

Primary Source

On Indian Removal – State of Morals

While Indian removal enjoyed wide support among Americans, especially in the South and West, it had many opponents as well. One of the most vocal critics of removal was Jeremiah Evarts (1781-1831), a Christian missionary who had worked for years to “civilize” Native Americans through the adoption of Christianity and agriculture. In 1829 and 1830 Evarts wrote a number of influential newspaper and magazine essays arguing that removal violated binding Indian treaties and ignored the extent to which the Southern tribes had adapted themselves to white civilization. The following excerpt is taken from a pamphlet containing an expanded version of an anti-removal essay that Evarts wrote for the January 1830 issue of the Boston American Monthly Magazine. In it, Evarts quotes from a pair of documents that demonstrate, in his opinion, that efforts to “civilize” the Southern tribes were succeeding, contrary to what advocates of removal were suggesting.

The following is extracted from a report by the missionaries in 1828.

“That the Cherokees are rapidly advancing in civilization is acknowledged by every one. Six years ago, a large proportion of the parents of our children came to the annual examination of the schools, poorly clad, and generally dirty; but at an examination in 1826, when near 200 people attended, all without exception, were well clothed and apparently clean. Many of the Cherokees around us, may be said to be good farmers. One man, the last year, tilled about 100 acres. Some have been successful in raising tolerable crops of wheat.”

In August 1829 the teacher of the school at the Brainerd Station writes thus.

“During the last year, I think the children have made greater proficiency than during any year previous. The examination of the schools was attended on the 5th inst. by upwards of 100 persons, many of whom were from among the most respectable in the nation, and were able to judge of the attainments of the scholars. All were gratified so far as I can

learn; and there is no doubt but the schools are regarded with much more interest by the people now, than formerly. We hope that the instruction given to the young, will, in many instances have a happy influence on the minds of the parents. The school also brings the people more within the sound of the Gospel, and gives us more influence.”

“*State of Morals.*—The moral condition of the Cherokees is certainly improving. Temperance Societies are forming, and men of influence and authority are using the power vested in them to promote morality. A case occurred last spring, where one of the judges of the circuit court, on finding the air in the court house strongly impregnated with whiskey, directed his sheriff to follow certain suspected persons to their haunt in the woods, and destroy the whiskey. He succeeded, and was in the act of pouring it off on the ground, as the men appeared. By the same judge six men were fined Fifty Dollars each for gambling, and one was fined for profaneness.”

From reports at the same period it appears that on the first of July 1828 there were at the same station 19 members of the church, including the mission family. On the first of July 1829 there were 34; of whom 19 were native members.

Source: Jeremiah Evarts, *The Removal of the Indians . . . and An Exhibition of the Advancement of the Southern Tribes, in Civilization and Christianity* (Boston: Peirce and Williams, 1830), 63.