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TEARS OF REPENTANCE

TEARS OF
REPENTANCE



*Christian Indian Identity and Community
in Colonial Southern New England*

JULIUS H. RUBIN

University of Nebraska Press | Lincoln and London

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P R E F A C E

Henry Oliver Walker (1843–1929) painted an evocative mural, *John Eliot Preaching to the Indians*, commissioned in 1903 for the rotunda of the Massachusetts State House in Boston. Walker received his training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Consistent with this academic tradition, he adopted a muted palette of red, orange, and yellow to suggest an autumn woodland scene at Nonantum in 1641 where light reflected from the Charles River in the background. The artist enhanced the grandeur of Reverend Eliot’s gesture of exhortation by recording his words in the lower border of the mural: “I am about the work of the great God and my God is with me.” He preached to seven assembled Native men clothed only in breechcloths. One man appears to be wearing a Plains Indian feather headdress, and several women are draped in woolen garments.¹ The mural reflects an enduring trope in the American imagination captured in paintings, prints, and lithographs throughout the nineteenth century: heroic, godly men like Eliot, renowned as the “Apostle to the Indians,” brought gospel light and truth to “savage” and “uncivilized” inhabitants of the forest. Natives are depicted as enthralled, passively receiving these messages of hope (in a subordinate or inferior position), seated or standing below the towering preacher. The viewer’s focus remains on the preacher, not the Native audience.

Five years earlier, in 1898, the Reverend Edward G. Porter commissioned the Spanish sculptor Domingo Mora to carve four bas-relief panels for the front façade of the Congregational House in Boston. The fourth bas-relief, *Community Witness: The Apostle Eliot Preaching among the Indians, 1646*, captures Eliot preaching in front of Waban’s wigwam in Nonantum. Porter writes, “The evangelic spirit, drawn directly from the New Testament and encouraged by an enlightened mind and a consecrated heart, finds expression in missions of all kinds at home and abroad.”²

My study attempts to alter this perception of Native passivity, thrall-dom, subordination, and docile receptivity by shifting the focus from the preacher to the Native congregation. What did Native peoples make of Reformed religion in the context of the unfolding of settler colonialism in New England during the colonial period?

The impetus for this book came from the instructive comments of a reviewer of my first book, *Religious Melancholy and Protestant Experience in America* (1994), who suggested that a study of religious melancholy among Christian Indians in the context of Protestant missions was long overdue. For more than a decade I immersed myself in Native American studies, ethnohistory, American history, religious studies, and relevant topics in sociology and psychology, seeking to understand the lived religion, religious emotions, and predicaments of Native peoples—individuals and groups—in southern New England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who found themselves in the throes of missionization, religious paternalism, and the dynamic of settler colonialism.

I realized that if I wanted to reconstruct how Natives actively reshaped their lives and communities, then concepts like “conversion narrative,” “morphology of conversion,” and “religious melancholy,” although important, were too limiting. As C. Wright Mills argues in *The Sociological Imagination*, when a concept is not adequate to the task, we must develop broader heuristic constructs. To this end, I posed the question of individual and collective identity: how did Native groups appropriate selected aspects of Reformed religion to persevere as ethnic groups and peoples in their new world? Shifting the focus and emphasis from conversion to salvation, I examined how Christian Indians recast Protestant theology into an Indianized quest for salvation from this-worldly troubles and toward the promise of otherworldly paradise. The melancholy praying Indian embraced a penitential sense of life in which rituals of evangelical humiliation might prompt God, Jesus, and Christian other-than-human persons to grant health, prosperity, and good things to the people. And Christian Indians in mission communities that were organized by various regimens of religious paternalism adopted, with differing degrees of success, an ethic of ascetic life regulation suited to the restricted land base and lifeways on reservation communities.

The chapters on the Great Awakening among Native communities behind the frontier consider how evangelical pietist religion transformed religious identities and communities, giving rise to the sublime hope that regenerate Christian Indians were children of God who might effectively contest colonialism. With this dream unfulfilled, the exodus from New England to Brothertown on Oneida lands in New York envisioned a separatist Christian Indian commonwealth on the borderlands of America in the decades following the Revolutionary War.

Many people have assisted me in bringing this project to completion. Elisabeth Chretien, Associate Acquisitions Editor, clarified questions regarding permission to publish archives and manuscripts, copyright and fair use, and other production issues.

I wish to acknowledge the critical insights and guidance provided by the anonymous readers whose suggestions have helped improve this book. I am trained as a historical sociologist of religion and have benefited from readers with expertise in American history and Native American studies.

This is my third study of religious melancholy, that complex of theology, practical divinity, and religious emotions in American Protestantism that contributed to our national religious identity and the recasting of ethnic identities of Christian Indians from colonial times through the nineteenth century. Matthew F. Bokovoy, PhD, Senior Acquisitions Editor, Native American and Indigenous Studies and Western American History, saw promise in my work and steadfastly championed this book through the process of revision, helping me to develop and clarify my ideas for publics across disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.

This project was made possible by faculty development grants from Saint Joseph College, including sabbatical leaves in 1996, 2002, and 2010, summer minigrants, and research funds. Emma Lapansky, Professor of History and Curator of the Quaker Collection at Haverford College, provided an opportunity for me to study lived religion in America during my participation in a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute, “Religious Diversity in America,” in 1996. I presented my conceptualization of evangelical Christian Indian identity at the Third Mashantucket Pequot History Conference, devoted to “Eighteenth-Century Native Communities of Southern

New England in the Colonial Context,” in September 2002. I am grateful to Jack Campisi of the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center for his encouragement and to Kevin A. McBride, Director of Research at the Center, for sharing his study of the Mashantucket Pequot village known as Indiantown. I wish to thank Scott Manning Stevens, Director of the D’Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies, for selecting me as a participant in the National Endowment for the Humanities Institute, “From Metacom to Tecumseh: Alliances, Conflicts, and Resistance in Native North America,” hosted by the Newberry Library in June 2010. These sessions and conversations helped me to clarify my ideas about the role religion played in Indian resistance to settler colonialism. Rowena McClinton has assisted me in my study of the Moravian mission to Pachgatgoch.

Kerry Driscoll, my colleague at Saint Joseph College, convinced me to join her in teaching an honors seminar on Native American literature and history. During these classes, she taught me much about captivity narratives and Native American literature. Her considerable influence can be found throughout this book. Kathy Kelley has graciously filled my many interlibrary loan requests.

I want to thank Yale University for providing a Pew Visiting Faculty Fellowship during 1996, and Harry S. Stout, Professor of History, Religious Studies, and American History, Yale University, for the many invitations to participate in Pew Conferences devoted to the study of religion in America. This study would not have been possible without access to Yale’s libraries, including the Manuscript and Archives Collection of Sterling Memorial Library, the Special Collections of the Divinity Library, and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Other libraries that have made this research possible are the Houghton Library, Harvard University; the Edward E. Ayer Manuscript Collection, the Newberry Library, Chicago; Massachusetts Historical Society Library, Watkinson Library, Trinity College; Shain Library, Connecticut College; Connecticut Historical Society; Madison County (New York) Historical Society; Olin Library, Wesleyan University; Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts; and the Special Collections and Archives of the Burke Library, Hamilton College, Clinton, New York.

Nearly twenty years ago, in the preface of my first study of religious melancholy in America, I articulated my hope that I reiterate today: “Writing is an act of faith, the mustering of an ‘inner assurance’ and conviction that we indeed have something of value to contribute to anonymous publics from across many disciplines.”³

TEARS OF REPENTANCE

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INTRODUCTION

In this study I retell the now-familiar stories of the intercultural encounters between Protestant missionaries and Native peoples in southern New England from the seventeenth century through the early national period. These encounters include John Eliot, Thomas Mayhew Jr., and others who established the first “praying towns” in southeastern Massachusetts and Martha’s Vineyard among the Wampanoags. From the eighteenth century we consider John Sergeant’s work among the Mahicans in Stockbridge, Gideon Hawley’s mission among the Mashpees, David Brainerd’s evangelical mission to the Lenapes in New Jersey at Crossweeksung and Bethel, the Moravian mission at Pachgatgoch, and Samson Occom’s ministry to the Montauketts. Finally, from the early national period, I retell the migration to Oneida lands of the Stockbridge tribe to create New Stockbridge, and the formation of the Brothertown community—an amalgamation of emigrants from the Narragansetts/Niantics, Montauketts, Farmingtons, Mohegans, Pequots, and Paucatuck Eastern Pequots from New England.

Retelling these stories of intercultural encounters presents accounts of the ideals, purposes, and goals of the Protestant missionaries juxtaposed with accounts of the lived religion, religious experience, and religious practice of Indians in these unique village communities. Natives are not depicted as either the “culturally demoralized victims of European aggression or as the self-actualizing resisters of White imperialism.”¹ If Natives must not be viewed as one-dimensional caricatures—passive victims or scheming political operatives—then alternatively, we need to imagine them as complex human actors enmeshed in their village worlds, bound together through kinship and the noncoercive political and religious authority of sachems and powwows. They shared a common culture and language, and pursued

trade, diplomacy, and warfare and the seasonal migrations that were their traditional lifeways.

By examining the distinctive features of social relations in Indian village worlds in a colonial context, we can identify patterns of thought and cognition (*eidos*), and the cultural construction of emotions and lived experiences (*ethos*),² to elucidate the distinguishing characteristics of “being Indian in colonial New England.” The evidence from more than fifty Indian towns in southeastern Massachusetts, Cape Cod, Martha’s Vineyard, Nantucket, Rhode Island, and Connecticut—local linguistic communities in the eighteenth century—suggests that despite English interference, Natives continually recreated and revitalized their languages, identities, oral traditions, cultures, and lifeways.

The family household, clusters of extended families, and large multi-generational kin groups formed the basis for village social organization. Kinship bonds of blood, marriage, and intermarriage across Indian towns created local and regional networks of affiliation, status, and sachemship that tied Natives to one another and to their ancestral lands. Villagers reunited for traditional calendrical rituals and sacred Christian holidays in church grounds, dances, weddings, funerals, and “frolics.” Their ceremonies attempted to maintain balance and reciprocity with many other-than-human persons: God, Jesus, traditional gods, culture heroes, guardian spirits, and shape shifters. They continued to believe in portents and dreams, consulted powwows and herbalists, and defended themselves against witchcraft. The textures of village life show how Indians selectively made choices about incorporating English culture as they struggled to preserve their communities and recreate themselves and their traditions.³

We will investigate how Native peoples adapted to their new worlds in the colonial encounter and pose several questions. First, how and why did Reformed Protestantism appeal to so many Native Americans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? Second, how did they selectively appropriate, embrace, and institutionalize Protestant theology, piety, and morality, blending Christianity with traditional lifeways to create unique and hybrid Christian Indian identities and communities?

When ethnographers or historians recount stories of intercultural

encounters, they impose a narrative structure to explain continuity and change. For example, influenced by the salvage ethnography of Franz Boas, anthropologists working in the 1930s and 1940s created the master narrative of Native American cultural changes by conceiving of “the present as disorganization, the past as glorious, and the future as assimilation.”⁴ This interpretive framework imagined the Native as a romantic and exotic other, alienated from an idealized precontact past, languishing in a present marked by pathology and social disintegration, and destined to disappear or assimilate in the future. Recurrent themes in American literature, poetry, and the arts, as well as collective representations of our national identity from King Philip’s War through the early national period to the present, envision Natives as the vanishing American.⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville embraced this trope that structured his perception of race in America. Writing in the margin of the manuscript of *Democracy in America*, he describes an encounter with a young Creek woman and a slave woman who were left to care for the child of a member of the planter elite in the 1830s. He asks: “Why is it that of these three races, one was born to perish, one to rule, and one to serve?”⁶

Jean M. O’Brien’s *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* examines six hundred local commemorative histories in the period 1820–1880, in the context of emerging American nationalism, to reveal the ideological project that elaborated a master narrative of Indian extinction. Doomed by perceived racial inferiority, Native groups and cultures steadily declined as intermarriage diluted “blood purity” and undermined the “authenticity” of aboriginal peoples. Central to New Englanders’ perception of “real” Indians was a belief that Native lifeways were tied to nature, unchanging tradition, and irrational superstition. Thus, Indians could not make the transition to nineteenth-century modernity that was dominated by science and reason.⁷

Michael V. Wilcox refers to these images of Indian history as terminal narratives—injurious ideas that distort our understanding by conveying a story of destruction, disappearance (as a result of epidemic diseases and demographic decline), conversion, and assimilation. As an alternative, he proposes a narrative that emphasizes Native presence and persistence. It

rejects terminal narratives as one-sided “accounts of Indian histories which explain the absence, cultural death, or disappearance of Indigenous peoples.”⁸

Following the decades of the civil rights movement, the American Indian Movement, and the cultural revolutions of the 1960s, a new postcolonial narrative structure emerged that imagined the past as exploitation, the present as resistance, and the future as ethnic revitalization. Terms such as oppression, colonialism, resistance, identity, ethnogenesis, and ethnicity captured strategies of resistance that ensured the revitalization of tribal ethnic identities.⁹

In reversing the terminal narrative, Wilcox suggests that in response to colonialism, Native peoples reconstructed their collective identities as political entities—tribes and nations—and reinvented themselves as sociocultural entities—ethnic groups. Max Weber defines ethnic groups as constituted by “an overarching communal consciousness” or brotherhood, a shared historical memory of colonization, a social division and boundary for inclusion of insiders and the exclusion of outsiders, and a common culture, language, religion, and way of life.¹⁰ Within the dynamic of colonialism, nation-states, and empire, indigenous peoples as tribes and nations could engage in resistance, warfare, diplomacy, and treaty making to secure rights to ancestral land.¹¹ As distinctive ethnic groups they could reclaim their collective identity and peoplehood.

The formation of new Christian Indian communities exemplified one type of ethnic group formation and a critical dimension of ethnogenesis that is defined as “a creative adaptation to a general history of violent changes—including demographic collapse, forced relocation, enslavement, ethnic soldiering, ethnocide, and genocide—imposed during the historical expansion of colonial and nation states in the Americas.”¹² In seventeenth-century encounters with colonizing newcomers, many remnant groups joined together to form amalgamated villages to reconstitute themselves as new peoples. We need to consider the role that religion played in this recreation of Native peoples.

Ethnogenesis implies that peoples possess the powers of agency to reclaim their histories and reinvent their cultural traditions and collective identity.¹³ Ethnogenesis embraces the Western idea of cultural reflexivity and cultural

reinvention as a self-conscious process wherein peoples examine aspects of their culture as an object from the point of view of an outsider. In this manner, they make purposeful decisions to blend and syncretize elements of various cultures and create variations of Christian Indian identity in which “new ethnic identities, communities, and cultures are built or rebuilt out of historical, social, and symbolic systems.”¹⁴

Each generation returns to study Native communities and to the historical record, to research and retell important stories that are reshaped and revised by new questions, value commitments, and scholarly imperatives of the zeitgeist. In the spirit of Michel Foucault’s archaeology of knowledge, we must become self-reflexive about the discourses of knowledge and power and about the theoretical constructs and methods that we employ. “There is no fixed meaning in the past, for with each new telling the context varies, the audience differs, the story is modified.”¹⁵

Before I proceed to retell the stories of intercultural encounters and the emergence of Christian Indian identities and communities, I first need to define and clarify key concepts, methods, and the narrative structure that inform this work. I begin with the insight that Christian Indian identity and community were produced by, and in response to, colonialism.¹⁶ Colonialism, invasion, and conquest radically transformed the Indians’ old world. The logic of domination by settler groups devised political-legal, administrative, and economic initiatives to control and domesticate Native populations, dispossess them of land, and eradicate their culture and lifeways. Settler colonialism envisioned the elimination of Native societies and their replacement by newcomers.¹⁷

Native peoples have resisted, persisted, and survived, despite the attempts to dispossess and eliminate them. In light of Native adaptations and perseverance, colonialism needs to be viewed as a multidimensional process that includes (1) biological survival and stabilization of populations after initial demographic decline due to epidemics and warfare; (2) political participation through overlapping alliances and warfare in North America where European colonizers from France, Spain, England, and the Netherlands sought Native allies in geopolitical competition; (3) economic exchange and incorporation of Indians as producers and consumers into

the mercantilist and later market economy through the fur trade and dependency on manufactured goods; (4) cultural exchange of worldviews, language, ideas, and religion.¹⁸

While these four dimensions of colonialism have been the impetus for change and discontinuity imposed from the outside, the colonized peoples exercised limited opportunities for agency within their communities. “Choices for change are made with the limiting constraints of colonial forces which are powerful enough to push indigenous peoples and individuals in directions they do not control and in fact deem undesirable. . . . The patterns of change that we are looking for are those that express the values and interests that gain the consensual support of the indigenous communities.”¹⁹ We need to examine the cultural exchange of religious ideas in the encounter between Native and newcomer and focus on the choices that Native peoples made when they encountered missionaries, ministers, and church-based institutionalized religion.

English Protestants introduced alternative myths of creation and previously unimaginable models for making a good life. Reformed Protestantism was a world religion that proclaimed the existence of a transcendental creator deity and the expiating sacrifice of a savior-prophet who might redeem humanity tainted by the sin of innate depravity in this fallen world. The concepts of sin as the willful disobedience to divine law and repentance formed the basis for a systematic religious ethos of life regulation and a heightened ethical relationship between God and humanity.

The unfolding of history, all human endeavor, and the events in each believer’s life reflected God’s preordained plan (providence). Protestant dogma explained the existence of good and evil (theodicy), the meaning of human existence marked by the believer’s relationship with God (theology), the paths to salvation (practical divinity), and the obligations to submit to God’s laws to make a good life and to forge a personality and identity in conformity with religious ideals (ethics). Within this religious worldview, English Protestants struggled mightily to find the inward grounds for the assurance of salvation in the world to come, eschewing a stance that promoted the enjoyment and sanguine acceptance of this world.

Christian Indian identity from the seventeenth through the nineteenth

centuries was forged in the crucible of religious melancholy. Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* identified an epidemic of religious melancholy in England in the seventeenth century, especially among radical Calvinist Puritans and Separatist sects who transplanted this spiritual malady onto New England shores.²⁰ Religious melancholy was a necessary, prescribed spiritual exercise for the believer in the spiritual journey from sin to regeneration. Each pilgrim traversed this inner journey, appropriating the practice of piety: self-examination to reveal sin, holy terror before God's law, feelings of abandonment as one forsaken by God. Conversion narratives structured the passage through the slough of despond into an ecstatic, selfless surrender to God in a moment of grace marked by the illumination of the heart and reception of the Holy Spirit as the regenerate believer turned toward God. Yet so many found themselves trapped in religious melancholy, in a ceaseless psychomachy, and unable to find the inner assurance of God's love. Not infrequently, believers obsessed over the dialectical tension between despair and assurance—the presumption of grace.²¹

From the beginning, Protestant missionaries to Native Americans schooled their neophytes in the consciousness of sin, the necessity of self-abasement, and the need to shed copious tears of repentance. Missionaries brought models of making a life through religious melancholy, and the promise of conversion and salvation, to Native peoples as a cultural therapeutic intended to redeem savage peoples living in darkness.²² We will examine the “marrow of divinity” for Christian Indians as they selectively appropriated new concepts of self and personhood and new religious experiences, religious emotions, and forms of prayer, worship, and ritual.

The encounter with English religion occurred through missionary outreach beginning in the 1640s after three decades of virgin soil epidemics. Between 1616 and 1619, an epidemic struck coastal New England, killing an estimated 90 to 95 percent of the afflicted populations. Before the plague, Massasoit, chief Wampanoag sachem, could boast of sixty villages and twenty thousand people joined in confederacy. But after the pestilence, his chieftainship was reduced to one thousand survivors, as they stood helpless before their enemies and forced to ally with Plymouth Colony in March 1621.²³ Thousands more perished in the winter of 1623 in Massachusetts Bay

from fevers and influenza. Smallpox swept through Native settlements in 1633.²⁴

The associated population decline and village abandonment, the collapse of corporate kin networks, and the triumph of English hegemony in southern New England after the Pequot War in 1637 did create a crisis in meaning for surviving Indian groups. The colonists introduced new gods, new sources of spirit power, and competition from ministers and missionaries who would discredit shamans and seek to control spiritual power.

Acceptance of new religious ideas and practices was neither inevitable nor uniform among Native groups. Early Protestant missionization often failed to take root in tribes such as the Narragansetts who had not suffered catastrophe and collective trauma, or among Mohegans, Pequots and Niantics, Wampanoags, Nipmucks, and other groups whose population, kinship structure, system of political and religious authority, land base, and lifeways adapted and restabilized into traditional, non-Christian village worlds.²⁵

Historical anthropological investigations of missionary encounters identify the diversity, complexity, and uniqueness of the emergent “local Christianity,” in which the reception of Christian doctrine is paradoxical and susceptible to multiple interpretations. “When a locality encounters Christianity, it is never obvious in advance what that ‘Christianity’ is, it can be defined only in reference to its own historical development.”²⁶ In light of this caution, we must take seriously how Natives experience and shape this religious encounter to capture the histories of local Christianities “as they are lived in all their imaginative force.”²⁷

Anthropologists argue that religious conversion in a missionary encounter must not be perceived as the eradication of indigenous religion, although missionaries pursued this end. Neither is conversion simply a syncretism—a blending of Native and Christian elements that forge a new hybrid religion. Rather, conversion involves a quest by Native peoples for new social practices and new forms of community, relatedness (*habitus*), belief, and ritual. Through conversion, neophytes struggle to rebuild social worlds shattered by invasion, warfare, epidemics, population collapse, and village abandonment. Christian Indians everywhere have embraced new forms of identity, “a newly inscribed communal self defined through the gaze of others.”²⁸

Christian Indian communities and identities in the eighteenth century were constituted by hybrid, blended, and innovative expressions of Native belief, ceremony, and folk religion intermixed with a variety of Protestant forms. “Christianity did not eradicate old beliefs; rather, it supplemented and even strengthened them, providing a new, broader spiritual basis. The new world that emerged was one in which Christian and traditional beliefs alike, sometimes separately and sometimes together, guided and gave meaning to people’s lives.”²⁹

Native appropriations of Christianity did not necessarily result in acculturation or “cultural genocide” where the influx of new religious ideas and practices replaced traditional lifeways.³⁰ We should shift our focus from the intentions of missionaries to Christianize and “civilize,” and emphasize what Native peoples made—the hybrid beliefs (meaning-making) and their emergent religious practice (making do). Undoubtedly, the receptivity and religious pluralism of Native peoples who adopted new truths, visions, ceremonies, and gods frequently resulted in intratribal factionalism (neophyte-Christian as opposed to traditionalist-pagan)—not solidarity and empowerment. Nevertheless, Native Christian practice also produced ceremonies that revered the land, reanimated communal bonds, and reaffirmed kinship, the sacred, and the ritual passage through the life cycle. “The logics of religious practice proved especially useful for colonized peoples trying to lead lives of integrity on their own terms within the spaces surveyed, structured, and policed by people with power over them.”³¹

Linford D. Fisher emphasizes the lived religion and the practice of Native Christianity while deemphasizing the importance of conversion. The religious practice of Christian Indians was distinguished by praying to God, Sabbath worship, the singing of psalms, and the practice of piety in private devotions that included Bible reading, prayer, and mediation. Intermixed with Reformed Protestantism, Christian Indian enclaves everywhere continued traditional practices of powwowing, funeral rituals, feasts, and other communal ceremonies. He concludes: “the Christian practices and beliefs that were adopted, even by second and third generation Indian Christians, were done so alongside other, more traditional elements of Native culture and religion.”³² What is the significance of these hybrid and emergent prac-

tices in praying towns or in second- or third-generation communities for Natives as they confronted religious paternalism and colonization?

This study has also benefited from the methods employed and the questions investigated by the new Indian history and ethnohistory that examine the dynamic in which each group seeks to understand and shape the encounter with the other.³³ Natives possess powers of agency to pursue their self-interests, to make decisions that might ensure their survival, to negotiate, to resist, and at times, to accommodate.

Talal Asad provides us with key questions: What model of human agency and self-constitution do we employ? How do we conceptualize a grammar of motives to capture meaning, awareness, and intent? “People are never only active agents and subjects in their own history. The interesting question in each case is: In what degree, and in what way, are they agents or patients?”³⁴

The categories of self, agency, and motivation in tribal groups differed significantly from those of the Protestant missionaries who sought to transform Native identity and society in the image of civility and Christianity. The logic of ethnohistory requires that we attempt to reconstruct these categories for each culture and capture the transformative changes that occurred, the decisions taken, and the strategies employed.

Culture provides the key to the cognitive worlds of Natives and newcomers. The concept of culture—a symbolic code that guides, directs, orders, and renders meaningful individual and collective life—is represented in language, material artifacts, and social organization. Understanding the symbolic code of the other remains one key objective of ethnohistory.³⁵ Ethnohistorians are students of “otherness” who “try to understand each culture, initially at least, on its own terms, according to its own cultural code, because that is the only way to understand *why* people in the past acted as they did. Unless we know what they imagined reality to be and their own particular place and role in it, we will never succeed in recreating the world they really lived in.”³⁶

In the “spirit wars” following the American Indian Movement and Red Power in the 1960s and early 1970s, scholars and activists reevaluated the significance of missions and Christian Indian identity in historical perspective for contemporary Native groups. Appendix A, “Religion and Red Power,”

considers this polemic and affirms the receptivity and religious pluralism that characterized Native groups in their encounter with Christianity from first contact to the contemporary period.

Guided by the insights of ethnohistory, we seek to recover the religious experiences, expressions, meanings, and intentions of Native peoples.³⁷ “We can but listen to what, in words, in images, in actions, they say about their lives. . . . It is with expressions—representations, objectifications, discourses, performances, whatever—that we traffic: a clay figurine, a mural, a curing rite, a revitalization movement.”³⁸ Insight into their lived experience necessitates an attempt to reconstruct their cognitive worlds and mentalities, and their categories of action and the logics of thought and morality.³⁹

Ethnohistorians attempt increasingly to recover and reinterpret Native literacy among Algonquian groups in southern New England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by searching for indigenous voices in documents created by missionaries or colonial officials, such as wills, petitions, handicrafts, conversion narratives, deathbed lamentations, confessions, and sermons. Protestantism fostered Native literacy following Eliot’s translation and publication of the Bible, catechisms, and devotional books into Massachusett. Colonial administration and Christian Indian life, especially in the eighteenth century, imposed new literary forms: letters, petitions to colonial authorities or the Crown, spiritual diaries and daily account books—the morphology of conversion, the reflection on life anticipating the saints’ everlasting rest. With caution, we can “read through’ Euro-American documents to recover and interpret Indian voices and experiences.”⁴⁰ Mohegan men like Samson Occom and Joseph Johnson completed Eleazar Wheelock’s boarding school and devoted much of their lives as missionaries promoting Wheelock’s “Grand Design.” They wrote autoethnographic accounts of their lives and predicaments, and these documents reveal their experiences of self and community as the cultural intermediaries who straddled many worlds.⁴¹

We need to “read people back into history” using missionary writings that depict the religiosity and actions of Natives in primary documents, where a sensitized ethnographer can tease out their voices, meanings, experiences, and forms of resistance and accommodation as they speak to

us across the centuries. Even when Natives remain silent in the historical record, we can interpret their actions as a mode of “talking back,” as in the case among Moravian missionaries at Springplace in the early nineteenth century, whose diaries record their attempts to suppress alcohol use, social and ceremonial dancing, or ball play (*anetso*). Cherokee youth and elders are “silent” in the records, yet we infer from their actions a commitment to individual and collective identity as they continued to participate in community ceremonies that included gambling, frolics, and *anetso*.⁴²

Each missionary initiative—the praying town and the mission church and community—was an experiment in religious paternalism and an attempt to impose a religiously grounded ethnogenesis on Natives as integral to the dynamic of colonization. Missions envisioned the creation of a unique community with formal social structures that emulated European models of polity, economy, household, gender role allocation, and church community, designed according to God’s blueprints and scriptural authority.⁴³ Jesuit missions to New France (Sillery) and New Spain (Paraguay), Franciscan missions to Alta California, New England praying towns, and Moravian missions in America were each modeled as a rational utopia that would remake sinful “savage” peoples into godly Christians who might dwell together in a commonwealth marked by hierarchy, civility, order, sobriety, and a work ethic.⁴⁴ Religious paternalism attempted a reduction of indigenous peoples, stripping them of their cultures so that they might submit to institutional social control. James Axtell recounts the goal of seventeenth-century English religious paternalism, “to reduce them to civility,” to apply “the yoke of Christ.” He explains: “becoming a Christian was comparable to assuming the posture and character of tame cattle—docile, obedient, submissive. . . to ‘reduce’ the Indians’ proud independence and godless self-reliance to the total dependence of a ‘weaned child.’”⁴⁵ In this regimen of supervision and surveillance, Native hands and labor, and their hearts, minds, and souls, were rededicated to a higher purpose in the service of civilization and Christian conversion.⁴⁶

Clearly, Protestant missionaries advanced a system of religious paternalism hoping to institute a Christian Indian identity and congregational community of the ingathered faithful. Conversion, reduction to civility,

and the accommodation to a settled residential community with English patterns of agriculture, family, gender, and polity provided the blueprint for this model of individual and collective identity. Here religious paternalism envisioned conversion as the obliteration of Native beliefs and practices and the abandonment of traditional patterns of kinship, authority, oral tradition, language, seasonal migrations, and lifeways.

Religious paternalism, in its many iterations, promulgated a religious ethos and life order suited to internal colonies—reservation life—where Natives could no longer practice seasonal migrations of traditional economies and lifeways, nor intertribal trade, diplomacy, and warfare. Instead, they lived as settled populations concentrated on a smaller land base, where Protestant moral guidance prescribed a work ethic of sober vocational asceticism in which their duties were as Christian men and women living godly lives in a Christian commonwealth.⁴⁷

What did Christian Indians make of these paternalistic regimes? What Indian voices, meanings, and religious experiences can we extract from the extant documents and the early records that have been largely written by ministers, missionaries, and colonial administrators? What dialectic and interplay can we discover between the missionary architects of religious paternalism, who devised God's blueprints, and the Native laity and religious leaders, participants in these regimes of religious paternalism? How did they forge individual and collective religious identities in this crucible of colonialism?

Finally, in the spirit of Max Weber's historical sociology of religion, we investigate how religious ideas formed the foundation for coherent worldviews that promoted the methodical organization (rationalization) of practical conduct through a religious ethos, life order, and corresponding type of personality. Weber articulated a structural phenomenology of religious experience using the typology of inner-worldly/otherworldly (asceticism/mysticism) to create an explanatory understanding of how believers, like Christian Indians, embraced a distinctive religious ethos, forged religiously grounded personalities, conducted their lives in conformity to religious dictates, pursued prescribed religious experiences, and struggled to attain the promises of salvation.⁴⁸

Weber redirects our attention away from the problematic and ambiguous concept of conversion of indigenous peoples where the dynamic of conversion (turning toward God) has become linked to the terminal narrative.⁴⁹ Mary Douglas suggests that the language of conversion or moral regeneration does not assist us in our study of Native encounters with Christianity. She writes: “When the study of religion is conducted in the language of the pulpit and dominated by the language of moral regeneration, anthropology is excluded.”⁵⁰

Weber is concerned with religious ideas of salvation wherein the promise of salvation helped make suffering meaningful. Using this explanatory model we will discover how Christian Indians welcomed the annunciation of salvation as the hope for transcendence or escape from the varieties of suffering that afflicted the body: hunger, sickness, disability, death and dying, and intrapsychic distress from dreams, desires, and compulsions. In addition, “one could wish to be saved from political and social servitude,” of the colonialism where Native communities suffered from powerlessness, poverty, land dispossession, and cultural and later racial exclusion from English social and moral communities.⁵¹ Finally, peoples everywhere seek salvation from indifferent fortune represented by natural disasters—storms, droughts, floods, earthquakes—and the social disasters of warfare and genocide.

Weber provides important methodological insights that inform our study in the historical sociology of religion. Like the changing master narrative of ethnographers, Weber understood that historians and social scientists selected research topics and perspectives that were constituted by critical value commitments, questions of cultural significance, and the prevailing narrative structure. Writing in “Objectivity in Social Science,” he argues that “All knowledge of cultural reality, as may be seen, is always knowledge from *particular points of view*.”⁵² Thus, each point of view created a limited and partial perspective that might engage or be contested by other perspectives. And contemporary historical and social scientific scholarship would necessarily be reevaluated as succeeding generations would create their own distinct points of view. Advocating a radical perspectivalism, Weber states that knowledge is never value-free but is created by refer-

ence to value. “Knowledge of historical reality cannot and should not be a ‘presuppositionless’ copy of ‘objective’ facts.”⁵³

Weber’s historical sociology articulated a methodology to investigate the cultural significance and uniqueness of the object under study through the formulation of ideal types. Each ideal type, for example, religious paternalism, colonialism, religious personality, the Protestant ethic, and Christian Indian identity, is articulated with clarity and precision, in a logically consistent form that accentuates or exaggerates certain aspects of the object domain. Thus, ideal types create “logical utopias” that are not intended as statistical averages or normative ideals but as classificatory and sensitizing constructs. Ideal types assist us to identify the significant and “unique individual character of cultural phenomena” under investigation and guide us in conducting empirical and historical cases studies.⁵⁴

Mary Douglas offers a cautionary note: classical sociologists of religion have adopted structural explanations that tend to view social actors as passive recipients of external and impersonal social forces or carriers of religious ideas.⁵⁵ Instead, she proposes an active voice—the study of religious action and actors grounded in their social worlds, situations, meanings, and accounts that explain intentionality, motivation, and purpose. I propose to investigate Christian Indian identities and communities by recovering, wherever possible, their active voices, religious experiences, expressions, and practices guided by the insights of ethnohistory and sociology. We must retell the stories of these intercultural encounters with a faithful narrative of the missionary endeavors and with sensitivity to how Indian people are different and what they made of religious paternalism and colonialism.⁵⁶ Our goal, as Axtell suggests, must be to get the stories “straight for ourselves and future generations . . . particularly if we want to do justice to *all* the participants, not just those who allegedly ‘won’—or ‘lost.’”⁵⁷

The study of religious emotions (known in past times as religious affections) can also assist us in understanding the dynamics and significance of emerging Christian Indian identity and personalities, or types of self and personhood founded on the fulfillment of religious values and concerns. Sociologists argue that religious emotions are constituted by the dialectic of selves, who are situated in distinctive groups or institutions, and their

relationship to sacred symbols and the performance of ritual and ceremony directed toward a numinous or transcendental other. Religious groups establish through dogma, ritual, and performance specific “emotional regimes.”⁵⁸

Chapters 1 through 3 examine the Christian Indian congregational communities that were influenced by Calvinistic Puritanism in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Here, under the canopy of religious paternalism, in praying towns and eighteenth-century reservations, missionaries championed the Christian Indian identity of the regenerate neophyte who would become a Native Christian reborn in faith. Religious melancholy shaped their religious personhood and experience. Christian Indians were marked by the attributes of the melancholic saint, repenting the sins of the forefathers for their heathen past, viewing life as a penitential journey—a perpetual round of repentance in Protestant rituals designed to remove the providential curse of sin and bring good fortune, prosperity, and health to the people.

Chapters 4 through 8 explore the emotional regimes produced by evangelical pietism and the New Light theology of the Great Awakening. Christian Indian youth and men and women became newborn children of God endowed with powers of agency to testify in public—“democratic personalities” inspired by the Holy Spirit to act on behalf of tribal and intertribal interests. Religious melancholy was a constant companion in the lives of Samson Occom, Joseph Johnson, and others who repeatedly traversed the cycle of self-examination that uncovered the evidence of sin followed by holy despair and the joyous assurance of God’s love and adoption.

Evangelical Christian Indians dreamt of building the new communities of Brothertown and New Stockbridge on Oneida lands in the borderlands of white settlement in the New Republic. They longed to create a separatist Christian Indian commonwealth of brothers and sisters united as reborn children of God, residing in individual agrarian households and exercising liberty as proprietors in a self-governing democracy.

Chapter 6 explores the Moravian missions to Shekomeko and Pachgatgoch and the system of religious paternalism they instituted—the Brüdergemeine (congregational community of brothers and sisters united by faith).

Moravian doctrine articulated by Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf in 1743 placed increased emphasis upon “Blood Theology” with constant, seemingly obsessive references to the suffering of Christ on the cross—his wounds (especially the side hole) and blood—that reminded believers of the sacrifice that would redeem humanity.

Believers embraced a daily, inward fellowship with Christ, who was viewed as a loving and compassionate friend, and anticipated a life order of *Lebensgefühl*—a joyful feeling for life and bliss.⁵⁹ Zinzendorf’s theology of the heart proclaimed a “blessed happiness” (*Glückseligkeit*) for the childlike neophyte whose broken and shattered heart was daily refilled with the love for Christ and made anew by the contemplation of Christ, who successfully traversed the spiritual itinerary of shame and sorrow.⁶⁰ Thus, an evangelical pietist personality for the Christian Indian neophyte in Moravian religious paternalism promoted a Protestant inner-worldly mysticism combined with a life order of asceticism, temperance, and godly conduct. In a sermon preached at Pachgatgoch in 1755, missionary Carl Gottfried Rundt summarized the inner life of the childlike neophyte who alternated between penance of sin and contemplation of redemption through surrender to Jesus. He instructs his “brown flock” that “Every faithful child of God neither could, nor should let these 2 considerations leave his heart: 1) I am a poor sinner, a fallen person, I have sin and misery in and about me, and I can no longer rely upon myself in the least; but 2) I am atoned, I am a redeemed and saved sinner. . . . He to whom I lawfully belong [and] who ransomed me, shall have me wholly as His own.”⁶¹

The praying town (e.g., Natick, Stockbridge), the eighteenth-century reservation with a sponsoring missionary (Gideon Hawley at Mashpee, David Brainerd at Crossweeksung and Bethel, the Moravians at Pachgatgoch), and the evangelical Christian Indians who founded the communities of Brothertown and New Stockbridge each articulated a summum bonum of religious identity and a model of community organization. Would these religious and cultural ideals and resources prove effective for Native peoples as they struggled to forge new ethnic identities? Would Christian Indians triumph over the material forces of colonialism that were characterized by the relentless process of land dispossession, the erosion of political sover-

eignty, and the positioning of Native peoples at the bottom of the economic hierarchy in poverty and debt peonage? I retell these stories and recapture the sublime hope of those caught in a crucible of social change, who hungered for this-worldly salvation, beseeching the new Christian God to bring prosperity, health, and good fortune for themselves and their people. But Christian Indians, who dared to hope for better lives, not infrequently encountered despair.