians to any great extent and I have had many opportunities of judging, not only in this country and California, but in Mexico and parts of South America I attribute this in part to the solemnity of the ceremonies of the Church, but in a great measure to the example set the Indian by the priests, their self-denial and devotion and their mode of living, which causes the Indian to believe them something superior to the rest of mankind Among the Rees [Arikara], Gros Ventres and Mandans, who have their villages at Fort Berthold, as you know, there is a great disposition to become civilized The establishment of a mission at that point would not only be a great benefit to the Indians, but to the country, for though their number is but small, I suppose all told some 4,000 souls, they would in a few years form a settlement in that far-off region which would be a benefit to travellers to and from Montana I would propose maintaining there the same military protection they have at present, one company of infantry, until the Mission got firmly established and able to take care of itself The Fathers should be, if possible, French, the Sisters also, on account of the half-breeds who live with the Indians being French

The other point for a mission, Yankton Agency [near Fort Randall], is much further down the Missouri River and in the settlements These Indians, Yankton Sioux, have made a treaty with our Government, by which, for several years, they are to receive a large annuity, a part of which is set aside for the instruction of the children and religious improvement of the Indians I have known these Indians well ever since 1857 and I can safely state they are in a bad, if not worse condition now than they were then The children have no schooling or any instruction whatever I doubt if they have ever had a school among them I would suggest that this part of the annuity for school purposes be paid over to a Catholic Mission estab-

lished at that point. If the Government would allow this, a few years would see these much imposed upon Indians partly civilized and happy<sup>103</sup>

At St. Louis, March 13, the Jesuit missionary board gave General Sully's proposal what approval and encouragement it could without actually accepting it. "It was highly approved and will be looked to," Father De Smet wrote to Sully. "Owing to our own numerous establishments and the great want of personal means the design could not be immediately acted upon"<sup>104</sup>. In the summer of 1866 De Smet was again on the upper Missouri, where in the neighborhood of Fort Sully he met numerous Sioux of the various tribes, among them Yankton, Yanktonnais, Brulés, Oglala, Two-Kettles, Santees and Sioux Blackfeet. On July 6 he baptized the head chief of the Yanktons, Pananniapapi or Man that Strikes the Ree, an old acquaintance of the missionary, who had known him since 1844. On the 26th of the same month the Yankton chiefs, including Man Who Strikes The Ree and Jumping Thunder, affixed their marks to a petition addressed to De Smet for a mission and school. "We want no other but you and your religion. The other [non-Catholic teacher] wants us to learn how to read and sing in the Indian language, and which we all know how to do in our own way. What we want is to learn the American language and their ways. We know enough of the Indian ways"<sup>105</sup>.

<sup>103</sup> Sully to De Smet, February 28, 1866 (A)

<sup>104</sup> CR, *De Smet*, 4 1279

<sup>105</sup> CR, *De Smet*, 4 1287. The following entries occur in De Smet's record of baptisms in the course of his upper Missouri journey of 1866: "April 30, 1866—on board the steamer Ontario Mrs. Mary Tilton, w. fe of the editor of the Montana Post, Virginia City, g [god] mother Mrs. Elizabeth Meagher. May 5 Yankton Agency Rosalie about 1 yr of age, d [daughter] of F. B. Chardon and his Sioux wife—g f [god-father] Alexi[s] Giou. Maria Tshapa (Beaver) about 40 yrs of age, of the Sioux nation, wife to Alexi[s] Giou, g f F. B. Chardon (Co. Judge)." "Baptized large number of children belonging to united camp of Indians (200 lodges) of Yanktons, Yantonnais, Brules, Ogallalas, Deux Chaudières (Two Kettle) Santes and Piedsnoirs Sioux" (Charles Primeau was god-father to all these). "May 21, Fort Berthold Virginia (b. 25 June '65) d. of Frederick Gerard and his Riccarce wife, g f W. Conkey, g m Elizabeth Meagher. May 25 Fort Union Nicolas b. Febr. 8, 1866, son of Philip Alvarez and his Assinaboine wife bapt. numb. Assinaboine children, g f to all, Theodore L'Espagnol. May 30 on board Ontario bapt. Marie (7) and Pierre (5) children of Little Wolf, Crow chief, g m Elizabeth Meagher. June 7 Fort Benton I baptized Joseph born in Sept. 1863, legitimate son of Cyprian Mott and Meline his wife. At Fort Berthold June 18, 1866 to end of month I baptized 147 children belonging to the three United Bands of Indian Riccarees, Minitarees and Mandans, g f Pierre Garrot. On board of steamer Minor below Fort Rice I baptized Dominic about 2 yrs old s. of Franc La Framboise and his Sioux wife. July 2, in an island of the Missouri 2 children of Benjamin Cadotte and his Sioux wife. July 6 [Yankton Agency?] I baptized Pan-

In 1867 De Smet was again a visitor to the Yanktons in their camp near Fort Randall "The chiefs, with Pananniapapı (Man who Strikes the Ree) at their head, begged me to grant them a mission and establish schools in the tribe. The head chief, a good many adults and all the children of this tribe have been baptized"<sup>106</sup> None of the St. Louis Jesuits could be spared at the moment for a mission among the Sioux. A plan to invite two Fathers of the English province of Jesuits to take the work in hand came under consideration, but it was concluded not to involve any of the European Jesuits in what might prove an abortive undertaking. In 1868, on the occasion of his remarkable peace expedition to the hostile Sioux bands encamped on the Yellowstone above the mouth of the Powder River, De Smet on his journey thence to Fort Rice baptized over sixty children and five adults. Near Fort Sully other Sioux children received the sacrament at his hands. Finally, in the summer of 1870 he undertook in company with Father Ignatius Panken a journey to the Grand River country in what is now North Dakota to prospect for a Sioux mission in that quarter. A letter of the provincial, Father Coosemans, to the General alludes to the circumstance

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naniapapı or L'Homme qui frappe le Riz great chief of the Yankton tribe and I baptized Anna Mazaitzashanawe his wife under the patronage of S. Pieter and S. Anne. Peter is about 66 years of age, Anne about 50, g. f. P. J. De Smet. I baptized Alec Rencontre about 25 yrs. of age son of Zephyr Rencontre and Lucy his wife about 25 yrs. of age g. f. of both Alexi[s] Giou." Alexis Giou was Yankton interpreter "I took up my lodging in the house of the excellent interpreter of the nation, Mr. Alexis Giou, who loaded me with kindness and friendliness." CR, *De Smet*, 3: 867

<sup>106</sup> At the Yankton Agency, May 7, 1867, was baptized Francis, born in November, 1866, son of Chardon (Christian name not given) and a Blackfoot Sioux mother. Large numbers of Indian children were baptized. Thus, May 7-11, at the Yankton Agency, seventy-one children of the bands of Pananniapapı (Yankton chief), La Belle Rade and La Vache de Medicine, May 19, in camp of Le Tonnerre qui Saute and camp of the Brulé Tetons about one hundred and ten children, May 21-22, in camp of the Zuan [*sic*] Teton chief, some eighty-one, May 27, in camp of Brulés, Deux Chaudières (Two Kettle) and Yantonnais, about one hundred and thirty-five, May 31, at old Fort Sully, about two hundred and twenty-nine children of the Two Kettle Band, Blackfeet Sioux, Mimicanjous, Sans Arcs, Yantonnais, July 4, at old Fort Buford or Union in camp of Tourniquet, Assiniboin chief, about forty-five children. A great many Sioux children received baptism at De Smet's hands in the course of the journey of 1868. At Fort Rice, May 28, Uncpapakā (Hunkpapa) and others. May 29, Camp of Two Bears, Yantonnais, Sisseton, a large number of children. "June 25. On my way from the Uncpapa hostile camp baptized about 54 children. June 28. baptized Paul Zetemenisapa (Black All Over)." "July 3. Fort Rice, baptized Old Owl orator of the Uncpapa camp about 65 yrs. old and his wife and La femme qui regarde en sortant, about 60 yrs. of age. July 4. Fort Rice, baptized wife of Major Galpin 49 years old. July 8, 1868. Near Fort Sully in the United Camp of Big Mandan, Yellow Hawk, and Red Fish large number of children."

I have just received a letter from Father De Smet from the Indian country. He is now on the way to St. Louis where he hopes to arrive before the 15th of August. He complained of his health and of a loss of strength. Father Panken whom I sent along with him as companion on this last trip has been a great consolation to him. They succeeded in doing much good among the Indians and among the soldiers in the Forts, by whom they were well received everywhere. For many years Father De Smet has wished to see a permanent mission established among these poor people deprived of all religious aid except what he has been able to render them on his annual visits. He undertook this trip more particularly to look over the ground and see when and how this mission ought to be commenced.<sup>107</sup>

Returning to St. Louis early in August from what was his very last visit to the Indians, Father De Smet wrote thence to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Parker:

At my return to St. Louis in the beginning of last month I gave an exposé to my Superior and his consultors of my visit and mission among the various Sioux tribes. They readily approved and resolved on the establishment of a mission among the aforesaid tribes, without deciding on the locality. During the consultation a letter was read from General Stanley, in which he advised, stating his motives, establishing the mission in Peoria Bottom, where General Harney raised buildings fifteen miles below Fort Sully and where the little band of Yellow Hawk habitually resides (north side of the Missouri River).

I will here state that, personally, I am in favor of establishing the mission on the Grand river reservation from the fact that it will bring the missionaries in closer contact with a greater number of Indians and give them more facility to visit the hitherto hostile bands in the interior. I was assured while at Grand River that the bottom lands four miles above and six miles below the agency are susceptible to cultivation with plenty of timber and good grazing around. My proposition will, no doubt, meet with the approbation of my Superior and his board of whom I am a member.

My health has been rather feeble for some time past owing to the excessive summer heat in the upper country. I trust the coming cool weather will again brace me up and prepare me for the new Sioux mission, which for years has been dear to my heart.<sup>108</sup>

As he had expected, De Smet's recommendation as to the location of the proposed mission was adopted by the missionary-board in St.

<sup>107</sup> Coosemans à Beckx, July 27, 1870 (AA)

<sup>108</sup> CR, *De Smet*, 4:1297. "I have always favored putting the mission on the east bank of the Missouri, but if it be decided to commence it at once on the west bank, the place known as Isaak's [?] Wood Yard—30 miles beyond Grand River and fifteen miles below Battle Creek is the best place. The timber, farming land and hay are all good at that place." Stanley to De Smet, January 20, 1871 (A)

Louis, made up of the provincial, Father Coosemans, and his consultants "This year," read the minutes of the board for January 27, 1871, "a new mission will be established, *Deo volente*, among the Sioux on Grand River." At a meeting of the board in March the names of fathers to be assigned to the mission were proposed. Fathers Hoecken, Panken, Driessen, Van den Bergh, De Meester were mentioned, Father Hoecken to be superior. In the outcome Father Francis Kuppens was to go as superior with Father Peter De Meester as assistant. The commissioner of Indian affairs showed himself friendly to the project, requesting De Smet to name some acceptable person for appointment by the president of the United States as Indian agent at Grand River, "it seeming very desirable that any agent sent by the Government to the care of those Indians should be in full harmony and sympathy with the local missionary or teacher."<sup>109</sup> De Smet's first suggestion for the position was Dr. William F. Cody, a person other than the Buffalo Bill of later days. De Smet was not sanguine over the success of the mission and wrote in this sense to General Sully.

In the mid-June of 1871 Fathers Kuppens and De Meester, commissioned to set the Sioux mission on foot, arrived at the house of the brothers Louis and Adrian Egat, two Frenchmen resident at Grand River, Dakota Territory. Thence on the following day they were conducted by Louis Egat to the camp of a Great Yankton chief, Two Bears, where they proposed to stay a few days to learn something more of the Sioux language and look over the ground of their future labors. "Permission to stay awhile with his people," Father Kuppens relates, "was politely but coldly granted me and I was introduced into the lodge of my host. This mansion I saw gaudily decorated with paintings of bears, eagles, buffaloes, tomahawks, pipes, houses, men, etc. After smoking a pipe which passed from mouth to mouth according to the rule of Indian etiquette, the chief deigned to explain to us that all his people had gone forth from the camp to prepare for a solemn dance in honor of the Sun, that there was not a single squaw left to unsaddle my horse, so he proposed that we should all remount and ride together to the scene of the celebration." Father Kuppens then enters on a minute description of the gruesome dancing ceremony he was permitted to witness. His account concludes:

At length, the most painful operation begins. While the dancers are so exhausted that they seem momentarily on the point of falling down, the chief medicine man steps forth and with a knife cuts two gashes on the back of each one's shoulder blade, then thrusts his fingers into the gashes and passes a string through the flesh, to which he fastens a dried buffalo head,

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<sup>109</sup> *Idem*, 4: 1298

which dangles from the shoulders of the nine remaining dancers. Now they are to dance again till the weight of the heads has caused the strings to cut through the bleeding flesh from which they are suspended. What a relief I felt when at last the heads one after another had fallen to the ground! But all was not over yet. They are now cut on the upper arm and with a rope ten feet long fastened similarly to the tree. At about 2 o'clock P. M. they had danced themselves loose and the ceremony was concluded. Alas that all this suffering is not undergone to gain an eternal crown! If converted these men would not shrink back at hearing these words, "the Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away."<sup>110</sup>

Fathers Kuppens and De Meester remained but a few weeks at Grand River. In August they were back in St. Louis after meeting and lodging in the same tepee with the celebrated Sioux chief, Sitting Bull. Major J. C. Connor, the agent at Grand River, wrote in appreciation of the work they were carrying on at the time he penned his report of September 9, 1871. The following year he declared that nothing in the way of cultural and religious improvement could be effected among the grown up members of the tribe. The only hope lay with the children, who under the influence of patient discipline and education, could be weaned away from the savage ways of their elders.<sup>111</sup> But a Catholic school, it would seem, was not for the moment a practicable proposition.

Before he had left St. Louis in 1870 to visit the Indian country for the last time De Smet had expressed a wish that in the event of his death in the course of the journey or of failure to open the projected Sioux mission, the money collected by him for that purpose should be applied to an object which he designated.<sup>112</sup> At his death three years later this fund amounted to six thousand dollars. No instructions of his in regard to the disposition to be made of the fund seem to have been known to Father Coosemans's successor as provincial, Father Thomas O'Neil, who was of the opinion that as it had been got together with a view to the Indians, it should be expended directly on their behalf and he advised accordingly that the entire sum be transferred to the Rocky Mountain Missions. The project of a Sioux mission, De Smet's dream of a life-time, was thus not realized in his own day. But within a decade or so of his death German Jesuits with headquarters at Buffalo succeeded in establishing Sioux missions on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud agencies in South Dakota, which have since

<sup>110</sup> *WL*, I 110

<sup>111</sup> *RCIA*, 1871, no. 92, 1872, no. 28. Major Connor seems to have owed his position to Father De Smet. There is extant a letter from General Harney to De Smet requesting him to support Connor's application for the post. (A)

<sup>112</sup> Coosemans à Beckx, June 15, 1870. (AA)

developed into the largest Catholic Indian schools in the United States. They carry out effectively the program of religious and social service cherished by De Smet on behalf of the Siouan tribes and they do so on a scale far more elaborate than would have been possible for him

A few Sioux who met De Smet on his excursions to the upper Missouri probably yet survive and among the various bands of that once powerful tribe his name is still a familiar one, around which a body of story and reminiscence, partly authentic and partly apocryphal, has grown up

#### § 5 EXCURSIONS TO THE UPPER MISSOURI

In the last decade or so of his life the missionary zeal of De Smet as has been pointed out, found its principal and in fact only outlet as far as field-work was concerned in the journeys he made almost every year to the upper Missouri country. The nature of these journeys is explained by Father Keller in a letter to the Father General

Father De Smet will undertake a trip to the more distant missions with a view to meet the missionaries of that region and deliver to them whatever he has got together for their use. He prepares for this annual trip by buying various things for the use of those Fathers, then he goes up the Missouri by steamboat as far as navigation reaches and there either stores with reliable persons what he has brought along for the missionaries or else delivers the material to the missionaries themselves, who come to meet him. And so descending the river in the same boat he returns home after an absence of three or four months. Meantime, on the river banks as he goes up or down as also at the place where navigation stops, he visits numerous Indian villages and gatherings, distributing presents and baptizing the children. As a matter of fact, this trip is not so necessary that it cannot be omitted, since its principal object, which is to fetch goods to the missionaries, could be equally attained by putting the goods in charge of the captain of the boat, who would either deliver them to the missionaries or else store them in a place whence the latter could afterwards have them transported. But as long as Father De Smet is eager to put up every year with a journey of this sort, I should think that he ought to be sent, especially as he can at the same time gain a number of souls for heaven and procure for himself the recreation he finds necessary.<sup>113</sup>

This opinion of Father Keller in regard to De Smet's yearly expedition up the Missouri was also shared by Father Murphy, who

<sup>113</sup> Keller ad Beckx, April 21, 1863 (AA) "I hope Almighty God will grant you perfect safety and great prosperity during your trip. May you be in His hands the instrument of the salvation of many souls. Do all you can, dear Father, for the good of these poor people whilst you are with them, in the way of instructing, baptizing, marrying." Coosemans to De Smet, April 9, 1863 (A)



thought that circumstances warranted him in allowing to the veteran missionary this periodical outlet for his energy and zeal. On the other hand, Father Sopranis, the Visitor, looked with disfavor on these excursions nor did he think that the reason chiefly alleged by De Smet to justify them, namely, the numerous baptisms performed, was a valid one. Moreover, strange to say, he had been assured by Fathers Congiato, Gazzoli and Hoecken that these excursions to the Indians had become a hindrance rather than a help to the missions, though in what way is not revealed. Sopranis would therefore have the General instruct Murphy to hold De Smet in St. Louis and have him attend to the business of the vice-province, adding that Murphy had De Smet for assistant and reposed a great deal of confidence in him.<sup>114</sup> In the end Father Murphy's view prevailed and, with the approval of the General, De Smet continued his periodic visits to the upper Missouri which, as a matter of fact, were on more than one occasion undertaken chiefly in deference to government request.

To baptize in numbers the children of heathen parents leaving more or less to chance their future upbringing as Catholics is not the approved practice of the Church. That De Smet did so is to be explained on the ground that, infant mortality being very high among the Indians, probably the majority of the children baptized by him might be expected to die before attaining to fully conscious life. "The life which the Indians lead," he wrote to Coosemans from the Yankton Agency, May 15, 1867, "is a very hard and painful one and the climate is exceedingly rigorous. A great number of their little children succumb before the ordinary age of reason, not being able to resist strain, wretchedness and baffling diseases, for there are no remedies among them. It is a real feast day for me when I baptize these poor little innocents. I have a very intimate conviction that baptism has opened heaven to a very great number of children whom I have had the happiness and consolation of baptizing in my long excursions and missions among the Indian tribes."<sup>115</sup> De Smet always had a great trust in the power of these little recruits for heaven to help him and, after the example of St. Francis Xavier, frequently implored their aid. This he did with particular earnestness in the days immediately preceding his death. To Father Coosemans he sent from the Yankton Agency a passage copied from a letter of St. Francis Xavier, adding that he was at pains to put it into practice. "Among other intercessions we invoke that of the children whom I have baptized and whom God in His infinite mercy has called to him before they have tarnished the robe of their

<sup>114</sup> Sopranis ad Beckx, February, 1862 (AA)

<sup>115</sup> De Smet à Coosemans, May 15, 1867 (AA)

innocence I believe they are to the number of a thousand and more. I invoke them to obtain the grace of doing in this land of exile and misery what God wills and in the manner He wills it ”

The journal of De Smet's Missouri River trip of 1867 notes repeatedly the baptisms of Indian children along the way. The register which accompanies the journal records only the given or Christian name conferred by the missionary on the infants at their entrance into the Church. At Fort Thompson, May 27, one hundred and sixty and more received the sacrament. "They [the Sioux] were very attentive to the religious instructions they received. Having spoken on the necessity and benefits of infant baptism and of all the dangers the children are exposed to, principally from sickness, the chiefs harangued their various bands and the mothers hastened to present to me their little ones to the number of over one hundred and sixty. The ceremonies of baptism lasted till evening. This has been a day of great consolation to me and I trust shall be long remembered and prove very beneficial to the Indians." On May 31, also at Fort Thompson, there were numerous baptisms. "This day, at the breaking up of the Great Council the mothers with their infants were awaiting me and I regenerated one hundred and seventy four of their little children in the holy waters of baptism." <sup>116</sup> The Indians, however, were not alone in sharing the benefits of Father De Smet's ministry on these missionary journeys. Not a few Catholic families of whites were settled here and there along the upper Missouri in the neighborhood of the forts and among them baptisms and marriages were administered. Moreover, government troops stationed at the forts included numerous Catholics in their number and these were privileged to have the services of a Catholic priest. "May 28th, I said Mass late in the morning and gave an instruction at Fort Thompson. The garrison is principally composed of Irish, Germans and French, all Catholics. It was the first visit they had received from a priest. Accordingly a good number made haste to profit by my presence to approach the sacraments." <sup>117</sup> On board the *Graham*, 249 feet in length, "a floating palace and the largest boat that has ever come up the Upper Missouri," De Smet found himself in company with a large detachment of soldiers. "My quality of envoy extraordinary of the Government carries with it the title of Major, strangely mated, it must be owned, with that of Jesuit. Still, it must be said in its behalf that it gives me readier access among the soldiers, a great many of whom are Catholics. I gave them, not as a Major, but as a priest, all my spare moments. Sunday, I said Mass in public, in the spacious ladies' cabin,

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<sup>116</sup> Ms. journal (A)

<sup>117</sup> CR, 3 875.

and every day I offered the holy sacrifice in my private state-room, with the consolation of being able to distribute holy communion to several. I found myself conducting a small mission on board, my days were past in doing the catechism and instructing and confessing the soldiers, who hastened to come before me. As I went along I baptized a lady and her children”<sup>118</sup>

De Smet's last upper Missouri trip was in 1870 when he went with Father Panken to Grand River to prospect for his long-contemplated Sioux mission.

The Indians of the Spanish Southwest were not among those evangelized by the middlewestern Jesuits. But attempts were made in the fifties to interest the latter in the Indians named and the correspondence incident on the attempts brings out interesting data. Beginning with 1852, Bishop Lamy of Santa Fe made repeated appeals to St. Louis and even to Rome for priests to work among the aborigines of his diocese. Probably the fact that he had been a pupil in a Jesuit school, Father Murphy, vice-provincial at St. Louis, 1851-1856, having been an instructor of his in France, made him feel that he had a special claim on the Society's attention. "An amiable and holy prelate," Murphy described him to the General, and "devoted to the Society"<sup>119</sup> Lamy's diocese numbered one hundred thousand Catholics, ten thousand of them being Indians. He appealed to Father Roothaan.

To administer the sacraments to so many of the faithful scattered over an immense territory, I have only a dozen priests and I do not think I can rely even on all of these. We have in the same territory an Indian tribe whom it would be easy to bring under the banner of the cross if we had a number of good missionaries, men of God, who would seek only the good of souls and the glory of our Divine Master. I have had long conversations with Father De Smet at the college of St. Louis where the Fathers have extended to me and my party the most generous hospitality. He [De Smet] has a particular grace for the conversion of the Indians. Two tribes, the Comanches and Navajos, number 10,000 together and are ready for the harvest. And so I entreat you for God's glory and the salvation of souls, do all in your power to send some of your Fathers to a field where the harvest is already so ripe, but is being lost for lack of workers.<sup>120</sup>

In a letter of February 1, 1852, to Father Roothaan, Lamy had asked for the Spanish-speaking Fathers De Blicck and Druyts. De Blicck was not available, being in his theological studies at Georgetown, and Druyts as president of St. Louis University was not easily

<sup>118</sup> *Idem*, 3 881

<sup>119</sup> Murphy à Roothaan, November 12, 1875 (AA)

<sup>120</sup> Lamy à Roothaan, July 29, 1852 (AA)

to be spared. Though Father Murphy could not supply the aid the Vicar-apostolic of New Mexico was begging for, he was desirous that the field be accepted. "What a fine field for our Spanish Fathers," he wrote March 3, 1852, to Roothaan. "No Rosas, no pragmatic sanction of his Catholic Majesty." In 1854 Lamy, passing through St. Louis on his way to Santa Fe with a party of five French and Spanish priests and three deacons, renewed his petition for the services of Fathers De Blicke and De Smet. De Blicke was thought by Murphy and his council to be unsuited physically and otherwise for the hard missionary life of the Spanish Southwest. Of De Smet Murphy said "I should indeed be very reluctant for Father De Smet to leave me since I need his services constantly, he himself is of the opinion that if he must eventually leave here, he ought to labor for the Indians of our own territory."<sup>121</sup> In 1855 Father Machebeuf, Lamy's vicar-general, indited a long letter to Father Beckx from Florissant, where he was awaiting an opportunity to travel back to Santa Fe. He had already made three appeals to Father Murphy but without result and was now about to return with four Loretto nuns who were to join their sisters in Santa Fe. He had learned from Father Gleizal that the Spanish Jesuits had recently been expelled from Loyola in Spain by an anti-clerical government and he pleaded with the General to assign him some of their number to work among the Indians and whites of New Mexico. He offered them a parish in Santa Fe, another one in Zamí (?) near the Navajo, a property "two leagues in length" situated some five leagues from Santa Fe, finally, there were good prospects for a college. Machebeuf's appeal was made in the name of Bishop Lamy, but it met the same fate as the previous one. Later, in 1861, the Bishop addressed himself to the Visitor, Father Sopranis, asking for priests and repeating the offer of an extensive property five leagues from Santa Fe. "We should need not fewer than four or five Spanish-speaking Fathers." All Sopranis could do was to forward the petition to the Father General, as it was impossible for the overburdened vice-province to take on additional tasks. Happily, in 1862 Lamy received aid, temporary though it was, from the California Jesuits.

At a still later date, 1867, a group of Italian Jesuits arrived at Santa Fe to lay the foundations of the New Mexico-Colorado Mission. With them on their journey over the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico was Father De Blicke, the same whose services as a Spanish-speaking priest had been solicited by Bishop Lamy as early as 1852. He was to spend some nine months in the latter's jurisdiction in the capacity of missionary-preacher. We find this reference to him in a letter of Father

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<sup>121</sup> Murphy ad Beckx, September 14, 1854 (AA)

Machebeuf, April 14, 1868 "The celebrated missionary, Father De Blicke came to Denver, over a month ago from Santa Fe, where he had preached several missions and retreats. He gave a mission in our principal mountain parish where I was with him for a week, and he began one here in Denver on Friday of Passion Week. Unfortunately he was taken sick on the third day of the mission." A week later than the date of this letter, Machebeuf started from Denver for his consecration as Vicar-apostolic of Colorado and Utah leaving Fathers De Blicke and Matthonet in charge of the only parish then in the town.<sup>122</sup> The party of missionaries, De Blicke among them, and Loretto nuns with Bishop Lamy at their head which journeyed over the Santa Fe Trail in the summer of 1867 was attacked by Indians at the crossing of the Arkansas, one of the nuns dying of fright.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> W. J. Howlett, *Life of the Right Rev. Joseph P. Machebeuf, D.D., Pioneer Priest of Ohio, First Bishop of Denver* (Pueblo, Col., 1908), p. 337.

<sup>123</sup> *History of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth* (Kansas City, 1898), p. 105.