II

The Opinions of George Croghan on the American Indian

In 1777 Dr. William Robertson, King's historiographer for Scotland and principal of the University of Edinburgh, published one of his epic works, *The History of America*. In his own words those two magnificent volumes contained "an account of the discovery of the New World, and of the progress of the Spanish arms and colonies there." But his original interest and plans had been of broader scope, and it is interesting to note that he expressly acknowledges the assistance of two Protestant missionaries who from their experiences with the Five Nations had furnished answers to his queries concerning the Indians.

Recently a copy of his list of Indian questions has been uncovered among the papers of George Croghan in the Cadwalader Collection. With it are Croghan's answers and a letter from Alexander White, prominent Virginia lawyer and legislator, which explains how the list came to Croghan's hand. All three of these papers are here published through the courtesy of the owners. For convenience in comparison queries and answers have been integrated. It remains doubtful whether or not Croghan's answers ever reached the celebrated Dr. Robertson. If they did it must be admitted they were given little weight as his *History* more often than not expresses variant views.

Croghan was a notable colonial fur trader and land speculator. His appointment as deputy superintendent of Indian affairs under Sir William Johnson was well merited by his intimate knowledge of that field. Few could rival his experience among the Indians of the Ohio country. Some years after his death in 1782 his personal papers were turned over to General Thomas Cadwalader, the attorney for his estate. For one hundred and thirty-five years they remained in the successive law offices occupied by the Cadwaladers until their eventual removal in 1939 to The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

N.B.W.
A letter docketed "A Letter & Queries Proposed by Dr. Robertson"

Winchester 30th Augt. 1773

Sir

A letter from a Person entirely unknown might require an apology. I have none to offer but what arises from the subject. You have no doubt heard that the celebrated Dr. Robertson of Edinburgh is engaged in writing a History of America. The original of the inclosed Queries he transmitted to Doctor Richd. Brooke of Prince George County Maryland, with a Request to procure answers to them. It was by accident they came to my hand. I know of no man so capable as yourself to give satisfaction on the Subject, and you must be sensible how interesting it will be to the Publick that so masterly a hand as Doctr. Robertson should have every possible assistance in composing a work of so great Expectations as his History of America. If you will transmit your answer to me in Winchester, or the above named Doctor Brooke it will be carefully forwarded. I shall only observe that it is probable he may have informations from different Parts of America, therefore it might be proper to mention the Tribes in which particular customs and manners are observed, to prevent the appearance of contradiction. I am

Sir

Your most humble Servt.

Alex White

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"Queries proposed by Doctor Robertson"

(With George Croghan’s Answers)

1st. Is the bodily Constitution of the Indians as vigorous and Robust as that of the Inhabitants of the Ancient Continent?

Its Difficult to Judge whether the North american Indians are more or less vigorous & Robust then ye ancients. Butt its Gneraly alow’d. they Can Carry Greater burdens on thire backs, then the Europians, & bear more hardships in traveling & hunger, as to hard Labor they have a great Dislike to itt.
2\textsuperscript{d}ly Is the beardless countenance and the want of hair on every part of the body but the head natural to all the Indians?

as to the want of Hair on thire bodys its prity Gineral, they acustome themselves to pluck itt out when young, boath males & femials, yett I have observed Numbers of old Men of Diferant Tribes, w\textsuperscript{h} have beards when they Leve of plucking, & have hard that Some of ye famiels have hair on Some part of ye body Likewise.

3 Are the Indians defective in the Animal Passions for their females, and are they inferior to the People of the Ancient Continent both in desire and ability?

the Indians are No way Deflective in the Animal Passions for thire feamales, & have as Great Desiers and abilitys I blive as any Nations can have, butt they have a Natural Modiesty in thire behaver which prevents thire Desier being Easily Discoverd & phaps they have more affection for thire Children & Relations then any other Nations on Earth.

4\textsuperscript{th} Have their Songs and Dances any Reference to Love and Galantry?

thire Songs when Danceing is Intierly on Love & Galentry,—butt thire Warr Songs is a kind of prayer—adressed to the Good & Great Sperit, to request his aid & asistance that they may Conquer thire Enemys.

5\textsuperscript{th} Do their common discourse relate much to the Animal Passions between the Sexes

thire Great modesty prevents any Galentry in thire Comen Conversation, particklerly in publick Companys, unless when Intoxticated with Spereouts Liquers.

6 Is the appetite of the Indians for food greater or less than the Europeans?

I have Never observed thire appetites to be Greater then ours, unless after Liveing a Long Time very Scanty or without food, w\textsuperscript{h} often hapens particklerly after a Debouk of Drinking, some have hartrer appetates then others, So you will find in Europians.
Is the period of human life longer or shorter among them than in Europe?

Tiss Dificult to Judge Now, whether they have Longer Life then Europians, as they have mostly Larn'd. from us all our vises, purticklerly a predominant passion for Spereoutes Liquers, butt thire old Sages Say thire ancesters Live'd. to a Great age, and Indeed its very probable, as att this Day, you may observe that those Tribes w'h Live most Distant from ye Whites, to have Grater Numbers of ageed pople amoungst them, then those Tribes Near the European Setlements.

What are the Diseases to which they are most subject

thire Diseases is Chiefly Rumatic acitioned by Fetague in thire Warr moreless & hunting, w'h. they have a Rong conception of owing to thire Notions of Witchcraft, butt as thire Diet is plain & wholsom, they are unaquented with many Disorders that we have, ye Small pox they gett from us, w'h. is fattel to them, & as to the Venearial Disorders, whether they had itt beefore ye Eurepians came to america or Nott, I cant say butt they have itt Now pretty comon, & are very Dexterus in cureing it phaps as Safe & Speadely as any Europian Doctors.

Does Polygamy (or having a number of Wives) take place among the Indians of North America.

I have been about 20 years aquainted with Near 40 Tribes of Northren & Westren Indians and Never Could Discover that Polygamy had been Countenanced, tho I have Seen Some chance men amongst them that had two Wives, butt they were frequently held in Dirision & made a Jest of for itt.

Are their Marriages permanent, or when dissolved how are their offspring disposed of?

thire marridges are Chiefly Intended to be permanent, tho itt often hapens they are Dissolved, on a Disagreement between the marriaged Cuple, as they universelly agree in opinion, that its beter to part then Live in Strife together, if ye Children be young the Women Keeps them, & ye man sends
hur part of his hunt to Cloath them, ocationally, till they are able to Supert themselves & thire mother, butt if ye children be grown up ye man Takes the boys, & ye Women ye Gurls, the parting of man & Woman Creates No Ill blood between themselves Nor thire frends.

11 What is the Characters of the Indian women with respect to chastity both before and after Marriage?

the Indian Women before marriage Sell thire feavers, as Lades of Easay Vertue do amonngst Europians, butt without any Stain to thire Carrecter, when married, Every breech of Chastity after marriage is a blemish & in Some Nations is punished & frequently in all produces a seperation

12 In what manner are the Women treated by their Husbands?

In the Same manner we Do as far as they have mains to Dress them fine, & give them what they want, w. they do in preference to themselves

13 Whether are the Indian Women Prolific, that is, have many Children?

Indian women are Ginerally as Prolific as ours

14 Do many of the Children die young?

No pople on Earth Take more Carr of thire Children

15 What is the State of parental affection and what Returns of filial Duty and attachment when compared with the State of those passions in other Nations.

No pople Can have more affection for thire Children, & the Returns of Duty, may be compaird. with other Nations.

16 What are their Ideas of Property? Whether does the product of their agriculture and the Game which they take in hunting belong to the Community or the Individual.

Every family have thire Distinct property, butt the Community Can Never Suffer fer Want, if one has itt thire hospitality is So Grate, tho Laterly they begin to fall of, Sence they become more aquainted w. Europians, w. tho very Fine, is butt a bad Complement to the polite World.
17 What degree of authority do their Sachems or Chiefs possess. Is it confined to Military Command alone, or is it likewise exercised during peace

thire Chieffs Derive thire athority from thire own Good behaver, & preswasion, which Never fails to Give them Great power in Council, boath in Warr & paeces, & Ginerely those who have acted with most prudence & Showd. ye Greatest abilitys in thire Warrs & military acheefments, are Comonly most Respected in ye Cabinet, they have thire Nobility, Likeewise amongst them, butt he that Displays ye Greatest abilitys, will allways be Highest in Council.

18 Is the authority of their Chiefs hereditary elective, or merely the Result of their merit & Eminent Qualities?

answerd above.

19 Do they exercise any Criminal jurisdiction by punishing such as are guilty of Acts of Violence? or is the Right of Revenge left wholly in the hands of private Persons?

they have No Duridiction [sic] or Laws butt that of Nature yett I have known more than onest thire Councils, order men to be putt to Death for Commiting Rapes, w'h. is a Crime they Despise.

20 What are the motives and objects of their Wars?

To Counquer Cuntrys, w'h. then become thire Dependents, besides itt Keeps thire young men in Exercise, & gives them a marsial Sperret, w'h. is thire Greatest Glowere & ambition.

21 Whether is any considerable number of their Prisoners spared and adopted, or are they mostly put to death?

mostly adoped.

22 Whether is their fortitude under torture general, or do many of them Sink and loose their Spirits under their sufferings?

thire fortitude is Great & Gineral under Torture Even in thire feamels.
23  Do they discover any considerable degree of Industry and Ingenuity in their Works of Art?

they are Nott Industres Nor are they frugal they Say the Great giver of Life Supert the foules of the are, who have No Industry, & that they Shall Want Nothing when they Return from this Cuntry, to that Great & good Sperret, who made them. In Such Trinkets as they make they Discover Some Ingenuety, wth. No Doubt might be Cultivated.

24  Whether have they any Songs or Poems containing traditions concerning the History of their Country? Or whether could a literal translation of these be procured?

they have Some Songs in thire Condoling for the Dead, which is Little understood by themselves, & makes itt allmost Imposible to gain a literal Translation.

25  Whether have they any Idea of a Diety as the Creator and Governor of the World?

they have, whome they Call the Good Sperret or Great giver of Life, the Evel Sperrit they Call the Tempter, who they beleave posses Every passion who Dose mistheffe or any Evel actions In this World.

26  Is there anything remarkable in their Religious Rites?

Nothing Remarkable in Religous Rites that Ever I Could Remark, Save amoungst Some Tribes who have Feasts att Diferant Seasons of ye yeer, Some of those made of fatt mate of wth. they ate None, butt burn all, att other feasts they ate all wth. has been small Resemblance of ye Isrellites.

27  What is their Ideas with respect to a future State?

they Expect to go back to ye Great giver of Life, whare they are Nott to Want any thing, & they Imagine what Ever Crimes, they Commit in this Life is punished here by Sickness misfortunes and the Like.
Can any Specimens of their elquence be procured. I mean literal translations of their Harangues such as Colden has published in his History of the 5 Nations

there Can many be procur'd. I Deer Say, att the plantation board, as the Shuperintendants for Indian affairs, Transmitt all thire Journals to that Board.

What is the State of Population among the Tribes which have little Intercourse among the Europeans?

farr Greater then amongst those who have any Intercourse with the Europians.

Has the use of Spiritous liquors, and the Communication of the small Pox been as fatal to them as is commonly said?

Sperritous liquers the Ruin of thire Naturall morrels w'h. is Ginerally a Disposision to honesty hospitality and fair Daling itts Likewise hurtfull To Trade & Commerce, amongst them yett ye Traders Carrey itt to them, as itt may be Suposed with No very honist Intension, itt Likewise makes them break thire publick Ingagements with us, oftener then I blive they otherwise wold, & prevents them from Imbracing the Cristian Religion, as to the Small pox itts very fatal to them and allways will be, Till they become Civilised, as Till then they Cant be brought to keep themselves Warm, and adopt Such meshurs as is Nessesary in that Disorder thire Savige Disposion apeer only in action att Warr, & when Intoxicated with Liquer fer ye Last they are oblidg'd. to the Europians.

The above article dealing with George Croghan may serve to introduce our publication in the near future of his journal covering the years 1759 to 1763. This interesting manuscript has been until recently attributed to William Trent. Since students have used it in their research the Editor desires to call attention to the fact that it is actually Croghan's.