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# LAND OF THE JEWISH INDIANS: HOW THE HEBREW BIBLE MADE RACE AND TERRITORY IN THE EARLY UNITED STATES

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Religious Studies in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

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# ABSTRACT

Matthew W. Dougherty: "Land of the Jewish Indians: How the Hebrew Bible Made Race and Territory in the Early United States"
(Under the direction of Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp)

This project traces the rise and fall from 1790-1850 of the idea, once popular in the United States, that Native Americans were descended from Ancient Israelites. White evangelicals, Native Americans, American Jews, and early Mormons all told "Israelite Indian stories" to intervene in the contest over land in North America. Their stories staked divinely-backed claims on "promised lands" in North America. In the process, they re-drew or disrupted racial boundaries by suggesting unlikely bonds of kinship among Native Americans, white Protestants, and Jews. In aggregate, these stories show that a broad swath of Americans, not just white proponents of the nation's "manifest destiny" to rule the continent, used Christian motifs to understand and debate the future of this expansive empire. This project, therefore, clarifies the links between religion and empire in the early United States. In contrast to studies focusing on the religious and political theories of white elites alone, it demonstrates that a broad range of Americans of multiple races, classes, and confessions used religious narratives and Christian theology understand life in a colonial society. For those who told them, Israelite Indian narratives forged new political alliances and dramatized the crises brought about by white Americans' appropriation of American Indian land.

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Introduction

***Precis of the Argument***

In the years between the Louisiana Purchase of 1808 and the end of Indian removal in 1842, travelers in the northeastern United States would have been likely to hear a bizarre story repeated by a minister's fireplace or read out loud from a newspaper at the Post Office.[1] In its most frequently-repeated form, the story might have resembled this composite:

*Our North American Indians are the descendants of Israelites. Learned men have pointed out the resemblances between their religious rites and those of the Israelites: they worship one God, whom they call Yo-He-Wah; they have a feast of expiation like the Day of Atonement; and their languages seem to have Hebrew roots. Therefore, many weighty scholars have said that they are the remnants of the Kingdom of Israel, which was destroyed by God for its wickedness…*[2]

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[1] The Indian Removal Act of 1830 effectively declared the Federal Government's intention to forcibly relocate all American Indians living East of the Mississippi, but removal was not instantaneous. The politics of relations between the United States and American Indian nations at the time required that Native peoples at least appear to assent formally to removal. Hence, over the years from 1830-1835 the Federal Government's Indian Agents negotiated a series of treaties that provided the legal pretext for removal piece-by-piece. The actual movement of people took even more time. Thus, it was not until the 1842 conclusion of the decade-long Second Seminole War that this wave of forced migrations came to an end. Mark Rifkin, *Manifesting America: The Imperial Construction of U.S. National Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); John Van Atta, *Securing the West: Politics, Public Lands, and the Fate of the Old Republic, 1785-1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014); John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016).

[2] The most common newspaper items that told Israelite Indian stories were reviews of Mordecai Noah's public speeches about the Israelite descent of American Indians or reviews of books arguing the same such as Elias Boudinot's *A Star in the West* or Ethan Smith's *A View of the Hebrews*. These were too numerous to cite. Other newspaper accounts of this narrative or variations on it include "The Progress of Knowledge," *Western Recorder*, January 19, 1830, Proquest American Periodicals; Powhatan, "The Lost Tribes in America," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, July 10, 1835, Series 1, Proquest American Periodicals; "From the New York Sun: Jews and American Aborigines," *The Ripley Transcript*, November 2, 1837, HAN; Samuel Woodworth, "Indian Feasts," *Constantine*

This project focuses on the culture and mental worlds of those who told stories like this one about Israelite Indians in the early republic. What appealed to them about this idea? Which of their political interests did believing in Israelites in America serve, and what delights did it offer them? In my reading, two themes emerge from the way these stories were used, both dramatizing and commenting on imperial expansion in the early American republic. First, they appealed to the authority of the Hebrew Bible to contest land claims.[3] Second, they pressed against racial categories to imagine alternate ways of conceiving of kinship, descent, and alliance.

People who told Israelite Indian stories intervened in the contests over land in North America often euphemistically called "westward expansion." The expansion of the United States was neither continuous nor inevitable. It occurred because of specific, usually local, struggles involving not only settlers and American Indians but also land speculators, evangelical philanthropists, and missionary societies. Stories about Israelites in America allowed members of all these groups to argue for the rights of "a chosen people"— be they American Indians, a specific Native nation, or white Americans— to "promised lands" in North America. They also allowed those who told these stories to re-draw racial boundaries by suggesting unlikely bonds of kinship among American Indians, white Protestants, and Jews. Because most Americans were

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*Republican*, June 27, 1838, HAN; Franklin Smith, "Origin of the American Indians: From DeBow's Commercial Review of the South and West," *Weekly National Intelligencer*, August 14, 1847, HAN; "Big Leg, A Miami Chief. His Trial for Murder.," *Spirit of Democracy*, August 25, 1849, HAN.

[3] "Hebrew Bible" is an anachronistic term stemming from modern scholars' attempts to discuss the texts shared by Jews and Christians without using the traditional Christian name "Old Testament." Most of the groups discussed here simply called these texts "Scripture," "the Bible," or "Law." I call them the Hebrew Bible to emphasize that not all the groups studied here interpreted them as antecedents to a "New Testament."

intimately familiar with the texts of the Hebrew Bible, arguments drawing on those texts brought powerful emotions to bear in debates over the imperial ambitions of the United States.

American high school students are taught that the United States did not engage in imperialism until its 1898 interventions in Cuba and the Philippines during the Spanish-American war. Over the last two decades, however, historians of the early United States (1776-1861) have shown that during this period our nation closely resembled European empires both in its aggression toward Indigenous peoples and its exploitation of enslaved Africans. Historians of religion in America have followed suit by using "empire" or "colonialism" as organizing themes for their histories. The study of religion and empire in the United States, however, has more often focused on the involvement of religious movements with the creation of the racial categories that regulated and organized bodies in the United States than on their involvement with the conquest and organization of territory.[4] This focus on bodies, while productive, obscures the centrality of land claims to American Indian religions and to the history of missions in North America. Hence, it leaves us with an incomplete picture of how religion both aided and hindered American imperial expansion.

This project steps into this gap by studying a set of religious narratives about empire relying on the idea that American Indians were, somehow or other, Israelites. White Protestants, American Jews, early Mormons, and Native Americans all used stories about Israelites in America to comment on racial boundaries and competing claims to territories. Evangelical

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[4] Only a few recent studies have clearly connected religious ideas and movements to debates over American expansion. See, for example, John Pinheiro, *Missionaries of Republicanism: A Religious History of the Mexican-American War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Sam Haselby, *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

Protestants based in the northeastern states, for example, took these stories to mean that settlers should move west only slowly and wait for missions to convert "Israelite" Indians. Once they had realized their heritage, they argued, American Indians would return to Jerusalem and leave the continent open to white settlement. Early Mormons, similarly, drew on Israelite Indian narratives when they debated which nation of "Lamanites"—that is, American Indians they took to be the descendants of Israelites— they should ally and settle with to escape the reach of the Federal government. Cherokee Congregationalists, similarly, used the idea to argue in the face of Indian removal that God had given their "Israelite" ancestors a homeland in the Appalachians. Although the idea that Native Americans were Israelites originated in European discourses, therefore, Americans of multiple races and confessions used narratives based on this conceit to dramatize arguments about race and territory in a widely-understood, religious idiom.

Writing the cultural history of Israelite Indian narratives in the early American republic requires the theoretical insights of Religious Studies. Scholars of religion have long analyzed the ways that religious practices, beliefs, and organizations can reflect political interests.[5] More recent studies have expanded this focus to link intimate and personal religious exercises with larger political movements.[6] As recent work in religion, affect and emotion suggests, however, we cannot assume that religious beliefs and practices directly represent political interests. Such

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[5] Talal Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); David Chidester, *Empire of Religion: Imperialism and Comparative Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014).

[6] Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); John Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America: With Reference to Ghosts, Protestant Subcultures, Machines, and Their Metaphors; Featuring Discussions of Mass Media, Moby-Dick, Spirituality, Phrenology, Anthropology, Sing Sing State Penitentiary, and Sex with the New Motive Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

beliefs and practices often have unexpected meanings and effects.[7] Israelite Indian narratives are a particularly fruitful site for this kind of analysis because they were open to misunderstanding, partial translation, and multiple conflicting readings.[8] For example, early Mormons inadvertently made themselves targets of mob violence when their public affirmations that God would allow Native Americans to destroy non-Mormons drew the ire of white Protestants. Hence, the translation of political interests into religious language was not smooth or direct, but full of twists and misunderstandings driven more by the affective charge than the political utility of stories about Israelites in America.

The groups that embraced Israelite Indian narratives were never able to effectively counter changes in U.S. culture that encouraged expansion. Part of the reason was that these stories worked by using the narratives of the Hebrew Bible to forge powerful emotional connections between "chosen peoples" and "promised lands," but in doing so they often invested hope in expectations that could not but be disappointed. American Indians were not Israelites. They were not about to convert en masse, and the course of history was not about to be guided in their favor by a divine hand. But studying them allows us to better understand the links between Bible-reading, emotion, and the mechanisms of empire in the early United States.

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[7] John Corrigan, *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Donovan O. Schaefer, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); John Corrigan, *Emptiness: Feeling Christian in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[8] Ann Pellegrini, "'Signaling through the Flames': Hell House Performance and Structures of Religious Feeling," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2007): 911–35.

*Significance and Literature Review*

**Manifest Destiny and Religious Nationalism**

This project is in conversation with two literatures studying the influence of Christian theologies on the culture and processes of colonialism in the Americas. The first discusses the importance to early American nationalism of rhetoric about God's Providential guidance of the country. Largely confined to the history of ideas, the study of the interrelationship of religion and nationalism in the early United States has focused on the emergence of an American national identity and the question of how Americans came to have a sense of national mission or destiny that underwrote the conquest of the North American continent. This project intervenes in this literature by arguing that there was as much disagreement as agreement in the early United States about the relationship of religion to American nationalism and expansion. White Protestants were not the only Americans who participated in debates about what God might want for America, and not even all white Protestants argued that God would bless expansion at a breakneck speed.

Historians often center discussions of religion, national identity, and imperial expansion in the early United States on manifest destiny. "Manifest destiny," in the strictest sense, was a mid- to late nineteenth century political theology holding that it was the destiny of the United States to create a homogenously white, Protestant state that would rule the entirety of the North American continent. It quickly rose to prominence in mid-century Democratic politics as a slogan for a new disregard for international law and confidence in the exceptional mission of the

United States as the guardian of Protestant Christianity, democratic government, and white supremacy.[9]

At least since the 1935 publication of Albert Weinberg's *Manifest Destiny: A Study of National Expansionism in American History*, however, intellectual historians and scholars working in American Studies have used the phrase "manifest destiny" to name a continuous doctrine, idea, or mood supposedly stretching over large swaths of American history. Weinberg traces the idea that the United States was a chosen nation to the belief common among northeastern Revolutionary clergy that the success of the American Revolution was due to the intervention of Divine Providence.[10] Later authors followed Weinberg in identifying long continuities in American religious expansionism, in some cases expanding the term to

[9] Much of the literature that invokes manifest destiny does so without connecting the term to its specific historical origin in this period: two 1845 newspaper articles by the Democratic political writer John O'Sullivan (1813-1895) that promoted the annexation of Texas and Oregon by the United States. O'Sullivan used the phrase to counter British and Spanish claims to land in North America that relied on the older "Doctrine of Discovery" that European empires adhered to in making legal claims to territory in North America. The Doctrine of Discovery held that the first Christian nation to stake a claim to a territory inhabited by "heathens" gained title to all lands in the same watershed. O'Sullivan argued, in response, that land claims in North America could not be adjudicated by the "*old black-letter international law*" but must bow to the higher claim given to white Americans "by the right of our *manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent* which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us." Robert Walter Johannsen, "The Meaning of Manifest Destiny," in *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansionism*, ed. Sam Haynes and Christopher C. Morris (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997); Robert J. Miller, "The Doctrine of Discovery, Manifest Destiny, and American Indians," in *Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians*, ed. Susan Sleeper-Smith et al. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

[10] Albert Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (The Johns Hopkins Press, 1935), 37–39, 100–129. Weinberg treats the sermons of New England clergy as a reliable barometer for northeastern sentiment, which limits the utility of his treatment of religious nationalism in the Revolutionary era. More nuanced analyses of the New England clergy and their influence on early American politics can be found in Jonathan Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy* (Oxford ;New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Jonathan Den Hartog, *Patriotism & Piety: Federalist Politics and Religious Struggle in the New American Nation* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2015).

encompass a mood stretching from Puritan New England to the Vietnam War.[11] Historians working on American expansionism have tended to continue to treat "manifest destiny" as a shorthand for the belief that Providence underwrote American territorial ambitions without clearly differentiating different religious approaches to expansion or acknowledging sectional differences.[12] The study of themes of manifest destiny in American thought, meanwhile, has been taken up by scholars working in American literature and Indigenous Studies, many of whom focus quite narrowly on works considered important to or representative of American literature such as the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville.[13]

But scholars writing on nineteenth-century nationalism during the last thirty years have emphasized that "manifest destiny" is best used narrowly to denote a mid-nineteenth century form of religious nationalism associated with the Democratic party and with the emergence of "white" as a racial category. Reginald Horsman's 1981 *Race and Manifest Destiny: the origins of American racial Anglo-Saxonism* contributed to this discussion by connecting Manifest Destiny to the racial system of the early republic. He argues that from 1800-1850 a new rhetoric

[11] Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); Steven Woodworth, *Manifest Destinies: America's Westward Expansion and the Road to the Civil War*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010). Ernest Tuveson's 1968 *Redeemer Nation* was more circumspect in terminology, reserving the term "manifest destiny" for mid-nineteenth century developments alone. The connections Tuveson traces between Jonathan Edwards, Richard Baxter, and twentieth-century Progressives, however, created a similar impression of an enduring "mood" or "tendency" in American politics that haunts other treatments of manifest destiny. Ernest Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role.* (University of Chicago Press, 1968), 26–46, 120–25.

[12] E.g. Walter Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism: A History* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Hixson tends to discuss "Manifest Destiny" as an agentic force that possesses historical actors and causes them to behave in certain ways.

[13] Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998); Joshua Bellin, *The Demon of the Continent: Indians and the Shaping of American Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

of divine intervention in American history emerged claiming that God had chosen this white race to conquer the continent.[14] Thomas R. Hietala built on this vision of the entanglement of racial and political discourses in American religious nationalism. He argues that manifest destiny rhetoric was produced by a coalition of Democratic politicians with conflicting desires for America to be a nation for whites only and for it to encompass more and more land to prevent the economic and social instability they feared would result from industrialization.[15] Religious arguments for expansionism, Hietala shows, were therefore born from specific political conflicts rather than an enduring American mood.

None of these histories, however, treats religion as a complex cultural formation. Hietala's and Horsman's narratives treat religion as ideology in the Marxist sense: a screen for class interests. Weinberg's, meanwhile, assumes that elite expressions of religious ideas were sincere representations of their motives and of American culture in general. These arguments do not capture the nuances of early national culture. The same conservative evangelical churches that produced the clearest advocates of America's special relationship with God during the Revolution also produced the most intransigent white opponents of expansion, the passage of the

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[14] Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 1–6, 158–86.

[15] Thomas Hietala, *Manifest Design: American Exceptionalism and Empire*, Revised ed. (Ithaca: Cornell, 2003), 55, 170–72. Hietala's focus on elite power brokers has been challenged by accounts that see expansion as driven mainly or in part by a populist, racist push from below. Patrick Griffin, for example, argues that important elements of U.S. expansionism can be traced to a strong ideological divide that emerged in the mid-eighteenth century between British imperial elites, who desired to maintain peace with American Indian nations until they could be made dependents by trade relationships, and frontier settlers who saw themselves as engaged in a bitter war with all American Indians for their survival. Early national conflicts like the Whisky Rebellion were, in his argument, attempts of frontier settlers to get elites to listen to their concerns. John R. Van Atta strikes a balance between Hietala's view of manipulation from above and Griffin's vision of a push from below by showing how popular protest both influenced national political decisions and co-opted by elites who granted title to squatters as a political bargaining chip. Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); Van Atta, *Securing the West*.

Indian Removal Act, and the slave system during the early republic.[16] Capturing the hesitant, conflicted, and often contradictory stances that conservative evangelicals took toward racial inequality and imperial expansion in the early United States requires asking how and why they came to oppose U.S. imperialism when they benefitted from it.

Several recent studies of religious nationalism have attempted to address the more nuanced and difficult question of how religious movements, ideas, and organizations could come to sincerely support policies that were not clearly in their rational interests.[17] Sam Haselby's *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism* distinguishes between two strains of nineteenth-century American religious nationalism: one produced by a national missionary movement based in the northeast and another produced by frontier populists.[18] Nicholas Guyatt, similarly, parses out several different strains of American religious nationalism in his *Providence and the Invention of the United States* by tracing the influence on both popular and elite American

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[16] The first political vehicle for these aims was the Federalist party, which was in place from 1789-1824, suffered badly during the War of 1812 for its members' support for peace and closer ties with the British. It declined first as a national political force, then collapsed even in its home territory of New England. Its successors were the National Republican and Anti-Masonic parties, which merged into the Whig Party in 1833. Although these parties had divergent goals and political cultures, northeastern evangelicals supported all three and used them as vehicles for their political interests. Robert P. Sweringa, "Ethnoreligious Political Behavior in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, ed. Mark Noll and Luke E. Harlow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 145–68; Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 95–139, 701–38; Daniel Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 91–124, 243–84, 570–612.

[17] Peter Onuf argues that anti-imperialists were, in fact, acting in their own interests. Whereas Democrats embraced an idealistic vision of the United States as specially chosen by God while unintentionally supporting British interests through trade, Federalists and Whigs saw themselves as heirs of the British empire and made rational imperial decisions about expansion and slavery. Onuf's argument Peter Onuf, "Imperialism and Nationalism in the Early American Republic," in *Empire's Twin: U.S. Anti-Imperialism from the Founding Era to the Age of Terrorism*, ed. Ian Tyrrell and Jay Sexton (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2015).

[18] Haselby, *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism*, 1–20.

thought of providentialism, or the idea that God guides the course of history and of individual lives, from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. Americans of various political stripes used providential language both to cloak their interests in ideological language and to make effective political arguments in a highly religious culture.[19]

These arguments, one focusing on producing a typology of nationalism and the other on distinguishing different uses of one common trope, produce a more complex picture of religious nationalism in the early United States. Both note the entanglement of religious nationalism with racial categories. His characterization of frontier revivalism as essentially non-political obscures more than it reveals, however.[20] As recent work on expansion has shown, frontier whites did indeed have political goals that their roundly-expressed contempt for urban elites, and urban missionaries, expressed long before the presidency of Andrew Jackson.[21] Further, Haselby's argument often gives unclear accounts of the relationship of the nationalisms he describes to racial systems.[22] Guyatt captures northeasterners' attitudes toward race more exactly when he argues that providentialism could not account for the continuing presence of American Indians

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[19] Nicholas Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1–10, 170–74.

[20] Haselby, *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism*, 117–63.

[21] Griffin, *American Leviathan*; Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal*.

[22] Haselby, *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism*, 52–54, 191–92, 312–15. Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Verso, 1990), 69–72, 385–88; Nicholas Guyatt, *Bind Us Apart: How Enlightened Americans Invented Racial Segregation* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).

and Black Americans in God's chosen nation because the nation that providentialist thinkers envisioned was a white one.[23]

That Protestants used tropes about "Israel" to think about the presence of American Indians reveals a popular dimension of the providentialist and religious nationalist literatures discussed in this body of scholarship. Israelite Indian stories, precisely because they are so strange, emphasize the complexity of religious nationalism in the early American republic and antebellum period. They allow us access to the murky terrain between northeastern whites' aspirations toward benevolence, their uncertainty about the divinely-ordained fate of the nation, and their rejection of equality with Americans of color. White Americans turned to the figure of the Israelite to understand American Indians because doing so allowed them to feel as if Native people were familiar to them and their place in providential history was known. For the people studied here, religion was not only rhetoric but a way to understand and feel one's way into the world.

**Race, the Hebrew Bible, and the Figure of the Israelite**

This project intervenes in an interdisciplinary conversation about the influence of the Christianity on the creation of racial systems in the Americas. It makes two latent themes in this literature explicit. First, it shows that Hebrew Bible narratives shaped how Americans felt about and emotionally experienced race as well as the ways they thought about or justified it. Second, it shows that that racialized discourses were not always or primarily about bodies, but also figured in debates about land and territory.

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[23] Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876*, 173–74.

At least since the publication of Winthrop Jordan's *White Over Black*, a strain in the history of race and religion in North America has argued that religious categories, practices, and modes of thought shaped the development of American racial systems.[24] Several recent studies in this vein have emphasized the importance of missionary encounters between white settlers, enslaved and free Black people, and Native Americans in the construction of race. Missionaries were responsible from the seventeenth century forward for converting people of color in Anglophone empires in the Americas. As Spanish, French, and Portuguese missionaries had before them, English and later American missionaries found themselves caught in a double bind. Their mission was to incorporate Native Americans, Africans, and East Asians as Christian subjects or citizens, but the long-standing assumption that "Christian" meant "a person of European descent" meant that that missionaries and other colonists saw non-European Christians as defective in some way.[25]

[24] Foundational texts include Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes towards the Negro, 1550-1812* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1973); Donald Matthews, *Honoring the Ancestors: An African Cultural Interpretation of Black Religion and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). This scholarship is in tension with histories that treat race as a secular category that religious groups can only resist, fail to resist, or be corrupted by such as Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Jon Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). Although often cited as an argument about the influence of the Bible on race, Colin Kidd's work falls into the second camp. He argues that, although there were many ways of reading scripture in a "racialist" fashion, the overall influence of Christian readings of the Bible was to constrain and restrict the development of racist ideologies. The counterfactual claim that racism would have been far worse had it not been for Protestant theologians does not help us understand how Biblical narratives shaped race on the ground. Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 25, 27, 167.

[25] Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517 - 1570* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993); Robert Bartlett, "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 1 (2001): 39–56; Emma Anderson, *The Betrayal of Faith: The Tragic Journey of a Colonial Native Convert* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008); Karoline P. Cook, "Between 'Casta' and 'Raza': The Example of Colonial Mexico," in *Race and Blood in the Iberian World*, ed. Mark S. Hering Torres, María Martínez, and David Nirenberg, Racism Analysis (Zurich, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012).

In the United States, this problematic emerged when missionaries and other white Americans conflated the terms "Protestant," "white," and "American."[26] Both Joshua Paddison and Rebecca Goetz have shown, for example, that white Christians in North America designated people of African, Asian, and Native American descent as "heathens" to explain why they could not fit into Christian communities. In colonial Virginia as well as in Reconstruction-era California, white missionaries worried that some categories of people were heathens by descent and, therefore, could never be made fully Christian even if baptized.[27] This equation between "white" and "Protestant" in the early United States also worked in the other direction, insofar as Euro-Americans who were not Protestants were often suspected of racial inferiority or degradation.[28]

Discourses about heathenism focused on the bodies of individual people. They alleged that Christians of color remained somehow "heathen" despite baptism, conversion, confessions of faith, church membership, or other markers of belonging because of defects that inhered in their bodies. Although the lists of such defects differed—an inborn tendency to certain kinds of sin, a lack of emotional or intellectual capacity, or an unhealthy affinity for non-Christians of the same race—they all posited that there was something wrong with non-white bodies. Christians of color might overcome those "disabilities" to some degree, but could never be free of them.

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[26] Edward Blum et al., "Forum on Whiteness," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 19, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 1–35.

[27] Joshua Paddison, *American Heathens: Religion, Race, and Reconstruction in California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012); Rebecca Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia: How Christianity Created Race* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

[28] Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

Discourses about non-Protestant Europeans, likewise, focused on the body while moving in the opposite direction. Mormons, Jews, and Catholics were suspected, because of their religion, of hereditary defects.

Although Israelite Indian stories emerged in similar missionary contexts as worries about "heathens" in America, they referred to land as well as to bodies. By arguing about what kinds of people were "chosen" to make claims about what territories were their "promised land," they helped to naturalize connections between group identity, religion, and territory. Hence, they were most often told to make claims about the corporate identity or land claims of entire groups of people, not individuals. They more often resembled other narratives that sought to make Native land available to settlers than those designed to exploit African-American labor.[29] The category "Israelite" was also more ambivalent than the category "heathen." The repeated references to God's judgment or preservation of "nations" and "peoples" in the Hebrew Bible has long provided both Jews and Christians with an archive of narratives to make sense of historical events and political relationships.[30] The people of Israel have a double role in such narratives about difference. On the one hand, because the Hebrew Bible depicts Israel as a chosen nation that God repeatedly preserves, it has been a rich source of metaphor and imagery for discussing the alleged divine guidance of a political or religious group. On the other hand, Christian readings of the Hebrew Bible have often focused on prophecies criticizing Israel's "unbelief"

[29] Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); Jean O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[30] The word translated as "nation" or "people" is Hebrew *goy* (גוי), Greek *ethnos* (ἔθνος), and Latin *gens* or *natio.* On the use of these terms in medieval Europe and a comparison to the modern use of "race" and "ethnicity," see Bartlett, "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity."

and “idolatry.” Especially after the emergence of anti-Judaism as a potent strain of Christian thought from c. 1000-1300, such texts were taken as evidence of the perfidy and stubborn unbelief of Jews. Hence, for a Christian to argue that a group was, literally or metaphorically, “Israelite” could single it out for special approbation or condemnation.[31]

To better understand the role that tropes of “Israel” played in the shaping of American racial categories, I rely on recent work in the reception of Biblical narratives among African-Americans and on images of “the Jew” in the conquest of the Americas. In *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth Century American Christianity* (2004), Sylvester Johnson highlights ambivalence in how Black and white Americans used discourses about Ham, Noah’s cursed son and the progenitor of Canaan, to discuss race and slavery. Whereas white Americans used the idea of Hamitic lineage to shore up the system of chattel slavery, African-American authors could use the idea to reaffirm their own basic humanity. Even though affirming their descent from Ham associated African Americans with a racial history of slavery, being able to locate themselves in the Bible proved to be powerful compensation.[32] Laurie Maffly-Kipp’s *Setting Down the Sacred Past* (2010) expands this discussion by arguing that African-American race histories, which often referred to the Bible, provided Black Americans with a sense of their history as a people that did not always reference race as the most salient category for understanding themselves. By

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[31] On the history of anti-Judaism, see David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013).

[32] Sylvester Johnson, *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity: Race, Heathens, and the People of God*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

providing a basis for dignified self-understanding, these histories bound communities together and helped create a space for life. [33]

In both studies, the readings of the Bible and of European historical sources that African-Americans used to make sense of their world often escaped reduction to an immediate political calculus. These stories not only located a space for African-Americans in European understandings of history, as Johnson argued, but also reveal their authors' intellectual strivings, curiosities, and attractions. These moved in multiple, often idiosyncratic, directions, producing texts that do not now present us with a unified story of racial uplift or "becoming American." Rather, although these stories often discussed liberation or encouraged pride in being Black, they simultaneously reaffirmed communal obligations and the centrality of Protestantism.[34] Hence Biblical narratives did emotional work that moved actors in strange or unexpected ways.[35]

By arguing that understanding Israelite Indian stories requires attention to their affective appeal, my account builds on Jonathan Boyarin's analysis in *The Unconverted Self* (2009).

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[33] Laurie Maffly-Kipp, *Setting down the Sacred Past: African-American Race Histories* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

[34] Ibid., 1–15, 276–83. Discussions of the use of the Bible in American nationalism have not always attended to the ambiguities and ironies that Johnson and Maffly-Kipp highlight. Eran Shalev's study of the use of tropes referencing Israel in early American political life, for example, detects little ambivalence in comparisons between Israelites and American Indians in the early United States. He argues that the appeal of Israelite Indian was that they allowed pro-missions Americans to hope that their nation would play a signal role in the Christian millennium and "helped to situate the United States as a redemptive force in history." Such characterizations leave the intertwined religious, imperial and racial implications of these stories unexplored. When accounting for the decline of Israelite Indian narratives, for example, Shalev attributes them in part to what he characterizes as a "virtual disappearance. . .after successive removals" of Native peoples from the east. The process of "successive removals" was, in fact, the result of a complex political conflict with genocidal intent. In the context of those removals, attributing "Israelite" identity to American Indians had far wider and more ambiguous meanings than the straightforward nationalism Shalev describes. Eran Shalev, *American Zion: The Old Testament as a Political Text from the Revolution to the Civil War* (New

[35] Ibid., 18.

Boyarin argues that overdetermined correspondences between Jews and American Indians did work in early modern European literature by allowing both groups to be compared to the pre-conversion, sinful self that Christians sought to eliminate. Such comparisons allowed Christian Europeans to create and maintain both Christian identities and the territorial integrity of Christendom.[36] When colonial authors drew literal or metaphorical connections between Jews and American Indians, they applied already-familiar rhetoric both about the need to create and maintain the boundaries around Christianity by incorporating problematic others and about their fears over whether such incorporation was ever possible or desirable.[37]

Like early modern European ideas about Jews and Indians and like the histories African-Americans produced to make sense of the interrelationship of Christianity and race, Israelite Indian ideas built on non-rational correspondences that often shifted in meaning. The place of ideas about Israel and Jews in early American culture meant that "Israelite" identity could have a wide range of meanings. Unlike the European writers that Boyarin studies, early nineteenth-century American authors rarely drew on the identification between Jews and the sinful selves of Christians that drove some elements of European anti-Judaism.[38] They drew, first, on an Anglo-American millennialist tradition that encouraged the hope that Jews would soon convert to

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[36] Jonathan Boyarin, *The Unconverted Self: Jews, Indians, and the Identity of Christian Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 19–36, 82–88.

[37] Ibid., 79, 112–15.

[38] Boyarin, *The Unconverted Self*. As a republic, the United States also lacked the European legal structure that placed Jews under the protection of—and hence at the disposal of—the monarch, which made them prime targets for violence in much of Europe. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*.

Christianity, a hope that restrained anti-Jewish groups before 1830.[39] Second, they drew on a rich Protestant culture that associated "Israel" with the pure community of God and the histories of the Bible with the history of the United States.[40] In spelling books, Masonic ceremonies, church sermons, and everyday expressions such as the use of "daughters of Israel" to mean prominent women in a church community, Israel and Israelites were symbols of wisdom, faith, and purity for American Protestants. Although they often held themselves to be superior to Israel in ways that fit older tropes claiming that Christians had replaced Jews as the chosen people, these positive associations affected the meaning of Israelite Indian stories.

### ***Sources***

American Indians were far from the only group supposedly descended from lost Israelites. A long history of speculation traced the ancestry of Nestorian Christians, Anglo-Saxons, Zulus, and others to the so-called "lost tribes of Israel." The lost tribes were reputed to be the remnants of the Kingdom of Israel that was conquered by the Neo-Assyrian empire in 722 BCE. Scholars now believe that the members of the ten Israelite tribes who had land holdings in Israel were variously integrated into the southern kingdom of Judah or deported elsewhere in the

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[39] Insofar as millennialist groups felt that Jews should cease to exist as a distinctive group, they represented an acute religious and cultural challenge to American Jews. They were, however, also a check on traditional anti-Judaism. It was only after millennialist views of Jews began to wane around 1830 that substantial anti-Semitism began in America. Malcom H. Stern, "The 1820s: American Jewry Comes of Age," in *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, ed. Bertram Wallace Korn (New York: KTAV Publishing, 1976); Egal Feldman, *Dual Destinies: The Jewish Encounter with Protestant America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Frederic Jaher, *A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness: The Origins and Rise of Anti-Semitism in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994); Robert K. Whalen, "'Christians Love the Jews!' The Development of American Philo-Semitism, 1790-1860," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 6, no. 2 (July 1, 1996): 225–59.

[40] Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876*; Eran Shalev, *American Zion: The Old Testament as a Political Text from the Revolution to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

Assyrian Empire.[41] But, for centuries, both Jews and Christians believed that they had been utterly lost to history and placed in an unknown land, only to be reunited with the descendants of the Kingdom of Judah—Jews—with the coming of the messiah.[42] The idea that those lost tribes might be the ancestors of American Indians originated in the sixteenth century, and persisted in European and Euro-American writing about the Americas through the end of the seventeenth century.[43] Although more common in the Spanish colonial literature, it enjoyed a brief vogue in colonial New England when political tensions and Millennial expectations ran high during the

[41] Michael D. Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*, Second Edition (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 308–26.

[42] Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Flavius Josephus: Comprising the Antiquities of the Jews, a History of the Jewish Wars, and Life of Flavius Josephus, Written by Himself*, trans. William Whiston (Philadelphia, Pa.: Jas. B. Smith & Co., 1854), bk. IX, chap. 14. The origin for the idea in the canonical Hebrew Bible was 2 Kings 17:6. Those interested in the history of the lost tribes of Israel often also drew on the apocryphal 2 Esdras 13:39-50 (4 Ezra 13:39-50 in Catholic nomenclature). They also re-read several of the major prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible, with special attention to Isaiah and Jeremiah, as referring to the alleged restoration of the tribes. Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[43] Spanish sources drawing on the idea include Diego Durán, *Historia de Las Indias de Nueva España E Islas de La Tierra Firme.*, ed. Angel María (Garibay Kintana) Garibay K., 2 vols. (México [D.F.]: Editorial Porrúa, 1967); Gerónimo de Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana*, ed. Francisco de P. Solano y Pérez-Lila, 2 vols. (Madrid: Atlas, 1973); Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, *Compendio Y Descripción de Las Indias Occidentales*, ed. Balbino Velasco Bayón, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Madrid: Historia 16, 1992); Gregorio García, *Origen de Los Indios de El Nuevo Mundo, E Indias Occidentales* (Madrid: F. Martinez Abad, 1729). English sources included Thomas Thorowgood, *Iewes in America, Or, Probabilities That the Americans Are of That Race: With the Removall of Some Contrary Reasonings, and Earnest Desires for Effectuall Endeavours to Make Them Christian* (London: Printed by W.H. for T. Slater, 1650); Thomas Thorowgood, *Jews in America, or Probabilities, That Those Indians Are Judaical, Made More Probable by Some Additionals to the Former Conjectures* (London: Henry Brome, 1660). A key source for both Spanish and English writers was Menasseh ben Israel, a Sephardic rabbi from Amsterdam, whose *Miqweh Israel: Esto es, Esperança de Israel* (Amsterdam: Semuel ben Israel Soeiro, 1650) argued that the lost tribes lived in the Americas but were not identical with American Indians. Because of a translation error in the Latin edition of his work, however, the English and other subsequent editions portrayed him as endorsing the idea. Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon, "Introduction," in *The Hope of Israel: The English Translation by Moses Wall*, by Menasseh Ben Israel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

English Civil War.[44] By the eighteenth century, however, the idea had fallen out of favor in both English and Spanish literature.[45]

When these stories reappeared in the United States during the first decades of the nineteenth century, therefore, they had surged back to life after decades of obscurity. Though never uncontested, they achieved a level of respectability they had not enjoyed in Anglophone North America since the turn of the eighteenth century. Most surviving Israelite Indian narratives from this period are found in print sources such as sermons, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and books. These sources do not constitute one coherent intellectual conversation on the issue because there was no single reading public in the early United States. No center of print distribution shaped tastes in a direct way, but rather a proliferation of locally-produced newspapers and journals catered to specific publics: craftsmen, young women, Freemasons, or members of one Protestant denomination or political party. So many reading publics could form in the early United States because literacy rates were high compared to the rest of the Americas and because communal reading practices, such as reading newspapers aloud at the post office, allowed even people with no or scant literacy to participate in print culture.[46]

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[44] Richard Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Richard W. Cogley, "The Ancestry of the American Indians: Thomas Thorowgood's Iewes in America (1650) and Jews in America (1660)," *English Literary Renaissance* 35, no. 2 (March 1, 2005): 304–30; Richard W. Cogley, "'Some Other Kinde of Being and Condition': The Controversy in Mid-Seventeenth-Century England over the Peopling of Ancient America," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68, no. 1 (January 2007): 35–56.

[45] Gregorio García's *Origen de los Indios*, which was in print into the eighteenth century, has been cited as a late instance of an author arguing in favor of Israelite Indian stories. However, a close reading of his text shows that he did not support the idea, but presents it as one among many options. See Teresa Martínez Terán, *Los Antípodas: El Origen de Los Indios En La Razón Política Del Siglo XVI* (Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónima de Puebla, 2001).

[46] Robert Gross, "Introduction," in *An Extensive Republic: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790-1840*, ed. Robert Gross and Mary Kelley, vol. 2, A History of the Book in America (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 1–50. Only evangelical organizations such as the American Tract Society

This project is framed as a history of popular intellectual movements. It treats people not generally considered "intellectuals"— such as Mormon laypeople, Indigenous religious leaders, and country pastors—as significant thinkers who produced meaningful ideas about the world around them. These ideas often mediated between more elite or politically powerful intellectual cultures and the popular or subaltern cultures in which the authors participated.[47] Chapters One, Two and Five all rely mainly on print sources for their arguments. Chapters One and Two focus on the production of Israelite Indian sources for consumption by white, northeastern evangelical Protestants. Chapter Five focuses on the subsequent spread of Israelite Indian narratives beyond that reading public, and particularly their diffusion after 1830 into a literature of speculation about the past aimed broadly at white readers. Because records of print runs and distribution figures for the early United States are sketchy, I can only rarely prove who read which texts. I have relied instead on tracing their influence in cheap print sources such as newspaper articles and evangelical tracts to make conjectures about their reception. Tracking the reception of Israelite Indian stories in the evangelical pamphlet literature also allows me to include

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and the American Bible Society, which were funded by donations rather than sales, attempted the mass circulation of print from centralized locations. Even their impressive efforts, such as the American Bible Society's attempt to distribute a Bible to every family in America between 1829 and 1832, fell short of their stated goals. John Fea, *The Bible Cause : A History of the American Bible Society*, First edition. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 41–50.

[47] My approach here draws on Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1982); David D. Hall, "The Mental World of Samuel Sewall," in *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 213–38; Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); Gabriela Ramos and Yanna Yannakakis, *Indigenous Intellectuals: Knowledge, Power, and Colonial Culture in Mexico and the Andes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014). This style of intellectual history focuses on implicit assumptions, contradictions, and complex interactions between belief and material conditions that I view as consonant with the goals of "lived religion" in American religious history and affect theory in religious studies more generally. For an approach to the question in the terms of more traditional intellectual history, see Lee Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians; European Concepts, 1492-1729.* (University of Texas Press, 1967).

perspectives from a limited number of women on a discussion that, at least in the surviving sources, seems to have largely been between men.

Chapter Three, which focuses on early Mormon millennial culture, and Chapter Four, which focuses on Cherokee Congregationalist churches, rely mainly on archival sources to understand the reception of Israelite Indian stories in much smaller communities than the broad reading publics considered in Chapters One, Two and Five. In the case of Chapter Three, the archival records support an analysis of a broad Mormon culture of telling and re-telling Israelite Indian stories. The most substantial archival source was the Joseph Smith Papers, printed by the Church Historians Press of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.[48] I also drew on printed collections of Mormon women's diaries, letters and accounts.[49] Although their opportunities for formal leadership were extremely limited, Mormon women were enthusiastic participants in their church's visionary culture. They engaged with Israelite Indian stories during prayer meetings, in letters, and—presumably—in everyday, unrecorded speech, helping to create a special place in Mormon culture for predictions of an Israelite future.

Chapter Four is based on a close reading of records about the Cherokee Nation prior to 1838 produced by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM or

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[48] Key parts of the Joseph Smith Papers used for this project include the "Documents" and "Histories" sections of www.josephsmithpapers.org and Matthew J. Grow et al., eds., *Council of Fifty Minutes, March 1844-January 1846*, The Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church Historian's Press, 2016).

[49] Edward William Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (Tullidge and Crandall, 1877); "Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightener," *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 17 (July 1926); Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, eds., *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-Day Saints* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1982); Eliza R. (Eliza Roxcy) Snow, *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow*, ed. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000).

American Board), a joint Congregational and Presbyterian missionary organization.[50] The chapter relies on records produced by one American Board missionary, Daniel Sabin Butrick (1789-1851). A firm believer in Israelite Indian stories, Butrick was also one of the few American Board representatives to stay in the Cherokee Nation after the national organization had decided to accept a Federal buyout of its mission properties and move to the Indian Territory. Butrick and his wife, Elizabeth Proctor Butrick (1783-1847?), traveled with Cherokee members of the mission churches during the forced removal of 1838, or the Trail of Tears. This chapter examines several ethnographic manuscripts Butrick produced in collaboration with Cherokee members of the American Board churches.

### *Theory and Method*

My historical analysis here draws on the insights of discourse analysis and affect theory. By "discourse" I mean a group of practices for producing knowledge and power.[51] Discourse analysis takes it for granted that ways of thinking and speaking both reflect and shape power relationships.[52] It has classically assumed that the way to understand a power relationship is to historicize it by exposing what decisions were made in the past that set the terms for future thought and politics. Discourse analysis assumes that our social worlds are shaped by the exercise of power but, in its strongest forms, does not assume that historical actors necessarily developed discourses intentionally.

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[50] William Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 43–60.

[51] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, Vintage paperback (New York: Vintage, 1982), 100,117.

[52] Ibid., 172.

Research in affect and emotion complements discourse analysis by emphasizing the ability of feelings to act alongside or disrupt the exercise of power through language. Models of religion in affect theory assume that practice, experience, and feeling might precede, rather than follow, linguistic models such as theologies, worldviews, and origin myths. It shows that affects can drive humans to act in ways that seem counter to their interests. But affects are not purely personal experiences outside the social structures emphasized in discourse analysis. They arise in social relationships, not in isolation, and have political effects because they attach to and animate social and linguistic structures. Affect theory insists, for example, that the pleasure that a slave owner might have taken in recounting the story of Ham or the sympathy that an Abolitionist might have felt for an enslaved person divided from her by a racial and legal boundary are worthy of attention because without them the social constructs of slavery and antislavery would have fallen flat.[53]

I occasionally use affect theory to complement discourse analysis in this project. Doing so allows me to highlight a persistent theme in my sources, namely their authors' assumption that

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[53] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 1–18. I do not assume that affect theory allows historians into a space behind or prior to language. Although some scholars, such as Brian Massumi, draw a strong distinction between "affect," or the primal, undifferentiated force of feeling and "emotions," or socially-conditioned expressions of affect, I follow Schaefer in finding that distinction largely unhelpful because it is impossible, or nearly so, to find a concrete example of a "pure affect" untouched by social formation or linguistic thought. Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 117–39; Jenna Supp-Montgomery, "Affect and the Study of Religion," *Religion Compass* 9, no. 10 (2015): 335–45; Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 119–44. My reading of feelings as produced in and animating political systems is authorized by recent work in affect that has emphasized the social transmission and production of feelings more than previous work in religion and emotion, which often worked with a model of emotion that assumed the primacy of the individual psyche. Works emphasizing the social production and transmission of affect include Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004); Katherine Ibbett, "Being Moved: Louis XIV's Triumphant Tenderness and the Protestant Object," *Exemplaria* 26, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 16–38; Schaefer, *Religious Affects*. For an overview of work in religion and emotion, see Corrigan, *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion*. The difference here is often more one of degree than kind, however, especially in work on religion and emotion that emphasizes the formation of emotional states by social practices and biology. See particularly Pamela E. Klassen, "Ritual," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion*, ed. John Corrigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 144–58.

their audiences would greet Israelite Indian stories with strong feelings. These stories were only compelling because people in this history took the Hebrew Bible to heart. More, at least some of the white Protestants who introduced these stories to national conversations grew up surrounded by Israelites. They imitated them bodily in Masonic ritual, read about them in horn-books, and saw them depicted in the illustrations of their family bibles. From early Puritan sermons to Timothy Dwight's *The Conquest of Canaän* (1785), the colonists and then the citizens of a new nation imagined themselves as "Israelites" specially blessed and tried by God.[54] Israelite Indian stories used Biblical allusions and brief references to the "opinion of the learned" to evoke these strong religious associations. Hence, they often seem to have been more interested in the emotions that the idea of Israelites in America might provoke than they were in rigorously proving a theory of Native American origins.[55]

This project consistently refers to organizations, people, and narratives as "religious," but to argue that something is "religious" is to step into definitional disagreements.[56] Both lay and academic uses of the term religion, as well as related terms such as "superstition," "magic," and "spirituality," more often reflect the colonial encounter of Europe with the rest of the world than

[54] Shalom Goldman, *God's Sacred Tongue: Hebrew & the American Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

[55] Several previous works on the "Jewish Indian theory" have treated it as a solution to a primarily intellectual dilemma about the origins of American Indians, as opposed to a series of narratives commenting on early American culture. See Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians; European Concepts, 1492-1729.*; Richard H. Popkin, "The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Indian Theory," in *Menasseh Ben Israel and His World* (Leiden: Brill, 1989); Dan Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon: Religious Solutions from Columbus to Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1986), 35–52; Steven Conn, *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1–34.

[56] Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category"; Russell McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Jonathan Smith, "A Twice-Told Tale: The History of the History of Religions' History," in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004).

definitional clarity.[57] This is not a reason to abandon the category of religion, but rather a reason to recognize that it is a western folk concept with its own history and that scholarly definitions of religion are continuous with, rather than radically separate from, folk definitions.[58] Building on the work of Melford Spiro and J.Z. Smith, I define religion as a culturally-shaped assemblage of relationships with subtle beings and forces.[59] "Relationship" follows Robert Orsi's work on religious presence, which calls for scholarship that analyzes the relationships, and especially the relationships of power, conducted with gods, saints, and spirits.[60] Such relationships can transmit and express larger social forces, and they can do so in quite intimate and emotionally-laden ways. The term "subtle" draws out what is already implicit in Spiro's original use of the term "supernatural." Saying that religions concern themselves with the supernatural assumes that both the scholar and the people studied can agree that there exists a "natural" realm about which most humans can agree and share knowledge, and a more mysterious "supernatural" realm about which they might fundamentally disagree. But the gap between modern American culture and that of early America, as well as the gaps between the multiple religious cultures in early

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[57] David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); Randall Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*; Chidester, *Empire of Religion*.

[58] Jonathan Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Relating Religion : Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004). McCutcheon, *Manfacturing Religion*, 11, 128–31, 158–61; Ann Taves, "Special Things as Building Blocks of Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies*, ed. Robert A. Orsi (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[59] Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious."

[60] Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*; Robert A. Orsi, "The Problem of the Holy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies*, ed. Robert A. Orsi (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Robert A. Orsi, *History and Presence* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016). A definition of religion that emphasizes relationships is not meant to privilege pleasant or uplifting interactions. As Orsi's work remind us, human's relationships with what they posit to be divine are rarely easy or straightforward, and may be quite painful.

America, makes it presumptuous to assume that we can so easily draw such lines. Saying "subtle" in place of Spiro's "supernatural" emphasizes that the phenomena under discussion were real, concrete, and perceptible to the historical people discussed while flagging the fact that there was disagreement then, as now, over their reality.

### *Outline of the Argument*

The chapters follow Israelite Indian stories from their introduction into the culture of the early American republic by pro-missions Protestants through their diffusion into other communities and their waning favor as Americans aligned themselves to the new realities of imperial expansion after Indian removal. The chapters also proceed roughly chronologically, focusing first on the growing popularity of these narratives from 1800-1825, their appearance outside northeastern Protestant circles from 1830-1838, and finally their decline in the 1840s and 1850s.

**Chapter One: Israelites in America (1800-1825)** begins the discussion of Israelite Indian stories with their revival and introduction into American print culture by Elias Boudinot and Ethan Smith. These authors published widely-read defenses of the idea that American Indians were the descendants of Ancient Israel. The chapter reads their books in the context of the conservative, northeastern evangelical culture in which they developed to better understand the appeal of Israelite Indian narratives in the first decades of the United States. It argues that conservative evangelicals, who largely supported missions to American Indians and opposed rapid territorial expansion, found Israelite Indian stories appealing because they called for Americans to halt the acquisition of new lands until the conversion of American Indians was complete. At the same time, these narratives promised that, once American Indians had realized their "Israelite" heritage, they would return to Israel and leave the land of America to white

Protestants. Hence, their opposition to expansion relied on a millennial solution to the "problem" of Native presence in America.

**Chapter Two: Our Common Father (1829-1839)** traces the expansion of Israelite Indian stories beyond the world of northeastern, pro-missions Protestants. It analyzes the uses of these narratives in the speeches and publications of the newspaper editor and Jewish advocate Mordecai Manuel Noah and the Methodist minister and Pequot activist William Apess. As public representatives of their groups, Noah and Apess found Israelite Indian stories useful for making territorial claims and political alliances. Noah told Israelite Indian stories to underwrite his attempts to imply that American Jews had claims on territory in North America that preceded those of white Protestants. Apess used them to argue for a political alliance between the "Israelites" of America and sympathetic whites that was based on the embrace of populist evangelicalism. Both men drew on the idea of American Indians' Israelite ancestry to ally with missionaries and their supporters while resisting the idea that Native people and Jews should be absorbed by the white Protestant majority.

**Chapter Three: The Remnant of Joseph (1830-1847)** follows the expansion of stories about Israelites in America into the theological foment and Millennial excitement of the early Mormon movement. It focuses on the practice of talking about, encountering, and being possessed by American Israelites in the early Mormon movement. Early Mormons imagined themselves as a distinct theological and ethnic community in part by envisioning, embodying, and being possessed by "Lamanites"—American Indians whom they believed to be the descendants of Israelites. For rank-and-file Mormons, and particularly women, such visions and practices were far more accessible than actual copies of the Mormon scriptures during the first

ten years of the movement. Therefore, they represent an important dimension of distinctive early Mormon practice.

**Chapter Four: The Original Customs of Our Nation (1835-1838)** discusses the uses of stories claiming that American Indians were descended from Israelites among Cherokees who were members of Congregationalist churches during the years 1835-1838. It re-reads missionary sources to show that Cherokee stories drawing on the Hebrew Bible which historians have taken to be the interpolation of a missionary eager to find the Lost Tribes of Israel are, in fact, theological and political arguments posed by Indigenous intellectuals. Butrick's Cherokee interlocutors claimed, first, that their ancestors were chosen by the God of Israel and, second, that they had been given their homeland in the Appalachians as a divine grant. In the context of rising support for removal in the Federal Government, these stories reinforced Cherokee land claims and argued for the importance of Congregationalist churches to the emerging Cherokee national culture.

**Chapter Five: To Possess the Whole of The Continent (1825-1847)** returns to the national debates covered in the first chapter to show how Israelite Indian narratives were altered and, eventually, replaced by other religious ideologies that more fully underwrote imperial expansion. Israelite Indian stories began to focus on material objects more than on ethnographic observations of Native people or Native histories, underwriting the belief that American Indians, like Israelites, belonged in the past. By the conclusion of Indian removal in 1842, Israelite Indian narratives had become completely a-millennial in character, and posited that the dominance of whites over Indians was a natural result of God's design of the world. This chapter also considers a brief, late exception to this trend, as members of the Mormon Council of Fifty considered whether to ally and settle with a Native nation to escape the Federal government.

## Chapter 1: Israelites in America (1800-1825)

### *Introduction*

In 1805, Elias Boudinot, a former member of the Continental Congress and Director of the U.S. Mint, retired to Burlington, New Jersey, to commit himself to evangelical causes. Over the next sixteen years, he published books and tracts that sought to defend the influence of evangelical Christianity, including a rejoinder to Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, a tract on the Second Coming of Jesus, and a biography of the eighteenth-century revivalist William Tennent.[1] He was the first president of both the enormously successful American Bible Society, established in 1816 with the mission to bring low-cost Bibles and tracts to the nation, and of the ineffectual American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews, which was established in 1820 to convert the Jews of America to evangelical Protestantism.[2] During this flurry of activity, Boudinot also became the public, respectable face of the idea that American Indians might, somehow or other, be descendants of Israelites. His 1816 *A Star in the West* would be quoted

[1] Elias Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation, Or, The Age of Reason Shewn to Be an Age of Infidelity [Electronic Resource]*, Dickins ed. (Philadelphia: Asbury Dickins, 1801); Elias Boudinot, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. William Tennent: Late Pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Freehold, in New Jersey* (N.J.: Printed by Henry P. Russell, 1807); Elias Boudinot, *The Second Advent, or Coming of the Messiah in Glory: Shown to Be a Scripture Doctrine, and Taught by Divine Revelation, from the Beginning of the World* (Trenton, N.J.: D. Fenton & S. Hutchinson, 1815); Elias Boudinot, *Poor Sarah, Or, The Benefits of Religion Exemplified in the Life and Death of an Indian Woman.* (United States: s.n., 1818).

[2] Fea, *The Bible Cause*, 19–29; Susanna Linsley, "Saving the Jews: Religious Toleration and the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews," *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 625–51. Boudinot's will left $2000 in cash to "civilizing and Christianizing the Indians," and two grants of land in north-central Pennsylvania, each more than 4000 acres, to the American Society of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the American Bible Society. Elias Boudinot, *The Life, Public Services, Addresses, and Letters of Elias Boudinot, LL. D., President of the Continental Congress*, ed. J. J. (Jane J. ) Boudinot (Boston ; New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1896), II: 87.

from and alluded to frequently in newspapers during the following decades, and his name would become synonymous with the idea.

One incident from *A Star in the West* stood out to contemporary readers enough to appear in most texts that mentioned the idea that American Indians might be Israelites, even if they did not refer to Boudinot directly. Boudinot related that he was once "present at a religious dance of six or seven nations" of American Indians, who had met together and held a dance in honor of the white "governor and inhabitants" who had entertained them. Already on alert for signs of their Israelite ancestry—he had been exposed to the idea in 1774 or 1775— he was "critically attentive" to "every circumstance" of the dance. To every circumstance, that is, but the location and date of the dance, or the identities of anyone else present. [3]

As Boudinot and "a very large company of gentlemen and ladies" watched, twenty or thirty Indians entered to the regular beats of a drum, wrapped in blankets, and began a circular dance, quickening on each rotation around the center "so as to make them very warm" and singing, until at the end of the fourth round "they cast off their blankets entirely" and danced vigorously "in a mere frenzy, twisting their bodies, and wreathing like so many snakes, and making as many antic gestures as a parcel of monkies." To Boudinot's ears, the song they sang sounded like "*y-he-ho-wah*."[4] This was exactly what he hoped to hear. He had absorbed from James Adair, author of *History of the American Indians*, the idea that American Indians

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[3] Elias Boudinot, *A Star in the West; Or, A Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, Preparatory to Their Return to Their Beloved City, Jerusalem.* (D. Fenton, S. Hutchinson and J. Dunham, 1816), 229. Boudinot does not even name which "governor" hosted the dance. Since he simply says "the governor," he may be referring to Henry Brockholst Livingston, who served as governor of New Jersey from 1806 to 1823.

[4] Ibid., 229–30.

preserved the original pronunciation of the four-letter personal name of God that had been lost to Jews and Christians.[5] Adair had claimed that he had heard the Chickasaw use the word "Yo-he-wa" in their cleansing ceremonies, but that they refused to utter it in other circumstances.[6] What could this be, Adair had argued, other than the original pronunciation of the divine name YHWH that Israelites were prohibited from speaking aloud? Boudinot felt certain that of it, writing "[t]here could be no deception in all this…Their pronunciation was very guttural and sonorous, but distinct and clear."[7] For him, and for many of his readers, the idea that Boudinot had heard the true name of God from the lips of American Indians was a thrilling possibility. It spoke to northeastern evangelicals' desires to find something familiar in American Indian religion, and thereby to understand what God desired for the new United States as it expanded aggressively into Native territories.

Stories claiming that American Indians are descended from Ancient Israelites now strike many Americans as preposterous. They gained wide credence in the early United States because Boudinot and other evangelical authors lent them an air of credibility. Boudinot, after all, was a respected statesman and benefactor of charitable organizations. That he believed in the Israelite

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[5] Boudinot had access to the MS of Adair's *History* a year before publication, since Adair stayed with him on his way to publish it in London, so it influenced his thinking even before any copies appeared in America. Boudinot, *A Star in the West; Or, A Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, Preparatory to Their Return to Their Beloved City, Jerusalem.*, 229–231; The earliest advertisement I have been able to find listing Adair's history is from nineteen years after its publication. See "Just Imported From London, Dublin and Glasgow and Now Opening for Sale, by Mathew Carey," *Gazette of the United States, Published as Gazette of the United States and Evening Advertiser*, February 7, 1794, America's Historical Newspapers, Archive of Americana.

[6] If Adair's belief that he heard the word "Yo he wah" during ceremonies had any merit, what he most likely heard was the word "Yahola" uttered by the server of the black drink (a tea probably made from *ilex vomitoria*) used in many southeastern ceremonies. James Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, ed. Kathryn E. Holland Braund (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), n. 485.

[7] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 211.

descent of American Indians enough to write *A Star in the West* suggested to his contemporaries that it was an idea worth considering. That someone so immersed in evangelical culture as Boudinot was responsible for popularizing Israelite Indian stories in the United States was no accident. These stories had appealed to specific desires, needs, hopes, and fears of conservative, northeastern evangelicals.

Boudinot was not alone in popularizing Israelite Indian narratives. In 1823, the Congregationalist minister Ethan Smith wrote *A View of the Hebrews*, which extended and amplified many of Boudinot's arguments. These authors' common grounding in a conservative, northeastern evangelical culture highlights their reasons for telling Israelite Indian stories and the appeal that those stories had in evangelical circles. Their Israelite Indian stories intervened in debates about missions to American Indians and the morality of territorial expansion. These stories allowed evangelicals to portray Indians as easy targets for conversion. By casting American Indians as Israelites, they depicted their religions as laudable, but limited, systems that would inevitably give way to Christianity. They also reflected evangelicals' feelings about their place as whites and as Christians in an aggressively-expansionist nation, in that they argued that American Indians could not be simply eliminated to make room for white settlers. If God was in covenant with the "Israelites" of America, he would surely judge a nation that mistreated them. Hence, the nation could not hope to survive if it took the land it desired from Native people, but must convert them first. Only then would "Israelite" Indians return to the Holy Land and leave the continent open for settlement by righteous whites. Israelite Indian stories affirmed that conservative evangelicals were key to the prosperity and moral purity of the nation, and secured readers' sense of moral superiority by inviting them to deplore the lower-class white culture of Indian-hating. Although they encouraged sympathy for American Indians and contempt for

white settlers, these stories ultimately endorsed white ownership of the land as much as did calls for Indian removal or later ideas of America's "manifest destiny" to spread across the North American continent.

Northeastern evangelicals' stories about Jewish Indians suggest more dimensions to the relationship between colonial dominion and theorizing about religion than previous work on the subject has allowed. Writing on comparative religion in the context of the South African settler state, David Chidester hypothesizes that a colonized people can only be "discovered" to have a religion after the frontier is "closed" and colonial dominance over that group is more assured. Producing knowledge about the newly-discovered religion of the colonized people then becomes a way of rationalizing and exerting mastery over difference.[8] Certainly, Smith's and Boudinot's ethnographic comparisons served this function, insofar as they argued that American Indian religions revealed nothing not already known to white Americans, and must naturally disappear as missionaries made progress. But their identification of "Israelites" in the American wilderness was also meant to please and to suggest kinship with white Americans. Through suggestion and allusion, these accounts pushed on readers who had been early trained to feel a thrill of recognition at the names, places, and peoples of Ancient Israel. That they were sympathetic does not mean that their works stood outside of a culture inflected by imperialism: the assimilationist missionary policies they supported were no less intended to solve "the Indian problem" than were genocidal removal policies. Their accounts suggest, however, that the Jewish Indian theory was not simply used to produce knowledge about American Indians but also to produce feelings

[8] Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*, 30–72.

of familiarity, hope and fear that defined the boundaries between evangelical Protestants and American Indians.[9]

The most substantial previous histories of Jewish Indian stories have treated them as solutions to two key intellectual issues: the origin of a group of people hitherto unknown to Europeans and the authority of the Bible as history. These intellectual histories treat them as part of a coherent lineage of "Jewish Indian theories" stretching from the late fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries.[10] Richard H. Popkin, for example, treats nineteenth-century writers like Elias Boudinot, Ethan Smith, and the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith as engaged in the same intellectual struggle against disbelief in the Bible as seventeenth-century authors such as Thomas Thorowgood, John Eliot, and William Penn.[11]

The conservative evangelicals who introduced Israelite Indian stories to American print culture did indeed want to defend the Bible as an accurate source of historical knowledge. Simply treating these nineteenth century authors as extensions of an older tradition ignores three problems, however. First, early nineteenth-century Anglo-Americans did not experience the existence of American Indians as a new intellectual challenge. They wrote in a culture that had been in contact with American Indians for generations, and in which the idea that they were descended from people construed as descendants of Hebrew Bible lineages— usually Asian

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[9] On the role of emotion in regulating boundaries between groups, see Ahmed, "Affective Economies"; Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 120–46.

[10] Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians; European Concepts, 1492-1729.*; Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*; Popkin, "The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Indian Theory."

[11] Popkin, "The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Indian Theory."

groups or "Tatars"—was already quite widespread.[12] Second, explaining these authors' works as a continuation of the seventeenth-century tradition ignores the discontinuity between the flourishing of such narratives in the 1660s and their revival in the late eighteenth century.[13] Third, and as a consequence, such explanations ignore the wide gap between the political lives of radical English Protestants of the mid-seventeenth century and English-speaking evangelicals living in the early United States.

This chapter focuses on two authors—Elias Boudinot and a Congregationalist minister named Ethan Smith—who published popular defenses of Israelite Indian stories that re-imagined these older narratives to make sense of the imperial expansion of the United States. Like many conservative evangelicals, Boudinot and Smith were dubious about the acquisition of new territory and uncomfortable with the new racial ideology of the early republic. Members of churches in the Reformed, or Calvinist, tradition, they believed that covenanted communities shared moral responsibility and that society ought to be ruled by the wealthy, educated, and pious. Hence, they worried that rapidly-expanding settlement would cause people to outrun the social institutions that ought to keep them in check.[14] They fretted, as well, that the enshrinement

[12] The idea of American Indians having an Asian origin was endorsed in leading American geographies. Jedidiah Morse, *Geography Made Easy: Being an Abridgement of the American Universal Geography*, Fourth edition, abridged, corrected and enlarged, by the author. (Printed at Boston: by I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, Faust's statue, no. 45, Newbury Street, 1794), 40–42; Elijah Parish, *A New System of Modern Geography, Or, A General Description of All the Considerable Countries in the World*, 3rd ed. (Newburyport [MA]: E. Little & Co., 1814), 22–23. Even histories that favored the idea of Israelite descent, such as

[13] The late eighteenth century saw the publication of James Adair, *The History of the American Indians; Particularly Those Nations Adjoining to the Missisippi [Sic], East and West Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, and Virginia: Containing an Account of Their Origin, Language, Manners, ... With a New Map of the Country Referred to in the History. By James Adair, ...* (London: printed by Edward and Charles Dilly, 1775). Daniel Gookin's *Historical Collections of the Indians of New England* (Boston [MA]: Belknap and Hall, 1792), which argued for the theory, was also reprinted in this period from the original 1677 edition.

[14] Amy DeRogatis, *Moral Geography: Maps, Missionaries, and the American Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Van Atta, *Securing the West*.

of white supremacy in the law codes of the early republic simultaneously elevated unworthy white men and denigrated people of color who adhered to evangelical standards.[15]

Telling Israelite Indian stories allowed Smith, Boudinot, and other supporters of missions to use long-standing Reformed Protestant ideas about Israel, the idea of covenant, and the coming millennium to think about their relationship to American Indians and expansionist politics. They used these stories to encourage their largely white Protestant audience to regard Native people as fundamentally like themselves and as people of great consequence for God's plans. The benevolent feelings they encouraged, however, did not extend to supporting Native land claims. Rather, the stories Boudinot and Smith told assumed that just as, in contemporary Protestant thought, Israelites had ceased to be the chosen people once Christians arrived on the historical scene, so too would American Indians cease to possess the continent because of Protestants' arrival.

***Sources***

Boudinot and Smith did not originate Israelite Indian narratives, but brought them to prominence in early nineteenth century America and gave them strong missionary and millennial charges. Although seventeenth-century English works, such as Thomas Thorowgood's 1650 *Iewes in America*, also argued that missionaries should especially attend to "Israelite" Indians, American works from the early nineteenth century most often cite Boudinot or Smith when they attribute the idea to anyone at all.[16] Boudinot's 1819 *A Star in the West* and Smith's 1823 *View*

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[15] On white Protestant feelings about converted Native Americans, see Hutchison, *Errand to the World*; John Demos, *The Heathen School: A Story of Hope and Betrayal in the Age of the Early Republic*, First edition. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014); Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism*.

[16] Charles Crawford, *An Essay on the Propagation of the Gospel; in Which There Are Numerous Facts and Arguments Adduced to Prove That Many of the Indians in America Are Descended from the Ten Tribes*, Second Edition (James Humphreys, 1801); Lewis Leary, "Charles Crawford: A Forgotten Poet of Early Philadelphia," *The*

*of the Hebrews* made their authors' names synonymous with the idea that American Indians might be Israelites in periodicals, chapbooks and letters from the 1820s and 1830s.

Smith and Boudinot were influenced by the mid-eighteenth century emergence of an evangelical culture in the Anglophone Atlantic world. Evangelicalism focused on the necessity of individual transformation or "new birth" for salvation, and accordingly emphasized scrutiny of one's emotional life. It transformed, and at times divided, English-speaking congregations in North America during the mid-eighteenth century and created new networks of shared piety, language, and concerns across denominations. Both men belonged to more conservative evangelical churches that looked to these mid-eighteenth century norms rather than the populist evangelicalism that would dominate nineteenth-century America.[17] Boudinot was baptized by the famous Anglican evangelical George Whitfield and raised in the pro-revival, or "New Side,"

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*Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 83, no. 3 (July 1, 1959): 293–306. Boudinot and Smith were referred to or reviewed in numerous articles, such as "Indian Civilization," *Church Record*, July 20, 1822, Proquest American Periodicals; N, "For the Saratoga Sentinel: Smith's View of the Hebrews," *Saratoga Sentinel*, December 23, 1823, EAN; N, "Smith's View of the Hebrews - No. 2," *Saratoga Sentinel*, December 30, 1823, America's Historical Newspapers, Archive of Americana; Woodworth, "Indian Feasts."

[17] I avoid the traditional terms of "the Great Awakening" and "the Second Great Awakening" for these transformations. First, these terms reproduce the theological assumptions about the agency of spirit in history that led to their coinage. Second, they distort our interpretation of eighteenth-century events by making them a foreshadowing of the nineteenth century transformations in American Christianity. Third, they imply that the relationship between evangelical groups shaped by the "First" and "Second Great Awakenings" is purely temporal. On the contrary, eighteenth-century norms about communal responsibility and public religion persisted in northeastern, Federalist evangelicalism—characterized here as "conservative evangelicalism"— far more than in other regions. On the rise of evangelicalism, see Leigh Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scotland and the Making of American Revivalism*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001); Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003); Thomas Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). On the coinage of the terms, see Jon Butler, "Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction," *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 2 (September 1982): 305–25. On the transformation of American evangelicalism by what I characterize as "populist evangelicalism," see Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990); Linford Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Haselby, *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism*.

faction of the Presbyterian Church. His childhood pastor was the evangelical firebrand Gilbert Tennent (1703-1764), and as an adult Boudinot would serve on the board of trustees for the New Side training ground of Princeton. [18] Ethan Smith, raised in a pious Congregationalist household in Belchertown, Massachusetts, turned to revivalism as a young adult after a brief stint in the Continental Army. He was soon "a main instrument in bringing about an extensive revival of religion" in his home town, and, after training at Dartmouth, launched immediately into the ministry. He spent the rest of his career in Congregational and Presbyterian parishes in northern New England, steadily publishing his sermons and scholarship.[19]

As was normal in nonfiction works of the time, their books borrow heavily from earlier sources. Boudinot modelled many of his arguments for American Indians' descent from Israelites on those in James Adair's *History of the American Indians* (1775), which he read in manuscript form.[20] He also drew on histories and ethnographies that did not tell Israelite Indian narratives, usually quoting them quite selectively as authorities on American Indian manners, customs, or religion.[21] Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*, which went into a second edition in 1825, quoted Boudinot at length and followed substantially the same structure while adding

[18] George Adams Boyd, *Elias Boudinot: Patriot and Statesman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1952), 7–8.

[19] William Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, vol. 2 (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1857), 297.

[20] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 116–17.

[21] Boudinot frequently cited, for example, Pierre Francis Xavier de Charlevoix's *Histoire et description generale de la Nouvelle France* (1744), Antoine-Simon La Plage du Pratz's *Histoire de la Louisiane* (1758) and Samuel Smith's *The History of the Colony of Nova Caesaria, or New Jersey* (1721). He also relied heavily on personal correspondence with Charles Beatty (1715-1772), a Presbyterian missionary in the Ohio Country whose *Journal of a Two Months Tour* (1768) was one of the earliest accounts in English of the Native peoples of that area.

information about then-recent archaeological discoveries in South America. The chapbook-seller Josiah Priest (1788-1851) exposed both narratives to a larger audience when he extracted large passages from *View of the Hebrews* for his 1825 *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed* and when he reiterated his belief in the idea in his popular *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West* in 1833. This latter work through three editions in its first year, including one print-run of 22,000 copies at a time when a popular fiction writer like Sir Walter Scott merited a print-run of roughly 10,000 copies.[22]

Boudinot and Smith told their story in three parts. First, they presented a reading of key parts of the Hebrew Bible, especially Isaiah and the deuterocanonical book of Second Esdras, to support the idea that the lost tribes of Israel could be found in North America. Second, they presented ethnographic information gleaned from geographies, histories, and the accounts of travelers, missionaries, and traders that presented features of "Indian" society thought to resemble the Israelite society described in the Hebrew Bible. This information focused particularly on religious traditions, rites, and customs, meaning that these narratives often engaged in a form of comparative research into religion. Finally, they presented their audiences with arguments for the evangelization of American Indians who, if Jews, would naturally vacate North America.

Because Boudinot and Smith works drew both the content and structure of many of their arguments from James Adair's *The History of the American Indians* (1775), historians have often

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[22] See the frontispiece of Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West: Being an Exhibition of the Evidence That an Ancient Population of Partially Civilized Nations Differing Entirely from Those of the Present Indians Peopled America Many Centuries before Its Discovery by Columbus, and Inquiries into Their Origins, with a Copious Description of Many of Their Stupendous Works, Now in Ruins, with Conjectures Concerning What May Have Become of Them.*, Fifth edition. (Hoffman and White, 1835); Josephine Guy and Ian Small, *The Routledge Concise History of Nineteenth Century Literature* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 204.

placed their works, and subsequent evangelical versions of Israelite Indian narratives, in a continuous tradition with Adair.[23] But this obscures how Smith's and Boudinot's work re-oriented Israelite Indian stories toward support for missions to American Indians under the conviction that converting American Indians would lead to white possession of the continent. Where Adair believed that the "Israelite" ancestry of American Indians was a reason for the British crown to avoid either military or missionary conquest in North America, Boudinot and Smith believed it to be a reason that missions must precede the expansion of white settlement.

Adair, an Irish-born buckskin trader, had lived in close contact with Native people in the southeast of North America, primarily the Chickasaw, for forty years. Unlike Smith and Boudinot, Adair was skeptical as to whether Christianity would be an improvement on Chickasaw religious life. His descriptions of Christianity, as when he called Jesus "a great prophet" when speaking to his Chickasaw relatives, echoed the language that English skeptics and Deists used. Although he saw Chickasaw ritual specialists, whom he calls "rain-makers," as swindlers, he similarly abused Catholic "rain-makers."[24] He describes most Chickasaw, however, as holding rationalized notions of the deity, whom they esteemed—in language more reminiscent of English Deists than Ancient Israelites—as the "prime mover" or "divine essence." They "pay

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[23] Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*, 42. Boudinot, for example, cited Adair seventeen times. He had access to the MS of Adair's *History* a year before publication, since Adair stayed with him on his way to publish it in London, so it influenced his thinking even before any copies appeared in America. Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 117, 229–331. Boudinot almost certainly began to read *The History of the American Indians* in its published version during the 1790s. Substantial excerpts from it first appear in his commonplace book—which he used from 1793 to 1803— near what appear to be preliminary notes for his 1801 anti-Paine tract *The Age of Revelation.* Elias Boudinot, "Commonplace Book" 1803, 160 passim, SEB. The earliest advertisement I have found listing Adair's book for sale in the United States dates to 1794. "Just Imported From London, Dublin, and Glasgow and Now Opening for Sale," *Gazette of the United States and Evening Advertiser*, February 7, 1794, America's Historical Newspapers, Archive of Americana.

[24] Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 428.

no religious worship to stocks, or stones…neither do they worship any kind of images whatsoever," unlike Catholics who filled their churches "with a crowd of ridiculous figures to represent God, spurious angels, pretended saints, and notable villains." Neither were they "atheists," as the Khoikhoi (Hottentots) of Africa were then held to be.[25] Because he believed Chickasaw religion to have a rational streak under what he regarded as its superstitions, he could be quite tolerant of it at times. For example, he encouraged women in his household—probably including his wife—to continue a ceremony of burning scraps of meat in the fire that he understood to be a rite of thanksgiving to God.[26]

Adair called Chickasaw religion "Israelite" because he assumed that there were essentially two sources of religious institutions: true revelation and human invention.[27] The latter was endemic, but particularly the fault of priests who visited impostures and superstitions on the people. Revelation, on the other hand, was pure, unitary, and to be found in the shared religious traditions of Judaism and Christianity. Accordingly, Adair repeatedly translated the parts of Chickasaw religious practice that seemed harmless or admirable as having to do with rational acknowledgement of and gratitude toward a "supreme being" that was a memory of the revelation to the Israelites. If their religion, from his perspective, needed to be cleansed from superstition, so, too, did Christianity.

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[25] Ibid., 81, 132–33, 142; Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*, 30–72.

[26] Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 157.

[27] Ibid., 175.

Hence, Adair's recommendations to his readers as to the best way for the British Empire to control the Chickasaw did not rely on missionaries as later American evangelicals' plans did. Of the three methods used by the British Empire in dealing with American Indians, missions, conquest, and trade, Adair could only recommend the last. Warfare, he argued, would fail because American Indians would resist invasion fiercely. Their Israelite ancestry meant that they were dedicated to "the divine law of equal freedom and justice" and would not accept British rule.[28] Missionaries would only embarrass themselves and their religion. He makes this point with a story about a Cherokee woman named Dark-lantern who came with her English husband to a priest of the Church of England to be baptized and have their marriage solemnized. When the priest insisted on catechizing Dark-lantern before baptizing her, her husband asked her unrelated questions in Cherokee and fed the correct responses back to the priest in English. The husband became angry when he felt that the priest was examining her too closely on the concept of the Trinity—perhaps he had trouble with the concept himself—and their conversation grew heated. When Dark-lantern demanded to know the cause of the argument, the groom replied in Cherokee that the priest "only mentioned the manly faculties of nature." Dark-lantern smiled and the priest, taking her amusement for understanding of his explanation of the Trinity, baptized her. As Adair told the story, the priest bragged how "his earnest endeavours changed an Indian *Dark-lanthorn* into a lamp of christian light" but in the end "was obliged on account of her adulteries, to erase her name" from the list of converts.[29] Adair told this story to make the point

[28] Ibid., 275.

[29] Kathryn E. Holland Braund, "Introduction," in *The History of the American Indians*, by James Adair (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 167–68. Cherokee norms of sexual activity were very different than European ones in this period, so it is entirely possible that Dark-lantern might have committed adultery from an Anglican perspective while staying well within the bounds of acceptable behavior for a Cherokee woman. Divorce, for example, was quite easy to obtain in Cherokee society but forbidden in the Church of England. Unmarried people were generally free to have multiple sexual partners. Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change,*

that the “very rudiments of learning, not to say of religion, are wanting in several of our missionary Evangelists.”[30] Unlike Smith and Boudinot, Adair saw missionaries as bunglers who could not administer even a basic sacrament correctly. They could not be relied on to further British policy by converting American Indians. Hence, when Boudinot and Smith re-told Israelite Indian stories to support a prominent role for missionaries in American imperial expansion, they made a clear departure from Adair.

### *Israel and the Idea of Covenant*

Stories about Israelite Indians allowed Smith and Boudinot to create new emotional connections between conservative, white evangelicals and Native Americans. Their narratives both relied on and reinforced the idea that both evangelicals and American Indians were chosen people of God whose historical fortunes were determined by the same laws of Providence. They encouraged white readers to feel sympathy with American Indians by depicting their religions as remnants of the Israelite religion familiar to white readers from the Bible. At the same time, they made it clear that the relationship between white Protestants and American Indians could not be an equal one. Indians, they argued, were the degenerate remnants of a once-great people, who preserved only a few traces of Israelite religion. White evangelicals should congratulate themselves on their ability to discern the truth of Native religions and character, and hasten to fund missionaries whom American Indians would welcome with open arms. Their narratives also encouraged sympathy for American Indians by trading on their readers’ contempt for lower-class

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*1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999). Adair’s text also has a marked anti-Cherokee bias, informed by his ties to the rival Chickasaw, so the detail that Dark-lantern was later sexually unfaithful to her husband may also be a result of his dislike for Cherokees.

[30] Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 364.

whites who drove frontier settlement and swelled the ranks of the Democratic party. These "bad whites" were responsible for violence on the frontier and injustices done to Native people, and were a dire threat to both American Indians and the United States. By assisting Israelites in America, they argued, northeastern evangelicals would affirm their place as a chosen people of God. Once they had done so, they would be rewarded with the land that "bad whites" tried to take by force.[31]

Smith's and Boudinot's arguments relied on the assumption, common among conservative evangelicals, that the Bible communicated clear messages about the course of human history using symbols that did not waver in meaning. Boudinot copied out into his commonplace book a summary of this intellectual approach from Richard Hurd's *An Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies Concerning the Christian Church* (1772): the Bible "was constructed on the symbolic principles of the Hieroglyphics, which were not vague, uncertain things, but fixed & constant analogies."[32] These prophetic symbols, Smith argued, would be fulfilled not only symbolically but literally.[33] This meant that attentive readers could hope to know God's plan for the future by discerning signs in political events, as Boudinot attempted to in a series of letters with his brother Elisha debating whether Napoleon's rise in Europe heralded the end times, or as Smith did in a substantial book arguing that the French

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[31] Conservative evangelicals' tactics here clearly draw on the idea, common in the eighteenth-century British colonies, that upper-class whites were more "sensitive" and better able to express nuanced emotion. Nicole Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 63–103.

[32] Boudinot, "Commonplace Book," II:28.

[33] Ethan Smith, *View of the Hebrews: 1825 2nd Edition* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1996), 202.

Revolution and the weakening of the Ottoman Empire showed that the Jews would soon return to Israel to fight the armies of the Antichrist.[34]

This method of Bible-reading led evangelicals to conclude that God acted to preserve his chosen people and to rebuke them for their sins. Boudinot, for example, argued that the Revolution was "marked with the certain characteristic of a Divine over-ruling hand, in that it was brought about and perfected against all human reasoning, and apparently against all human hope."[35] A yellow fever epidemic in New York, likewise, made him think that "Our God seems to have a Controversy with his people, and unless we sincerely repent of our sins, we must expect the visitations of his rod."[36] Because God controlled history, moreover, those with eyes to see his influence could predict how the divine will would sway the future. Smith warned his audience in 1811 that conflict with England and internal divisions demonstrated that "God is angry with this nation." Should the "Antichristian influence" spread by Democrats, Freemasons, and Unitarians "find a permanent residence here" the nation would not only suffer immediately but would be struck by "the plagues of the infidel Power of the last days."[37] For both men, therefore, national politics reflected the state of American Protestants' collective relationship

[34] Elias Boudinot to Elisha Boudinot, "Burlington," July 11, 1808, Box 1, Folder 6 TEB; Elias Boudinot to Elisha Boudinot, "Boston," August 9, 1809, Box 1, Folder 6 TEB; Elias Boudinot to Elisha Boudinot, "Burlington," February 3, 1812, Box 1, Folder 7 TEB; Elias Boudinot, "Burlington," February 18, 1812, Box 1, Folder 7 TEB; Elias Boudinot to Elisha Boudinot, "Burlington," November 7, 1816, Box 1, Folder 7 TEB; Ethan Smith, *A Dissertation on the Prophecies Relative to Antichrist and the Last Times; Exhibiting the Rise, Character, and Overthrown of the Terrible Power: And a Treatise on the Seven Apocalyptic Vials* (Charlestown, MA: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1811), 231, 326–27.

[35]Quoted in Boyd, *Elias Boudinot: Patriot and Statesman*, 32.

[36] Elias Boudinot to Elisha Boudinot, "Rosehill.," August 8, 1803, Box 1, Folder 6 TEB.

[37] Smith, *A Dissertation on the Prophecies*, 361–62.

with God. Faithlessness in the community would lead to national disaster. They assumed that the histories of the Hebrew Bible, which explained the destruction of the first temple at Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile as results of national disobedience, provided a model for how history worked.

Smith and Boudinot relied on this approach to the Bible, and especially the idea that God directed history to reward faithful nations and punish unfaithful ones, in their arguments for the Israelite descend of American Indians. They argued that God had punished both the southern kingdom of Judah, from which they believed contemporary Jews to be descended, and the northern kingdom of Israel for their disobedience.[38] But whereas the residents of Judah had been dispersed among the nations of the earth, the lost Israelites had been made "*outcasts from the nations of the earth.*"[39] By parsing the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah referring to the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, Smith and Boudinot argued that attentive readers could deduce that their exile had been to a place far to the north and east of Israel: North America.

Proving that American Indians were Israelites would, from Smith and Boudinot's perspective, evoke sympathy from Protestants who found Israelite religion familiar from their reading of the Bible. American Indians who were Israelites were closer to Christianity than "pagans" with no knowledge of God, and could be expected to convert more quickly. Further, if

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[38] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 58; Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 29–32. In the narratives of Kings and Chronicles, the territories ruled by David and Solomon were divided into two political groups after the end of the Davidic monarchy: a southern kingdom ruled from Jerusalem and a northern kingdom ruled from Schechem and Tirzah. The latter was conquered by the Neo-Assyrian empire in 722 BCE and the former was conquered by the Neo-Babylonian empire in 586 BCE. The conquest of the Neo-Bablyonian empire by the Persians in 539 BCE led to the return of some Judean exiles to the Levant. Most Biblical scholars now date the prophecies Smith and Boudinot read to this last period of return, and see them as reflecting the exiles' understanding of these historical events as divinely-ordained.

[39] The quotation is from Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 44–45. Smith makes substantially the same argument in *View of the Hebrews*, 49-50.

Indians were Israelites, they would still be a covenanted and chosen people. Since members of Congregational and Presbyterian churches also saw themselves as having been born into an elect community under covenant with God, newly-found Israelites would be, in this sense, kin.

A key part of that argument was to demonstrate, by comparison between Israelite religion and American Indian religions, that Indians were monotheists who followed, or had once followed, the religious ceremonies and purity laws of Ancient Israel. Smith argued that "[The Indians] have brought down by tradition from their remote ancestors, the notion of there being but one great and true God; which affords a most substantial argument in favour of their being the ancient Israel."[40] They maintained the stance that Indians were monotheists against all contrary information. Smith, for example, blamed reports of Mexica (Aztec) use of religious imagery on Spanish propaganda.[41] Reading the testimony of Hiacoomes, a Wampanoag who converted to Christianity, that he had acknowledged "*thirty-seven gods*" before becoming a preacher on Martha's Vineyard, Smith concluded that "We know not what this insulated native could mean by his thirty-seven gods. But it seems evident from all quarters, that such were not the sentiments of the body of the natives of America."[42] Such was his commitment to the idea that American Indians were originally or truly monotheistic that Smith could only dismiss a prominent Christian Indian as "this insulated native."[43]

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[40] Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 73.

[41] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 189–90.

[42] Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 76.

[43] For an account of Hiacoomes's life and his prominence on Martha's Vineyard, see David Silverman, *Faith and Boundaries: Colonists, Christianity, and Community among the Wampanoag Indians of Martha's Vineyard, 1600-1871* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Newspaper articles that summarized Boudinot and Smith often focused on one key argument they presented to support the idea that American Indians followed fundamentally "Israelite" religions: that they preserved the original Hebrew pronunciation of the name of God, or tetragrammaton. Written as YHWH in the Hebrew Bible, the personal name of God is traditionally pronounced as *Adonai* ("my lord") by observant Jews out of a prohibition on saying the divine name out loud. Because of this practice, Protestants in the early nineteenth century believed that the divine name had been lost or was pronounced as "Jehovah"—a name derived from the letters YHWH read with the vowel points for "Adonai" usually written next to them in Hebrew scriptures.[44] Smith and Boudinot repeated and elaborated on James Adair's argument that American Indians remembered the name as "Yo He Wah." Adair claimed, based on his observations of Chickasaw Green Corn Ceremonies that "these red savages formerly understood the radical meaning, and emblematical design, of the important words they use in their religious dances and sacred hymns" because of "the reverence they pay to the mysterious divine name YO He Wah…The words which they repeat in their divine hymns, while dancing in three circles around their supposed holy fire, are deemed so sacred, that they have not been known ever to mention them at any other time..."[45] Because the supposed name "Yo He Wah" was only used in ceremonies, indicative to Adair of obedience to the commandment against taking God's name in vain, he believed that only Israelite ancestry could account for its presence in the North American lexicon.

[44] Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*, 96.

[45] Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, 156–57.

Whatever the source of Adair's misrecognition, it seized evangelical's imaginations. Boudinot believed that he heard the word "Yehowah" in the dance he witnessed.[46] Daniel S. Butrick, a missionary to the Cherokee described in chapter four, interrogated his congregants about what he called the "hymn to Yowah."[47] Passing mentions of Israelite Indian stories in newspapers and other works often mentioned the idea that American Indians preserved this lost name of God.[48] The attraction of this detail was that it suggested that American Indians remembered a lost name of the God that Protestants considered their own. This, along with other supposed correspondences between American Indians and Israelite religions, made American Indians seem more sympathetic and familiar to a Protestant audience than "pagans" or "heathens" elsewhere in the world. If American Indians "religious ceremonies," as Boudinot put it, were "more after the Mosaic institution, than of pagan imitation," Protestant audiences would find them familiar from their close reading of the Hebrew Bible.[49]

Some, such as the social critic Elizabeth Elkins Sanders (1762-1851), could even find them admirable. Her *Conversations, Principally on the Aborigines of North America* (1828) staged a dialogue between a mother and daughter over conflicts between Georgia, the United States, and the Creeks that drew heavily on Smith and Boudinot. In her sympathetic portrayal of

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[46] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 229–30.

[47] John Payne and D. S. (Daniel Sabin) Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1,2,3*, ed. William L. Anderson, Jane L. Brown, and Anne F. Rogers (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 45.

[48] Thomas Robbins, *A View of All Religions; and the Religious Ceremonies of All Nations at the Present Day*, Third Edition (Hartford, CT: Oliver D. Cooke & Sons, 1824), II:162; "From the New York Sun: The Jews and American Aborigines," *Connecticut Courant*, October 7, 1837, EAN.

[49] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 190.

the Creeks, she attempts to prove that they practiced "true," if incomplete, religion. The Creek (Muskogee) Green Corn Ceremony, she argues, is "a religious rite" of "more solemnity and devotedness than ours" conducted "to make atonement for sin, and in the hope of propitiating the Deity. . ."[50] She portrays it as a monotheistic festival not unlike "a large camp meeting," she concludes that "a considerable resemblance has been remarked between many customs of the Jews and the Aborigines of this country, which has induced some, to imagine our Indians to be the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel."[51] Sanders does not endorse the idea any farther, but the comparison to Ancient Israelites serves her purposes of portraying American Indians in general and the Creeks in particular as righteous monotheists, who might even be superior in solemnity and devotion to white Americans. In Sanders's conception of events, it was American Indians who were the righteous Israel of America, whereas white Christians who allowed desire for land to overcome their charitable instincts were the true "Jews."[52]

The belief that American Indians were essentially familiar, even admirable, helped Protestant audiences to respond to appeals for missions to American Indians with sympathy. In the eighteenth century, Anglican missionary organizations such as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and Society for the Promotion of Christian

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[50] Elizabeth Sanders, *Conversations Principally on the Aborigines of North America* (Mass.: (At the Salem observer office), 1828), 68.

[51] Ibid., 70.

[52] Ibid., 28. Unlike the other authors discussed here, Sanders was a Unitarian and saw foreign missions (particularly Calvinist ones) as affronts to cultures that were as well, or better, off without Christianity. See Elizabeth Sanders *Tracts on Missions* (Salem: 1844). She is a valuable reminder that there were dissenting, cosmopolitan voices that rejected the binary choice of missions or extermination I am outlining here. Amanda Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 147 n.20; Joyce Appleby, Eileen Chang, and Neva Goodwin, *Encyclopedia of Women in American History* (Routledge, 2015), 180.

Knowledge had encouraged potential donors to pity the “poor Indians” who were without Christianity.[53] Supporters of Israelite Indian stories likewise expected their audiences to feel sympathy for American Indians, but attempted to evoke this emotion by demonstrating that Indians were not so different from northeastern Protestants. The influential poet Lydia Howard Sigourney (1791-1865), for example, drew on the Jewish Indian theory in this register in her Traits of the Aborigines of America (1822). This poem was an epic history of American settlement that held up missionary zeal and benevolence toward American Indians as the highest heroic virtues. She positioned North American Indians as Israelites who “with mystic rites, / The ark, the orison, the paschal feast, / Through glimmering tradition seem'd to bear, / As in some broken vase, the smothered coals, / Scatter'd from Jewish altars.” By contrast, the Mexica had practiced an entirely different religion and “with blood / Of human sacrifices sought to appease” an angry deity until “their astonish'd vales / Like Carthaginian altars, frequent drank / The horrible libation.”[54] Where the Mexica, by practicing human sacrifice, fit contemporary Protestant images of “heathens” without religious knowledge, North American Indians were, in her conception, close relations to white Protestants.

Calling Native religions “Israelite” religion implied, furthermore, that it would be easy to convert American Indians to Christianity. To a Protestant reader of the Hebrew Bible, all Ancient Israelite sacrifices, feasts, and religious customs were read as “outward signs” of an “inner”

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[53] Laura Stevens, *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

[54] Lydia Howard Sigourney, *Traits of the Aborigines of America: A Poem.* (Cambridge, Mass.: University Press, 1822), 5–8.

Christian truth.[55]In a published sermon, Smith argued that the religion described in the Hebrew Bible was the "administration" of the covenant only until the coming of Christ, after which the old rites that looked "to a Saviour to come, and to shed his blood for sin" were discontinued and replaced by the rites of baptism and communion that "look back to the Saviour as already come, and having shed his blood;— having been 'delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.'"[56] American Indian religions, if they truly were Israelite in origin, could similarly be replaced entirely by Christianity. Boudinot argued that it was not "to be wondered at, if [Indians] have forgotten the meaning and end of the sacrifices. They are rather to be pitied…for having forgotten that the blessing [of a ceremony] was not in the outward sign, but in the thing signified or typified by that sign."[57] Unlike contemporary Jews, American Indians had supposedly entirely forgotten the origin of many of their ceremonies. Christianity, then, stood poised to offer "the thing signified" by Native religions.[58]

Smith, Boudinot, and other supporters of Israelite Indian stories had to confront the contrary evidence that no one Native group practiced Israelite religion in its entirety. To find the suggestive parallels that buttressed their arguments, they had to indiscriminately combine reports of a wide number of groups spread across the entirety of North America from the Tlicho

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[55] See, for example, the discussion of Israelite religion in Jedidiah Morse, *The American Universal Geography; Or, A View of the Present State of All the Kingdoms, States and Colonies in the Known World*, 7th ed (Charlestown: G. Clarke, 1819), 77.

[56] Ethan Smith, *The Blessing of Abraham Come to the Gentiles, a Lecture on Infant Baptism; Delivered at Bolton, New York August 3, 1818*, Second edition (Poultney, VT: Smith and Shute, 1824), 27.

[57] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 215–16; Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 35–38.

[58] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 260, 265.

(Dogrib) in what are now the Northwest Territories of Canada to the Mexica (Aztecs) and Toltecs in central Mexico.[59] To justify this move, they argued that American Indian cultures had degenerated over time such that only occasional hints remained for white observers, of which American Indians could not "give any tolerable account."[60]

Smith's and Boudinot's arguments about the "degeneration" of Israelites into American Indians often slid into critiques of lower-class whites and alcohol consumption. Smith, for example, argues that contact with lower-class whites and alcohol accounted for the Ark of the Covenant "degenerating into a *sack*," or medicine bundle, among American Indians.[61] Frontier violence, as well, was by their accounts the fault of degeneration from contact with whites, since American Indians had character "far superior to…most other heathen on earth." He blamed reports of their alleged cruelty in war on the Mosaic law, which encouraged "cruelties of principle," and on the corrupting influences of alcohol.[62] The widespread abuse of alcohol in American Indian communities, he argued, was a judgment of God that had been prophesied by Isaiah: "The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under feet."[63] Ephraim, one of the tribes given hereditary lands in the northern kingdom of Israel, stood in Smith's reading for all the "lost tribes." These arguments allowed Smith and Boudinot not only to shift

[59] Ibid., 97, 113.

[60] Ibid., 87; Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 74, 77, 101, 104.

[61] Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 73–74.

[62] Ibid., 131, 133.

[63] Ibid., 79–80. The quotation is from Isaiah 28:1.

the blame for colonial conditions away from themselves but to claim that the "degeneration" of American Indians was a warning of the ways whites might degenerate if pious elites were not kept in control. By blaming frontier violence on degradation and corruption of both local whites and of American Indians, Smith and Boudinot portrayed it as a punishment for both parties' disobedience to God. Only the exertions of missionaries to convert Indians would bring an end to it by restoring them to God's favor.

This view of American Indian religion emerged from Smith's and Boudinot's belief that nations, including both the United States and Native nations, prospered only so long as they remained "godly." Like many contemporary Congregationalist and Reformed ministers, they argued that societies prospered when they encouraged the public worship of God and maintained a social hierarchy headed by older, wealthier, and—ideally—more pious whites.[64] But being among the chosen brought increased responsibility, not freedom. Although God "often declared [Israelites] *his peculiar—his chosen—his elect people*…yet he has fully shewn to the world, that however dear a people might be to him…no external situation or special circumstances would ever lead him to countenance sin, or leave it unpunished, without a suitable atonement and deep repentance."[65] Hence, the Bible must be relied on as a model for godly communities and godly politics.[66] Upper-class whites were responsible for upholding strict standards of morality and religious practice. If they did so, they would guide their dependents—among whom were people of European, African, and Native American ancestry laboring under various kinds and degrees of

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[64] Ethan Smith, *What Is Done Away; And What Remaineth, A Sermon Delivered at the Ordination of Rev. Harvey Smith Over the Church and Congregation in Weybridge (VT.) March 9, 1825* ([Poultney, VT]: Smith and Shute, 1825), 11–19.

[65] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 23–24.

[66] Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness*; Shalev, *American Zion*.

bondage— toward a prosperous life and salvation. In this way, and this way only, could the blessings of God be assured and social harmony preserved.[67]

By blaming lower-class rural whites for American Indians' degeneration, Smith and Boudinot dramatized the threat that political changes in the early nineteenth century presented to their notions of the good society. Democratic-Republicans, and later Jacksonian Democrats, championed a social order in which all white men— regardless of class, age, or religion—were to have political franchise, legal superiority over white women, the right to acquire American Indians' land, and the right to appropriate African Americans' labor. They sought, in other words, to level social distinctions between white men while increasing distinctions between white men and other Americans.[68] Particularly after the War of 1812, Democratic leaders were willing to capitalized on anti-Indian resentment among whites living on the western frontier. This resentment, which dated back to the mid-eighteenth century, would fuel the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830.[69] These changes relied on the idea that being considered "white" was the main requirement for citizenship in the republic.[70] New forms of evangelical Protestantism—largely aligned with Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations—that rose to

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[67] Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness*; Haselby, *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism*, 193–94.

[68] Matthew Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Harry Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006).

[69] Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 135–42; Griffin, *American Leviathan*; Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal*, 50–77.

[70] David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*.

prominence in the south and west from 1800-1840 largely endorsed this new social arrangement.[71]

Northeastern evangelicals opposed both the levelling of social distinctions between whites and the exclusion of non-whites from Christian communities.[72] The Israelite Indian stories that Smith, Boudinot, and other evangelicals told warned that the lack of properly-ordered religion and society on the frontier had already corrupted both whites and American Indians, nearly destroying what remnants of Ancient Israelite religion remained in North America. The only way, they claimed, to prevent the corruption from spreading further and to guarantee God's blessings would be to generously fund missions to American Indians.[73]

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[71] Sweringa, "Ethnoreligious Political Behavior in the Early Nineteenth Century."On the rise of evangelicalism in the south, see Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). On the affective connection of whiteness to religious purity in American Protestantism during the nineteenth century, see Edward Blum, "Forum on Whiteness," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 19, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 1–35; Edward Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God & the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Paddison, *American Heathens*; Edward Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865-1898*, Updated edition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015).

[72] On the hierarchical structures envisioned by American Protestant missionary organizations, which in this period were based entirely in the northeast, see Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism*. On religion and politics in the early Republic and antebellum north, see Daniel Walker Howe "Religion and Politics in the Antebellum North" and Sweringa, "Ethnoreligious Political Behavior in the Early Nineteenth Century."

[73] The massive organization of northeastern Protestant missionaries in the early nineteenth century and their interactions with indigenous peoples are described in a rich historiography. A useful overview of the intellectual underpinnings of missions can be found in Hutchison, *Errand to the World*. Emily Conroy-Krutz's *Christian Imperialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015) and John Demos's *The Heathen School* (New York: Knopf, 2014) both focus specifically on the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), which was the largest Protestant missionary organization based in North America until the late nineteenth century. Conroy-Krutz usefully makes an explicit case for the ABCFM as an imperial organization, whereas Demos focuses on the particular lives of ABCFM converts and how their interactions with the missionary organization affected their lives. Amy DeRogatis adds Congregationalist missions to white settlers on the Ohio frontier in *Moral Geography: Maps, Missionaries, and the American Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003). Finally, William McLoughlin's *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839* and Daniel Mandell's "Crisscrossing Projects of Sovereignty and Conversion" in Joel Martin and Mark Nicholas ed. *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) provide excellent re-readings of the ABCFM mission to the Cherokees from the perspective of Cherokee politics.

The feelings of sympathy toward American Indians that Smith, Boudinot, and other evangelical writers cultivated had political consequences. They implied that the proper relationship between the United States and American Indian nations should be a guardianship, since American Indians had lost most of their admirable, "Israelite" customs and needed to be brought under the Christian covenant that evangelicals believed shielded the nation from harm. Northeastern evangelicals' concern for American Indians—however condescendingly expressed—suggests that they had qualms about the fact that the expansion of white settlement came along with the conquest of the people currently living in those territories. The rapid pace of settlement, furthermore, threatened to outstrip the growth of the social institutions they believed necessary for moral life.[74] With the ascendance of the Democratic-Republicans to power, however, the largely Federalist evangelicals of the northeast found themselves increasingly unable to slow expansion or prevent conflicts with American Indians even on the occasions when they summoned the political will to do so.[75] Missions seemed to offer a solution. If American Indians were incorporated into the boundaries of Protestant Christianity, northeastern supporters of missions assumed, they could be incorporated into a nation that was, ostensibly, Christian.

[74] Reginald Horsman, "The Dimensions of an 'Empire for Liberty': Expansionism and Republicanism, 1775-1825," *Journal of the Early Republic* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1989); Sweringa, "Ethnoreligious Political Behavior in the Early Nineteenth Century."

[75] The relationship of missionary organizations, and in particular the ABCFM, to the debates over removal in particular is discussed in William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 43–68; Joel W. Martin, "Crisscrossing Projects of Sovereignty and Conversion: Cherokee Christians and New England Missionaries During the 1820s," in *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape*, ed. Joel W. Martin and Mark A. Nicholas (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism*, 131–50; Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal*, 50–77.

### ***The Millennium and the Politics of Missions***

Attachment to American Indians, to Smith and Boudinot, implied opposition to Democratic politics and especially to Indian removal. But their feelings about Israelite Indians did not lead to them disavowing expansion or the conquest of American Indians' lands. Believing that the conversion of American Indians to Christianity would herald the Millennium, they argued that it would also herald white ownership of the continent. Once they had realized their identity as Israelites, American Indians would return to Jerusalem and leave their lands open. In the words of the poet Charles Crawford who argued in 1799 for the Jewish identity of American Indians, they would then "relinquish their land to the white people."[76] Missions, therefore, would lead to the liquidation of Native peoples' land claims as surely as would Indian removal, without the need to engage in genocide. That this millennial hope seemed so probable to Smith and Boudinot speaks both to the distress and guilt they felt about American expansion at the cost of American Indians and to the limits of their moral imaginations. Claiming that Indians were Israelites meant, to Smith and Boudinot, that their land claims were less, not more, valid.

Their support for missions put Smith and Boudinot in conversation with wider trends in conservative evangelicalism. Northeastern evangelicals inherited from early and mid-eighteenth century British political thought a preference for centralized government and a suspicion that the hinterlands of empire produced immorality, lawlessness and racial mixing. Hence, unlike Democrats, they felt that the rate of settlement had to be kept to a moderate pace. With the fortunes of the Federalist party in decline after 1800, evangelicals turned to new voluntary

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[76] Crawford, *An Essay on the Propagation of the Gospel*, 28–29.

societies to put the brakes on a rapidly-expanding nation and to re-exert control over its culture.[77] The missionary societies, of which the largest was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM or American Board) founded in 1810, sought to cultivate American Indian governments as clients and gradually incorporate them into the nation by altering their ways of life to conform to Euro-American patterns.[78] This mirrored older British strategies, which had been to cultivate dependence in Native client governments while slowing the expansion of European settlement, with the aim of forestalling military conflict and enriching the empire's trade until American Indians could be incorporated as British subjects or succumbed to supposedly-inevitable extinction.[79]

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[77] Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness*; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 276–356; Den Hartog, *Patriotism & Piety*, 1–12. Onuf, "Imperialism and Nationalism in the Early American Republic."

[78] Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism*.

[79] Onuf, "Imperialism and Nationalism in the Early American Republic." Such dependence was often more theoretical than actual. Even in relationships marked by inequalities born of colonialism, American Indians were savvy consumers of European goods and active participants in global economies. Moreover, throughout the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century, some American Indian groups projected military and political dominance over substantial territories. On economics, see especially Susan Sleeper-Smith, "Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World," in *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World*, ed. Susan Sleeper-Smith (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009). On American Indians' participation in European geopolitics, see the literature building on Richard White, *The Middle Ground : Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), especially Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006); Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). Especially west of the Mississippi, Native groups continued to be vital political, economic, and military actors throughout the period covered here. See especially James Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). Useful syntheses include Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Colin Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America*, Second edition. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

Smith and Boudinot argued that the Bible specified "in the most express terms" that there would be a literal return of both the descendants of the Kingdom of Judah—Jews— and the descendants of the Kingdom of Israel—the putative lost tribes—to Jerusalem.[80] Only then would the prophesied Millennium, or thousand-year reign of peace preceding the final judgment of humanity, come to the world.[81] God had providentially preserved the Jews and hid the Israelites in America solely for this end, and had ensured that there would be signs in the Bible making this plan clear.[82] To doubt that there were Israelites to be found in America and that they would be returned to Jerusalem was, therefore, to doubt the Bible: "To a believer in the divinity of the bible, there can be no hesitation, but that all this will most assuredly come to pass in the most literal and extensive sense."[83] But it would only come to pass if white Americans exerted themselves in missionary efforts.

Both men emphasized a specific reading of the book of Isaiah to justify their prophecies about the millennial destiny of the United States. Again, the Anglican divine George Stanley Faber, whose endorsement of "hieroglyphic" reading of the Bible Boudinot had found so helpful,

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[80] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 61.

[81] Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 42. There has historically been wide disagreement among Christians about the literal reality and timing of the Millennium, particularly with regard to whether the thousand years of peace would occur under the rule of the returned Christ ("premillennialism") or under the rule of a society perfected by Christian effort ("postmillennialism"). Van Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (Macmillan, 1964), 150–51. These debates were particularly heated in early America, as millennial prophecies took on rich political meanings. Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought 1756-1800* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[82] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 79, 89; Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 31, 37.

[83] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 79.

was vital to their interpretations. Following Faber's translation in *A General and Connected View of the Prophecies* (1808), both mean read Isaiah 18:1-2, 7 as:

> Ho! land spreading wide the shadow of thy wings…Go! swift messengers unto a nation dragged away and plucked; unto a people wonderful from the beginning hitherto…
>
> At that season a present shall be led to the Lord of Hosts, a people dragged away and plucked, even of a people wonderful from the beginning hitherto; a nation expecting, expecting, and trampled under foot, whose land rivers have spoiled, unto the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, Mount Zion.[84]

Boudinot implies that the United States, symbolized by its heraldic eagle, might be such a land, for "We are a maritime people—a nation of seafaring men" who would help sail the American Israelites to their homeland.[85] Smith agreed, emphasizing the greatness of the nation prophesied: "And those two great wings shall prove but an emblem of a great nation…far sequestered from the seat of anti-christ, and of tyranny and blood; and whose asylum for equal rights, liberty, and religion, shall be well represented by such a national coat of arms."[86] God's preservation of America, therefore, was not gratuitous, but a crucial step in the restoration of Israel. Even the ugliness of colonization and expansion would, ultimately, turn to the good, absolving Protestants of their involvement.

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[84] As quoted in Ibid., 294–95. In the Authorized version, the verse opens "Woe to the land of whirring wings along the rivers of Cush." Faber's reading allowed them to understand Isaiah 18 as a summons to a land "spreading the shadow of thy wings," rather than a warning. It is possible that Boudinot's interpretation of this passage drew on John McDonald, *Isaiah's Message to the American Nation, a New Translation of Isaiah, Chapter XVIII with Notes Critical and Explanatory, A Remarkable Prophecy, Respecting the Restoration of the Jews Aided by the American Nation; with An Universal Summons to the Battle of Armageddon, and a Description of That Solemn Scene* (Albany: E. & E. Hosford, 1814). McDonald's is the earliest work I have found that identifies the United States with the nation "spreading the shadow of thy wings" and deduces that America must restore the Jews to Israel.

[85] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 298.

[86] Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 184.

Both writers interpreted Isaiah's call as a divine warning to treat American Indians with compassion and to missionize them to hasten the time when they would realize that they were truly lost Israelites. "Remember your debt of gratitude to God's ancient people for the word of life," wrote Smith, "Restore it to them, and thus double your own rich inheritance in its blessings." Teaching the histories of the Bible to Indians would "Elevate them above the wilds of barbarism and death, by showing them what has been done for their nation; and what is yet to be done by the God of their fathers." Missionaries should "Tell them the time draws near, and they must now return to the God of their salvation."[87] Once Indians had both admitted their Hebrew origins and converted to Christianity, pious American Christians could provide the ships and crews to return them to Israel.

Supporters of missions should not expect this to be easy. Rather, they should expect descendants of Israelites to be "obstinate" and "greatly attached to the land of their banishment." Although their religion should and would naturally give way to Christianity, only after steady effort in the missionary cause would they return to Jerusalem as converted Christians.[88] Missions required a constant outlay of money and people, which in turn required their supporters to cultivate concern for the unconverted and excitement about missionary gains among the rank-and-file Protestants who funded the societies. A major obstacle to this concern and enthusiasm was that missions perpetually lagged behind their supporters' highest aspirations. If Indians were Israelites, Smith and Boudinot argued, a certain amount of difficulty was to be expected. But, if ordinary Protestants kept faith with the missionaries, they argued, the national crisis over

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[87] Ibid., 193.

[88] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 49.

expansion would be miraculously resolved. White Americans could then claim the continent not as the spoils of conquest, but as a just reward.

But if Americans did not do this, it would be they, not the American Indians, who would be "Jews": "We are very apt, and indeed it is a common practice, to blame the Jews, and charge them with great perverseness, and call them an obstinate and stiff-necked race," argues Boudinot, "…Yet would not any impartial person, under a just view of our conduct to [the Indians] since the discovery of this country, and the practices of a large majority of those who call themselves Christians, draw a pretty certain conclusion that we had not much to insist on, in our favour[?]" If Americans chose to persist in their disobedience to God by abusing American Indians and refusing to fund missions to them, they would be like the archetypical stiff-necked Jews that were standard fare in Protestant sermons. "We go on, under similar threatnings [sic] of the same Almighty Being. We shew much the same hardness of heart, under the like denunciations of vengeance, that he will afflict and destroy, without mercy, those nations who join in oppressing his people, without regard to his honour and glory."[89] In the view of these writers, then, God had brought Europeans to North America as part of a grand design to restore Israel, and if white Americans did not work to fulfill that design they would come under condemnation as the Ancient Israelites set to wander to America had. The place of both American Indians and whites in the American racial hierarchy, therefore, was contingent on divine judgment rather than a result of unchanging nature.[90]

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[89] Ibid., 301.

[90] My interpretation here draws on David Silverman's work on racial theories developed in the Brothertown and Stockbridge Indian communities during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. See Silverman, *Red Brethren : The Brothertown and Stockbridge Indians and the Problem of Race in Early America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010), 147.

As with their argument that contact with lower-class whites and alcohol had “degraded” American Indians, these arguments that it was the duty of the United States to return Indians to Israel critiqued frontier white culture. Boudinot included in the preface to *A Star in the West*, for example, an essay from the *Analectic* magazine condemning frontier violence in general and especially the conduct of the Tennessee Militia general John Coffee—and by extension his commander, Andrew Jackson—during the Red Stick War. Boudinot explained the inclusion of the essay by commenting that it was “in so much the style and on the same principles” as *A Star in the West* that he could not omit it, but must demonstrate to its author that “such despised sufferers, however degraded” as Indians “had found compassion in other breasts beside his own.”[91] At the time Boudinot included the essay, Andrew Jackson was at the head of the Tennessee militia and busily engaged in extending his orders to prosecute war against the Creeks into a full-scale invasion and annexation of Spanish Florida. He would later rise to power, and to the Presidency, with the support of frontier whites who saw “Indian fighting” both as a continual necessity and a signal virtue.[92] Conservative evangelicals like Boudinot understood themselves as better educated by their religious upbringing to feel compassion for Indians than “a large majority of those who call themselves Christians.” Frontier whites’ lack of compassion, indeed, threatened to bring down God’s displeasure on the nation.

In the wake of Boudinot’s and Smith’s publications, a tight association formed in American periodicals between support for missions and belief in the Israelite descent of American Indians, or at least the willingness to credit such belief. An anonymous author calling

[91] Boudinot to Boudinot, “Rosehill.,” iii–xxi.

[92] Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic*, 17, 54; Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 241–71; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 97–107.

in 1822 for white Protestants to redouble missionary efforts commented that "My enthusiasm has not yet induced me to believe with the late Dr. Boudinot and others that we shall find on this continent the long lost tribes of Israel; but I am confident. . .that every exertion to illuminate the dark minds of these savages…will be crowned with the approbation of the Most High."[93] The seeming non sequitur of conceding doubt about Israelite Indians reveals the tight association of that idea with support for missions, in that the author feared that disbelief would betray insufficient zeal for converting American Indians. William Allen, the president of Bowdoin College, likewise associated Jewish Indian stories with missions in an 1837 letter. Allen told his correspondent that he could not agree that the American Indians were Israelites, but hastened to add that he felt that they "need the blessed light of the Gospel, which the christians of our Country, and not the Government of our country must send to them."[94] Both authors' hesitation reveals that telling stories about Jewish Indians in the early Republic was a way of identifying with missionary causes and of expressing hope in their future success. Accepting them as true, or at least crediting them as respectable, signaled allegiance to the political cause behind missions: opposition to the "solution" of Indian removal or extermination.

The association of support for Israelite Indian stories with pro-missions politics led missionary journals to report any hints of information that might reinforce narratives like Smith's and Boudinot's. For example, an 1826 report on a speech by a Seminole leader to the Secretary

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[93] "Indian Civilization."

[94] Epaphras Jones, *On the Ten Tribes of Israel and the Aborigines of America &c &c* (New Albany, IN: Collins & Green, 1831), 40–41. The dates on the letters cited, which Jones reprints in an appendix, are all in 1836 and 1837, years after the publication date of 1831 given on the title page of *On the Ten Tribes*. The most likely explanation seems to be that Jones reprinted *On the Ten Tribes* with the appendix no earlier than 1837, but neglected to change the title page. The 1831 date may also be a misprint, since the pamphlet was printed quite cheaply.

of War in the Protestant Episcopal Church missionary organ *The Philadelphia Recorder* noted the unnamed leader's use of a legend seemingly influenced by the story of Jacob and Esau. This story, the paper commented, "is considered a piece of circumstantial testimony in favour of the opinion, that the savages of our country are descendants of the lost tribes of Israel."[95] *The Western Recorder,* a weekly missionary journal printed in Utica, reported that the Bible had been translated into Ojibwe and commented that "the narrations in Genesis strike the Indians as agreeable to their traditions. Some persons have heretofore endeavoured to identify the Indians with the lost tribes of Israel."[96] The authors of these pieces distanced themselves slightly from Israelite Indian stories by attributing them to unnamed others who "considered [the story] a piece of circumstantial testimony" or "endeavoured to identify the Indians with the lost tribes of Israel," but that they included these comments at all signals that they knew some of their supporters were likely believers in Israelite Indian narratives.

Although it is difficult assess what effects Smith's and Boudinot's narrative had on white evangelical reading publics, therefore, these references suggest that Israelite Indian narratives came to be associated with support for missions to American Indians by the 1820s. The readings of the Bible and of ethnographic sources presented in *A Star in the West* and *View of the Hebrews* drew attention even from evangelicals who did not endorse Israelite Indian stories because they spoke to wider concerns about the morality of territorial expansion. The conservative evangelicals who funded missionary movements worried that God's blessing of America might be contingent on its collective morality, and hoped that the incorporation of

[95] Philadelphian, "Descendants of Israel," *Philadelphia Recorder*, July 8, 1826, Proquest American Periodicals.

[96] "The Progress of Knowledge."

American Indians through missions could avoid what they saw as the national sin of removal. Israelite Indian stories promised that those missions would be swiftly successful, would bring missionaries into contact with Indians who were surprisingly familiar, and would open new lands for settlement as effectively as would Indian removal.

***Conclusion***

By arguing for, or at least being willing to credit, the Israelite descent of American Indians, evangelical authors associated themselves with missions. They imagined Israelite Indians as fundamentally like themselves in that they were in covenant with God and followed a religion more familiar than the “heathenism” of other missionized people. Not only did this make it seem that missions would be relatively easy, but making American Indians familiar it also encouraged the compassion for American Indians that supporters of missions believed necessary to sustain their organizations.

Arguing that American Indians were Israelites also positioned evangelical authors as allies of Indians in opposition to frontier whites and their political supporters. Whites in the south and west tended, in these decades, to emphasize the inborn superiority of white people and to advocate for the continual expansion they believed necessary for their safety and economic security. Evangelical supporters of Israelite Indian stories argued, against this, that American Indians were “degraded” only because God had allowed them to wander far from Israel and become “degraded” from contact with lower-class whites as punishment for the sins of Israel. Their place in the racial hierarchy of the United States, therefore, was the result of God’s desire to humble them and would be undone in the millennium if white Americans displayed compassion. If they did not, but allowed the aggressive expansionism encouraged by frontier

white culture to direct relations with American Indians, they, also would fall under condemnation.[97]

That these narratives argued for compassion for American Indians and portrayed the colonial relationship between whites and Indians as contingent on God's will did not mean that they were anti-racist or anti-imperial.[98] They argued for compassion toward American Indians with the understanding that "Israelite" Indians would vacate the continent and leave their territories to whites. The conversion of the American Indians would therefore absolve evangelicals of guilt for American colonialism, open vast new lands for settlement, and leave whites at the top of the racial hierarchy. These narratives therefore encouraged the idea that missions to American Indians would accomplish the same ends as Indian removal in a way more pleasing to God. They did not dispute the assumptions that American Indians and whites could not co-exist in North America, or that it was up to whites to determine what should be done with or to American Indians. As Israelite Indian narratives spread, however, they would take on new meanings

[97] Boudinot, *A Star in the West*, 296–97.

[98] The characterization of northeastern evangelical nationalism as "anti-racist" comes from the description of its origins in the writings of the Connecticut Wits in Haselby, *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism*.

## Chapter 2: Our Common Father (1829-1839)

### *Introduction*

On March 8, 1837, the American Jewish politician, playwright, and newspaper editor Mordecai M. Noah (1785-1851) delivered his popular address, "Discourse on the Evidences of the American Indians Being the Lost Tribes of Israel," at the New York Mercantile Library, or Clinton Hall, in New York City. The Mercantile Library, like other stops on the then-booming "lyceum circuit," provided a mixture of edification and entertainment with public lectures and debates. Noah likely expected a crowd that night. After all, this address had proved popular in the past and he would soon capitalize on its success by publishing it.[1] But Noah would have had an additional reason to hope that his audience would be substantial: he would be part of a debate, rather than a lecture, because "the Indian warrior, Metecomet" would deliver an address refuting his. Overheated advertising aside, Noah's opponent— whose pseudonym paid tribute to the seventeenth-century Wampanoag sachem known to the English as King Philip—was not a "warrior," but a Methodist minister named William Apess (1798-1839) who was a Pequot by birth and a Wampanoag by adoption.[2]

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[1] Mordecai M Noah to Robert H. Pruyn, Esq., March 20, 1837, Box 1, Folder 5, MNP.

[2] Philip Gura, *The Life of William Apess, Pequot* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 129–30. "Metecomet" is an alternate spelling of Metacom or Metacomet, also known as King Philip. Apess helped make Philip newly famous in the early United States with his lecture on American Indian rights, *Eulogy on King Philip* (1836). On the conflict between the Native coalition led by Philip and the English settlers, see Jenny Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc., 2005). Gura also argues that Apess lectured under the name "Gos-kuk-wa-na-kon-ne-di-yu," a rendering of Sganyodaiyo or Handsome Lake, the "Seneca Prophet" who founded the Gaihwi:io or Longhouse Religion that was one of the most successful Nativist movements of the nineteenth century and one of the few to continue to the present day. On Sganyodaiyo, see 1735-1815 Handsome Lake and

Although Apess opposed Noah in 1837, had they met six years earlier they would both have argued for the Israelite ancestry of American Indians.[3] Early in his career Apess had used Boudinot's theories to think through his position as a Methodist and a member of Native nations living on the margins of nineteenth-century New England.[4] His sole published sermon, *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ* (1831), relied on the idea that American Indians were descended from the Lost Tribes of Israel to argue that conversion to Christianity did not require the abandonment of Native political autonomy. Apess had also packaged his autobiography, *A Son of the Forest* (1829 and 1831), with a lengthy extract from Boudinot's *A Star in the West*, thereby joining his self-presentation as a Christian Native American to the idea that he was also an Israelite.[5]

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Arthur Caswell Parker, *The Code of Handsome Lake, the Seneca Prophet,* (University of the state of New York, 1913); Anthony Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (Knopf, 1970); Matthew Dennis, *Seneca Possessed: Indians, Witchcraft, and Power in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). Apess's use of the name of a famous opponent to English settlement may have also been a response to racially-charged critiques from Noah's opponents implying that he was too soft on American Indians. When Noah delivered the same address in the same hall about a month earlier, a New York newspaper reported sarcastically that he would illustrate "his peculiar theory with several very pretty specimens of live Black Hawks, a young Oceola, a Jumper and two or three Black Dirts. At least, if he does not, he ought to do so, for the benefit of science and inductive philosophy." Black Hawk was a Sauk leader famous for leading armed opposition to the United States. Oceola, Jumper (Hemha Micco), and Black Dirt (Foke-Luste-Hajo) were all leaders of the Seminoles, who were then fighting a drawn-out war with the United States. If Apess read and took offense at these remarks, his pseudonym of "Metecomet" may have been intended to show that Native leaders were able to appear in public as speakers, not just "specimens." "A Rabbi in the Rostrum," *The Herald*, February 14, 1837, HAN.

[3] Apess's name was originally spelled "Apes," but the scholarship on him has followed Barry O'Connell's pioneering editorial work in using the spelling Apess used after 1836. See Barry O'Connell, "Introduction," in *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), xiv, n. 2.

[4] O'Connell, "Introduction"; Jean O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650-1790* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997); O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*; Nancy Shoemaker, "Mr. Tashtego: Native American Whalemen in Antebellum New England," *Journal of the Early Republic* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 109–32.

[5] William Apess, "A Son of the Forest," in *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, ed. Barry O'Connell (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 52.

Apess and Noah retold Israelite Indian stories for new political purposes that conservative northeastern evangelicals like Smith and Boudinot had not imagined. They wrote in the context of a new set of political and social ideals that rose to dominance in the United States from 1800-1830. Often summarized as "Jacksonian," this political culture saw the growth of a new consensus among white Americans: that the basis of the good society was the moral individual, freed from the social ties of deference and dependence that now came to seem like restrictions. Although the language used to argue for this political culture used universal language, only white men had wide access to the enslaved labor and cheap land appropriated from Native nations that funded economic and social freedom.[6]

Because they came of age with this racial caste system firmly in place, Apess and Noah made their arguments by referring to the nature of "Israelite" bodies, and especially skin color, more often and more intensely than did Boudinot or Smith.[7] By arguing for biological kinship

[6] Watson, *Liberty and Power*; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 164–201, 411–45. On women and this new political ideology, see Carolyn Eastman, "The Female Cicero: Young Woman's Oratory and Gendered Public Participation in the Early American Republic," *Gender and History* 19 (2007): 260–83. On race, see especially Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 15–38. It is important to recall that, even as new individualistic ideals came to dominate the sources we now have, their reach was not total. Women, people of color, and people living away from the urban centers of the north and east were all likely to depend on social connections, along with their attendant hierarchies and limitations, in ways that belied the idea of the atomistic individual in a free society. Then as now, being able to believe in being self-made was an expensive luxury, and comparatively few could afford it even if many aspired to it. See, especially, Sophie White, "'A Baser Commerce': Retailing, Class, and Gender in French Colonial New Orleans," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2006): 517–50; Kathleen DuVal, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution*, First edition. (New York: Random House, 2015).

[7] English contempt for Africans had a long history stretching back long before the Revolution, as outlined in e.g. Jordan, *White over Black*. The post-Revolutionary shift away from a variety of forms of unfree labor toward heavy reliance on race-based chattel slavery, however, intensified the association between the designation "black" or "negro" and unfreedom, as did shifts in the practice of slavery toward more brutal and efficient forms of labor extraction. For Native people, especially those living in areas of dense Anglo-American settlement, this had the effect of collapsing the distinction between "colored" (i.e. not white) and "black" (i.e. unfree and legally available for sale). Their responses to this situation varied, from full acceptance of purported Black inferiority and chattel slavery to arguments for solidarity among people of color. On slavery before the Revolution, see especially Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987); Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Norton, 1996); Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia*. On the influence of

between Israelite and Indian bodies, they made claims about contemporary Jews and Native peoples in the racialized language common in Jacksonian America. Previous scholarship has emphasized that Apess's narratives were articulated in response to racist notions about American Indians, but has portrayed Noah as concerned only with obtaining "American" status for Jews. This interpretation misses that Noah and Apess possessed bodies that were racialized in the early United States, and often marked as inferior to white Protestant bodies. By associating themselves and their kin with the virtuous Israelites that filled Protestant print culture, they could construct alternate lineages that contested their place in the American racial hierarchy without questioning its fundamental premises.

But Noah and Apess also used these stories to make pointed bids for land and political autonomy. Noah hoped that the supposed relationship between American Jews and American Indians would help secure land for Jewish immigrants while maintaining their ethnic distinction from white Protestants.[8] Apess, meanwhile, reinterpreted Israelite Indian narratives to imagine inter-tribal alliances based around adherence to populist evangelicalism.[9] If American Indians

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chattel slavery and labor regulation on racial attitudes, see Alden T. Vaughan, "The Origins Debate: Slavery and Racism in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 97, no. 3 (July 1, 1989): 311–54; Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*; Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*. On Native responses to chattel slavery and the early American racial regime, see Nancy Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to Be Red," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (June 1, 1997): 625–44; Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country : The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[8] Francis Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); Rifkin, *Manifesting America*.For a close study of this process in New York, highlighting the collusion between state, Federal, and private interests, see Taylor, *The Divided Ground*.

[9] I use the term "populist evangelicalism" to denote the evangelical churches—many growing out of the Baptist and Methodist movements—that rose to prominence in America from c. 1800 to c. 1840. In contrast to the conservative evangelicalism of Boudinot and Smith, populist evangelicals tended to emphasize the importance of dramatic emotional transformations over stable membership in and approval by a community of the "saved." Thus, they

were Israelites, he assumed, their religions would be fulfilled by Christianity. Native-led Christian communities could then form the basis of alliances between geographically-dispersed Native nations that would allow them to combine political resources and forge alliances with sympathetic northeastern evangelicals on more equal terms. He did not at first use "Israelite" identity to lay claim to any specific territories, but would later allude to it during his struggle to assist the Mashpee Wampanoag in maintaining their land claims.

Both men re-articulated Israelite Indian stories to argue that Jews' and Indians' cultural and political autonomy ought to be preserved because they were chosen by the same God the missionaries acknowledged. Part of the appeal of Israelite Indian narratives for Noah and Apess was that they emerged from the same evangelical culture that threatened the autonomy of Native peoples and American Jews. Noah continued to argue for the importance of Israelites' and Indians' supposed shared history long after his attempt to found a Jewish homeland in upstate New York faltered because he wanted to secure voluntarist reform societies as political allies, but saw missionaries who tried to convert Jews as threats to the continued existence of a Jewish community in America. Israelite Indian narratives allowed him to argue that Jews were original Americans and that they, not American Protestants, would fulfill America's divinely-ordained

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tended to be suspicious of hierarchy, including an educated ministry, as more likely an impediment than an aid to salvation. This style made populist evangelicalism accessible and appealing to rural whites, lower-class whites and people of color, who because of discrimination or frequent mobility were often shut out of the more hierarchical and stabile Protestant churches that tended to cluster in urban centers and to be closely tied to membership in a particular Euro-American ethnic group. As with my use of the term "conservative evangelicalism" in the first chapter, I am deliberately avoiding unhelpful periodization of a "First" and "Second Great Awakening." Optimistic views of the rise of populist evangelicalism can be found in Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*; George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991). More critical evaluations can be found in Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*; Amanda Porterfield, *Conceived in Doubt: Religion and Politics in the New American Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). The ethnic character of forms of American Protestantism other than populist evangelicalism is emphasized in Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society and Politics in Colonial America*, Updated edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Sweringa, "Ethnoreligious Political Behavior in the Early Nineteenth Century."

mission to create a Jewish homeland. Apess, similarly, used Israelite Indian narratives to directly respond to white missionary organizations. Although in favor of missions in principle, Apess was concerned that white missionaries were often assumed to be their non-white parishioners' legal guardians, which provided a pretext for stripping Native people of their rights. He therefore used Israelite Indian narratives to imply that American Indians should remain autonomous from whites even as they converted to Christianity.[10]

***Mordecai Noah***

One of the most influential Jews of the early American republic, Mordecai Noah was also a restless social climber and entrepreneur. He was born in Philadelphia in July, 1785 to Zipporah Phillips, a member of a long-established Portuguese Jewish family, and Manuel Mordecai, a recent Jewish immigrant from Mannheim, Germany. Manuel Mordecai had a short and disastrous business career that led him to abandon his family in 1791 or 1792. Zipporah died soon after, leaving Mordecai Noah and his sister Judith (1789-1868) in the care of their maternal grandparents Jonas Phillips (1736-1803) and Rebecca Machado Phillips (1746-1831). They arranged for Mordecai to be shuttled between relatives and friends of the family in Philadelphia, New York, and Albany throughout his childhood. He returned to Philadelphia, the seat of his grandfather's influence, in 1807 to launch in public career.[11] He almost immediately became

[10] This interpretation draws on Rochelle Raineri Zuck's argument that a pan-Indian politics is present in Apess's work. Rochelle Raineri Zuck, "William Apess, the 'Lost Tribes,' and Indigenous Survivance," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 1–26.

[11] The difference in social class between Noah's parents was significant: at this point, Sephardim—Jews, like Noah's mother, who traced their family lines and religious customs to Spain, Portugal, and the Mediterranean— had been in America longer and attained higher social status than Ashkenazim—Jews, like his father, from Central and Eastern Europe. Throughout his life, Mordecai Noah would play up his Sephardic connections and ancestry, even though three of his four grandparents were Ashkenazim. Cyrus Adler, L. Huhner, and David Sulzberger, "PHILLIPS," *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1907), http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12108-phillips; Aviva Ben-Ur, "Rebecca Machado Phillips," *Jewish Women's Archive, "Encyclopedia,"* accessed August 18, 2016, http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/phillips-rebecca-

involved with journalism and with the Democratic-Republican party, both preoccupations that would define his adult life.[12] Democratic-Republicans, later simply called Democrats, offered more options to a Jewish man attempting to climb the social ladder. They relied on white supremacism to unite their constituencies rather than the public Protestantism that Federalists valued, allowing Jews and Catholics to raise their status by emphasizing their whiteness.[13] Noah, for one, embraced racial fear-mongering and white supremacy with a vengeance. Even after a rivalry with Martin Van Buren made him switch allegiance to the Whig party after 1833, he publicly supported slavery and opposed granting the franchise to free Black Americans.[14]

Mordecai Noah used Israelite Indian narratives twice in his public life.[15] During his late career on the lecture circuit, he composed the *Discourse on the Evidences of the American Indians Being the Lost Tribes of Israel* that he delivered across the rostrum from Apess that night in March 1837. In 1825, a younger and less solvent Noah used these narratives in his attempt to found a Jewish colony on Grand Island near Buffalo, New York. This colony, called Ararat, was

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machado; Jonathan Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew : The Two Worlds of Mordecai Noah* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981), 1–4.

[12] Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, 5–6, 35–59, 77–96.

[13] Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution*; Sweringa, "Ethnoreligious Political Behavior in the Early Nineteenth Century," 131; Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*; Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*; Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*.

[14] Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, 111–13. I disagree with Jonathan Sarna's assessment that Noah was merely engaging in a newspaperman's hyperbole when he wrote panegyrics on slavery calling it divinely-ordained. Jews, like Catholics, had ample reason to embrace white supremacy in this period. The denigration of Black Americans provided them with a way to cleanse themselves of the taint of foreign-ness by casting themselves as the defenders of white purity. The idea that slavery was designed by God, meanwhile, was a common one in antebellum culture. See Johnson, *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity*.

[15] Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, 125.

to be a home for European Jews and American Indians. Drawing on imagined kinship ties between "Israelite" Indians and European Jews, Noah presented his project as a way of cementing Jewish claims to the North American continent and undoing what he saw as a damaging Jewish alienation from the land.

Interpreters of Ararat arguing for its wider political and cultural significance have felt the need to explain away Noah's desire to make money from land speculation. He first investigated the price of land on Grand Island in September, 1824, four months after he was declared insolvent.[16] Land speculation was a common way to make money quickly at the time, so historians have had to work hard to deny his economic interest in the project. The historian Jonathan Sarna, for example, argues that Noah was not truly interested in speculation by pointing to letters in which Noah seems to be unsure how much land he had purchased on Grand Island. This allows Sarna to see Ararat as a high-minded forerunner of later Zionist movements.[17] But Noah's interest in land was not in conflict with his cultural and political aims. What he called "this laudable and prosperous project" was meant to create an asylum for the Jews, yes, but it was also meant to make its backers rich. Noah hoped that investors in Ararat could expect returns of $100,000 or more for an outlay of $10,000 if European Jews could be suitably

[16] Mordecai M Noah, "Signed Petition by M.M. Noah for Insolvency, Accomplished and Signed by Noah, Countersigned by Richard Riker" (New York, N.Y., March 5, 1824), Box 1, Folder 2, MNP; Mordecai M Noah, "Noah's Secondary Interest in Grand Island," September 27, 1824, Box 1, Folder 4, MNP. The choice of an anonymous AJHS archivist to label Noah's inquiry about land costs evidence of his "secondary interest," the primary presumably being to secure a Jewish homeland, reflects the apologetic strain of much of the historiography.

[17] Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, 62, 65.

convinced of the security of the land titles they were buying and of the backing of the local government.[18]

In line with Sarna's interpretation of Ararat as a proto-Zionist project, Ararat has been read as an attempt to found a Jewish nation within the United States or, less grandiosely, to delineate an American Jewish identity.[19] Rachel Rubinstein has described it, along with other instances of imaginative connections between American Indians and American Jews, as a way of expressing Jews' "simultaneous and interacting desires for, and anxieties about, tribal and national belonging" while registering "a covert resistance to an American political culture that historically policed the kinds of difference it could tolerate."[20] Ararat, in these readings, was primarily about American Jews' complicated feelings about "Americanizing" or "becoming American." These interpretations have rightly highlighted Noah's desire for Jews to participate in, yet remain distinct from, American culture. But the fuzziness of the terms "American" and "Americanize" has led them to downplay the racial dimensions and concrete material consequences of Noah's project. In the early Republic, to be "American" was to be white. To be white was to have the right to Black labor and American Indian land at discount prices. Noah's interest in acquiring land on Grand Island was not secondary to his attempt to be both Jewish and

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[18] Mordecai M Noah to Peter B. Porter, "New York," August 17, 1824, HH-11, Peter B. Porter Papers, Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. This letter also reveals that Noah originally contemplated calling his settlement "Jerusalem," a name what would have been seen as even more grandiose than the one he settled on.

[19] Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, 61–65; Feldman, *Dual Destinies*, 61–62; Eran Shalev, "'Revive, Renew, and Reestablish': Mordecai Noah's Ararat and the Limits of Biblical Imagination in the Early American Republic," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 62, no. 1 (2010): 1–20; Linsley, "Saving the Jews: Religious Toleration and the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews."

[20] Rachel Rubinstein, *Members of the Tribe: Native America in the Jewish Imagination* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 18.

American, and it is not a fact we need to explain away. Acquiring land for Jews on the continent was part of becoming white, and becoming white was then the only way to be "American." Noah's envisioned unity between American Indians and American Jews was also not at odds with his vocal opposition to Abolitionism.[21] Incorporating American Indians while thrusting Black Americans outside the body politic was simply one style of being white in early nineteenth-century America.

**Israelites and Jewish lands**

Both a playwright and a Freemason, Noah understood the value of ritual and spectacle and used them to his advantage to create an elaborate performance that would drum up the local excitement and support he believed necessary to attract European Jews to Ararat.[22] At dawn on Thursday, September 15, 1825 a salute was fired from the steps of the Buffalo Court House. By eleven o'clock, a procession with a band, military and civic officials, and a long line of Freemasons had formed in front of the local Masonic Lodge. They processed to nearby St. Paul's Episcopal Church to the march from Handel's *Judas Maccabeus*, with Noah dressed as a "Judge of Israel" in crimson, ermine-trimmed robes and wearing a "richly embossed golden medal suspended from his neck." Earlier plans to hold the ceremonies on Grand Island, where a flag

[21] Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, 110–14.

[22]Noah joined Independent Royal Arch Lodge No. 2 in New York City on March 25, 1825. R.W. William Duncan, *A History of Independent Royal Arch Lodge No. 2 F&AM of the State of New York* (New York, 1904), 274. Samuel Oppenheim, "The Jews and Masonry in the United States Before 1810," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, 19 (January 1, 1910), 1-94. The Lodge records are not clear about Noah's degree, but since he is listed as a full member he was probably raised to the third, or Master Mason, degree that granted full membership in the Lodge. Despite its name, Independent Royal Arch Lodge No. 2 did not confer the Royal Arch degrees. It is unclear how long Noah was an active Mason: in 1826 he defended the organization in public, but a decade later had adopted a negative position on it that was safer in the face of a substantial anti-Masonic political party. Sarna *Jacksonian Jew*, 186 n. 17 On Noah's belief that pageantry, including Masonic honors, would excite European Jews and assure them of the project's local support, see Noah to Porter, "New York."

staff had been put up for an undescribed "Grand Standard of Israel," were foiled by a lack of boats to ferry the large crowd that had gathered, so Noah delivered a proclamation outlining the plan and purpose of the settlement in the Episcopal Church.[23]

Noah's Ararat proclamation called for the Jews of the world to fund—through a tax of "three shekels in silver per annum, or one Spanish dollar"— the establishment of an "asylum" on Grand Island where persecuted Jews, including American Indians, could settle. The Jews of Europe, who had been "deprived…for centuries of a right in the soil" could now "till the land, reap the harvest, and raise the flocks which are unquestionably their own" on Ararat.[24] That their title to the land should be unquestionable was key to Noah, who believed that buyers would only be interested in clear rights to land. His worry was reasonable; a red-hot market in appropriated Native lands had already produced numerous competing claims to land in western New York.[25] Clear title could have been bought with a sizable down payment, of course, but, as his desperate call for a global tax to finance the venture suggests, he had been unable to secure the hoped-for financial backing. Therefore, his proclamation attempted to reassure European Jews that their title to the land was clear by alluding to the idea that American Indians were descended from Ancient Israelites and, therefore, Jews.[26] This idea allowed Noah to imply that American Indian

[23] Michael Schuldiner and Daniel J. Kleinfeld, eds., "The Ararat Proclamation and Speech, The Buffalo Patriot Vol. VIII Buffalo, Tuesday September 20, 1825," in *The Selected Writings of Mordecai Noah* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 105–7.

[24] Ibid., 107, 109.

[25] Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 366–95.

[26] Noah's decision to collapse any distinction between living Jews and Ancient Israelites when it suited his purposes was characteristic. For example, Noah claimed in a public speech given at the consecration of Shearith Israel's second synagogue on Mill Street that "Israel" had faced eighteen hundred years of persecutions because of its

lands were also Jewish lands, and that even newly-arrived European immigrants could claim a primordial title to land in North America through kinship with American Indians. He may have hoped that this would secure title to Ararat whether his global tax on Jews succeeded in raising the necessary capital or not.

As far as can be determined, Noah and the "Secretary Pro Tem" of Ararat, Abraham Benjamin Seixas, were the only Jews in attendance at the ceremony.[27] American Jews looked askance at the Ararat project, "from the fear," Noah claimed, "that the conduct of Jewish emigrants might possibly bring them into disrepute."[28] As it turned out, European Jews were just as embarrassed. In a widely-reprinted rebuke, the Chief Rabbi of Cologne claiming to speak as well for "Messrs. [Solomon] Hierschell [sic] and [Raphael] Meldola, Chief Rabbis at London," took Noah to task for attempting to establish a refuge for Jews prematurely: "God alone knows the epoch of the Israelitish restoration… every attempt on our part to re-assemble with any

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resistance to idolatry. The point of referring to the Jews as "Israel" here was to emphasize the continuity of persecution between Greeks, Romans, and Catholics and to insist that only in the Protestant-majority United States could those centuries of persecution end. Mordecai M Noah, *Discourse Delivered at the Consecration of the Synagogue of K.K. She'erit Yisra'el in the City of New-York: On Friday, the 10th of Nisan, 5578, Corresponding with the 17th of April, 1818* (New-York: Printed by C.S. Van Winkle, 1818).

[27] Lewis F. Allen, "The Story of the Tablet of the City of Ararat," in *The Book of the Museum*, by Frank H. Severance, vol. XXV, Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society (Buffalo: Buffalo Historical Society, 1921), 123; "Genealogy" n.d., Seixas Family Papers, Box 1 Folder 4, American Jewish Historical Society Collection. The Sexias family was a prominent Sephardic family in New York. Gershom M. Sexias (1745-1816), the first male of the family to arrive in North America, was the lay leader and Hazan of Shearith Israel. Abraham Benjamin Seixas (1786-1834) married Rachel N. Cardoza of Charleston on April 11, 1821 and died in Charleston. He is otherwise obscure.

[28] Noah to Porter, "New York."

politico-national design is forbidden, as an act of high-treason against the Divine Majesty." When Israel was restored, he added, it would not be to "a marsh in North America."[29]

Noah claimed kinship to American Indians in part to place Ararat in a productively ambiguous relationship to the Federal government. Although he claimed Ararat would be under the protection of the United States, Noah did not spell out how, precisely, the new republic he founded would relate to other states. His lack of clarity was consonant with legal ambiguity in the early nineteenth century around whether the Federal or state governments had the right to negotiate with American Indian polities for land. Because of this ambiguity, Federal, state, and private agents could all compete to extract land cessions from Native polities and, over the long run, tended to arrogate more land for white settlement.[30] Like other land speculators in the early United States, Noah exploited the existence of this grey area by leaving Ararat's governmental status uncertain until he could see how the chips would fall.[31] His attempt to support his land

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[29] "Reassemblage of the Jews," *Christian Secretary*, February 13, 1826; "Re-Assemblage of the Jews: To the Editor," *The Columbian Star*, January 28, 1826; "[Letters]," *Israel's Advocate; Or, the Restoration of the Jews Contemplated and Urged* 4, no. 2 (February 1826): 20–21. The rabbi's letter was reprinted particularly often in evangelical papers, which were more likely to advocate the conversion of Jews than the creation of a Jewish colony. *Christian Secretary* and *The Columbian Star* were both Baptist newspapers. *Israel's Advocate* was published by the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews, of which Noah was a firm opponent. The mentioned English rabbis were Solomon Hirschell (1762-1842), whose name is also spelled Hirschel or Herschell, and Raphael Meldola (1754-1828), respectively the Ashkenazic and Sephardic chief rabbis of London. Hilary L. Rubinstein, "Hirschell [Hirschel, Herschell], Solomon (1762-1842), Chief Rabbi," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2009); Richard Gottheil and Clarence I. de Sola, "MELDOLA," *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1907).

[30] Taylor, *The Divided Ground*.

[31] My economic interpretation of Noah's motives here differs from the political one explored in Shalev, "'Revive, Renew, and Reestablish': Mordecai Noah's Ararat and the Limits of Biblical Imagination in the Early American Republic." Shalev argues that the Ararat project relied on a larger political Hebraism in the early American republic, and failed in part because of U.S. resistance to the creation of a new state with an ambiguous relationship to the Federal government. I agree with Shalev about the importance of Hebraic models for early American politics, but my reading of the evidence is that Noah envisioned Ararat more as a land investment than a new state or government. As I have tried to emphasize here, however, almost everything about Noah's plans was up in the air,

claims with reference to the supposed familial link between American Indians and Jews was a further exercise in speculation.

The Ararat experiment failed, but Noah continued to believe that the Israelite identity of American Indians underwrote American Jewish claims to land.[32] His later "Discourse on the Evidences" portrayed Israelite Indians as the original Americans. Reinforcing the prior claim of American Jews to the continent allowed Noah to one-up Anglo claims to be the "true" or rightful Americans, and thereby to resist the idea that American Jews had to become Protestant to become white. But Noah's depictions of "Israelite" Indians' land claims were unstable. At times in his "Discourse," the posited Israelite ancestors of American Indians seem to have come into a continent devoid of settlement, mirroring narratives about European colonists' entry into an uninhabited wilderness. After the Lost Tribes crossed the Bering Strait, he argued, they spread down through the Americas to Cape Horn over two thousand years "the more hardy keeping to the north…the more cultivated fixing their residence in the beautiful climates and rich possessions of Central America, Mexico, and Peru."[33] All the Americas, therefore, were settled by lost Israelites.

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hence his desire for the additional legitimacy that kinship to American Indians seemed to bring. Shalev's interpretation is certainly possible, therefore.

[32]Noah had given up the project by November of 1833, when he wrote to the New York State Comptroller to inquire how much land, if any, he had purchased in his scramble to secure backers. By the following May the cornerstone of Ararat had been installed as a curiosity in the village of Whitehaven on Grand Island. Mordecai M Noah to A.C. Flagg, November 19, 1833, Box 1, Folder 4, MNP; Lewis F. Allen to Peter B. Porter, "Buffalo," May 22, 1834, X-5, Peter B. Porter Papers, Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. The envelope to Allen's letter reads, in Porter's hand, that he had given Allen the cornerstone on the condition that it be placed in a brick monument in Whitehaven.

[33] Mordecai M Noah, *Discourse on the Evidences of the American Indians Being the Descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel: Delivered before the Mercantile Library Association, Clinton Hall* (New-York: James Van Norden, 1837), 9–10.

Yet at other times Noah's justifications mirrored white settler narratives claiming land rights by conquest, such as those supported by chronicles of American Indian "outrages" and massacres.[34] Noah insisted that "the Tulequans [Toltecs] and Azeteques [Mexica]. . .who built the pyramids of Cholula and city of Palenque" then widely publicized in the American press were not Jews, but Canaanites. After being driven out from Israel by Joshua, these Canaanites had fled westward across Europe and Africa, and eventually to America. Later, the Lost Tribes crossed the Bering Strait and "The descendants of Joshua a *second* time fell on the Canaanites in another continent, knowing them well as such, and burn[t] their temples, and destroy[ed] their gigantic towers and cities."[35] Following the pattern of Anglo-American justifications of colonialism such as Timothy Dwight's *The Conquest of Canaän* (1788), as well as their Biblical models such as the Book of Joshua, Noah here implies that Jewish Indians had won the Americas for civilization and for God, and therefore had a continuing claim to them.

Noah's praise for "Israelite" Indians dovetailed with his argument that only vigorous action on the part of American Jews could restore Jews to Israel and save American Indians from what he saw as their inevitable destruction. Late in life, Noah argued that for the restoration of Jews to Israel to happen "the Jewish people must now do something for themselves; they must move onward to the accomplishment of that great event long foretold… and when they DO move, that mighty power which has for thousands of years rebuked the proscriptions and intolerance shown to the Jews, by a benign protection of the *whole* nation, will still cover them

[34] See, e.g., the frequently-reprinted Archibald Loudon, *A Selection of Some of the Most Interesting Narratives of Outrages, Committed by the Indians, in Their Wars, with the White People* (Carlisle [PA]: A. Loudon, 1808).

[35] Noah, *Discourse on the Evidences of the American Indians Being the Descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel*, 24–25.

with his invincible standard." If they did so, "Possibly, the restoration may be near enough to include even a portion of these interesting people [American Indians]" because of their descent from the Lost Tribes of Israel.[36] Although Noah called for American Protestants to assist Jews in returning to Israel, he resisted the notion that either Jews or American Indians needed missionaries to fulfil their divinely-appointed destinies. Rather, in the mode of the Jacksonian Democratic politics to which he devoted much of his adult life, Noah called for self-reliance and self-help.

For Noah, the putative Jewishness of American Indians was not to be superseded by Christianity, but was a reason to regard their land claims both as valid and as having transferred to American Jews. Noah was no advocate of American Indian rights, however. His 1844 "Discourse on the Restoration of the Jews," for example, praised Indian removal as an act of benevolence. As with his use of American Indians as part of the visual spectacle surrounding Ararat, arguing for Native land claims was for him a means to the end of securing American Jews' place as citizens of a white supremacist republic.[37] Arguing that American Indians' land claims rested on the foundation of their conquest and elimination of heathen "Canaanites" worked, by transfer of those claims along imagined lines of kinship, to reinforce Jewish claims to the physical territory of America. Claiming American Indians' land, in turn, allowed American Jews to claim political and cultural status as whites.

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[36] Ibid., 37–38.

[37] Mordecai M. Noah, *Discourse on the Restoration of the Jews Delivered at the Tabernacle Oct. 28 and Dec. 2 1844* (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1845), 10–11.

**Israelite and Jewish bodies**

During and immediately after the Ararat project, Noah attempted to secure an implicit endorsement from his "Israelite" relatives by arranging for American Indians to be present at events advertising his land venture. He invited the prominent Seneca leader Red Jacket, then living in Buffalo, to attend the inaugural ceremonies, although whether he came is unknown.[38] He was more successful in getting support from American Indians he paid to be present. In October 1825, he launched a five-ton boat, called *Noah's Ark*, to be part of Governor DeWitt Clinton's grand flotilla sailing from Buffalo to New York Harbor to celebrate the completion of the Eerie Canal. He meant to excite interest in the real estate venture by reenacting the narrative of the flood in Genesis: *Noah's Ark* would sail filled with "Israelites" who bid Jews to find rest in Ararat, a colony named for the location that the original Ark supposedly came to rest. The *New Hampshire Sentinel* described the boat as laden "with animals and birds of various descriptions, and two young Indian hunters of the Seneca tribe, dressed in their costume." By placing these young Seneca men aboard the Ark, Noah was reiterating the same claim that he had made by inviting Red Jacket: that the Native bodies displayed aboard the *Ark* were interchangeable with Jewish bodies. The two Seneca men dressed in what white observers could recognize as Native "costume" were meant at once to be read as authentic American Indians and authentic Israelites. Their presence implied that the Jews who would settle in Ararat staked their land claims by kinship with American Indians, not by conquest. The gesture, however, failed as a territorial claim or as a fund-raising advertisement. The *Ark* became stuck in the locks on the

[38] Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, 71.

canal and reached New York Harbor days after the governor's flotilla. As with Noah's initial proclamation, the newspapers were not kind.[39]

An identification between American Indians and the Lost Tribes allowed Noah to reproduce, in a form specific to American Jews, discourses that constructed white American identity by portraying whites as the heirs of American Indians who had vanished or were vanishing. In town histories, fourth of July speeches, plays like *Metamora*, and fictional works like *The Last of the Mohicans*, white Americans reassured themselves that American Indians were tragically, but inevitably, passing from the earth. They bequeathed their lands and their best spiritual qualities to whites, absolving them in the process of any responsibility for territorial expansion or aggression against Native nations.[40] But whereas white Americans drew spiritual connections between themselves and American Indians, Noah argued in his Ararat proclamation for a bodily connection between American Jews and Indians.[41] Since the biological assumptions of the day held that members of the same national groups would share characteristics, Noah therefore had to defend Indian "nature" by arguing that their distinction from Jews was cultural alone. The Indians, Noah insists, "are not Savages, they are wild and savage in their habits, but possess great vigour of intellect and native talent, they are a brave and eloquent people."[42] After

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[39] Ibid., 74; Shalev, "'Revive, Renew, and Reestablish': Mordecai Noah's Ararat and the Limits of Biblical Imagination in the Early American Republic," 17; John Prentiss, "Variety.," *The New Hampshire Sentinel*, November 18, 1825, EAN.

[40] Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 1–70; O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*; Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism*, 1–22.

[41] Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian, from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Renée Bergland, *The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Subjects* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000); Bellin, *The Demon of the Continent*.

unspecified “measures” to “cultivate their minds, soften their condition,” they might in time “re-unite with their brethren, the chosen people” into one nation.[43] They were, in other words, Israelites able to become Jews.

Noah’s Ararat project was also a rebuttal to the assumptions about Judaism and Jewish men’s ability to work the land promulgated by Protestant missionaries, particularly an organization with the Orwellian name of the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews (ASMCJ). The ASMCJ, which was chartered in 1820 with Elias Boudinot as the first president, believed that Americans ought to work to restore Jews to Israel, but that this would only be accomplished after their conversion.[44] Noah opposed the ASMCJ, literally, from its foundation. At the meeting of the New York Legislature that had granted the society’s charter, Noah spoke against the modification of its name from the original, and less-euphemistic, “Society for Evangelizing the Jews” out of the feeling that it should, at least, honestly declare its purposes.[45]

The consistent theme of Noah’s arguments against the ASMCJ was that Jews were not in need of Christian tutelage. One immediate impetus for his Ararat project, for example, was the

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[42] Schuldiner and Kleinfeld, “The Ararat Proclamation,” 109–11.

[43] Ibid.

[44] American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews. First Annual Meeting 1820, *Constitution of the American Society for Ameliorating the Condition of the Jews: With an Address from the Hon. Elias Boudinot, Delivered before the Society at Their First Annual Meeting, May 12, 1820 ; and the Act of Incorporation Granted by the Legislature of the State of New-York.* (New-York: Printed by Abraham Paul ..., 1820); “American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews,” *Israel’s Advocate; Or, the Restoration of the Jews Contemplated and Urged* 1, no. 3 (March 1823): 33.

[45] Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, 56–57.

ASMCJ had founded a farm in upstate New York seven months earlier that was meant to be a refuge for converted Jews. He first inquired about land on Grand Island in September 1824, seven months after the ASMCJ announced to supporters that it planned to build a farm in upstate New York for Jewish converts to Christianity.[46] The converts would be closely monitored by a white Protestant farmer, a matron, and a chaplain to ensure the validity of their conversions, and would learn agricultural skills to enable them to practice trades other than the mercantile and financial ones that the ASMCJ assumed they were accustomed to.[47]

Noah's Ararat project shared with the ASMCJ farm the assumption that labor on the land would be good for Jews. But where the ASMCJ wanted Jews to work the land to speed their conversion, Noah countered that working the land would make them better Jews. Noah used the concept that American Indians were Israelites to assert that Jewish men were not, contrary to anti-Jewish tropes, weak or defective of body.[48] The American Indian "Israelites," Noah wrote in his "Discourse on the Evidences," were "a singular race of men, with enlarged views of life, courage, constancy, humanity, policy, eloquence, love of their families; with a proud and gallant bearing, fierce in war, and, like the ancients, relentless in victory."[49] Although framed as praise for American Indians and as reasons not to think them "savage," this was also an argument for

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[46] Noah, "Noah's Secondary Interest in Grand Island"; Feldman, *Dual Destinies*, 76.

[47] American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews, "Proceedings of the American Society," *Israel's Advocate; Or, the Restoration of the Jews Contemplated and Urged* 3, no. 8 (August 1825): 114, 118–19.

[48] Steven Kruger, *The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

[49] Noah, *Discourse on the Evidences of the American Indians Being the Descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel*, 8.

the strength, independence, and virtue of their supposed relatives, American Jews. Noah's move to associate Jews with American Indians here echoes the work of James Fennimore Cooper and other authors of the early Republic who associated their characters with American Indians so as to showcase their proximity to an invigorating natural world.[50] Noah's description of this "singular race of men" is meant to show how American Jews could be: physically capable, "proud and gallant," relentless in war, but also possessing "constancy, humanity, policy, eloquence, love of their families." This ideal of physical courage and capacity for violence tempered by familial affection and self-control was, in fact, a widespread masculine ideal in the northeast between the Revolution and Civil War.[51] Noah, then, was not just imagining American Indians as mirrors in which to see a Jewish self, but specifically to see a masculine Jewish self.[52]

***William Apess***

William Apess was one of the few Native Americans from the early nineteenth century who had the education and resources to write extensive works without the mediation of a white co-author. Since the publication of Barry O'Connell's groundbreaking edition of his collected works, he has proven an especially fruitful figure for historians and literary scholars studying American Indian writing practices and intellectual traditions.[53] This chapter focuses specifically

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[50] Henry Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).

[51] Bryan C Rindfleisch, "'What It Means to Be a Man': Contested Masculinity in the Early Republic and Antebellum America," *History Compass* 10, no. 11 (November 2012): 852–65.

[52] Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

[53] William Apess, *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, ed. Barry O'Connell (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992); Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Maureen Konkle, *Writing*

on Apess's reception and re-shaping of Israelite Indian narratives in his early work. Apess considered "Israelite" both an alternative imagining of the racial category "Indian" and a term that indicated voluntary membership in the "Kingdom of Christ"—a religious and political union of Native peoples and allied white evangelicals that transcended, though it did not ignore, the reservation boundaries recognized by the United States. American Indians who converted to Christianity were doubly Israelites: literal Israelites by blood and spiritual Israelites by membership in the Kingdom of Christ. Thus, they were both fully Native and fully Christian.[54] The connection of Israelite identity to land was unusually flexible in Apess's thought, however. At first, he envisioned the "Kingdom of Christ" transcending particular territories, but after engagement with the legal struggles of the Mashpee Wampanoag came to hint that being an Israelite did mean that one had particular rights to a promised land. Despite his investment in calling Native peoples Israelites early in his career, however, he grew wary about the kind of

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*Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Robert Warrior, *The People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 1–47; Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 163–218; Kerstin Vogel, *The Native American Declaration of Independence: William Apess's Reflections of Ethnic Consciousness* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2008); O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 180–90.

[54] Similarly, as Jean O'Brien argues, Apess would later claim that American Indians were full citizens of both their nations and of the United States and, therefore, entitled to the rights of both citizenships. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 180–90. I build also on David Carlson's argument that Apess's autobiography established him as a liberal individual whose property rights and reputation could be trespassed upon, and therefore defended. This was certainly one effect of his autobiographical writing, especially in *Indian Nullification*, but Carlson's argument seems to underestimate both the integrity of Native communities in the Northeast and the extent to which those communities had incorporated Protestantism. In particular, his argument that Apess's account of his conversion amounted to an acceptance of "the colonialist rhetoric of Indianness" which "constitutes 'the Indian' as a cultural and social orphan in need of guidance and care" seems to miss both the broader context of independent American Indian churches in the northeast—which provided spaces where Christian conversion meant more, not less, independence for Native people—and the fact that Apess's autobiography was aimed at a public that already regarded American Indians as objects of pity and care. Whether he internalized that idea or not is likely unknowable, but it would be hard for him to miss the fact that pity was the dominant emotional mode of whites who professed to be American Indians' political allies. Writing in that mode, therefore, would be more legible to his audience. David Carlson, *Sovereign Selves: American Indian Autobiography and the Law* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 89, 90–121.

sympathy Israelite Indian narratives attracted from white Protestants and abandoned them by 1837.

**Israelites and the racialized body**

Apess's early preference for identifying Native citizenship by descent more than by residence in a particular territory reflected the fact that during his lifetime Native people in New England frequently moved in search of work and sustenance through territories that were not legally theirs, even if they were part of their traditional homelands.[55] Migration did not always mean displacement or disruption but, as Apess detailed in his 1829 spiritual autobiography *A Son of the Forest*, it did for him. His father, William Apes (b. 1770) of Colchester, Connecticut was a man of mixed Pequot and English descent who moved frequently around Massachusetts and Connecticut working as a laborer and servant.[56] Apess was born in Colrain, Massachusetts, and brought at a young age to Colchester, a community in the southeast of Connecticut near the main Pequot population centers. Although born into the dense Pequot networks of the region, he was separated from them after his parents left Colchester, placing him and his siblings in the care of their abusive maternal grandparents. Apess's clearest memory of his grandmother was of her beating him with a club when he was around four—a beating that only stopped when his uncle, Lemuel Ashbo, fought his way past Apess's grandfather to take the boy away.[57] Ashbo sought

[55] David J Silverman, "The Impact of Indentured Servitude on Southern New England Indian Society and Culture, 1680-1810," *New England Quarterly* 74 (2001): 622–66; O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 146–47.

[56] I follow the precedent set in Philip Gura's biography of William Apess of spelling his ancestors' last names as "Apes," since Apess did not add the second "s" to his name until the 1830s. Reliance on migratory labor could make family bonds more complex. Apess's father, for example, had at least three wives throughout his life, and because of the poor condition of records on people of color in New England it is now uncertain which was Apess's mother.

[57] Although beyond the pale by any contemporary standards, this beating was especially unthinkable for Native people in eastern North America. European and Euro-American observers who commented on American Indian

help from David Furman, a white neighbor who had the resources and social standing to draw the attention of the town selectmen to the children's neglect and abuse. The children were removed from their grandparents' home and bound out as apprentices to families in Colchester, as was the usual practice for dealing with children who had no one to care of them. Apess was bound out to the Furman family, beginning a long period of his life that he retrospectively narrated as utterly lacking contact with other Native people.[58] It is unlikely that he did not see his Pequot relatives at all during his time with the Furman family— Ashbo was a near neighbor and it is difficult to imagine that he did not visit the nephew he rescued from death during what would be a year-long convalescence— but as an adult he recalled this as a time when he was utterly cut off from his people.[59]

Apess later reached for Israelite Indian narratives in part because his experiences as an indentured servant to white families meant that the term "Indian" was laden with shame for him. Indians in New England were marked out as a people of dark complexion, subject both to whites' pity for the "poor Indian" and rage at Native people who seemed either to be taking insufficient or too much advantage of the opportunities afforded them by white charity.[60] Native

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child-rearing uniformly reported that they refused to physically "correct" their children. Calloway, *New Worlds for All*, 194–95.

[58] Indentured children were expected to work for the families that took them on to recompense them for room, board, and whatever education they provided. Apess was unable to work for a year because of his injuries, so as was usual in such cases the town recompensed the family. Apess, "A Son of the Forest," 5–6; Gura, *The Life of William Apess, Pequot*, 9–12.

[59] Apess, "A Son of the Forest," 12–15; Gura, *The Life of William Apess, Pequot*, 15–16.

[60] The dynamics of British missionary pity toward American Indians are explored in Stevens, *The Poor Indians*. Although there has been no extensive study of the emotions New England missionaries felt toward American Indians, many of the same basic dynamics as Stevens outlines were present. In particular, Indigenous people who were objects of white Christians' charity were exposed to shame and anger if they were insufficiently grateful and

people were objects of fear in New England oral traditions: Apess grew up hearing from the Furman family about “Indians” who killed and scalped “men, women, and children.” Such stories had their effect. As a child, he fled when he came on a group of women in the woods with complexions “as dark as the Natives.”[61] The term “Indian” became associated for him with personal as well as public racial shame. The only direct quotation from David Furman that Apess includes in his autobiography was the threat, shouted as he caught Apess to beat him for an offense had had not committed: “I will learn you, you Indian dog…”[62] That he recalled these precise words decades after the incident demonstrates how the shame of the term “Indian,” driven into his body by a switch, had come to be part of Apess’s interior world as well as his social environment.[63]

“Indian,” therefore, was not a neutral term for Apess, but one connected to racist animus and ostracism. In *A Son of the Forest,* the adult Apess argued that the word “Indian” was “imported for the special purpose of degrading us,” since he “could not find it in the Bible.”[64] Insofar as Apess wrote to lay the groundwork of an alliance between Natives based on collective

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industrious, but also if they participated too fully in white society by, for example, marrying white women. For individual examples, see Demos, *The Heathen School*. Whites in New England responded to shame they felt at the recognition of poor U.S. treatment of Native nations during Indian removal and at the continued existence of marginalized Native people in their own societies largely by denying that New England Natives continued to exist. See O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*.

[61] Apess, “A Son of the Forest,” 12–15.

[62] Ibid., 11–12.

[63] See the discussion of public and private shame in Kathleen Woodward, *Statistical Panic: Cultural Politics and Poetics of the Emotions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 79–108.

[64] Apess, “A Son of the Forest,” 10.

heritage and political interest, he could not rely on the term "Indian" without a qualm. His use of the term "Israelite" was in part an attempt to find other, more dignified meanings for Native ancestry by reference to Christian sacred history.[65] His complaint that he "could not find [Indian] in the Bible" placed him in company with other American writers of color in the nineteenth century who reached for the Bible to construct new understandings of themselves. African-American thinkers defied the degrading associations that the system of chattel slavery attached to blackness by interweaving Biblical narrative with histories of their African ancestors or by re-imagining the character of Ham whom white Bible interpreters named as the progenitor of all Africans.[66] Similarly, Apess redeemed the red skin attributed to him by the racial regime of his childhood by reimagining it as the "original complexion of our father Adam."[67] By associating "Indian" with the term "Israelite," Apess located American Indians in the Bible and portrayed them as belonging to a noble lineage.

This re-figuring relied on assumptions about Israelites that Apess shared with white Protestants. Where the word "Indian" was associated in Apess's childhood with savagery, Israelites were sterling examples. His few formal years of schooling would have included the

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[65] This complicates the claim, made by Rochelle Raineri Zuck, that the idea of the Lost Tribes was a source for Apess of a pan-Indian politics that contested notions of the "vanishing Indian." Zuck sees Apess's writing as announcing Native "survivance," or continued flourishing in the face of colonialism. This assertion that Indians were not vanishing, she argues, built toward a pan-Indian politics. I agree that Apess's writing has these characteristics, but read it as going beyond the minimal assertion of survivance and shared Native political goals. His specific use of Israelite Indian narratives seems to suggest a substantial role for evangelical Protestantism in promoting Native political alliance. Zuck, "William Apess, the 'Lost Tribes,' and Indigenous Survivance," 2–3.

[66] Johnson, *The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity*; Maffly-Kipp, *Setting down the Sacred Past*.

[67] Apess, "A Son of the Forest," 10.

ubiquitous *New England Catechism*, which in an 1801 edition printed in New England contained a roll-call of virtuous Israelites:

> Who was the most faithful Man? *Abraham*.
> Who was the meekest man? *Moses*.
> Who was the patientest Man? *Job*…
> Who was the strongest man? *Samson*…
> Who was the wisest man? *Solomon*.[68]

The same book encouraged children to remember Israelite exemplars to remind themselves to behave well: "Young Samuel that little child, / He serv'd the Lord liv'd undefiled," "Like young Abijah, I must see / That good thing may be found in me," "Young king Josiah, that bless'd youth / He sought the Lord, and lov'd the truth / He like a king did act his part, / And follow'd GOD with all his heart…"[69] Although some Israelites depicted in the Hebrew Bible of course were negative examples—the sons of Korah who opposed Moses and Aaron and were summarily executed appeared in the alphabet section of the same edition of the New England *Primer*— the association between Israelites and righteousness would have been firmly cemented in Apess's mind by repeated exhortations to look to them for exempla of Christian living.

Hence, when Apess wanted to re-read whites portrayals of American Indians, he reached for Boudinot's *A Star in the West* for evidence that their "character" was Israelite, not savage or animal.[70] "No being," quoted Apess from a section of Boudinot's text arguing for the "Jewish" character of American Indians, "acts more rigidly from rule than the Indian. . .The moral laws

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[68] *The New-England Primer, Or, an Easy and Pleasant Guide to the Art of Reading. Adorned with Cuts. To Which Is Added the Catechism.* (New England: The Book Sellers, 1801), [20].

[69] *The New-England Primer, Or, an Easy and Pleasant Guide to the Art of Reading. Adorned with Cuts. To Which Is Added the Catechism.*

[70] Apess, "A Son of the Forest," 74.

which govern him, to be sure, are but few, but then he conforms to them all. The white man abounds in laws of religion, morals, and manners; but how many does he violate?"[71] This comparison between American Indians drew on anti-Jewish accusations of legalism and stubborn-ness, but inverted them into positive qualities of pursuit of justice, moral rectitude, and faithful preservation of customs.[72] Repeatedly, Apess selected passages from Boudinot that used Indians' supposed kinship to Israelites to portray them as belonging to an earlier era of purer virtue. "We stigmatize the Indians as cowardly and treacherous, because they use stratagem in warfare…[but] man is naturally more prone to subtlety than open valor…" Again, "No hero of ancient or modern days can surpass the Indian in his lofty contempt of death…" This portrayal was Romantic, and the language Apess borrowed from Boudinot veered close to the tropes of the noble savage. For Apess, however, it seems to have provided a language that allowed him to re-read white accusations as simply misrecognitions. What they called savagery, he called signs that American Indians were God's chosen people.

Apess re-read the stories of savagery he was told as a young child again in his 1831 *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ.* "America . . .has utterly failed to amalgamate the red man of the woods into the artificial, cultivated ranks of social life" not only because of bigotry, but also because it was "the purpose of God that it should be done—for lo, the blood of Israel flowed in the veins of these unshackled, freeborn men."[73] These chosen people of God, he argued, were

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[71] Ibid., 62.

[72] On the broader reach of these stereotypes, see Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[73] William Apess, "The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ: A Sermon," in *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, ed. Barry O'Connell (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 107.

made for better things than upper-class American society. They are, by God's will, "unshackled" and "freeborn," more used to virtue than "artificial, cultivated" social life. To Methodist audiences, this argument would have plucked familiar chords. The movement was then undergoing a severe internal split as Methodists wishing to raise their social standing increasingly excluded people of color and moved away from the ecstatic bodily exercises of the early movement. Others, like the members of the Protestant Methodist Church that ordained Apess, reacted by reemphasizing the early movement's critique of fashion, cultivated manners, and worldly wealth in favor of a church without social distinctions.[74] This goal was never fully realized, likely because few proponents wished for it in earnest, but it seems to have given Apess hope that the Methodist movement would embrace American Indians as equals. His re-appropriation of noble savage tropes in his selections from Boudinot implied not only that American Indians were Israelites, but that they were exactly the sort of people the Protestant Methodists saw as good Christians.

Apess's selective quotation of Boudinot in *A Son of the Forest*, therefore, read American Indians' descent as an asset for their conversion to Christianity. This was an inversion of the more usual missionary apologetic that American Indians' "savagery" or lack of mental ability

[74] Apess initially joined the larger and longer-established Methodist Episcopal church. Over time, however, he found the Methodist Episcopal church insufficiently welcoming to people of color and too centralized in its administration. When the Methodist Episcopal conference in New York dragged its feet about ordaining him, he left for the more loosely-organized Protestant Methodist or "American Methodist" church that welcomed more local variation, more emotional worship styles, and more participation from lower-class whites and people of color. This split was the result of attempts of the Methodist movement in America to negotiate the tension between, on the one hand, middle-class respectability and acceptance of white supremacism, and, on the other hand, the radical egalitarianism of many eighteenth-century Methodists. The issues of white supremacism and slavery would again divide the Methodist Episcopal Church into Northern and Southern branches, and give rise to two separate majority-Black denominations—the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church and the A.M.E., Zion— when African-American members of churches in New York and Philadelphia left Methodist churches that no longer welcomed them. On the transformation of Methodism in this period, see John Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 173–96; David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 109–30, 178–201.

was a barrier to conversion. He also used the idea to expose and invert the other, unspoken, part of that missionary apologetic, however: that white Americans were somehow naturally best suited to be Christians. He attacked this assumption in the register of theological disputes between the Methodism that had given meaning to his adult life and the Presbyterianism of the Hillhouse and Williams families to whom he became indentured in his later childhood. When Apess was around twelve, David Furman sold his indenture for twenty dollars to a Presbtyterian judge named William Hillhouse who lived six miles away. Soon, Hillhouse decided that he could not control Apess, and sold his indenture again to William Williams, another judge and conservative Presbyterian who lived in New London, about twenty miles from Colchester.[75] Apess claimed to have found both judges' approach to religion more deadening than enlightening. He observed that although Williams "was exact in having all his family with him in the house of God… their ways were not like the ways of the Christians" because the minister read his sermon from written notes rather than depending "on the Holy Spirit's influence entirely."[76]

Apess's critique of these two Presbyterian judges draws on standard arguments that evangelicals had levelled at their opponents since the eighteenth century: that they relied too much on forms, repeated prayers, and ministerial learning and not enough on emotion or

[75] Apess, "A Son of the Forest," 12–15; Gura, *The Life of William Apess, Pequot*, 15–16. If Apess did continue to have contact with his relatives while living with the Furman family, as I think he might have, being sold into indenture in New London almost certainly cut off any remaining ties.

[76] The reference to "the Christians" is not generic, but refers specifically to a groups of breakaway Methodists and Congregationalists calling themselves the Christian Church that Apess had encountered while living with the Furman family. Apess, "A Son of the Forest," 17–18. Similarly, Apess wrote that Hillhouse's prayers could do him no good because they were by rote, and "Although I was so young, I did not think Christians ought to learn their prayers" and repeat them daily, therefore "I could fix no value on his prayers." Ibid., 15.

evidence of a new birth in Christ.[77] In Apess's situation, however, these critiques had an additional racial edge. Conservative Presbyterians like the Hillhouse and Williams families assumed that God had chosen specific people for salvation from the beginning of the world, while condemning other specific people to damnation. Although, in theory, a person's outward condition had no relationship to their state of grace, in practice members of these churches had come to expect that participation in the everyday practices of the church indicated that one was likely among the elect.[78] As Protestant denominations increasingly broke down across ethnic and racial lines in the early United States, Reformed Protestants came to assume that the whites of particular ethnic backgrounds who tended to belong to Reformed churches constituted the elect. That few people of color joined such churches was, from this perspective, evidence of the natural depravity of non-whites rather than a result of less intensive missionary effort. Although never stated explicitly, the evidence would have been hard for a Native person in Apess's position to deny: as far as most Presbyterians, and perhaps particularly conservative or "old light" ones like the Hillhouse and Williams families, were concerned, a person of color was assumed to be among the damned unless there was sufficient evidence to the contrary.

Apess linked the moment of his conversion, a key moment in any evangelical autobiography, to the experience of a presentation of Christianity that disdained reliance on heredity. He began attending Methodist meetings in 1813 at the age of fifteen. He retrospectively attributed his conversion to a single sermon which made him feel "assurance that I was included

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[77] Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

[78] Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 518–26; Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society and Politics in Colonial America*, 87–123.

in the plan of redemption with all my brethren…and I freely believed that all I had to do was to look in faith upon the Lamb of God…"[79] Depicting the revelation that "I was included in the plan of redemption with all my brethren" as the impetus for conversion in his spiritual autobiography signaled to Apess's readers that this was a key doctrine for him. The implicit argument is that Methodists' emphasis on the role of the human will in conversion offered an opening to American Indians that Presbyterians' emphasis on membership in a community of the elect did not.[80] It provided a way for American Indians to enter what Apess called in sermons the "Kingdom of Christ"— a spiritual Israel that knit together Christians of good will and authentic conversion—without having to believe that God particularly favored white Americans. The theological underpinnings of Apess's argument in favor of Israelite Indian narratives, therefore, critiqued rather than reaffirmed the sense of hereditary election basic to Boudinot's and Smith's uses of the idea.

Apess developed his critique of white Christians in his sole published sermon, *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ* (1831).[81] Aimed at an evangelical audience that was largely white, this sermon argued that active participation in conversion required whites to abandon their pretenses to hereditary Christianity and social superiority. "[T]he white man, who has most cruelly oppressed his red brother" must come "under the influence of that Gospel which he has

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[79] Apess, "A Son of the Forest," 19–21.

[80] Other Native American Christians in the early United States actually found Reformed doctrines more, not less, helpful because they allowed primarily Native churches to imagine themselves as the "elect." Silverman, *Red Brethren*. See also the Cherokee Congregationalists discussed in Chapter Four. Since Apess was raised in majority-white Presbyterian churches, however, such a reading may have been less available to him.

[81] Noll, *America's God*, 170–73.

long professed to believe, and…[pour] out unavailing tears over the wasted generations of the mighty forest hunters…"[82] The emotional process required of converted whites, therefore, would necessitate not only reformation in their conduct toward American Indians, but recognition that whites had never been the chosen people they professed to be. Published versions of the sermon came with an appendix entitled "Indians, the Ten Lost Tribes" that argued for the Israelite heritage of American Indians and argued that it should cause converted white Americans to allow "the red man…that station in the scale of being and intelligence which unerring wisdom designed for him to occupy."[83] Racism and the appropriation of American Indians' land was, for Apess, the result of defective moral choices of white Americans, not of God's curse or chastisement.[84] Given whites' clearly defective moral choice to oppress American Indians, they had no prior claims on Christianity that mattered. American Indians, on the other hand, had a claim on Israelite heritage, which Apess argued should make white audiences suppose that they were at least as capable of choosing to do good and to accept Christianity as were whites.[85] That Apess felt the need to add an additional appendix that argued for the bare humanity of American

[82] Apess, "The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ: A Sermon," 102.

[83] Ibid., 114.

[84] The idea that American Indians were cursed by God developed in the Brothertown community in New York during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The American Indian Protestants who made up the majority of members of that community adhered to Reformed theology, and believed that their suffering under colonialism both implied that they had incited God's wrath and that God might miraculously relieve that suffering. David J Silverman, "The Curse of God: An Idea and Its Origins among the Indians of New York's Revolutionary Frontier," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (July 2009): 495–534.

[85] Apess, "The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ: A Sermon," 113–14.

Indians is a testament to the low opinion most whites, even sympathetic ones, had of Native peoples' capacities for rational choice and action.

Part of Apess's early attraction to Israelite Indian stories was that they could elicit the assistance of sympathetic evangelicals in missions without implying American Indian inferiority. Over time, however, Apess began to regard white sympathy as less and less useful. As he wrote in conclusion to the last work we have to his name, "…although I can say that I have some dear, good friends among white people, yet I eye them with a jealous eye, for fear they will betray me…Yes, in vain have I looked for the Christian to take me by the hand and bid me welcome to his cabin…and if they did, it was only to satisfy curiosity and not to look upon me as a man and a Christian. And so all of my people have been treated, whether Christians or not."[86] Apess's abandonment of Israelite Indian narratives was thus likely a reflection of his fading confidence that white Americans were capable of seeing American Indians as fundamentally like them.

**Land claims and Native self-governance**

Although Apess agreed with Boudinot and Smith that American Indians' descent meant that they would make good Christians, he disagreed with their implication that conversion would involve the abandonment of Native peoples' lands or political autonomy. In his early writings, Apess used the concept of "Israelite" nationhood to argue that Christian missions, properly conducted, could help unify geographically-dispersed Native communities in the northeast. Apess hoped that membership in the "Kingdom of Christ" would solidify and sanctify the existing networks of trade and communication between these communities.

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[86] William Apess, "Eulogy on King Philip, as Pronounced at the Odeon, in Federal Street, Boston," in *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, ed. Barry O'Connell (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 310.

Previous treatments of Apess's political thought have focused on his more developed work in 1835 *Indian Nullification* and 1836 *Eulogy on King Philip*. Both works express a fully-realized sense of Native civil rights under the United States and separate rights under the governments of the tribes. They are pan-Indian in that they recognize that all Native people suffer under connected systems of oppression, and anticipate the sovereignty movements of the twentieth century in insisting on the treaty rights of individual tribes as vociferously as legal and social equality for all Native people.[87] The seeds of these later positions are clear in Apess's earlier work invoking Israelite Indian narratives, however. In the context of larger discourses about Israelite Indians, Apess's writings were aimed at an Arminian evangelical audience and made implicit claims about land and nationhood.[88] These claims are not to specific lands, however, because a flexible relationship to land and nationhood had become normal for Native peoples living in the northeast, both as an adaptation to the demands of integration into a changing economy and a shrinking land base and as a way to resist confinement to reservations. Even this more flexible relationship to the land came under threat in New England during the nineteenth century as increasing industrialization stripped the forests of wood and dammed fishing streams. The Native peoples of New England had few legal resources to contest these

[87] Brooks, *The Common Pot*, 163–97; O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 180–90.

[88] Here I build on earlier examinations of Apess's use of what the authors call "Jewish Indian" or "Lost Tribe" narratives in the works of Sandra Gustafson and Rochelle Raineri Zuck. Gustafson argues that Apess used narratives about Israelites to construct a sense of Native community against prejudice and contextualizes this argument among similar uses of the term "Israelite" by Joseph Smith and Mordecai Noah. Zuck, meanwhile, argues that Apess's use of Lost Tribes narratives constitutes an instance of indigenous "survivance"— a speech act meant to demonstrate that indigenous people continue to live and flourish despite colonialism. These are valuable points, but in the context of contemporary arguments about land-use and racial boundaries in which Israelite Indian narratives were involved there is a case for reading Apess's claims as stronger assertions of Native political independence and right to use the land of the Northeast to support themselves. Sandra Gustafson, "Nations of Israelites: Prophecy and Cultural Autonomy in the Writings of William Apess," *Religion and Literature* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 31–53; Zuck, "William Apess, the 'Lost Tribes,' and Indigenous Survivance."

changes. Because relatively few tribal governments in the area were recognized by the U.S. government, their land claims had been limited to small reservations.[89] Hence, Apess does not make specific references to any given "promised lands," but connects Israel to the "forests" and "wigwams" of the marginal, often unofficial, settlements that constituted Native territory in the northeast. His visions of Israel offered an alternative claim to land and citizenship from legal ones, based in the hope that evangelical benevolence could be relied on to help Natives in New England flourish, if only they could be dissuaded from overly-paternalistic missions.

Apess describes his childhood as one of isolation from Native communities, but it would be a mistake to take this at face value. At a minimum, he seems to have retained language skills in Pequot and, as argued above, there is reason to think that he was in contact with his uncle during his early childhood.[90] It is certain, however, that he experienced other forms of Native communities and relationships to land than those in his childhood community. Apess enlisted in a drum corps of the Army at fifteen after running away from the Williams household. His unit went through northern New York and across the border into Canada during the War of 1812. After leaving the Army in 1815, he spent roughly a year travelling through Canada and upper New York. He lived with Native communities with more distinct national governments and land claims such as Mississaugas and Haudenosaunees (Iroquois), principally Mohawks.[91] When he

[89] Daniel Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History: Native Americans in Southern New England, 1780-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 39–96; Brooks, *The Common Pot*, 106–93.

[90] O'Connell, "Introduction."

[91] Apess left the Army in 1815 without official permission, although he likely assumed, as many soldiers did, that his enlistment was over when the Treaty of Ghent ended official hostilities between Great Britain and the United States in December, 1814. Gura, *The Life of William Apess, Pequot*, 10-11.

returned to the area of New London at nineteen, he came under the tutelage of his aunt, Sally George (1779-1824), a leader in a racially-mixed community of Methodists on the border of Connecticut and Rhode Island. Soon after, Apess preached for the first time at a camp meeting, formally re-joined a Methodist class, and was baptized by immersion.[92] His return to the Methodist movement, therefore, meant re-immersion in a community of Native people that, while more diffuse than the ones he was likely to encounter farther north and west, seems to have been thriving. If George's community was typical of Native churches in southern New England at the time, her Protestant congregation would have formed the nucleus of a larger network of American Indians, African-Americans and people of mixed descent, not all of whom would have been formal members. Membership in majority-Native congregations, far from signaling assimilation or deracination, allowed American Indians to maintain and extend connections to other Native people.[93] Apess's use of Israelite Indian narratives in *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ* mirrored this experience insofar as they emphasized that voluntary conversion to Christianity would preserve, rather than undermine, Native nations' political and cultural independence from white America.

[92]Immersion was not the usual practice for Methodists, who generally followed Church of England practice by sprinkling, but Apess believed it to be the proper method of baptism. Gura claims that Apess was baptized in the Thames River. This is certainly possible, but Apess gives the location as "the place called Bozrah," most likely referring to the town of Bozrah, which does not border the Thames. The Yantic River, however, does flow through Bozrah. See United States Geographical Survey, Dept. of the Interior, "Norwich," 1893, Topographic Atlas for the State of Connecticut. Apess, "A Son of the Forest," 38–43; Gura, *The Life of William Apess, Pequot*, 30–35. Protestant communities were important hubs for Native people of southern New England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, since they provided gathering spaces and connections across distance in the absence of sizable reservations. Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening*.

[93] Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening*.

Apess argued in his early work that if American Indians converted to Christianity, "Entire nations of idolatrous savages [would] suddenly learn another worship and bow themselves in praise and adoration before the Great Spirit, for the first time revealed to them in the fullness of his glory through a suffering and risen Savior."[94] Drawing on Boudinot, who depicted American Indians as originally Israelite monotheists, Apess argues that Native religions anticipated Christianity. The putative "Great Spirit" that American Indian worship was ultimately directed toward would be fully revealed "in the fullness of his glory" by Christianity. Again, "savagery" turns out, in Apess's rendering, to be an eminently correctable condition, not an inborn trait. The embrace of Christianity, moreover, would not negate but rather enhance Native cultural and political identity. This was certainly Apess's experience of Sally George's congregation, which re-connected him to the kinship networks of Native peoples in southeastern New England from which indenture had cut him off.

Not all missions were equally good in Apess's eyes. Only those missionaries with pure motives, not desire for land, who relied on what "the power of God could effect" could "improve" American Indians.[95] His argument for reliance on "the power of God" signaled that Apess was thinking of the missions conducted by Baptists and Methodists, who were more likely to leave communities of color to their own devices than were Reformed groups such as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Baptists and Methodists had a much more straightforward concept of conversion than Reformed missionaries: the Bible was assumed to have power in and of itself, and the moment of conversion to signal a clear departure from sin.

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[94] Apess, "The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ: A Sermon," 102.

[95] Apess, "A Son of the Forest," 33.

Reformed missionaries, by contrast, emphasized that training in Euro-American "civilization" would both precede conversion and continue afterwards during a period of tutelage that rarely ended.[96] "The forests of Canada and the West" where missionaries had "sought not their own advancement" by appropriating Native land "are vocal with the praises of God, as they ascend from the happy wigwams of the natives. We see them flocking to the standard of Emmanuel."[97] These "happy wigwams" were manifestly not the planned, missionary-controlled communities that were the mainstay of organizations like the American Board. Rather, they were intact Native communities, converted to revivalism as was Apess's fondest hope. Apess, therefore, wanted his audience to reform, not discontinue, missions.

Apess envisioned the "Israel" of converted American Indians covering an extensive, flexible territory. The "forest" Apess declared to be his and his peoples' native home was not a generic trope, but a specific term designating the managed forests that constituted northeastern Native peoples' lived environments and main sources of food and timber. By the time Apess was born, the area near Colrain where his parents had settled was one of the few such remaining territories. The timber lands he would later help to defend in Mashpee were another. These were the "deep brown wilderness" and the "happy wigwams" that Apess believed would become the

[96] My account of Baptist and Methodist missionaries relies on McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*; Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*; Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*. Egalitarianism did not imply a large degree of individual freedom, as Hatch's term "Democratization" implies it might. Methodists expected quite strict discipline from new converts, but these regulations were administered by local "class meetings" that people of color could control and bend to their community norms. On Methodist discipline, see especially Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*; Hempton, *Methodism*. On Reformed missionaries, see Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism*.

[97] Apess, "A Son of the Forest," 33–34.

"Canaan of Gospel liberty" should American Indians be missionized properly.[98] Converted American Indians, in this rendering of missions, would remain both biologically and territorially apart from white Americans, remaining in their "deep brown wilderness" even as missionaries recapitulated Moses's leadership by bringing these descendants of the Israelites out of "the wilderness of sin" into "Canaan."

Apess proposed that converted American Indians ought to have more, not less, political autonomy.[99] Indians might become Christians, but they would not thereby join the "cultivated ranks of [white] society." His stern directions to missionaries in *Increase of the Kingdom of Christ* and his optimism about revivalist Protestantism indicate that, early in his career, he held out hope that properly-instructed missionaries could help Christian American Indians retain their independence and become members of "the kingdom of Christ" without surrendering to the United States. Israelite identity became part of these arguments because it was the sign that that difference would be maintained: God had blessed Israel and chosen them from among the nations, and Apess believed that God would do the same for American Indians.

For Apess, Israelite Indian narratives were also useful for the connections they forged to white missionary culture. They intimated that God would, in time, vindicate American Indians as he had vindicated the Israelites in the Hebrew Bible. "If…the Indians of the American continent are part of the long lost ten tribes of Israel, have not the great American nation reason to fear the swift judgments of heaven on them for nameless cruelties, extortions, and exterminations

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[98] Apess, "The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ: A Sermon," 111.

[99] Here I disagree with Barry O'Connell, who dates Apess's turn to American Indian separatism to his later life. O'Connell, "Introduction."

inflicted upon the poor natives of the forest?"[100] The narrative implicit in his warnings is the one outlined in the Hebrew Bible, and particularly in Exodus and Isaiah, that God has chosen the people Israel from among the nations, and would punish nations that oppressed them even if that oppression was, ultimately, part of the divine plan. Northeastern white missionaries and their supporters were then engaged in what would become a losing battle against Indian removal. As with slavery, they employed the language of national sin to argue that the entire country would fall under God's judgment should it commit the injustice of forcing American Indians from their homes. [101] Apess was simply raising the stakes by insisting that the Israelite identity of American Indians meant that God would assuredly avenge wrongs against them.

As we have already seen, however, many white authors understood Israelite Indian narratives to support American Indian vanishing, not survival. Apess struggled to make sense of the implication that "Israelite" Indians would vanish as surely as Israelite religion, in Protestant thought, had to give way to Christianity. Although Apess looked forward "to the day…not far distant when ample justice shall be done to the red man by his white brother," he also seemed to endorse the idea that American Indians would vanish from the continent regardless of whether that justice was done. He closed the appendix by remarking that living Indians are a "remnant…on their march to eternity."[102] Barry O'Connell has argued that this passage indicates Apess's acceptance of the idea of the "vanishing Indian," and that when Apess identified Indians

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[100] Apess, "The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ: A Sermon," 106–7.

[101] McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*; Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism*, 130–51.

[102] Apess, "The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ: A Sermon," 114–15.

as Israelites he made them “no less the objects of conversion to the ‘superior’ religion of Christianity than they were as unmodified savages.”[103] But this reading ignores the politics of pan-Indian unity Apess develops in his sermon and conflates the very terms Apess was trying to separate: conversion to Christianity and vanishing into the American nation-state. Although it is possible that Apess is simply wavering between hope and fear, it seems more in keeping with the sermon that precedes it to read this appendix as a warning rather than a prediction. If missionaries did not work to see that the “Israelite” Indians received the justice Apess hoped for, they would not be “on their march to eternity,” but already there.

Apess’s early use of Israelite Indian narratives relied on the concept that American Indians could be bound together into a spiritual Israel, a state that they would also share with converted whites. He seems to have envisioned continuing American Indian separatism, but he carefully divorced this from specific conflicts over American Indian lands in favor of general pleas for the “wigwams” and “deep brown wilderness” of converted Native peoples to be left alone. These politics made sense given that Apess wrote in a region where Native land claims were relatively restricted and mobility beyond the reservation was often the only way to make a living. Ties to land, such as his own ancestral home on the Mashantucket reservation, were important in Apess’s thought for Native people’s self-making and coherence as people, but he does not mobilize stories about “promised lands” or “chosen” status to defend them.[104] Rather he

[103] O’Connell, “Introduction,” lxxi.

[104] On place in Apess, see Mark Rifkin, “Shadows of Mashantucket: William Apess and the Representation of Pequot Place,” *American Literature* 84, no. 4 (December 1, 2012): 692–93.

envisioned Israelite identity as a way of linking together a more flexible network of Native spaces.

Apess did, however, participate in one land dispute: the so-called Mashpee Revolt of 1833-1834. This event saw a united Mashpee government, often represented by Apess, set against the board of overseers appointed to control the mission on their land. That board had seized the wages of Mashpee laborers and whalers, had denied the Mashpee the incomes from their land, and had appointed a minister without consulting the tribe, a state of affairs that Apess characterized as "calculated to drive the tribes from their possession and annihilate them as a people."[105] When Phineas Fish, the minister appointed to oversee the Mashpee mission, condoned the theft of wood from managed forests the Mashpee maintained in common, the Mashpee adopted Apess to give him standing to petition the Massachusetts governor and the Harvard Corporation to transfer control over the mission and its lands back to the Mashpee.[106] As Apess put it in *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Marshpee Tribe* (1835), his defense of his conduct during the Mashpee movement for sovereignty, "All the Indians ask of Harvard is, take away your pretended gift. . .Let us have our meetinghouse and our land, and we will be content to worship God without the help of the white man."[107] Having become convinced that missionaries intended for the reservation to remain under their control perpetually, Apess argued that Christian Natives should be left to their own

[105] William Apess, "Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Marshpee Tribe; Or, The Pretended Riot Explained," in *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, ed. Barry O'Connell (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 212–14.

[106] Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History*, 96–103; Brooks, *The Common Pot*, 163–97.

[107] Apess, "Indian Nullification," 255.

devices. His vision of Christian Native separatism from his early work continued, but he sharpened it here to a clear legal claim for discontinuing a specific mission.

The Mashpee petitions invoked the idea of persecuted Christian Natives as “Israelites,” but did not make an explicit case for their literal descent from Israelites. One of the tribal leaders’ legal resolutions—likely drafted with Apess’s help— described them as “the poor Israelites of Marshpee,” while another remarked that they regarded themselves “in some sort, as a tribe of Israelites suffering under the rod of despotic pharaohs; for thus far, our cries and remonstrances have been of no avail.”[108] This was a more flexible use of Israelite narratives than the ones Apess relied on in his early work, ones in line with the looser use of “Israel” among white Protestants to designate the church community that was taken to be the replacement of the Hebrew people in God’s favor. There is continuity here with Apess’s hope that independent American Indian church communities would be able to hold together Native nations in diaspora from their ancestral lands, but there is not a clear continuity with Apess’s earlier use of Israelite Indian narratives to describe Native Americans’ ancestry.

Without any further information than an absence of clear references to Israelite Indian narratives after his 1833 book *The Experience of Five Christian Indians of the Pequot Tribe*—which contains a single mention of a supposed link in the ancestry of Jews and American Indians in the appendix “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man”—and his public speeches against the idea in 1837, we cannot say for certain why Apess abandoned Israelite identity.[109]

[108] Ibid., 179–80.

[109] O’Connell notes that “An Indian’s Looking-Glass” was omitted from the 1837 reprint of *Experiences of Five Christian Indians*, which was Apess’s last publication along with a second edition of *Eulogy on King Philip*, and replaced with a shorter, less racially-charged paragraph. It is doubtful that his abandonment of Israelite Indian narratives alone would have led to the deletion of the whole section rather than and offending paragraph, but it may

One possible reason is that the tension between the implication of vanishing inherent in white Protestant uses of the narrative and Apess's support of Native rights became too great to continue relying on it. Another is, more simply, that Apess had grown disenchanted with white evangelicals. By 1837, the major Protestant missionary organizations had failed to prevent Indian removal, and most of the forced migrations of tribes east of the Mississippi had already occurred or were underway. Since he used Israelite Indian narratives in direct conversation with evangelicals such as Boudinot, Apess may have abandoned them as evangelicals abandoned the cause of Native rights.

### ***Conclusion***

That both Mordecai Noah and William Apess engaged with Israelite Indian narratives demonstrates that, from their initial popularization by conservative evangelicals, these stories came to have lives of their own. Lent an aura of respectability by the likes of Boudinot and Ethan Smith, Apess and Noah could speculate on lineal connections between American Indians and Ancient Israelites to advance their own racial projects and land claims. Apess attempted to undermine the connection between Christianity and whiteness by both showcasing what he saw as the hypocrisies of white Christians and by implying that American Indian societies and religions would be "completed," but not utterly transformed or assimilated, by revivalist Christianity. Although he imagined American Indians as part of a spiritual "Israel" with common interests and a common racial identity, Apess did not mobilize the possible meanings of that identity for claiming specific territories. Rather, he emphasized a geographically-diffuse and

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have contributed to an otherwise difficult-to-understand editorial decision. Barry O'Connell, "Textual Afterword," in *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 311–24.

flexible “Israel” that better fit the often-migratory lives of Natives in southern New England. Through spectacle as well as published text, Noah argued that American Jews’ kinship connections to “Jewish” Indians gave them a prior claim to the North American continent. That claim, in turn, implied that they were “native Americans,” a term that in the early nineteenth century referred exclusively to whites born in the United States. Meanwhile, both men also mobilized the Jewish Indian theory to attempt to attract the right kind and degree of attention from white Protestant missionaries, implying that they believed its political power stemmed from its appeal to that group.

Noah’s and Apess’s uses of Israelite Indian stories demonstrate not only the theory’s flexibility, but also that it could be mobilized to make claims about land and territory as well as claims about descent and race. This in turn suggests that the religious creation of race in the early United States was neither confined solely to discourses about bodies and skin color, nor was it solely the product of hegemonic narratives. By tracking the use of strange, unlikely, and unexpected tropes and figures such as the “Israelite Indian,” we can see how countervailing voices and alternative self-conceptions were articulated and sustained. Writing and speaking their way through the ambiguous identities and conflicting messages attached to them by white Americans, both men found in Israelite Indian stories a language to express their hopes and fears and a guide to the vulnerabilities, instabilities, and zones of interference in white Protestant notions of “chosen-ness.”

## Chapter 3: The Remnant of Joseph (1830-1847)

### *Introduction*

Perhaps the most famous encounter with Israelite Indians in the early United States was recorded in its most well-known version between 1839 and 1843. Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, claimed in a history produced during those years that on September 21, 1823 he encountered an angel who in life had been an American Israelite. The angel appeared "at my bedside standing in the air… Not only was his robe exceedingly white but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning…When I first looked upon him I was afraid, but the fear soon left me. He called me by name and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me…"[1] This angel, whose name was Moroni, led Smith to the location of the golden plates that Smith claimed were the source of the *Book of Mormon*. That text related a history of Israelites who had come to America around 600 BCE. Some, called Nephites, had remained faithful to God and accepted Christianity when Jesus visited America in person after his resurrection. The Nephites, including Moroni and his family, were wiped out, and had only preserved some records of their civilization on the golden plates.

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[1] Joseph Smith, Willard Richards, and Thomas Bullock, "History, 1838-1856, Volume A-1 [23 December 1805-30 August 1834]" 1843, 5, JSP. Smith mentioned both Moroni and the angel who he claimed had visited him in earlier texts, but first explicitly identified these two figures with each other in the 1838-1856 *History*.

Other Israelites, called Lamanites, apostatized but survived, and were the ancestors of contemporary American Indians.[2]

Smith's vision and the history of Israelites in America he produced were strange, even startling. For early Mormons, however, their strangeness was a reason to believe that they were sent from God rather than the products of human invention. They embraced the idea of American Israelites with an intensity unmatched by any other group in the early United States. They rehearsed their relationship to Israelite Indians, or "Lamanites," in sermons and stories, millennial prophecies, and visions like Smith's. Lamanites inhabited the bodies of Mormons in visionary trances and allowed them to speak in "Lamanite" tongues.[3] Inspired by these stories and visions, Mormons acted as if hosts of Lamanite warriors stood ready to avenge wrongs done to the new faith. The relationship between early Mormons and flesh-and-blood American Indians was shaped by narratives teaching that Lamanites were both a chosen people of God, superior in some sense to white Mormons, and that they were savages who would wreak vengeance on the Mormons' enemies.

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[2] According to the *Book of Mormon*, members of the Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (and hence descendants of Joseph) emigrated from Jerusalem to the western hemisphere in led by divine commandment and an object called the Liahona (1 Nephi 16, Alma 37:38). These Israelites split into two groups: the largely-faithful Nephites and the largely-wicked Lamanites (1 Nephi 9, 2 Nephi 5). After generations of warfare, the Lamanites destroyed the Nephites (Mormon 8:3). Early Mormons, Joseph Smith included, identified the locations described in the *Book of Mormon* with places in North America, and the Lamanites with North American Indians. After 1844, a "hemispheric" identification in which Lamanites were identified with Central and South American Native populations and with indigenous peoples of the Pacific islands became far more common. John-Charles Duffy, "The Use of 'Lamanite' in Official LDS Discourse," *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 118–67.

[3] Because the movement under discussion gave birth to several modern churches, of which the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Community of Christ are the largest, and because there is not agreement between those churches about the use or preference of the terms "Latter-day Saints" or "saints," I use the more colloquial "Mormon" throughout.

Because Mormons imagined Lamanites to be superior to them and looked to Lamanites to satisfy Mormon emotional and religious needs, their attitude toward Lamanites can best be characterized by saying the Lamanites were holy. As Robert Orsi has argued, making a flesh and blood person into a holy figure ensures that person's absence. Because they are seen not as humans but as repositories of divine presence, holy people become "blank slates for the articulation and vicarious experience of desire."[4] Telling stories about Lamanites allowed early Mormons to articulate their hopes, fears, and beliefs. Lamanites were savage and chosen, eager to receive the new Gospel in peace and eager to destroy its enemies, adoptive kin and blood relatives, unlettered objects of comic relief and visionary beings of prophecy. What they never were, was fully human.[5]

Mormons' relationships to "holy" Lamanites shaped their movement in two ways. First, rehearsing stories about Lamanites allowed Mormons to justify their claims to be part of the true, restored church of Jesus by claiming to experience the miracles described in the New Testament literally and physically.[6] When Mormons imagined themselves in relationship to Lamanites in

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[4] Robert A. Orsi, "'Mildred, Is It Fun to Be a Cripple?' The Culture of Suffering in Mid-Twentieth Century American Catholicism," in *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 43–44; Orsi, "The Problem of the Holy."

[5]I reject the argument advanced in Hickman, "The Book of Mormons as Amerindian Apocalypse" that the contradictions in the presentation of Lamanites in the *Book of Mormon* were meant to point beyond the text, toward an undoing of both the narratives themselves and of Romantic racist attitudes more generally (443-444). Hickman has demonstrated that such a reading is now available, but nothing in the early reception history of the *Book of Mormon* or the concept of Lamanites indicates that Joseph Smith or other white Mormons engaged with it.

[6] Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*, 40–41; Terryl Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12–29. On the appeal of tongues in the context of early American religious and scientific empiricism, see Steven C. Harper, "Infallible Proofs, Both Human and Divine: The Persuasiveness of Mormonism for Early Converts," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 99–118.

the here-and-now, they were finding yet another physical demonstration of the truth of the faith they had, often, made substantial sacrifices to join. Lamanites were real to early Mormons, whether encountered as American Indians whom they understood to be Israelites or received into their bodies in visions, prophecies and speaking in tongues. Lamanites would vindicate Mormon beliefs by providing physical evidence of *Book of Mormon* histories and by violently dividing Mormons from "Gentiles" in an apocalyptic war. Early Mormons delighted in the thought that they would see the physical and literal fulfillment of prophecy not only in the miracles of prophecy and tongues but also in the violence that Lamanites would mete out on their behalf. Seeing signs of "Lamanite" identity in American Indians, therefore, enchanted the world, and made the barrier between the present and an anticipated future Zion seem paper-thin.

Second, Israelite Indian stories framed the reception of the *Book of Mormon*. Missionaries and potential converts alike understood it to be part of the burgeoning genre of "Indian histories." For early Mormons, part of the text's appeal was that its histories were confirmed by "the learned." It was, by the standards of the early nineteenth century, not just a religious revelation but a repository of up-to-date scientific information.[7] Especially in cases where access to the new scripture was limited, the impression that Israelite Indian stories were respectable seems to have prepared early converts to accept the messages of Mormon preachers.

[7] The practice of science in the early United States, in contrast to today, valued experiential knowledge produced by rural amateurs over theoretical knowledge produced by urban professionals. Smith's revelations, although produced through decidedly non-ordinary means, were therefore closer to science than modern standards of evidence might imply. Bolton Conevery Valencius et al., "Science in Early America: Print Culture and the Sciences of Territoriality," *Journal of the Early Republic* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 123.

***Literature Review***

This chapter makes two interventions in the existing literature on the early Mormon movement. First, it argues that attending to the place of Israelite Indians in Mormon culture requires an analysis of rank-and-file Mormons, including Mormon women, who were not part of Joseph Smith's circle of trusted leaders. Second, it argues that their belief in Lamanites did not lead early Mormons to take the needs and goals of American Indians more seriously than did white Protestants.[8] Mormons' approach to American Indians was, undoubtedly, affected by their belief that Lamanites would play a role in the Millennium, but that set of beliefs limited as often as expanded their vision.

Because the *Book of Mormon* makes a claim to be revealed scripture, discussions of the relationship between it and other Israelite Indian stories have mostly focused on the question of its authenticity as a product of either divine revelation or human invention. The debate on the place of the *Book of Mormon* in the larger early American literature of Israelite Indians has mostly been confined, therefore, to the questions of where Smith got his ideas and how familiar he, or a close associate such as his scribe Oliver Cowdery (1806-1850), were with contemporary Israelite Indian stories. Behind these debates lies still another question dating back to the 1830 publication of the *Book of Mormon*: was Joseph Smith sincere in his belief that he was dictating a new scripture?[9]

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[8] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not consider itself to be Protestant, for the theological reason that they perceive their religion to be a restoration of the church that Jesus Christ intended to found, not a descendant of Protestant traditions. I do not endorse the claim that Joseph Smith's new religious ideas were unconnected to his Protestant context. I do, however, use the terms "Mormons" and "Protestants" to designate distinct groups in this chapter because, in the historical period under discussion, both sides saw the other as beyond the pale of correct belief and practice.

[9] Fawn Brodie and D. Michael Quinn both suggest that the *Book of Mormon* owed important features of its plot to the prevalence of Israelite Indian stories at the time. Dan Vogel's work has focused on documenting parallels

This pitched fight leaves out the lives of early members of the Mormon movement, whose reasons for finding the *Book of Mormon* and Joseph Smith's church compelling remain far less discussed.[10] This chapter follows on earlier studies of early Mormon culture by examining the practices surrounding Mormons' reception and dissemination of Israelite Indian narratives.[11] Mormons certainly cared deeply about the Israelite Indians described in the *Book of Mormon*, but their engagement with such narratives did not end with Smith's new scripture. In ecstatic religious exercises, they imitated American Indians and spoke in what they conceived of as Native and Israelite tongues. In prayer and preaching, they envisioned a millennial cleansing of the world at the hands of Native armies. Focusing on everyday practices captured in letters and diaries as well as church publications and preaching highlights women's reception of the *Book of Mormon* and Israelite Indian stories. Women, who are often left out of discussions of the

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between the *Book of Mormon*, Israelite Indian literatures, and contemporary debates in politics and religion to reconstruct the mental world of Joseph Smith. Richard Lyman Bushman and Grant Hardy have emphasized the sincerity of Joseph Smith's belief in himself as a prophet and the value of his work to make room for an acknowledgement of the existence of a wider Israelite Indian literature. Terryl Givens, on the other hand, has taken the position that the supernatural revelation of the *Book of Mormon* is of primary importance and has critiqued views of it as a human production. Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, Second edition (Knopf, 1971), 34–46; D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, Revised edition (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998); Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*; Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Utah: Signature Books, 2004); Richard Bushman and Jed Woodworth, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005); Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*.

[10] Laurie Maffly-Kipp, "Tracking the Sincere Believer: 'Authentic' Religion and the Enduring Power of Joseph Smith, Jr.," in *Joseph Smith: Reappraisals After Two Centuries*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Terryl Givens (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 175–88.

[11] Important analyses of early Mormon culture touching on the question of its appeal for early converts include Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*; Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 90–99; Val Rust, *Radical Origins: Early Mormon Converts and Their Colonial Ancestors* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004). There have also been several analyses of beliefs about Lamanites in contemporary Mormon cultures. See Lori Elaine Taylor, "Telling Stories About Mormons and Indians" (PhD dissertation, SUNY-Buffalo, 2000); Stanley J. Thayne, "The Blood of Father Lehi: Indigenous Americans and the Book of Mormon" (PhD dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2016).

reception of the *Book of Mormon* because they were not able to take part in public debates over theology, emerge as key figures in the discussion of practice.

Their practices of marking American Indians as holy have often been read as signs that early Mormons harbored less animus against American Indians than did white Protestants. Richard Lyman Bushman asserts, for example, that "simple racism does not explain" how Lamanites could be both savage and chosen in the *Book of Mormon*.[12] It is true, as well, that Lamanites were set apart in Mormons' eyes from ordinary life. They were described as chosen by descent: better, and higher than white Americans, who could only become like them through spiritual adoption into Israel through Mormon ritual life.[13] But to argue from the special place of Lamanites in Mormon spiritual hierarchies toward Mormon exceptionalism in discussions of race and religion in the early republic is both to ignore the ways that construing Lamanites as holy ensured their absence as American Indians and to ignore clear discursive connections between early Mormon thought and wider discussions about Israelite Indians in the early United States.[14]

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[12] Bushman and Woodworth, *Joseph Smith*, 98.

[13] Armand Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 4.

[14] For examples of arguments to Mormon racial exceptionalism, see G. St. John Stott, "New Jerusalem Abandoned: The Failure to Carry Mormonism to the Delaware," *Journal of American Studies* 21, no. 1 (April 1, 1987): 71–85; Ronald W. Walker, "Seeking the 'Remnant': The Native American During the Joseph Smith Period," *Journal of Mormon History* 19, no. 1 (April 1, 1993): 1–33; Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*; Jared Hickman, "The Book of Mormon as Amerindian Apocalypse," *American Literatures* 86, no. 3 (September 2014): 429–61.

### *Lamanites and Jewish Indians in the Early Mormon Imagination*

Grant Underwood's study of the motivations of early converts stresses the prevailing belief among many early Americans that the true church, if it appeared on earth, would be accompanied by signs and wonders.[15] The practices of having visions, speaking in tongues, and delivering prophecies provided what early Mormons took to be clear proof that they were living in a restored apostolic age. Not only did early Mormons at times embrace spiritual exercises in which they embodied what they thought of as Lamanite identities, but they also brought Lamanites into their lives through the far more common practices of speaking in tongues and receiving visions. Given the signal part Lamanites played in Mormon prophecies, it is not surprising that their presence was thought of as a touch of the holy.

## Lamanites and the Miraculous

In 1830, members of the Mormon congregation in Kirtland, Ohio began to hold regular meetings resembling the camp meetings then common on the western frontiers. During these meetings, some members of the church conducted "themselves in a strange manner, sometimes imitating Indians in their manoeuvres" by, for example, pantomiming paddling a canoe along a river or scalping their enemies.[16] They may have accompanied these gestures by speaking in "Lamanite" tongues, as did Shakers who similarly acted out behaviors stereotypically associated

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[15] Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*, 97–98.

[16] John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints (Commonly Called Mormons;) Including an Account of Their Doctrine and Discipline; with the Reasons of the Author for Leaving the Church* (St. Louis [MO]: Published for the Author, 1839), 16–17.

with American Indians when they claimed to receive spiritual visitations from Native spirits.[17] By imitating Lamanites, these Mormons literally enacted *Book of Mormon* prophecies that associated Lamanite violence with the millennial return of Christ. Joseph Smith put a stop to these exercises, fearing that they could lead to violence if a white public deeply distrustful of American Indians believed that Mormons had associated themselves too closely with Native people[18] But Mormons continued to take on Lamanite identities or speak in "Lamanite" tongues to emphasize their newfound faith's connection to the world of the miraculous.

Early Mormons traded stories about the presence of Lamanites to assert their belief in the miracles that, they asserted, had returned to the world with Joseph Smith's restoration of the true Church of Christ. Many of these stories focused on the manifestation of Lamanite presence by white Mormons who claimed Lamanite identities, performed Lamanite "manoeuvres" in religious trances, or spoke Lamanite tongues in religious ecstasy. As these stories show, early Mormons hoped that Lamanites would be an intimate presence in their lives. They signaled their conviction in the miracles that authorized and empowered the Mormon movement by surrendering their bodies, tongues, and identities to Lamanite control.

Early Mormons looked to miraculous signs to confirm their faith. One such sign was the gift of tongues, or the divinely-granted ability to speak an unknown language. A Kirtland Mormon woman, Presendia Huntington (1810-1892), remembered attending one prayer meeting with a relative who doubted the truth of the *Book of Mormon*. She believed herself to be

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[17] Christopher C. Smith, "Playing Lamanite: Ecstatic Performance of American Indian Roles in Early Mormon Ohio," *Journal of Mormon History* 41, no. 3 (2015): 148–50.

[18] Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 108; Duffy, "The Use of 'Lamanite' in Official LDS Discourse."

vindicated when during the meeting a Mormon man "arose and sang a song of Zion in tongues; I arose and sang simultaneously with him the same tune and words, beginning and ending each verse in perfect unison, without varying a word. It was just as though we had sung it together a thousand times."[19] For Huntington, the Mormons' ability to sing in unison while speaking tongues indicates that they were not imagining their spiritual gifts but were receiving divinely-imparted knowledge of a real language.

Huntington likely interpreted the "song of Zion" she sang to be in a hidden language, perhaps the language spoken before the fall of the Tower of Babel. Christian movements that practice speaking in tongues often distinguish between the gift of speaking a tongue unknown to any humans, sometimes called glossolalia, and the gift of speaking in human languages foreign to the speaker, called xenoglossia or xenolalia. Early Mormons did not always make such neat distinctions, however. Their accounts of being able to speak a tongue known only to God often associated that language with American Indian languages.[20]

Benjamin Brown (1794-1878) gave pride of place in his conversion narrative to the purported identity between the tongues that Mormons spoke in prayer meetings and the languages of the Israelite Indians of the *Book of Mormon*. He reported praying in 1833 or 1834 to know the truth of a story in 3 Nephi 28 that relates that three Nephite disciples of Jesus are given immortality and the task of ministering on the earth until the Second Coming.[21] Two of the

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[19] Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom*, 208–9.

[20] Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death*, 108, 116–41.

[21] Mormon authors often compare this story to the narrative mentioned, though not endorsed, in John 21:22-23 that the disciple John would live until the Second Coming. It also bears a strong resemblance to and is an inversion of

Nephites subsequently appeared to him in a vision, and chastised him for his disbelief in the gift of tongues: “This personage spoke in the Nephite language, but I understood, by the Spirit which accompanied him, every word as plainly as if he had spoken in English.” Furthermore, Brown “recognized the language to be the same as that in which I had heard [a Mormon] speak at the meeting” and “was dumb before my rebuke.”[22] He imagined the Nephite language, therefore, as identical with the language spoken in tongues during prayer meetings. Nephites, in the *Book of Mormon*, were also Israelites who came to America, only to be eliminated by the Lamanites. In this sense, the language he imagined hearing would have been a Native American language, albeit possibly one distinct from the languages spoken by Lamanites.

Benjamin F. Johnson (1818-1905) went a step beyond Brown when he claimed to have received the ability to speak Mohawk when on a mission in Ontario near Lake Simcoe in 1840. Having come on a number of Mohawk families camped near the lake shore, he found one man who spoke English well and “commenced talking to him of their forefathers,” that is, the Lamanites.[23] In the midst of his talk, “the Spirit came upon me, and I spoke in their own tongue. All the Indians came running to me, to listen with glistening eyes and great attention through all my talk to them. When I ceased, the Indian with whom I had been talking said, ‘You talk good Mohawk, and we all understand.’” He came to believe that “the Spirit of the Lord rested upon

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the European trope of the Wandering Jew: a Jewish man who mocked or denied Jesus on the cross and was cursed to wander endlessly until his return.

[22] Benjamin Brown, *Testimonies for the Truth a Record of Manifestations of the Power of God, Miraculous and Providential, Witnessed in the Travels and Experience of Benjamin Brown* (Liverpool [UK], 1853), 8.

[23] Lori Elaine Taylor claims that the people Johnson encountered were Ojibwe, but does not provide a source. Taylor, “Telling Stories About Mormons and Indians,” 195.

them, and they would now tell me anything I wished to know pertaining to their religion." Because barriers to learning about the Mohawk's religion were lowered, by divine intervention, as Johnson believed, he could question them about what they believed and discover what he thought was evidence that they were descendants of the Lamanites of the *Book of Mormon*. "I learned that their hopes of the future were almost identical with our own, and they realized that because of wars and wickedness they had been cursed, but that through the ancient fathers it was promised that the power of their enemies should be broken, and a great prophet or prince would be sent to them by the Great Spirit."[24] Here, Johnson follows Adair, Boudinot, and other Jewish Indian theorists in asserting that parallels between religious narratives—in this case between the ingathering of the Lamanites described in the *Book of Mormon* and what seems to be a Nativist religion such as the Longhouse Religion (*Gaihwi:io*)—prove relatedness of descent.[25]

This seemingly-straightforward story of a miraculous instance of xenoglossia expressed Johnson's desire to see not Mohawks but Lamanites. By the end of this encounter the transformation in his mind was complete: he ceases to use the term "Indians," instead referring to them as "these Lamanites." Johnson never described them as Mohawks. Their self-ascription was swallowed up in Johnson's vision of a holy people, whose (putative) once and future status as Lamanites, not their current national or tribal identities, shaped how he treated them. The

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[24] Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Heber City, UT: Archive Publishers, 2001), 86–87.

[25] Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*; Gregory Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Alfred Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

discourses of holiness wrapping and constituting Lamanites ensured that Johnson could neither hear nor see these Mohawks. Their absence was assured.

Stories associating miraculous gifts with Lamanites suggest that the exercises in Kirtland were not incidental excesses but an instance of the way that early Mormons seized imaginatively on the "Indian history" that Joseph Smith had provided. Lamanites were part of the world of the miraculous—angels, tongues, golden plates—that early Mormons longed to feel in their lives. Forging relationships, real or imagined, with Lamanites was one way of doing this.

**Lamanites and the Millennial Gathering**

For early Mormons, Lamanites were holy figures who would usher in the millennium. [26] They were also, simultaneously, less than human. This complex relationship played out both in physical encounters with American Indians and political attitudes toward Indian removal. Early Mormons treated American Indians as special people, but also assumed that they would play the role imagined for them in prophecy. The very prophecies that made Mormons value American Indians, therefore, limited their ability to understand Native resistance to Indian removal.

On July 19, 1838, a group of Mormons from the "Kirtland Camp"—a group that fled the Kirtland settlement under pressure from local antagonists— were traveling near Mansfield Ohio when they encountered "a Lamanite, of the Wyandot tribe." One member of the group, probably Seventy member John Davis Parker (1799-1891), gave the Wyandot man "the stick of Joseph

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[26] Matthew Bowman, *The Mormon People: The Making of an American Faith* (New York: Random House, 2012), 32–62.

[i.e. a copy of the *Book of Mormon*], which pleased him much."[27] In the version recorded in an early version of Joseph Smith's *History*, the man was impressed by the sight of the Kirtland Camp moving, and exclaimed "Dis serprize me mazingly."[28] To the Mormons who encountered him, this unnamed Wyandot man was a Lamanite, a figure with whom every interaction was pregnant with meaning. Parker's reference to his gift of a copy of the *Book of Mormon* using the uncommon term "stick of Joseph" indicated that he saw himself as enacting his belief that this was a holy man, a being of prophecy. His acceptance of the gift, to them, was a confirmation of the eventual union of white Mormons and converted Lamanites in the millennium as the people of Joseph. In the "valley of the dry bones" prophecy in Ezekiel, God instructs Ezekiel to use a stick marked "Joseph" and a stick marked "Judah" to demonstrate the re-gathering of the people of Israel after the destruction of the Temple and the Babylonian Exile. "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand."[29] Parker's reference to the *Book of Mormon* as the "stick of Joseph" indicates that he saw the man's acceptance of it as recapitulating the prophecy of

[27] Early Mormon church organization underwent several revisions. When Parker was ordained to the Seventy in 1835, it was a body called to "preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world" and to administer the church Smith envisioned spreading "in all nations, first to the Gentiles and then to the Jews" The relationship of the Seventy's authority to that of the Twelve Apostles who served under Smith was unclear: the Seventy was "equal in authority" to the Apostles, but was to serve "under the direction of the Twelve." *Doctrine and Covenants* 107:25-26, 34-35. L. Aldin Porter "A History of the Latter-day Seventy" *Ensign: A Magazine of the Latter-day Saints* Vol. 40, No. 8 (August 2000).

[28] Joseph Smith, Willard Richards, and Thomas Bullock, "'19 July 1838, Thursday' in History, 1838-1856, Volume B-1 [1 September 1834-2 November 1838]" 1845, 259, JSP.

[29] Ezekiel 37:16-19, Authorized Version. Mormons also interpret this prophecy to mean that the "stick of Joseph" or *Book of Mormon* and the "stick of Judah" or Bible are to be joined into one complete record. *Doctrine and Covenants* 27:5.

Ezekiel, and in his eyes confirmed the identity between the man before him, the Lamanites of the *Book of Mormon*, and the Israelites of the Bible. The Wyandot man's acceptance of it, all unwittingly, was interpreted by the Mormons present as a signal that the American Indians would be gathered together as part of God's millennial plan.

At the same time, the Mormons remained as capable as any white Americans of being amused by the Wyandot man's dialect. The quotation, "Dis serprize me mazingly!" smacks of contemporary depictions of American Indians on stage, which emphasized "primitive" speech patterns. These shows, like blackface minstrelsy, reinfored the border between white audiences and non-white people by caricaturing and exaggerating differences between the groups. In the case of redface dramas, white audiences craved "Indian" characters who were either savage and child-like or noble relics gently ceding their lands to whites of the future.[30] Modern tastes might not stretch to thinking about a being of prophecy who can also be a source of humor, but the simultaneous awe, expectation and condescension this incident contains encapsulates early Mormon attitudes toward "Lamanites." In visions and prophecy as well as in the flesh, American Indians were made to serve the purposes of Mormons' religious expectations.

Parley Pratt (1807-1857) developed a startling vision of Lamanites' role in the millennium in his best-selling defense of Mormon doctrine, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All Peoples* (1837).[31] In Pratt's view, white Mormons take a distinctly secondary role in the millennium, since he reads the *Book of Mormon* as saying that the "remnant of Joseph and those

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[30] Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 57, 64–65.

[31] Sections of my discussion of Parley Pratt and the reception of his prophecies by early Mormons will be published in altered form in Matthew W. Dougherty, "None Can Deliver: Imagining Lamanites and Feeling Mormon, 1837-1847," *Journal of Mormon History* Forthcoming (2017).

gathered with them" inherit Zion in America while the other tribes of the Jews inherit Jerusalem in the Middle East. These "believing Gentiles, who will gather … from all the nations of the earth," that is, Latter-day Saints, are saved through being gathered with American Indians—the "remnant of Joseph"—and united into one people with them.[32] Hence, in Pratt's reading, white Mormons are after-thoughts in a sacred history that purports to be primarily about American Indians. Although his presentation of the *Book of Mormon* relied on the currency of Israelite Indian stories in the early United States, then, he understood that history as containing very different meanings from the supersessionist logic employed by Ethan Smith and Elias Boudinot. Whereas those writers imagined the history of white Protestants over-writing and superseding that of both American Indians and Ancient Israelites, in Mormon thought Israelites, who were also American Indians, over-wrote the history of white converts and provided them with a millennial destiny.

But Pratt's sympathy, bordering on self-abnegation, for Lamanites in the millennial age did not translate to a significant attempt to understand the beliefs, needs, or goals of living American Indians. From the Mormon base of operations in Missouri and Ohio, Pratt was in a perfect position to see the effects of Indian removal on nearby Native groups such as the Lenape (Delaware), Oneida, Stockbridge, and Potawatomi. But although he felt "sorrow, when I think how you have been smitten," Pratt exhorted American Indians to see that removal as God's instrument to gather them together and prepare them to possess the Americas—once they had

[32] Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People: Containing a Declaration of the Faith and Doctrine of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, Commonly Called Mormons* (New York: W. Standford, 1837), 180, 186.

converted, of course.[33] Hence, to be included in Pratt's millennial visions, American Indians would have to pay a steep price.

Pratt recorded visions of the apocalyptic vengeance of American Indians against white Protestants to argue that American Indians should not seek to resist removal in the here and now. He quotes at length the *Book of Mormon* prophecy now numbered as 3 Nephi 21:11-21, which in the 1837 edition he refers to predicts that "… whosoever will not believe in my words which am Jesus Christ … they shall be cut off from among my people, which are of the covenant; and my people which are a remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces and none can deliver."[34] For Pratt, as for other early Mormon readers of this prophecy, the "remnant of Jacob" was the Lamanites. But, despite the violent language of the prophecies, he does not counsel American Indians to take up arms to fulfill them.

Pratt argued that Indian removal had been appointed by God as a prelude to the millennial gathering of the tribes. "O ye Red Men of the forest … lay down your weapons of war, cease to oppose the Gentiles, in the gathering of your various tribes …" God had caused the Federal government to force Native people from their land, and they should "suffer [the

[33] Ibid., 190–91.

[34] Ibid., 188. This is a partial repetition of a prophecy given in 3 Nephi 20:14-20. Both *Book of Mormon* prophecies echoed the Hebrew Bible book of Micah: "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver." Micah 5:7-8 (Authorized Version).

Gentiles] peaceably to fulfill this last act of kindness, as a kind of reward, for the injuries you have received from them, for the very places of their dwellings will become desolate; except such of them as are gathered and numbered with you …"[35] Pratt anticipated that Indian removal was only a prelude to an ironic reversal. It would, through God's agency, allow the tribes to be united in preparation for the final destruction of white settlements in North America and the rule of the continent by converted Lamanites and white Mormons. But to enjoy this future, contemporary American Indians would have to abandon any attempts to resist removal and accept their place in Pratt's vision as a holy people of God. They would become the people Pratt found described in the *Book of Mormon* only if they "peaceably" endured the "kindness" of forced migration, disease and famine brought by removal.[36]

**Lamanites and Violence in the Millennium**

Early Mormons were fascinated by the apocalyptic prophecies of 3 Nephi, which promised that the Lamanites would soon "pass through" and destroy the Gentiles. Their images of how this anticipated millennial war would play out relied on literatures of frontier violence that depicted American Indians as "savages" fought by white settlers in a struggle to gain rightful title to the land.[37] White Protestants, especially those on the frontiers, used this literature to

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[35] Ibid., 190–91.

[36] See, e.g. Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears* (New York, N.Y.: Viking, 2007); Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal*.

[37] Numerous studies of literature in historical context explore frontier warfare narratives. Foundational texts include Henry Smith, *Virgin Land : The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970); Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence; the Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860.* (Wesleyan University Press, 1973); Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment : The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).

reaffirm the sacrifices their ancestors had made to create "civilization" and remind them that their identity relied on constant war with Native people. [38] Mormons, likewise, told stories about Indian massacres, but re-read them as hopeful signs of the redemption of white Mormons. This allowed them to fantasize about the apocalyptic destruction of the white Protestant communities in which many early Mormons had been raised and to which they often maintained ties. In Mormon scenarios of millennial violence, they would be able to stand back as witnesses to the slaughter that Lamanites would carry out on their behalf rather than commit to participating in it. Especially as hostility against Mormons mounted in Missouri and Illinois after 1840, early Mormons greeted visions of this millennial destruction with hope and excitement.

Mormons' opponents often accused them of allying with American Indians and drumming up violence against whites.[39] Although these accusations were largely fantasy, letters from early Mormon women show that at least some Mormons shared in that fantasy. Elizabeth Haven Barlow (1811-1892), a cousin of Brigham Young, wrote from Quincy, Illinois in 1839 that a gathering of American Indians in the upper Missouri was both "a preparation for war" and a sign of their imminent religious conversion.[40] She claimed that one tribe had a "prophet … who

[38] This literature developed on the frontier in response to mid-eighteenth century conflicts. Griffin, *American Leviathan*. Urban Americans also defined themselves against "savages," but they were more likely to tell stories implying that white Americans had replaced American Indians as "first people." Deloria, *Playing Indian*; O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*. See also Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*. Both rural and urban literatures ignored the ongoing relationships of exchange, trade, and intermarriage between settlers and Indigenous peoples that were also characteristic of areas where Native nations wielded as much or more power than the United States. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); DuVal, *The Native Ground*; Calloway, *New Worlds for All*.

[39] Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 68; Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 55; Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death*, 109.

[40] The meetings Barlow describes were probably between Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, and Assiniboine peoples. They had suffered repeated smallpox epidemics, and attendant social disruption, from 1837-1839. This probably accounts for the rumors of repeated meetings and violence Barlow mentions, but because her letter is vague it is difficult to

will not allow the white [non-Mormon] missionary to be in their midst, because 'they no preach the true God.'" To Barlow, this was an obvious prelude to the apocalyptic uprising of the Lamanites: "The prophecies must all be fulfilled, and when the remnant of Jacob pass through there will be none to deliver … How soon they will pass through we know not. They are very wrathy toward the whites and we hear many things which they threaten, but God will not suffer them to rise until the Gentiles are ripe for destruction."[41] Barlow imagined a tight relationship here between the rejection of Protestantism and the embrace of the Mormon movement. Mormon millennial culture encouraged her to expect that American Indians would soon convert en masse to the new faith and join with them in a final war. Hence, she imagined that these unnamed American Indians' opposition to Protestantism signaled their immanent rejection of the United States government and alliance with the beleaguered Mormons.

Six years later, Sally Randall (1805-?), an early convert, wrote from Nauvoo that: "the mob characters and dissenters threaten of something in the spring, but we don't fear them much for we never shall be drove from here. We are too strong for them ourselves and besides that there is already ten hundred thousand of the Lamanites baptized into the Church and they are waiting very impatient to avenge the blood of Joseph and Hyrum. We have to keep men among

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pinpoint exactly what events it reflects. Francis A. Chardon, *Chardon's Journal at Fort Clark, 1834-1839; Descriptive of Life on the Upper Missouri; of a Fur Trader's Experiences among the Mandans, Gros Ventres and Their Neighbors; of the Ravages of the Small-Pox Epidemic of 1837* (Pierre, SD, 1932). See also Roy Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977); Elizabeth Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2014).

[41] Elizabeth Haven Barlow, "Elizabeth Haven Barlow, Quincy [IL], to Elizabeth Howe Bullard, Holliston [MA], Feb. 24, 1839," in *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-Day Saints*, ed. Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1982), 110–11.

them to keep them back or they would [have] been here before this time."[42] Randall distinguished between Mormons and Lamanites by referring to their emotional temper. Mormons were restrained, where Lamanites burned for vengeance. Mormons, therefore, retained the moral high ground by restraining the Lamanites even though they would benefit from Lamanite violence. Mormons could meet threats to their existence with civilized and Christian equanimity because they had savage Lamanites waiting in the wings.

The vision of Lamanite vengeance on behalf of the aggrieved Mormons did not end with the migration from Nauvoo, however. In June, 1847, Eliza Snow (1804-1877)—a former plural wife of Joseph Smith— wrote from the migrants' temporary settlement at Winter Quarters, Nebraska (now North Omaha) that she had "spent the eve at br. Leonard's … Great instruction was brought forth—br. L[eonard] spoke of the American government—its fall &c. after which the Lord manifested the contrast of the happiness of the saints and the suff'ring of the gentiles when the Lamanites go forth. Language cannot describe the scene."[43] At least during this historical moment, when the perception among Mormons was that they were a persecuted people driven from their lands, the prophecies of Lamanite violence were a topic for a quotidian religious meeting. The migrants had begun to think of themselves as separate from the "American government" that had, in their eyes, betrayed their trust by not protecting Mormons' rights to live where they chose and by not preventing the assassination of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. The phrase "the Lord manifested …" seems in context to indicate that Leonard's remarks

[42] Sally Randall, "Sally Randall Letters," in *Women's Voices:*, n.d., 143.

[43] Eliza R. (Eliza Roxey) Snow, *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow*, ed. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 176.

were followed by a period of prophecy or speaking in tongues in which one of the people present elaborated on the millennial future in which the Lamanites would destroy the "gentiles" while preserving the "saints."

Hoping for this vengeance, which would be poured out on the unconverted white "Gentiles" of America first and foremost, became a key way of differentiating the converted from the unconverted, the Saints from the Gentiles. Mormons imagined themselves as distinct from the unofficial white Protestant establishment.[44] Reading about, talking about, and having visions of the apocalyptic destruction of this system at the hands of Lamanites was a key practice by which early Mormons differentiated themselves from white Americans. By unleashing bloody violence in the millennium, Lamanites would demonstrate that white Mormons were a distinct people from white Protestants. But the fact that Lamanites, not white Mormons, would be the instruments of divine retribution suggested that the latter would remain innocent onlookers, still separate from their converted "Israelite" kin.

Only one early Mormon, the missionary Jonathan Dunham, openly identified himself with the Lamanites who would destroy Gentiles in the millennium. In 1840, he wrote in haste to Hiram Kellogg of Kirtland, Ohio, asking for help resupplying and going on a new mission to the Six Nations (Iroquois or Haudenosaunee): "A new scene of things are about to transpire in the west, in fulfillment of prophecy &c … I am not sent to the Gentiles neither to the Cities of the Sameritans [sic], but to the promised people of the house of Jacob, who if they go through &c" and signed the letter "J Dunham, Lamanite."[45] Anyone versed in early Mormon millennial

[44] Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 1–13.

[45] Thomas Burdick to JS, "Letter," August 28, 1840, Joseph Smith's Letterbook 2, 174-176, JSP.

thinking would have been able to complete his truncated quotation of 3 Nephi 20:16 prophecy that the Lamanites would, in the millennium, destroy the gentiles, for "if he goeth through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver."[46] When he arrived in Kirtland, Dunham preached that "this nation is about to be destroyed," echoing the anticipation of millennial violence found in Barlow's, Randall's and Snow's writings.[47]

But Dunham, unlike other early Mormon authors, assumed Lamanite identity when anticipating this millennial destruction. This was not to be a lasting identification; Dunham clearly distinguished between Mormons and Lamanites when planning an extensive mission to multiple American Indian tribes five years later.[48] Rather than an expression of permanent solidarity with American Indians or of his intention to fight alongside them in the millennium, Dunham's enthusiastic identification of himself with the Lamanites seems to have been a dramatic assertion of his allegiance to what he saw as the right side of the coming conflict. If Dunham was taking on a Lamanite identity strategically and temporarily, his action would have a wider context. At this time, white men donned "Indian" costumes and identities in public demonstrations and fraternal orders to reaffirm their commitment to the "American" values that Indians were taken to represent. In doing so, they could critique the existing social order, re-

[46] The verb form "goeth" indicates that Dunham was probably quoting the version of the prophecy in 3 Nephi 20:14-20, since the 3 Nephi 21 and Micah 5:7-8 versions both use the verb form "go." The distinction may simply be a matter of mis-remembering or textual error, but since "if he goeth through" is indicative mood, whereas "if he go through" is subjunctive, the distinction may indicate a greater confidence in the definiteness of the prophecy.

[47] Burdick to JS, "Letter."

[48] E.g. Grow et al., *Council of Fifty Minutes, March 1844-January 1846*, 290, 303, 399.

affirm their status as "native" Americans, or both, depending on the situation.[49] By calling himself a "Lamanite," Dunham similarly shed his white identity in what was likely only a temporary performance. It is likely that, like white men who reaffirmed their civilized status by donning and doffing "Indian" costumes, Dunham played with a Lamanite identity only to reaffirm his eventual place in the millennium as a white Mormon who would witness the destruction brought by "the house of Jacob" on his behalf.[50]

In this light, the argument advanced by numerous interpreters that early Mormon prophecies about Lamanites indicated a deep, unusual sympathy for American Indians take on a new light.[51] Yes, Mormons endorsed a prophesied apocalyptic scenario in which American Indians would make war against unrighteous whites, and were often accused of colluding with Indians for that reason.[52] That very scenario, however, was clearly understood by early Mormons to rest on the assumption that Indians were savages who, even after conversion, would be more than willing to do the Saints' killing for them. Just as in larger American discourses about Israelite Indians, then, Indians were "Israelites" in part because conversion would not end their separation from white Christians. They would remain, because of their descent, a people apart.

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[49] Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 38–70.

[50] I expand on this point in Dougherty, "None Can Deliver: Imagining Lamanites and Feeling Mormon, 1837-1847."

[51] Stanley B. Kimball, "The Captivity Narrative on Mormon Trails, 1846-1865," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1985): 81–88; Walker, "Seeking the 'Remnant': The Native American During the Joseph Smith Period"; Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*; Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death*; Hickman, "The Book of Mormon as Amerindian Apocalypse."

[52] Stott, "New Jerusalem Abandoned," 75–76; Walker, "Seeking the 'Remnant': The Native American During the Joseph Smith Period," 1–3; Hickman, "The Book of Mormon as Amerindian Apocalypse," 439–42; Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 15–74.

### *Jewish Indians and the Reception of the* **Book of Mormon**

Imagining Lamanites as a holy people in Orsi's sense of the word allowed early Mormons to construct narratives around the *Book of Mormon* that shaped how they presented it to others, read it for themselves, and defended its contents. Early readings of the *Book of Mormon* owed much to the Israelite Indian histories already familiar in early America, and invested them with urgent new meanings. In contrast to white Protestant treatises that depicted American Indians as preserving distant remnants of original Israelite practice that would facilitate their conversion and the millennial destiny of the United States, discussions of Lamanites imagined American Indians as on the verge of total millennial transformation into a group of utterly different people who would overturn the order of the world.

### The *Book of Mormon* as Indian History

Early Mormons presented the *Book of Mormon* as both a new scripture and as a history of the American Indians. They expected their audiences to be hungrier for an Indian history than for additions to the Protestant canon, and so emphasized the historical angle of the *Book of Mormon* in public presentations.[53] For example, *Times and Seasons,* a newspaper published in Nauvoo and edited by Joseph Smith, serialized a dialogue in 1841 representing an ideal for missionary work that gives the "Jewish Indian" histories of the *Book of Mormon* pride of place, and presents them as a reason for a skeptical convert to embrace the religion rather than as a stumbling-block to faith. The model missionary, "Elder Pierce," begins his description of the *Book of Mormon* by calling it "…a record of the aborigines of this continent (America), which was engraven on plates of precious metal, and handed down from father to son, from generation to generation."

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[53] Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 91–99; Duffy, "The Use of 'Lamanite' in Official LDS Discourse," 123.

He goes on to argue that the *Book of Mormon* is important because it fills a gap in potential converts' knowledge:

> …there is no correct account given of [American Indian] descent, or their history—the world has been shrouded in darkness on these matters; but the Book of Mormon like the rising sun, eradiates the gloom, throws a flood of light on the history and proceedings of this people, and brings to light things which have been hid from generation to generation—contains many predictions respecting their restoration to righteousness, and again becoming a 'fair and delightsome people.'[54]

Pierce's placement of a newly revealed American Indian history within *Book of Mormon* prophecies of the millennial gathering of the Lamanites, complete with the expectation that restoration to a blessed state would also mean the restoration of white skin, highlights several of his expectations. The first is that the idea that a "correct account" of American Indian history would be enticing to potential converts, who could be expected to have already been exposed to the Israelite Indian stories purporting to explain that history. Indeed, they were expected to find it a respectable idea. A character in the dialogue sympathetic to Mormonism, "Mr. Matthews," remarks to his more skeptical friend, "You will observe by this account, Mr. R[oberts] that this people who landed here were Jews, this you know agrees with the idea, that many learned men have had, that the Indians are descendants of the Jews." Roberts agrees that "this idea is generally entertained among the learned." When Matthews observes that he "had always thought that there had been a more enlightened people on this continent, than the present Indians" because of the presence of "ancient buildings, monuments &c." the ostensibly-skeptical Roberts replies: "There can be no doubt on this subject."[55]

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[54] "Dialogue on Mormonism II," *Times and Seasons*, July 15, 1841, Mormon Publications: 19th and 20th Centuries, BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections.

[55] Ibid.

Second, this dialogue assumes that, of all the dense theological content of the *Book of Mormon*, non-Mormons in the early 1840s would be most interested in its millennial prophecies. In the understanding of early Mormons, a signal doctrine of what they took to be the restored Christian faith delivered by Jesus was that there would be two millennial gatherings of the peoples of the earth: one of the Jews centered in Jerusalem and one of the converted American Indians and Mormons centered in "Zion," which Smith identified with a location in Jackson County, Missouri.[56]

Contrary to Terryl Givens's argument that the *Book of Mormon* was important first and foremost as a symbol, the idealized missionary does not simply point to the *Book of Mormon*'s existence as a sign that the latter days had come and that new revelations would now be forthcoming.[57] He also does not give an extensive account of its finding and translation, as Smith often did in early newspaper articles. Rather, he emphasizes a specific subset of the book's contents: the histories of Jewish Indians and prophecies about their role in the millennium. Had early Mormons thought to add a subtitle to their scripture to help potential converts understand it, as the modern Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints did in 1982, they would have been likely to pick not "Another Testament of Jesus Christ," but "A History of the American Indians."

Actual, rather than ideal, accounts of missionary activity bear out the idea that Jewish Indian stories made the *Book of Mormon* seem an exciting revelation shedding light on vital

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[56] Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*, 63–65, 80–83.

[57] Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 61–65. This reading also complicates Steven C. Harper's argument that it was distinctive early Mormon doctrines that most attracted converts. "Infallible Proofs, Both Human and Divine: The Persuasiveness of Mormonism for Early Converts," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, Vol 10, issue 1 (January, 2000), 99-118.

questions about American history. Through the Nauvoo period (1839-1846), the mere fact that the *Book of Mormon* contained a history of Israelites in America seems to have drawn converts.[58] Lyman Omer Littlefield (1819-1890), an early Mormon born in Oneida County, New York, reported in his autobiography that his first interest in Mormonism was stirred in childhood by hearing about a "golden bible" that "purported to give an account of a great and enlightened nation of people, then extinct, from whom the American Indians were descended."[59] That such a story made sense to Littlefield demonstrates not only the wide dissemination of the Israelite Indian stories in American newspapers and cheap print but also the wide reach of the belief that the history of American Indians was unknown but, if revealed, would confirm rather than challenge existing accounts of the world.[60] In this way, early Mormons' first impressions of their scripture and its histories depended on the wider currency of the Israelite Indian stories in the early republic.

Such narratives not only provided a context in which outsiders could understand the *Book of Mormon*, but also provided a way for Mormons who did not have access to the text to

[58]Early Mormon history is characterized by a series of systolic missionary efforts moving outward from centers of Mormon settlement and diastolic movements toward gathering in a specific place. The historiography of the movement has tended to divide the history into periods based on the notional "center" of church life, an approach which has the virtue of clarity even if it tends to overemphasize the experience of Joseph Smith and key church leaders as paradigmatic, and to de-emphasize the experience of leaders regarded as schismatic by the modern LDS Church. A conventional way to divide the periods discussed here would be: Palmyra (to 1831), Kirtland (1831-1839), Nauvoo (1839-1846), and migration to Utah (1846-1849). A judicious treatment of this history that uses similar periodization while eschewing the narrow focus it tends to encourage is Bowman, *The Mormon People*.

[59] It is possible that Littlefield, writing in 1888, was normalizing this idea in retrospect, although the wide dissemination of the Jewish Indian theory in cheap print (see Chapter 2) suggests that it was at least plausible that he should have been familiar with the idea in the early years of the Mormon movement. Lyman Omer Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-Day Saints: Giving an Account of Much Individual Suffering for Religious Conscience* (Logan, UT, 1888), 27.

[60] Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*, 35–52.

understand the oral versions of the stories they heard in sermons and testimony. According to the diary of Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightener (1818-1913), the Kirtland Mormon community did not have a copy of the "golden Bible" between the time of her baptism in October, 1830 and John Whitmer's arrival with a single copy in December of that year.[61] If the *Book of Mormon* was not available to this community for two months, how did they make sense of the stories they were told? Lightener's account reveals that the Kirtland Mormons experienced the *Book of Mormon* and the early revelations of Joseph Smith first and foremost as oral texts. When she was first able to borrow a copy of the *Book of Mormon* for the space of an evening, Lightener committed its opening verses and the outline of the "history of Nephi" to memory. This was not a woman who expected to have easy access to the book again. Rather, she expected to have to orally recount the story she had read. Even after a printing press was built in Kirtland, printed revelations were read in a richly oral environment. Lightener recalled a gathering at her uncle's house to "converse upon the revelations that had not been printed as yet, but few had looked upon them." "They spoke of them with such reverence, as coming from the Lord. . .While talking they were filled with the spirit and spoke in tongues."[62] In the context of Kirtland, Joseph Smith's revelations and the *Book of Mormon* itself were not ready to hand. Rather, the experience of reading them was an occasion for discussion and for ecstatic religious visions.

Absent the resources for, or the practice of, the continued study of the text, early Mormons would have had to understand the historical narratives of the *Book of Mormon* in the

[61] "Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightener"; Lucy Mack Smith, "History, 1844-1845," *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 2015, 117, josephsmithpapers.org.

[62] "Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightener."

context of stories they were already familiar with. Because the *Book of Mormon* claimed to be a history of Israelites in America, those familiar with stories about Jewish Indians that circulated in cheap print could not help but read Joseph Smith's history in light of them. Littlefield and other early converts were, after all, familiar enough with such stories to ask the questions about Indian origins that the *Book of Mormon* claimed to answer. Hence, the concept of the Lamanite was not only genealogically linked to Joseph Smith's exposure to Jewish Indian stories, as has often been argued, but intertextually entangled with ordinary Mormons' understandings of them.[63]

**Apologetic Features of Jewish Indian narrative**

Wider conversations on Jewish Indians not only shaped potential converts' expectations and informed Mormons' readings of the text, but also helped to justify the superiority of Mormon doctrines over those of mainstream white Protestants and Universalists. Early explanations of the *Book of Mormon* not only gave priority to its Israelite Indian histories as a way of helping new readers to understand its genre and questions, in other words, but also as a way of demonstrating its superiority as scripture. The idea that the *Book of Mormon* demonstrated God's intention to send a revelation to the Americas, as well as to the "old world" allowed some early Mormon preachers to offer a compelling response to the question of how it could be that God had not seen fit to reveal Christianity—and hence the way to salvation— in America until the late fifteenth century.

Henry Caswall, an English traveler who visited Nauvoo in 1842, preserves the text of an early Mormon sermon that speaks to this point. Soon after arriving, Caswall sought out the site

[63] For arguments connecting Smith's narrative genealogically to Jewish Indian stories, see Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*.

of the Nauvoo Temple under construction and stumbled on a congregation "of about two thousand" meeting in a grove near the sanctuary. Caswell recorded one of the two sermons given that day, given by a "stout, intemperate-looking" elder. The elder argued that Protestant views of God were unjust because they had been "traditioned" to think that there was only one revelation. But the Bible "a book principally written in Asia, by Jews, and suited to peculiar circumstances and peculiar classes," had not been brought to America until after European contact. If God was no respecter of persons, and judged all equally, the elder asked, how could American Indians be judged equally with Europeans if they had never received a revelation? A God who could do so "was most horribly unjust, and he, for his part, would never love such a God; he could only hate him." But no, he went on, God "had now revealed Himself in America just as truly as he had ever done in Asia," and "had redeemed men by his blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and had made them unto God kings and priests."[64] Caswell found this sermon unconvincing, but to Mormon audiences it offered an apology for the justice of Mormon doctrines of revelation and for their superiority to other alternatives available in the early United States.

By claiming that God had revealed himself to Jewish Indians in America, the elder was positing that there were multiple scriptural revelations. This contrasted to populist understandings of revivalism, which claimed that only an individual's response to the Bible could save him or her, as well as to Universalist arguments that all could be saved regardless of

[64] Henry Caswall, *The City of the Mormons; Or, Three Days at Nauvoo, in 1842*, 2nd ed. (London: J.G.F. & J. Rivington, 1843), 10–12. Caswall scoffed at the elder's comment that he had left his Bible at home because "it ain't necessary" for preaching, but his reference was a near quotation from a song praising the Lamb, the apocalyptic figure of Christ, in Revelations 4:9-10: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." (Authorized Version)

whether they had experienced revelation. As much as Universalism, this Mormon theology rejects both Reformed and Arminian Protestant visions of the New World, which held that God had damned generations of American Indians either because it was his sovereign wish to do so or because they had not heard the message of the Gospel. As much as revivalism, however, it emphasizes the necessary and saving character of revelation. Furthermore, because this American revelation depended on its own history of Israelite Indians for self-authentication, this unnamed elder's panegyric for the *Book of Mormon* relied on notions of bloodline, ethnicity and descent. God had revealed himself to the Jews of "Asia," and to the "Israelites" of America. White Mormons, despite the racial ascription assigned to them in early America, were poised to inherit along with and because of both of those peoples and, as we have seen, particularly because of the violence wrought by Lamanites.

By the late 1840s, however, at least some early Mormons were more concerned to separate their scriptures, and Smith's prophetic role, from contemporary Jewish Indian theories than to rely on them. In a September, 1848 article for the Liverpool-based *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, Orson Pratt argued that the story in the *Book of Mormon* that the descendants of Joseph had been given the Americas as a "land of promise" was far more probable and conformed far better to the Bible than did theories about the Ten Lost Tribes. "Why did not this modern prophet, if a deceiver, form his deceptive scheme more in accordance with the opinions of the learned" supporting the idea that the Lost Tribes were to be found in America? "Out of the twelve tribes of Israel why did he select only a branch of one tribe to people that vast continent?" The story that Joseph's people alone populated the continent, in Pratt's mind, conformed not to the "opinions of the learned" but to the blessing in Genesis 49 that begins "Joseph is a fruitful

bough, even a fruitful bough by a wall, whose branches run over the wall."[65] In Pratt's reading, this text prophesied that Joseph's descendants would spread and increase, just as the *Book of Mormon* predicted. That Joseph Smith had taught this, rather than following one of the Lost Tribes theories, was to him convincing evidence of his prophetic mission.

Thus, in addition to the well-documented—and hotly-contested—connection between the spread of Israelite Indian and "mound-builder" stories in the early Republic and the composition of the *Book of Mormon*, the presence of Jewish Indian theories in the common discourse of Americans also influenced how this text was received and discussed. Even before potential converts opened the pages, and even before Mormons in Nauvoo had easy access to the text itself, Jewish Indian stories were already present in their minds, along with the millennial expectation and white supremacist weight that they carried in Protestant discourses.

### *The Rise of Ephraim*

In the latter nineteenth century, Mormon perspectives on the meaning of descent for their millennial destiny altered. They went from regarding themselves as Gentiles who would be saved by being gathered with the Lamanites to regarding themselves as already incorporated into the lineage of Israel. [66] By the time of the settlement in Utah, specific ideas about descent and sacred history had become more stable: white Mormons most often saw themselves as the descendants of the tribe of Ephraim, and American Indians as the descendants of the tribe of Manasseh.[67]

[65] Genesis 49:22, Authorized Version. The Hebrew is uncertain, and may also be read "Joseph is a wild ass, a wild ass by a spring—wild colts on a hillside," as is preferred in the JPS translation.

[66] Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 268–69.

[67] Fenella Cannell, "The Blood of Abraham: Mormon Redemptive Physicality and American Idioms of Kinship," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, no. 1 (May 2013): S86. Ephraim and Manasseh were the sons of

Although both of these groups were regarded as kin to one another, in that they were descendants of the Biblical Joseph, the identification of white Mormons as Israelites made American Indians superfluous to Mormon millennialism in a way they had not been previously. Combined with a growing tendency to locate "Lamanites" in South America and the Pacific Islands, this shift lessened, though it did not eliminate, the role of North American Indians in the Mormon imagination. In the process, it exaggerated existing associations in Mormon thought between white skin and membership in a chosen people by implying that the righteous descendants of Ephraim were white-skinned.

In his study of racial attitudes among Mormons, Armand Mauss argues that this shift was the result of the contamination of early Mormon thought by British Israelitism, or the idea that Anglo-Saxons were the descendants of the Lost Tribes and, therefore, God's chosen people. [68] But a closer examination of the border between white Mormons and non-white "Lamanites" in early Mormon thought reveals that the elements of belief in the election of white Mormons were already present. As has been well-studied, the *Book of Mormon* repeatedly expresses the idea that whiteness indicated righteousness and, most infamously, that the hues of American Indians' skins were due to a divine curse of "the skin of blackness," which would, in the millennium, be

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the Biblical character Joseph born to him in Egypt. Following the general thematic pattern of Genesis of favoring youngest sons, they are particularly favored among the descendants of Jacob (also called Israel) because they are the children of Jacob's youngest son. In the blessings of the patriarchs of the Twelve Tribes of Israel that conclude the portion of Genesis concerned with Jacob, Ephraim and Manasseh are each given their own blessing so that the tribe of Joseph receives two blessings where the others receive only one (Genesis 49:1-28). In the Book of Joshua, Ephraim and Manasseh are likewise each given their own allotment of land, so the tribe of Joseph gets a double allotment of land (Joshua 14:4). According to the narratives of the *Book of Mormon*, Lehi, the patriarch of the Nephites and hence of the Lamanites who broke off from them, was of the tribe of Manasseh (Alma 10:3). The Ten Lost Tribes included Ephraim and Manasseh, but according to Mormon understanding the Nephites left Israel before the putative scattering of the tribes in 722 and so are not considered part of the Lost Tribes.

[68] Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 4, 50–51.

reversed as Lamanites became “pure [originally ‘white’] and delightsome.”[69] Discussions of the *Book of Mormon*’s purported white supremacism have erroneously focused on it as a feature of Mormonism divorced from the wider context of white American Protestantism, except when that context is invoked apologetically as a contaminant. Mormon emphasis on covenant and peoplehood was nothing new, however. Although Mormon theology moved in radically different directions reflecting the concerns of the so-called Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century, its roots lay in the thinking and practice of New England Congregationalism, with its deep affiliation between tribal identity and Christian community. Mormonism was born in the “burnt-over district” of northern and western New York, an area that at that time was filled with immigrants from northern New England. Many early Mormons came from families with roots in New England churches dissenting from the Puritanism of the Massachusetts Bay colony, meaning that they were acquainted both with the concept that the chosen people might not be coterminous with the civil community and with the concept that membership in the chosen community could be determined by descent.[70]

Smith’s innovation was that he rejected the Reformed concept of individual election to salvation or damnation while retaining the concept of a chosen people. Early Mormons tended to think of this chosen-ness as inhering in the blood. Young and Smith both argued that although it was Israelite, including Lamanite, blood that saved, those without would have their blood

[69] 2 Nephi 5:21, 2 Nephi 30:6. The change from “white” to “pure” was made in the 1840 edition, the last that Joseph Smith edited. Subsequent editions produced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints used the original text reading “white” until 1981. Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, “A Note on the Text,” in Joseph Smith, *The Book of Mormon*, Penguin Classics, (New York: Penguin, 2008), xxxii.

[70] Rust, *Radical Origins*.

physically changed in Baptism so that they would become part of Israel.[71] The move to recognize white Mormons as members of "Ephraim"—an ascription made through the ritual of the Patriarchal Blessing—was hence an effort to make more secure and original to individual Mormons their election, and to express an idea of Mormons as a chosen people by descent as well as by choice. As my earlier analysis of white Reformed uses of the Jewish Indian theory indicates, to be chosen by descent was not a uniquely Mormon desire, nor were Mormons the only ones to use Jewish Indians as fulcrums in their own transformation into a chosen people. Rather, the discontinuity between Reformed and Mormon uses of this idea was the Mormon desire to think about that chosen-ness as made manifest in the blood.

That the physical manifestation of chosen-ness was, overwhelmingly, white skin is expressed not only by the idea that Lamanites were cursed with a "skin of blackness" but also by the idea that this "curse" could be removed because of righteousness. On June 3, 1834, a Mormon expedition calling itself Zion's Camp was traveling in southern Illinois when they came upon partially exposed human remains on top of a mound. Digging, they uncovered "the skeleton of a man almost entire, and between his ribs the stone point of a Lamanitish arrow, which evidently procured his death." Joseph Smith, who was with the company, felt a peculiar sensation in his chest as he contemplated the scenery from the top of the mound and "the visions of the past being opened to my Spirit of the Almighty I discovered that the person whose Skeleton we had seen was a white Lamanite, a large thick set man, and a man of God. His name was Zelph. He was a warrior and chieftain under the great prophet Onandagus who was known from the eastern sea to the Rocky Mountains. The curse was taken from Zelph, or at least in

[71] Cannell, "The Blood of Abraham: Mormon Redemptive Physicality and American Idioms of Kinship," S86.

part."[72] The story of Zelph not only helped to anchor Mormon sacred histories in the landscape, as John-Charles Duffy has argued, but also unfolded a new aspect of Smith's thinking about Lamanites.[73] Whiteness, in this new reading, could not only be lost in a moment of mythical explanation of human difference like the Curse of Ham, but could also be regained. The clear implication of Smith's comment that the "curse was taken from Zelph, or at least in part" was that his whiteness was the result of his godliness and his martial struggles against wicked Lamanites. This suggests that the early Mormon turn away from the idea of salvation through gathering with the Lamanites toward salvation through white descent from Ephraim, although driven in part by missionary frustration, was also an elaboration of earlier associations of whiteness with faith and righteousness.

The encounter with Zelph was not only a case of uncovering a grave of a person who, according to Mormon interpretations of both Lamanite genealogy and their own descent by ancestry or adoption, was an ancestor.[74] It was also, like the visionary appearances of Lamanites and Nephites or the speaking of Lamanite languages in ecstatic trances, a spiritual practice that claimed an inert body as a signifier for Mormon purposes. In this case, Zelph's redemption from the "curse" of dark skin was part of a larger association of whiteness with holiness. The bodies of American Indians—or, in this case, the remains of a dead Native man—were key figures in arguments valorizing whiteness. Set apart from the rest of humanity as a holy people, Lamanites

[72] Smith, Richards, and Bullock, "History, 1838-1856, Volume A-1 [23 December 1805-30 August 1834]," 489. I have silently omitted the numerous insertions and crossed-out text in the *Joseph Smith Papers*, except where those variations are significant.

[73] Duffy, "The Use of 'Lamanite' in Official LDS Discourse," 125.

[74] Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death*, 89–100.

demonstrated through the supposedly-temporary darkness of their skin that God's hand had written his judgements onto the bodies of living humans. White skin, in this reading, was an *a priori* sign of righteous lineage, whatever the merits of the individual. This valorization of whiteness would, in turn, lead to the rise of Ephraimite lineage as a major component of white Mormon identity and the subsequent de-emphasis of the role of Lamanites in bringing about Christ's millennial reign.

***Conclusion***

Drawing on the wider context of Jewish Indian narratives, early Mormons forged intense affective relationships with the Lamanites described in their new scripture. These attributions of Lamanite identity to American Indians, while unique, were in continuity with white Protestant attributions of "Israelite" or "Lost Tribes" identity to the same peoples. These continuities shaped the ways that early Mormons and "gentile" observers understood the new religion and its scripture. Mormon exaltation of American Indians, however, came at a price. Although Mormon narratives emphasized the specialness and continuing importance of "Israelite" American Indians, belief in that very specialness required Mormons to set "Lamanites" apart from the rest of humanity. As a holy people, they were expected to act as passive conduits for Mormon expressions of desire through visionary culture, millenarian expectations, and emerging discourses of ancestral purity. The inheritors and builders of a new Zion, they were to willingly surrender their actual territories in favor of a promised millennial destiny.

Crucially, whereas missionary versions of Israelite Indian stories insisted that God wanted to gather American Indians to Israel, Mormon uses of these narratives required American Indians to remain in North America. But ensuring Lamanite presence in the future Zion required Mormons to guarantee American Indian absence. While Lamanite bodies were conjured into

being through possession, tongues, and visions, the bodies of American Indians, living like the unnamed Mohawks or dead like "Zelph," were treated as inert objects of Mormon self-fashioning. They dismissed all American Indian land claims, meanwhile, as secondary to the goal of establishing the millennial kingdom that would belong to both Lamanites and Mormons. As Pratt's quotation illustrates, even removal could be read as a part of this millennial gathering. Although Mormons considered Lamanite blood and bones holy, therefore, their versions of Israelite Indian narratives did not support Native land claims any more than did evangelical ones.

## Chapter 4: The Original Customs of Our Nation (1835-1838)

### *Introduction*

Israelite Indian stories— as the examples of Mordecai Noah, William Apess and early Mormons demonstrate— were re-told to support political and religious projects other than those that their conservative evangelical popularizers intended. Another re-narration of Israelite Indian stories occurred in the Cherokee Nation in the years leading up to the forced removal of 1838, often called the Trail of Tears. A small group of Cherokee intellectuals, all members of churches founded by the joint Congregationalist and Presbyterian American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM or American Board), used Israelite Indian stories to root their claims to territory and national integrity in the mandates of the Christian God, whom they claimed had created the Cherokee, guided them to their land, and given them their "original" religion: Protestantism.[1] Their stories implied that Congregationalist Cherokee had the fullest knowledge of their people's original customs and religion, and were therefore the proper arbiters of what

[1] By arguing for these Cherokees as, first, intellectuals capable of producing knowledge about the world rather than simply objects of study and, second, representatives of one group of Cherokees rather than of the Cherokee people as a whole, I am attempting to answer the critiques of Indigenous Studies in Audra Simpson, "Native Studies at the Horizon of Death: Theorizing Ethnographic Entrapment and Settler Self-Reflexivity," in *Theorizing Native Studies*, ed. Andrea Smith and Audra Simpson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014). Simpson argues that the development of Indigenous Studies as a separate discipline within the academy has inadvertently reinforced the notion that Indigenous people are only relevant as objects of knowledge who reveal the unitary and authentic "truth" of their culture to non-Indigenous subjects. By treating Butrick's interlocutors as intellectuals commenting on Christian theology, Cherokee history, and political relations between missionaries and Cherokees, I show that what historians have taken to be one more instance of ethnographic revelation by Indigenous objects of study is in fact a series of sharp arguments about the social and political world of Congregationalist Cherokee from 1835-1838. On indigenous intellectuals, see Weaver, *That the People Might Live*; Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*; Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*; Ramos and Yannakakis, *Indigenous Intellectuals*; Kiara Vigil, *Indigenous Intellectuals: Sovereignty, Citizenship, and the American Imagination, 1880-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

was, and was not, permissible Cherokee practice.[2] Rejecting missionaries' denigration of Cherokee traditional healing and ceremonial life, these intellectuals posited that both healing and ceremony were gifts of the Christian God, and therefore permissible for Cherokees in the American Board churches. Contrary to what earlier interpreters analyzing their stories have argued, these intellectuals did not accept that Christianity embraced all races, but adopted, inverted, and re-articulated white Protestant claims to be the chosen people.[3]

These stories are available to us from the work of Daniel S. Butrick (1789-1851), an American Board missionary whose manuscripts are critical for understanding life in the Cherokee Nation immediately before the Trail of Tears.[4] From 1835-1838, Butrick interviewed Cherokees whom he understood to be experts in their people's history and ceremonial life. John

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[2] Although technically under the supervision of the Union Presbytery of eastern Tennessee, the American Board missions were staffed largely by New England Congregationalists and followed plans of settlement modeled on New England norms. Therefore, I refer to them as "Congregationalist" or "American Board" churches, rather than "Presbyterian" churches, in this chapter. McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*, 102–6, 151–54, 164–67.

[3] William McLoughlin argues that the incorporation of Hebrew Bible stories with Native narratives demonstrates that Cherokee thinkers understood the Bible to be the universal history of humanity, and believed that reading themselves into its narratives would put them in a stronger position in American society. I disagree. Cherokees told Israelite Indian narratives in this period to claim stories from the Hebrew Bible as the possessions of their people, not universally-available stories. McLoughlin's interpretation misses this aspect of their arguments and, further, naturalizes the idea that Christianity is a "universal" religion. The idea that Christianity is universal, while Indigenous peoples' religions are "national" or "particular" is a theological assertion and a well-worn trope in discourses of comparative religion that naturalized colonial relationships. William McLoughlin, "Fractured Myths: The Cherokees' Use of Christianity," in *The Cherokees and Christianity, 1794-1870: Essays on Acculturation and Cultural Persistence*, ed. Walter H. Conser (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 156. On "universal" versus "national" religions, see especially Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*.

[4] Comparison between these manuscripts and ones produced by the late nineteenth-century anthropologist James Mooney have been used to reconstruct visions of Cherokee religion, law, culture, and social organization before contact, from the eighteenth century through the U.S. government's forced removal of many southeastern tribes to Indian Territory, and during the rest of the nineteenth century. Works that have made use of them include: Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1978); McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*; Perdue, *Cherokee Women*; Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

Ross (1790-1866), Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, had authorized Butrick's project with the hope that what he found would uncover stories of "the Original Customs & Manners of our nation," which could be compiled into a record "for the satisfaction of posterity long after this present generation shall have returned unto dust." Ross wanted Butrick's project to form the basis for a national mythology that could benefit future citizens of an economically-developed and politically-powerful Cherokee Nation. Hence, he emphasized that the book would not be published until a board of elders had reviewed it and Ross and the Assistant Chief, George Lowery, had inspected the revised version.[5] This review process never happened. Too many of the elders Ross might have relied on, including many of Butrick's main interlocutors, died on the Trail of Tears, and the Nation was left in too much political disarray in the immediate aftermath of removal for it to be a high priority.

Some of the stories that Butrick recorded show clear influences from the Hebrew Bible. Thomas Nutsawi, an elderly Cherokee, told the missionary that: "God told the leader of the Indians that they must go to a country which He had given them, but they would have to pass some great water before they got there."[6] Another older Cherokee man, Thomas Smith or Shield Eater, told a similar story: "When the Indians started to go to that country God had given [them], they were fleeing from their enemies. But as they soon came to a great water, God told their

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[5] John Payne and D. S. (Daniel Sabin) Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 4,5,6*, ed. William L. Anderson, Jane L. Brown, and Anne F. Rogers (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 15. When quoting from the Payne-Butrick papers, I have followed the editors' typography, including crossed-out words, when legible, in ~~struck through type~~ and set apart words inserted above or below the line ˇwith caretsˇ.

[6] Although the text here reads "Indians," elsewhere Nutsawi depicts both Abraham and Moses as Cherokee men who authorized or originated Cherokee religious traditions. It is thus likely that these stories were told with the Cherokee foremost in mind. Butrick renders the Cherokee version of the name "Abraham" as "E-ga-ha-yi" or "Aquāhäyi," and "Moses" as Wosi or Wâsi.

leader to strike the water with a rod, and it should divide, and give them as passage through, and then flow together and stop their enemies. Thus their leader did, and thus they passed through and their enemies were stopped. God loved them, and therefore He assisted them in this way."[7] These re-told Israelite Indian stories claimed that the Cherokees' ancestors had been chosen by God and led to their current homeland. Using these stories, members of American Board churches argued both that white Americans should recognize the Cherokees' divinely-given right to their land and to argue that Protestant Cherokees had a better claim to Christianity than did the missionaries. Furthermore, they implied, God had given Cherokees access to methods of traditional healing and a ceremonial life that whites had not received. Hence, Cherokee members of American Board churches could participate in both without compromising their status as Christians.

Butrick saw the Israelite Indian narratives he collected and other stories clearly influenced by the Hebrew Bible as evidence that American Indians were the descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel. He likely recorded and perhaps even solicited stories that conformed to this idea. As one Cherokee man recalled in the late nineteenth century, the missionary did not hide his "opinion that [Cherokees] were descendants of the old Hebrew stock."[8] Historians, skeptical of this explanation, have tended to see them simply as measures of the penetration of Christian narratives into Cherokee culture by the 1830s.[9] In this reading, Butrick's interlocutors were

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[7] Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1,2,3*, 211.

[8] Walter Adair Duncan, "CHEROKEE ANTIQUITIES -- 'The Buttrick Collections,'" *Cherokee Advocate*, April 25, 1884.

[9] McLoughlin, "Fractured Myths: The Cherokees' Use of Christianity." The first missionaries to arrive in the Cherokee Nation were Moravians, in 1799. McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*, 13, 35–53.

either unknowingly passing on Bible stories as their own oral histories or, perhaps, inventing them on the spot to appease the missionary.[10]

In context, however, these stories had specific political meanings. Furthermore, the people who told them were probably aware that they had parallels in Hebrew Bible texts, since they were almost all members of American Board churches. Economically and socially, members of these churches stood in between the small class of Cherokee planters who had substantial lands worked by enslaved African-Americans and the much larger class of Cherokee who lived in relative isolation from Euro-American trade networks and culture. Although without the influence on that National Council that the planters wielded, they had extensive access to the resources and influence that American Board missionaries brought.

The Israelite Indian stories they told reflected the context of American Board church members and of early nineteenth century Cherokee political and religious life in general. A unified political identity had tied the Cherokee together since the mid-eighteenth century, when the sovereign Cherokee towns formed a tribal council. The towns had long relied on a matrilineal clan structure to maintain diplomatic and trade relationships, but the presence of Europeans in their territories required the Cherokees to create a new deliberative body that would be recognized as a legitimate government by people with no concept of kinship as the Cherokees understood it. This tribal council gave rise to the National Council established by the 1827 Constitution of the Cherokee Nation. Unlike the tribal council or earlier networks of kinship, the

[10] There is no mystery as to how Butrick's interlocutors learned those stories in the first place. As George Lowrey, a member of the National Council, noted at the time, Hebrew Bible stories had been circulating in Cherokee oral traditions at least since contact with Quaker missionaries in the eighteenth century. Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 4,5,6*, 86–87.

Cherokee Nation described in the 1827 constitution relied on a concept of citizenship. The Cherokee people, in its rendering, were empowered to democratically elect a government that would have sole sovereignty over their territories, their persons, and their laws.[11]

By 1835, when Butrick began his interviews, the Cherokee people were in a precarious situation. Having ratified their new constitution and new national government eight years earlier in a bid to secure their remaining land in the Appalachian Mountains, they now faced renewed pressure to relocate to the Indian Territory. The Federal government and the State of Georgia, following on the passage of the Indian Removal Act, brought legal pressure and militia violence to force the Cherokees from their land. The Cherokee National Council hoped to secure existing Cherokee territory by creating a new, more centralized state. They came to believe that the way to secure their claims to their territory and separate legal sovereignty was to stress a new concept of Cherokee citizenship modeled on the Romantic nationalism that welded together ethnic and political identity in European nation-states. [12] The National Council held that being Cherokee meant political allegiance to the republican government of the Cherokee Nation, citizenship in that nation, and lack of African-American heritage. These new definitions only partially supplanted older ones based on descent from the matrilineal clans of the Cherokee people, the ability to speak Cherokee, and knowledge of Cherokee ceremonial life.[13]

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[11] Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 41–59; Sturm, *Blood Politics*, 30–31, 36–39; Miles, *Ties That Bind*.

[12] William McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986); Perdue, *Cherokee Women*. On Cherokee participation in national politics on the removal question, see Martin, "Crisscrossing Projects of Sovereignty and Conversion: Cherokee Christians and New England Missionaries During the 1820s."

[13] Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 41–59; Sturm, *Blood Politics*, 30–31, 36–39; Miles, *Ties That Bind*.

The Cherokees whom Butrick interviewed faced the challenge of mediating between the stories they had been given by non-Christian ancestors and their lives as Christian citizens of this newly-constituted Cherokee nation-state.[14] Expecting that their stories would be preserved and published with the imprimatur of the National Council, they carved out a central political position for Christian Cherokees by marking some ideas and practices they described to Butrick as "traditional" and others as degenerations or innovations.[15] Israelite Indian narratives helped in this project by allowing them to argue that their stories described an original Cherokee religion revealed by the God of Israel. These thinkers re-cast Israelite Indian narratives to avoid the implication that, as lost "Israelites," the Cherokees needed white Christian assistance.[16] Rather,

[14] I describe members of American Board churches as "Christians" because they identified themselves publicly as Christians by undergoing baptism. I do not assume, as we will see, that this always or usually involved divorcing themselves from all practices or identities that missionaries would have regarded as un-Christian. The question of how "real" Native American conversions have been under colonial conditions is a hotly-debated one. Bruce Trigger has argued that American Indians always converted for economic, social, or political reasons and, therefore, can be assumed to have been insincere, see *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" reconsidered* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985). Trigger's intervention was meant to push back on histories that took missionary accounts of happy converts at face value, but introduced problems of its own. As James Axtell pointed out in "Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions," and "Were Indian Conversions Bona Fide?," both collected in *After Columbus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), the suspicion of mixed motives attached to American Indian conversions is never applied to conversions by Euro-Americans. Historians of American Indian religion have recently been more willing to follow our sources' descriptions of themselves as Christians, without assuming that the label meant the same thing to Native people as to missionaries. See, e.g. Quincy D. Newell, *Constructing Lives at Mission San Francisco: Native Californians and Hispanic Colonists, 1776-1821* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009); Tracy Leavelle, *The Catholic Calumet: Colonial Conversions in French and Indian North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening*.

[15] Modern Cherokees continue to create usable histories and identities by demarcating certain activities as traditional ones that affirm their survival as a people. The fact that some of these activities, such as attendance at Cherokee Baptist services, have a shorter history than others, such as the Green Corn Ceremony, does not change the fact that members of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma recognize both as ways of being Cherokee. Sturm, *Blood Politics*, 126–29. On mediation in missionary records, see Chidester, *Empire of Religion*, 5–11.

[16]The explanation sometimes proposed that Butrick's interlocutors made up these stories to please him or deflect his questions is unlikely because Ross had already given Butrick his imprimatur by the time the interviews discussed here were held. Thus, the people Butrick spoke to were anticipating that their stories would be reviewed by Ross's planned council of "antiquarians." Further, several gave permission to Ross to identify them as the sources of the stories, suggesting that they were willing to stand by them in the future. Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 4,5,6*, 5–6.

they argued that they were relating an original Cherokee tradition that, although compatible with missionary Christianity, was not beholden to it.[17]

Cherokee stories about their Israelite ancestors also responded to the "civilization" program of the American Board. A massive Congregationalist missionary enterprise that maintained a mission to the Cherokees in their traditional homeland from 1819 to 1838, the American Board encouraged European-style farming, the adoption of English and patriarchal family organization in an attempt to inculcate the mores, manners, and skills expected of Congregationalists back home in New England along with Christian doctrines. [18] This program was deeply destructive to older Cherokee ways of life, and particularly so for women.[19] The American Board's insistence that civilization precede Christianity reflected a longer-standing communalist ethic. The Congregational missionaries emphasized dress, literacy, and European-style agriculture because Christianity to them meant membership in the body of visible saints—visible for their clean collars and well-kept households as much as for their good works.[20]

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[17] Carving out a space for such a form of Christianity was desirable because belonging to a mission community had clear advantages and drawbacks. The mission sites often provided schools, stores, mills, and other services, and the American Board itself could be a powerful political lobby that some Cherokees used adroitly. Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 43–46, 62–78; Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 159–84; Martin, "Crisscrossing Projects of Sovereignty and Conversion: Cherokee Christians and New England Missionaries During the 1820s"; Demos, *The Heathen School*; Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism*.

[18] McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*, 132–33; Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 43–46, 62–78; Demos, *The Heathen School*; Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism*.

[19] Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 159–84.

[20] On the origins of Congregationalist views of the importance of public righteousness, see Edmund Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1963). On Congregationalism, culture, and politics in New England during the early nineteenth century, see James Rohrer, *Keepers of the Covenant: Frontier Missions and the Decline of Congregationalism, 1774-1818* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness*; DeRogatis, *Moral Geography*. Amy Laura Hall tracks the development of this emphasis on heredity in Christianity in mainline Protestantism in Amy Hall, *Conceiving*

The stories told to Butrick demonstrate that Cherokees in American Board churches picked up on an unspoken idea in this Congregationalist ethic: that, all other things being equal, Christians were likely to be the descendants of Christians. For these Cherokee thinkers, the idea that Christianity might be heritable allowed them to make powerful claims on the missionaries' religion. Cherokees also emphasized the importance of descent, in that they assumed that connections to sacred beings, political identity, and social cohesion ran through maternal lineages and "blood."[21] Stories claiming that the Cherokees' ancestors had been chosen by the Christian God and led to their current homeland used the cross-cultural importance of heredity to argue both that they had been given their homeland by a divine mandate that white Americans should recognize and to argue they had an even better claim to hereditary Christianity than did the missionaries. Furthermore, the Cherokees Butrick spoke with implied that they had been given access to methods of traditional healing and a ceremonial life that whites had not, and could participate in both without compromising their status as Christians.

***Sources***

This chapter draws on the successive manuscripts Butrick produced after he received permission from Ross in September 1835 to conduct his investigation. Butrick usually recorded the sources of the stories he collected, which allows some recovery of the social position and goals of his interlocutors. [22] Tracking whom he cites, and how often, reveals that Butrick's

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*Parenthood: American Protestantism and the Spirit of Reproduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008).

[21] Perdue, *Cherokee Women*; Sturm, *Blood Politics*.

[22] Butrick's manuscripts now exist in four versions held in two separate collections. This chapter mainly relies on the "Indian Antiquities" manuscript that was the last version edited by Butrick. The earliest versions of Butrick's work appear in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Archive at Harvard University.

manuscripts do not represent most Cherokee.[23] Instead, they reflect the culture and mental worlds of members of the American Board churches. Although only about one per cent of Cherokees were members of American Board churches during the height of the missionaries' influence, eleven of Butrick's seventeen named interlocutors were members and an additional four were close kin to members.[24] Butrick's manuscripts, therefore, represent a small sub-group

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Alongside Butrick's diary and letters, this collection has an undated manuscript entitled "Jews & Indians" that contains some of the results of his interviews, arranged to stress what he saw as parallels between Ancient Israelites and the Cherokees. An indispensable reference on the American Board papers is Paul Kutsche's *A Guide to Cherokee Documents in the Northeastern United States*, Native American Bibliography Series No. 7 (The Scarecrow Press: Metuchen, NJ, 1986). Three successive revisions of the original "Jews & Indians" manuscript appear in the John Howard Payne papers at the Newberry Library in Chicago and published as *The Payne-Butrick Papers* by the University of Nebraska Press. This collection consists of the material Butrick sent to John Howard Payne (1791-1852), a Long Island dramatist who had plans to publish the missionary's work. Butrick's manuscripts in the John Howard Payne papers cover the same topics as the "Jews & Indians" manuscript in three successive forms: a body of letters Butrick sent to Payne on Cherokee history and culture, a systematic draft edited by Butrick entitled "Indian Antiquities," and a draft Payne edited for publication entitled "Cherokees Vol. 1." Despite Payne's and Ross's attempts, Butrick's manuscripts were not published in full during his lifetime. Extracts were published in the *Indian Chieftain*, a newspaper published out of Vinita, Indian Territory and subsequently bound and published as D. S. (Daniel Sabin) Butrick, *Antiquities of the Cherokee Indians Compiled from the Collection of Rev. Daniel Sabin Buttrick [Sic], Their Misisonary from 1817 to 1847 as Published in the Indian Chieftain* (Vinita [Indian Territory]: Indian Chieftain, 1884).

[23] There are not many sources that extensively describe Cherokee culture before removal. Historians use three principle sources: 1) James Mooney's *Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* (1892) and *Myths of the Cherokee* (1902), 2) James Adair's *History of the American Indians* (1799) and 3) Butrick's unpublished material in both the ABCFM archive and the Payne-Butrick Papers. Charles Hudson's groundbreaking work on southeastern American Indians relied heavily on Adair and Mooney while largely ignoring Butrick. Contemporary ethnohistorians, however, generally follow Theda Perdue in reading all three existing sources together to reconstruct late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Cherokee culture and thought. While likely sounder than relying on Adair or Mooney alone, this method requires that the conditions in which Butrick wrote be considered to the same degree that Adair's and Mooney's contexts have been. Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 512–17; Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 200–220. For critiques of Adair and Mooney, see Charles Hudson, "James Adair as Anthropologist," *Ethnohistory* 24, no. 4 (1977): 311–28; William McLoughlin, *The Cherokees and Christianity, 1794-1870: Essays on Acculturation and Cultural Persistence*, ed. Walter H. Conser (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 323n36; William L. Anderson, Jane L. Brown, and Anne F. Rogers, "Introduction," in *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1,2,3* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), xiii–xiv.

[24] There were 170 recorded members of American Board churches in 1835, when the total population of the Cherokee Nation was 16,500. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic*, 319, 382; Russel Thornton, "The Demography of the Trail of Tears Period," in *Cherokee Removal: Before and after*, ed. William Anderson, John R. Finger, and Douglas C. Wilms (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 88.

within the Cherokee Nation.[25] His interlocutors were neither the planter elite who dominated the National Council and mercantile connections outside the Nation nor the geographically-isolated and poor lower class who were most insulated from social and economic change. They were for the most part a middling class of people who generally lived near the ABCFM mission stations and had access to the schooling, manufactured goods, smithies, and mills the missionaries brought.[26]

Butrick's manuscripts, furthermore, do not represent all Cherokee Congregationalists. A few male members of American Board churches were the most often cited. Some were older men, many or most of whom seem to have been Cherokee monoglots: Thomas Nutsawi (d. 1838), Nettle (d. 1840), Thomas Smith or Shield Eater (d. 1838) and Raven (d. 1838). These men were already old at the time of forced removal in 1838, and the Trail of Tears proved deadly for most of them. Since Butrick prepared the "Indian Antiquities" manuscript in Indian Territory after removal, this first group was already gone and would not have been available to clarify or

[25] The "Indian Antiquities" manuscript names seventeen Cherokees as sources: Thomas Nutsawi, Corn Tassel, Tarapin Head [sic], Nettle, Thomas Smith or Shield Eater, Raven, Isaac Short Arrow, Three Killer, Mrs. Chism [Chisholm?], Deer in the Water, "George Hicks's Grandmother," Zachariah, Samuel Candey (or Candy), Johnson Pridget, Thomas Pridget, Andrew Sanders or Snake, and Caty Vann. Only two of these, Corn Tassel and Tarapin Head, were, as far as I have found, unconnected with the American Board churches. Nutsawi, Johnson Pridget, Thomas Pridget and Zachariah were members of Carmel church where Butrick spent the longest time. Deer in the Water was a member of Candy's Creek church where Butrick was briefly stationed. Nettle, and likely Three Killer, were members of the Haweis church. Shield Eater, Isaac Short Arrow, Andrew Sanders, and probably Raven were part of American Board churches, but I have not yet traced them to a specific congregation. Butrick's journal refers to a "Br. Raven," who is presumably the name man by that name whom Butrick used as a source, but the identification is uncertain because "Raven" was a war title that multiple Cherokee men could have held at the time. George Hicks's Grandmother; Samuel Candey; Caty Vann, who was a Methodist; and possibly Mrs. Chisholm had immediate family who were church members. I have determined church membership, where possible, based on biographical notes in *The Payne-Butrick Papers* and using the index of Kutsche's *A Guide to Cherokee Documents* to find ABC letters that mention the people in question. See Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1,2,3*, 293–33; Paul Kutsche, *A Guide to Cherokee Documents in the Northeastern United States* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1986).

[26]McLoughlin estimates that the Cherokee middle class that emerged from 1819-1829 comprised between eight and ten percent of the population. McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*, 26–27.

change the record. The second group of men were younger, proficient in English, and familiar with Anglo-American culture: the translators Johnson Pridget (dates unknown) and Andrew Sanders (1789-1852), or Snake. Pridget, who was Nutsawi's nephew, frequently traveled with Butrick and contributed some sections to the "Indian Antiquities" manuscript. Andrew Sanders, the son of a white Army deserter and a Cherokee woman of the Bird clan named Susannah, was Butrick's most frequent translator in his "antiquities" project.[27] Both men were not only intimately involved in collecting Butrick's notes, but were available to Butrick as he was revising his manuscripts.

Most of these men's biographies are obscure. We have the fullest account of Thomas Nutsawi, Butrick's most frequent interlocutor. His story, recorded in an encomium Butrick wrote after his death, suggests that some of Butrick's most important interlocutors had been thoroughly educated in Cherokee traditional healing and ceremony, and worked to reconcile their knowledge with their membership in Congregational churches. Nutsawi was trained as a ceremonial leader and knowledge-holder by an older male relative—Butrick refers to him as his "grandfather" but it would have been more usual for him to be trained by a maternal uncle—and spent several decades officiating at large ceremonies. At around age fifty, he moved about twenty miles from his home in Turnip Mine Town to the Carmel mission station, where Butrick was the pastor, to work off debts incurred at the mission store. While working at the mission as a saddler, Nutsawi joined the Carmel church and abandoned his place as a ceremonial leader. This devastated his "grandfather," who left Turnip Mine Town for Shooting Creek fifty or sixty miles away. Nutsawi

[27] Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1,2,3*, 318–317, 320, 322, 325–26; Daniel S. Butrick, "Wednesday July 25" 1838, 18.3.3 v. 4 (sec. 6) Cherokee Mission, Miscellaneous. Butrick Journal, May 26 to Sept 22, 1838, ABC.

continued both to engage in healing ceremonies while invoking the name of Jesus and to counsel other Cherokees. After Federal troops gathered large numbers of Cherokees into internment camps in May 1838, he went from camp to camp delivering comfort and fasted and prayed to call for the help of the Christian God. In August of that year, at about the age of sixty, he fell ill and died. He was attended in his final illness both by members of the American Board mission and by unnamed Cherokee, and was buried near the Carmel mission station.[28]

To assert that men like Nutsawi re-made customs and re-told stories is not to claim that their narratives were inauthentic or fictional, but to assert that tradition is a moving target. Viewing tradition as an inheritance that must be re-told and re-articulated to be meaningful in changing conditions accords with at least some modern Cherokees' storytelling ethics. In Christopher Teuton's account of storytelling in the modern Cherokee Nation, stories are the possession of a lineage of storytellers, not attempts to create definitive, incontestable histories. Telling a story brings the resources of one's teachers to bear on a specific situation in the present. Because orally-recounted stories are told not to a silent audience of readers but to a discrete set of people within hearing, specific details, narrative sequence, and different versions of the same events may be selectively changed out of a desire to tell the most useful or appropriate version of the story for that audience.[29]

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[28] Daniel S. Butrick, "Monday [August ?]" 1838, 18.3.3 v. 4 (sec. 6) Cherokee Mission, Miscellaneous. Butrick Journal, May 26 to Sept 22, 1838, ABC.

[29] Christopher Teuton, *Cherokee Stories of the Turtle Island Liars' Club: Dakasi Elohi Anigagoga Junilawisdii (Turtle, Earth, the Liars, Meeting Place)* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 4–8, 33–35, 146–51. On the importance of stories in Native, and particularly Cherokee, thought, see also Thomas King, *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Daniel Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

### ***Land claims***

Nutsawi, Shield Eater, and the other men Butrick talked with interpreted stories about deliverance and the promised land not as spiritualized allegories, as the missionaries tended to, but as divine commandments for the Cherokees to remain in their land. In this, they differed strongly from both missionaries and the pro-missions public. White Americans who told Israelite Indian stories often openly advocated for the dispossession of Native land. Charles Crawford's *Essay*, for example, argued that once American Indians had realized that they were "Jews" they would return to Israel and leave their lands to white Americans.[30] Butrick, although he did not believe that identification of the Cherokees as Israelites meant that they would vacate their land, still saw the hand of God in Cherokee removal and interpreted it as a just chastisement for their sin.

Associations between the narratives of the Hebrew Bible and Cherokee claims to their traditional territory came to the fore in Nutsawi's and Shield Eater's interpretations of Exodus above. Nutsawi claimed that God had given the land the Cherokees currently lived in to them, while Shield Eater emphasized that God had defeated their enemies to bring them to their land because "God loved them, and therefore He assisted them in this way."[31] In this re-telling of Israelite Indian narratives, the themes of a promised land and God's assistance to his chosen people, already present in Exodus, came to the fore. By claiming that their ancestors' migration was to "a country which He had given them," Nutsawi and Shield Eater were appealing to the idea that the God whom white Americans worshipped—and whose mandates they claimed to

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[30] Crawford, *An Essay on the Propagation of the Gospel*, 28–29.

[31] Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1,2,3*, 211.

respect—had ordained that Cherokees should have their traditional homeland. Much more literally than in the interpretations of Exodus favored by African-American Christians in the nineteenth century, then, these interpretations imagined the Promised Land as a physical territory.[32]

Nutsawi's and Shield Eater's Israelite Indian stories drew on accounts of migration, rather than insisting that Cherokees were autochthonous to their land. Later interpreters—such as the ethnographer James Mooney (1861-1921), whose research in the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma remains influential—have tended to discount and devalue Cherokee migration stories, claiming that if they ever had such a story it has been lost.[33] Since contemporary Cherokee storytellers preserve versions of migration stories that are markedly different from the Exodus narrative, however, Shield Eater's and Nutsawi's use of Exodus does not necessarily indicate a lack of another story to tell but a choice to tell this particular story, in this particular time and place.[34] Given that some contemporary white Americans justified the racial caste system with reference to supposed separate creations of different kinds of human beings, endorsing stories

[32] David W. Kling, "A Contested Legacy: Interpreting, Debating and Translating the Bible in America," in *American Christianities: A History of Dominance and Diversity*, ed. Catherine A. Brekus and W. Clark Gilpin (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

[33] James Mooney, *James Mooney's History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* (Asheville, N.C.: Historical Images, 1992), 428–29.

[34] Several migration stories with very little or no influence from Exodus continue to be told, suggesting that Mooney simply did not interview a storyteller who knew a migration story, or was not told it. Teuton, *Cherokee Stories of the Turtle Island Liars' Club*, 55–76.

that presented Cherokees as having migrated into their land rather than having been created there may have seemed the better choice.[35]

These stories portrayed God as giving the Cherokees their land unconditionally, without any suggestion that they would have to meet certain moral or ritual standards to stay in it. Shield Eater, in the example above, claimed that God "assisted them" to escape their enemies and come "to that country God had given [them]" simply because "God loved them."[36] Although Shield Eater ostensibly told this story about events in the far past, he chose to tell it during a period when Cherokee land claims were under serious assault. Butrick could not have collected this story earlier than he began his project in 1835, which was the year that the Treaty of New Echota provided the legal pretext for Cherokee removal, or later than 1838, when Shield Eater died during the beginning of forced removal. This context suggests that the "enemies" in this story could as easily be Georgia militia or land speculators as the unnamed, presumably Indigenous, people who Shield Eater claimed had once pursued the Cherokee.

If Shield Eater meant to comment on contemporary politics, his reading of God's hand in the situation would have been directly opposed to that of many American Board missionaries. Butrick interpreted assaults on Cherokees' land claims as chastisements from God for their failings. Even as his Cherokee congregants were being gathered into camps for the forced march west, Butrick was inclined to tell them that God had only allowed this to happen because of their moral failings. He preached that "they might say their enemies were cruel, but suppose they

[35] McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*, 9, 24; G. Blair Nelson, "Men before Adam!: American Debates over the Unity and Antiquity of Humanity," in *When Science & Christianity Meet*, ed. David Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[36] Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1,2,3*, 211.

were, how did they get this power over them?" Removal could only be God's judgment for Sabbath-breaking and "almost universal Saturday night frolicks," meaning social or religious dances, "carried through the Holy Sabbath."[37] Although harsh, this judgment of the situation matched Butrick's providentialist understanding of history. He wrote in 1831 that "Whatever our Rules, i.e. the rules of the United States, see fit to do with [the Cherokee], or for them is of but little consequence. They are safe unless their Rock give them up."[38] God, not white Americans, would determine the Cherokee's fate. Seeing his congregants forced from their homes, Butrick could only reach for explanations for why God had abandoned them.

Nutsawi's and Shield Eater's Israelite Indian stories contested Butrick's teachings by arguing that God had given them their land without condition. Although, like him, they may have hoped that God would assist them against their enemies, they did not argue that God allowed their enemies to attack them because of the Cherokees' moral failings. Their uses of Israelite Indian stories contested the missionary's teachings as well as wider assumptions that an association between Indians and Israelites would imply that they should cede their land to white Americans. In these stories, the salvation that God offered to Cherokees was not just a spiritual matter. Rather, it also included a divine warrant to their ancestral homeland. Whether Nutsawi and Shield Eater got the idea that Indians were Israelites from Butrick or not, therefore, their re-telling of Israelite Indian stories served their own purposes.

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[37] Daniel S. Butrick, "Saturday [June ?]" 1838, 18.3.3 v. 4 (sec. 6) Cherokee Mission, Miscellaneous. Butrick Journal, May 26 to Sept 22, 1838, ABC.

[38] Daniel S. Butrick, "November 25" 1831, 18.3.3 v. 4 (sec. 4) Cherokee Mission, Miscellaneous. Butrick Journal, 1830-1832, ABC.

### ***Election, Ceremony and Healing***

Nutsawi's and Shield Eater's Israelite Indian narratives insisted that the Cherokee were the chosen people of God, whose ancestors were identical with the Israelites in the Hebrew Bible stories that American Board missionaries told. Their interpretations of these stories conflicted with Butrick's reading of the Bible, especially on the issues of ceremony and traditional healing. Butrick fiercely opposed both traditional Cherokee ceremonial life and traditional healing, seeing them as rank idolatry. Nutsawi and Shield Eater responded by telling stories about how his "Israelite" ancestors had received their ceremonies and methods of healing from the Christian God. Hence, their uses of Israelite Indian stories not only argued for the territorial integrity but the cultural and religious patrimony of the Cherokee.

Nutsawi that tied Cherokee ceremonies and healing to revelations to the ancestral "prophets" of his people. "God…gave new commandments to the Indians, while they were in the wilderness, and marked them on a long smooth stone (having descended on to the top of a mountain) and gave them to their leader and enabled him to read them to the people." In this story that re-tells the giving of the law to the Ancient Israelites at Sinai, Cherokees receive the revelation that Protestant missionaries claimed was unique. But they had also "other instructions which were marked on skins." Inserting "other instructions" into the story suggests that Cherokees were given a more extensive revelation than Butrick or the other missionaries, and that their differing religious practices were the result. Some of Butrick's interlocutors went further in insisting on the primacy of this revelatory event, as when Shield-Eater argued that it was the "son of God," that is, the missionaries' Christ, who revealed these laws. [39]

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[39]Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1,2,3*, 212.

In Nutsawi's and Shield Eater's accounts, the Christian God gave Cherokees their laws, ceremonies, and practices of divination and healing that the missionaries grouped under the rubric of "conjuring." Divination using quartz crystals, for example, was an important part of Cherokee ceremonial life and traditional healing. It could be used to discover possible sources of illness and social discord, and in major ceremonies of renewal was used to divine how many members of the community would live through the next year.[40] When Nutsawi describes these practices, he refers to the sacred crystals used in divination as the "word of Wâsi" or Moses.[41] Shield Eater, likewise, claims that such crystals "were also anciently called Wâsi uto nu hi, Moses' word, and Wâsi intisata in, Moses director &c."[42] Read in the context of this idea, Nutsawi's claim that "[God]...talked with some [American Indians], and told them things to come and thus made them prophets," carves out a place for prophecy distinct from that envisioned by the American Board. [43] Whereas Congregational theology of the time taught that the age of prophecy was over, in Nutsawi's re-telling the election of the Cherokee included the gift of power to foresee the future. Cherokee divination, which to the missionaries was rank superstition, thus became in this telling a form of special revelation likened to the direct speech between God and the prophets of Israel.

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[40] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 166–69, 355–58.

[41] Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1,2,3*, 36–37.

[42] Daniel S. Butrick, "[A Cherokee Missionary on Jews and Indians]" n.d., ABC 18.3.3 (Part 1, Sec. B), American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Archives, 1810-1961 (ABC 1-91) Houghton Library, Harvard University.

[43] Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1,2,3*, 213.

These Cherokee thinkers moved somewhat more cautiously around the issue of traditional healing, which the missionaries monitored closely. To speak very broadly, Cherokee traditional healing in the early nineteenth century required the identification of cause of the disease, which was most often thought to be a ritual impurity or offense given to an other-than-human being. The person administering the cure would then use a variety of means such as herbs, songs, scratching, sweats, and baths to drive out the impurity or oppose the afflicting being with another power.[44] But to the missionaries, all traditional healing or "conjuring" was suspect because it involved the invocation of other-than-human beings. Even when compared to other American Board missionaries, Butrick was particularly opposed to traditional healing.[45] He had caused a major rift in the Carmel church community in the fall of 1830 by condemning one member's healing as "the black waters of heathenism," and then delivering a blistering sermon on "the great evil & wickedness of addressing our prayers to inferior objects." As might be expected, "scarcely a Cherokee attended meeting," on the next Sunday, and a large portion of the congregation left the Carmel church permanently.[46]

In practice if not explicitly in his Israelite Indian narratives, Nutsawi rejected the missionary's harsh verdict on traditional healing. He was prone to a condition causing "bleeding

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[44] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 352–65.

[45] Butrick complained that William Chamberlain, the pastor at Haweis, allowed traditional healing. Daniel S. Butrick, "Friday August 17" 1838, 18.3.3 v. 4 (sec. 6) Cherokee Mission, Miscellaneous. Butrick Journal, May 26 to Sept 22, 1838, ABC.

[46] Finding a church that permitted healing would not have been difficult. Both the Methodists and William Chamberlain, the American Board minister at the Haweis church, permitted traditional healing. Daniel S. Butrick, "September 8" 1830, 18.3.3 v. 4 (sec. 4) Cherokee Mission, Miscellaneous. Butrick Journal, 1830-1832, ABC; Butrick, "Friday August 17."

at the lungs." His relatives all used a medicine "administered by conjurers" to treat it, so when he suffered this condition while at the mission he was at a moral crossroads. Although he "had learned the sin of conjuring and resolved to have no recourse to it," he believed that he needed the medicine and so "went to the woods, and obtained the family medicine, and took it, calling on the Name of the Lord for help. He spent…some whole days in fasting and prayer, and soon found his health restored." In this case, Nutsawi mediated between Butrick's firm stance against "conjuring" and the realities of life in the Cherokee Nation in which traditional healing practices were often the only recourse for the ill. By gathering the medicine that he believed would cure him but administering it along with a course of Christian prayers, Nutsawi seems to have been asserting, or hoping, that new ways of healing compatible with Christianity could be found.[47]

Some of the Israelite Indian stories Nutsawi told seem, considering his blending of Christian and Cherokee practices, to have attempted to give some elements of Cherokee traditional healing a grounding in Christian theology. He claimed that in the past "mortal diseases were supposed to arise from the displeasure of God, when any such diseases made their appearance, the people resorted to the A-to-hv-na ["Physic dance," in Butrick's translation] for relief. God had directed them to do this…"[48] This explanation of traditional healing connected the missionaries' understanding of sickness as a trial from God with Cherokee understanding of it as the result of a ritual impurity or an offended other-than-human being. According to Nutsawi, God was both the being offended and the being to be propitiated by healing ceremonies: not a far

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[47] Butrick, "Monday [August ?]."

[48] Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1,2,3*, 290.

cry from then-contemporary Reformed Protestant practice of days of fasting and repentance in reaction to disasters or sickness.

Here, as in the narratives about Prophecy, the Christian God was the source of traditional Cherokee ceremonial life. Although Nutsawi did not directly narrate the gift of ceremonies to the Cherokee as he had with divination, he again told a story about the "Israelite" customs of his ancestors that provided a warrant for Congregationalist Cherokee to engage in practices that the missionaries forbade. In the hands of Cherokee intellectuals, the idea that they might be descended from Israelites therefore authorized the incorporation of Congregationalism into traditional Cherokee ceremonial life, divination, and healing.

***Election and Possession of Christianity***

The Israelite Indian narratives that Butrick recorded also advanced the idea that Christian Cherokees were a remnant following the tribe's original religion, which they argued was Trinitarian, Protestant Christianity. Stories about a supposedly-ancient Cherokee belief in "three Beings Above" both cemented claims to their "Israelite" ancestors' Christianity and helped to define the way that Christian Cherokees should regard the non-Christian majority in the Nation, referred to in Butrick's manuscripts as "idolaters." On the topics both of Trinitarian theology and so-called idolatry, Butrick's interlocutors pushed back on the theology of the American Board by asserting that their "Israelite" ancestors had practices the original, pure form of Christianity. Missionaries, in this understanding, were only restoring to the Cherokees a religion to which they had ancestral rights.

According to both Nutsawi and Andrew Sanders, the most ancient Cherokee authorities held that the world had been created by "Three Beings above, always together, and of the same

mind" whose names were "U-ha-lo-te-qa, Head of all power," "A-ta-nv-ti, or United" and "U-sqo-hu-la," which Butrick parses as meaning "the affections of the heart." "These three," Nutsawi said, "will always continue the same. They created all things, were acquainted with all, and present everywhere, and governed all things. When these called any person, that person must die just in the same way They thought best to have him die." They "sit on three white seats above; and all prayers are to be directed to them. They have messengers, or angels who come to this world and attend to the affairs of men."[49] Nutsawi's narrative here clearly reflected the contemporary Congregationalist understanding that Israelite religion was Trinitarian. Orthodox Congregationalists, then engaged in fierce debates with what would become the Unitarian Church, supported their more conservative Trinitarian theology by arguing that the prophets and patriarchs of Israel had believed in the Trinity.[50] By contending that their ancestors had originally believed in "Three Beings," then, Nutsawi and Sanders maintained that traditional Cherokee beliefs resembled the ones that orthodox Congregationalists imputed to Israelites. The characteristics they imputed to the Three Beings—that they were "of the same mind," "always continued the same," all-present, and all-powerful—reflected the attributes of divinity that

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[49] Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 4,5,6*, 109. The earliest version of this account is anonymous, but Butrick later attributes it to Nutsawi. See Ibid., 205.

[50] Like most American Board missionaries, Butrick held strongly to the Trinitarian position. When the American Board sent him a copy of a sermon preached by a minister with Unitarian sympathies, he burned it because "I could not feel willing to keep in the house a sermon preached by a tongue employed in denying the sacred Trinity." Daniel S. Butrick, "[N.d.]" 1832, 18.3.3 v. 4 (Sec. 5 Jan 11, 1832- Dec (?) 1832 68 pp) Cherokee Mission, Miscellaneous. Butrick Journal, ABC. On the idea that Israelites were Trinitarian, Payne refers particularly to the 1818 edition of Ambrose Serle's *Horae Solitariae* in *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1, 2,3,* 208. See Ambrose Serle, *Horae Solitariae; Or, Essays upon Some Remarkable Names and Titles of Jesus Christ, Occurring in the Old Testament, and Declarative of His Essential Divinity and Gracious Offices in the Redemption of Man : To Which Is Annexed, an Essay, Chiefly Historical, upon the Doctrine of the Trinity.*, First American, from the second London edition. (Philadelphia: Printed by Patterson and Cochran, no. 108, Race-Street., 1799), 345–426.

Trinitarian Congregationalists insisted upon.[51] By asserting that their ancestors had understood Congregationalist orthodoxies long before the arrival of American Board missionaries in the Nation—indeed, before the arrival of Europeans in North America— Nutsawi and Sanders insisted that the missionaries were only helping them to restore their ancestral religion.

The theology Nutsawi and Sanders produced was not, however, identical to that of the missionaries. In a different conversation, Nutsawi relates that "Ye-howa was a great King. He was a man and yet was a Spirit. The song or hymn called yowa was sung to him. His name must never be mentioned only by persons selected, & by them, only on the sabbath day."[52] Butrick begins the very next entry: "~~God~~ ˇthis Yehowaˇ commanded them to rest from all work every seventh day. . ."[53] The crossing-out emphasizes the ambivalence around the identity of "Ye-howa" in Nutsawi's account. To him, Ye-howa could be a "king"—a word used elsewhere to translate *ukv*, the political office more normally translated "chief"— who was "a man and yet a Spirit." An unnamed Cherokee, probably also Nutsawi, told John Howard Payne that Ye-howa was "a God, and yet a king, appearing sometimes as man, or rather that He was both material, and immaterial."[54] Butrick was willing elsewhere to identify Ye-howa with the second person of the Trinity.[55] But here he hesitated, lifting his pen and crossing out the word "God" rather than

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[51] See, e.g. Ethan Smith, *View of the Trinity: A Treatise on the Character of Jesus Christ, and on the Trinity in Unity of the Godhead; with Quotations from the Primitive Fathers*, Second edition (Poultney, VT, 1824).

[52] Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1,2,3*, 208.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 4,5,6*, 142.

[55] Ibid.

claim as divine a figure that his interlocutors seemed to be thinking of as a human king. To Butrick, humans and God were distinct beings, interrelated only by the complex parsing of Jesus's identity in mainstream Protestant Christology. To Nutsawi, the categories were more fluid. Hence, Israelite Indian stories allowed Nutsawi to comment on and re-articulate the theology taught in American Board churches in his own terms.

Despite their endorsement of the idea that their Israelite ancestors had been Christians, Nutsawi and Sanders were aware that Christians were a minority in the Cherokee Nation. They used the concept of the "Three Beings" to draw a distinction between Christian and non-Christian Cherokees. Butrick's informants said that the difference between themselves and non-Christian Cherokees "consisted only in the objects of worship, and not in ˇoutwardˇ forms & ceremonies. These, in general, were the same, as none had images."[56] Rather than echo missionary rhetoric that Cherokee religious life consisted of culpable worship of animals, Nutsawi seems to be suggesting that the ceremonies themselves, the "outward forms," did not differ between Christian and non-Christian Cherokee. By adopting Protestant ideas that emphasized belief over right living and right ritual practice, he was thus able to argue that Cherokee religious traditions were not in and of themselves idolatry, and could be maintained if they were practiced with belief in the Christian God. [57] Hence, their re-readings of Israelite

[56] Ibid., 104.

[57] The idea that incorrect worship consisted primarily of using images or other defective "outward forms" may have had a basis in Butrick's sermons. Butrick was so opposed to the use of images that he burned pictures of non-Christian deities sent along with the American Board's instructional materials, and made it a habit to "destroy or deface, all pictures of the Saviour, or the Holy Spirit" in the mission's possession. Daniel S. Butrick, "Saturday [December ?]" 1833, 18.3.3 v. 4 (sec. 5) Cherokee Mission, Miscellaneous. Butrick Journal, 1833, ABC.

Indian narratives allowed them to position themselves as reformers restoring the "original" Cherokee religion.

At one point in Butrick's records, however, his interlocutors seem to hint that traditional Cherokee ceremonial life might be forbidden by the Christian God's commands to the ancestors of the Cherokee people. Thomas Nutsawi and Johnson Pridget told Butrick that:

> . . .those who deny the worship of the sun, and adore only the Three Beings above, say that the priests who pray only to them, i.e. to God above, and all others not guilty of lying, stealing, fighting, murdering, fornication, adultery, or causing abortion and destroying children &c. when they die will go above to God, where it will always be light and pleasant.
>
> But all such as are guilty of the above crimes, together with all who pray to the Devil, (by praying to the Devil they mean praying directly to him in order to prevent his hurting them, or praying to the sun &c. in obedience to the Devil) will go when they die to Tsv-ski-no-i, i.e. the place of wicked spirits, and be forever tormented.[58]

This interpretation of the afterlife shows clear Christian influences, both in the idea of there being either eternal reward or eternal punishment after death and in the list of misdeeds that might merit punishment. Cherokees had not previously censured abortion or infanticide, for example, and sex before marriage was normal.[59]

This would seem to be a clear-cut prohibition against traditional Cherokee religious ceremonies, but in the context of Nutsawi's and Pridget's other statements, it seems to be a prohibition of the anti-social practices Cherokees referred to as "witchcraft" and strongly distinguished from ceremonial practice. Nutsawi and Pridget elsewhere suggest that Cherokees who refuse to acknowledge the "Three Beings Above" are simply ignorant, not under the

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[58] Payne and Butrick, *The Payne-Butrick Papers, Volumes 1,2,3*, 239–40.

[59] McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic*, 333; Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 148, 180.

influence of the Devil as in the parenthetical "(by praying to the Devil they mean praying directly to him in order to prevent his hurting them, or praying to the sun &c. in obedience to the Devil)" above. This discrepancy suggests that the explanatory parenthetical is Butrick's, not his interlocutors'. If so, what might "praying to the Devil" mean? Elsewhere in Payne and Butrick's manuscripts, the word "Devil" refers not to the missionaries' image of an ever-present enemy of Christianity, but to malignant other-than-human beings such as two siblings who caused smallpox or a trickster figure also called *Untsaiyi* the Gambler.[60] Records of Cherokee religion from the period associate such beings with witchcraft, or the anti-social use of ritual power, not with normal, pro-social Cherokee ceremonial life.[61] Rather than a condemnation of all non-Christian Cherokees, whom Butrick's interlocutors otherwise treat mildly, this condemnation of contact with the Devil was probably a more socially normal prohibition against witchcraft, not, as Butrick parsed it, a prohibition against Cherokee ceremonial life.

By incorporating the missionaries' Trinitarian theology into their retellings of Israelite Indian stories, therefore, Nutsawi and Sanders made an argument for the continuing integration of Congregationalist Cherokees into the life of the Cherokee Nation. If, as their stories implied, the original "Israelite" Christianity of the Cherokees had looked like current ceremonial life in "outward forms," Christian Cherokees could participate in traditional Cherokee ceremonial life, by directing their worship to the "Three Beings Above." Since Nutsawi, Sanders, and Shield Eater intended these stories to be recorded and re-told for the use of the Cherokee Nation in the future, their narratives positioned themselves and future Congregationalist Cherokees as

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[60] *Untsaiyi* means "Gold," or "metal ore," although James Mooney translates it as "brass" in *Myths of the Cherokee*.

[61] Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians*, 174–83.

authoritative interpreters of the “original” Cherokee religion. Had their narrative that Cherokee were originally Trinitarian Christians identical with the Israelites of the Hebrew Bible been accepted, Congregationalist Cherokee would have been in a powerful position, despite their small numbers, to control the integration of traditional Cherokee religion and Christianity.

### *Conclusion*

The Israelite Indian stories Butrick recorded argued for the territorial integrity and religious autonomy of the Cherokee Nation, as well as the vital position of Cherokee Congregationalist churches in the Nation. Although white, pro-missions Protestants in the northeast such as Elias Boudinot and Ethan Smith had used Israelite Indian narratives to discredit Native land claims, these Cherokee intellectuals found that these same narratives could be used to create new theologies that emphasized that the Cherokees’ land had been granted to them by God. By casting themselves as the holders of an “original” Cherokee tradition that accorded with, but modified, the missionaries’ religion, they argued as well for the importance of their communities to the Cherokee Nation and anticipated a future reform that could occur once that Nation had defeated its opponents on the national stage.

Most of the intellectuals Butrick consulted died during removal, and the book project they cooperated was a further casualty. The notes that Butrick took were compiled into manuscripts purporting to reveal timeless “Indian Antiquities” to a white audience, rather than being submitted to the review process Ross envisioned and published for the use of future Cherokees. The intellectual world in which these stories were told was also badly damaged, if not obliterated, by removal. The American Board abandoned its mission stations and accepted a Federal buyout of the lands they had been built on before the onset of removal, and that betrayal

tainted the Congregational churches for many Cherokees. This helped ensure that Baptists would become the most important Christian group in Cherokee religious life.[62]

The records remain, nevertheless. They impart several broader lessons in the context of both Cherokee politics before removal and the larger history of Israelite Indian narratives. First, they show an instance in which Native peoples produced accounts of themselves and the world that cannot be reduced to the dichotomy of assimilation and resistance that has long dominated histories of American Indian religions. Second, they show that the National Council was not the only political bloc shaping Cherokee society during the period leading up to removal. Rather, multiple groups vied to make a place for themselves in the new Cherokee Nation and to control the representation of the Nation to outsiders. Histories of the Cherokees before removal often focus on the political positions of the elites, dwelling particularly on the role of such figures as John Ross, John Ridge (1802-1839), and Elias Boudinot (1802-1839), editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix.*[63] Butrick's records, meanwhile, are often treated as representations of "the Cherokees" in general. Seeing Butrick's records as reflecting a political and social group—the Congregationalist Cherokees— may force historians to be more cautious in our generalizations about Cherokees in this period, but doing so gives us a fuller picture of internal Cherokee politics. Third, they add to a growing archive of examples of Native peoples' adaptations and

[62] McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*. One legacy of this is the importance of Baptist deacons in contemporary Cherokee culture in Oklahoma. Circe Sturm argues that Baptist deacons, like traditional healers and leaders in the Keetowah Society, are usually designated as "fullblood," indicating that belonging to a Baptist congregation is seen as a valid way of being Cherokee. Sturm, *Blood Politics*, 126–29.

[63] See, e.g. the classic treatment of the period in McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic*, and the discussion of Cherokee politics in Chapter One of Rifkin, *Manifesting America*. Other accounts have focused on non-elite Cherokee, such as Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, but tend to treat Butrick's manuscripts as representative of the large body of Cherokees who have left us no written records.

innovations in the face of the changes brought by settler-colonialism.[64] Thus, they are one more demonstration that Indian removal was not an inevitable consequence of U.S. expansion, but a contingent decision made for specific reasons and in willful ignorance of continued Native adaptation. The next, and final, chapter will analyze some of those reasons while showing how the body of ideas we now call "manifest destiny" came to eclipse Israelite Indian narratives.

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[64] The literature on the range of Native American responses to colonialism is vast and quickly-changing. The best introductions are Peter Mancall and James Hart Merrell, *American Encounters: Natives and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal, 1500-1850*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007); Calloway, *New Worlds for All*; Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

## Chapter 5: To Possess the Whole of the Continent (1825-1850)

### *Introduction*

Israelite Indian stories entered American print culture as counter-narratives to Indian removal. They argued that missions, not conquest, would allow for the expansion of white settlement in North America, and warned that the nation's blessings could vanish if American Indians were not treated well. In the hands of Mordecai Noah, William Apess, and Cherokee thinkers, these stories became ways for members of groups marginalized by the consolidation of white nationalism in the first decades of the nineteenth century to stake claims to land and racial dignity. For Mormons, they became millennial documents that promised a divine revolution that would, among other things, radically re-configure the racial hierarchy of the United States. Mormons and their American Indian kin would see the destruction of white Protestants and the creation of the Kingdom of God on Earth in the land of North America.

But even as non-white and non-Protestant authors took up Israelite Indian stories, the presentation of these narratives in print cultures aimed at white Protestant audiences changed dramatically. Israelite Indian narratives appeared in American newspapers regularly through the 1850s and occasionally even after the Civil War. After the mid-1820s, however these narratives rarely supported missions. They did not argue that it was the duty of Americans to convert the "Israelite" tribes of North America so that God would bless their conquest of the continent, or that "Israelite" heritage meant that American Indians should retain some of their land claims. Rather, they used Israelite Indian stories to argue that Native people, and their land claims, properly belonged to the past.

With a shift in the political purposes of Israelite Indian stories came a shift in epistemology. More so than earlier narratives, they disregarded reports of American Indian customs or histories in favor of examination of artifacts and grave sites. This epistemic shift reveals subterranean changes in American religious culture that allowed the development of the theological ideas, first, that God had granted North America to whites as a race, and, second that this divine election could be perceived first and foremost from Americans' bodies and possession of land rather than from histories. Hence, the alteration in the way that Israelite Indian stories were told reveals some of the shifts in American religious cultures that allowed the rise of the theology of national election that historians have come to call "manifest destiny."

Most Americans in the early republic embraced some form of providentialist thinking, meaning that they assumed that God was in control of history and dictated the fates of nations. Israelite Indian narratives depended on this assumption insofar as they assumed that the imputation of Israelite identity to American Indians implied that they would share in the divinely-guided history of Israel. Americans differed, however, in how they thought about Providence. The northeastern evangelicals who introduced Israelite Indian stories to America had assumed, first, that God dispensed providences to nations in accord with their deeds and, second, that the United States was being prepared for its place in an apocalyptic change to the world. As time went on, however, these conservative forms of evangelicalism were replaced, particularly in the south and west, by populist evangelicalism that de-emphasized covenantal relationships between God and collectives in favor of a focus on the individual.[1] This populist evangelicalism tended to assume that God's election of America was unconditional and displayed in the natural

[1] Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*.

features of the world and of human bodies.[2] To such thinkers, the elimination of American Indians was a natural event that signaled God's intention for white Americans to subdue the continent, not a political choice that might bring down judgment on America for its immoral actions.

The incorporation of Israelite Indian narratives into this populist strain of providentialism coincided with their abandonment by conservative evangelicals. After the election of Andrew Jackson, evangelical supporters of missions accepted the idea that Indians were doomed to vanish.[3] Although Protestant missionaries agitated against Indian removal and assisted Native lobbies to the Federal government before 1830 against the policy, they concluded that they had been defeated politically soon after the passage of the Indian Removal Act. Electing to relocate their missions to Indian Territory rather than turn down a buyout of their lands, the American Board abandoned Native nations to face the Federal government alone.[4] Puzzlingly, this change occurred during the same decades that saw other northeastern evangelicals take up the cause of Abolition.

Why did the vanishing of American Indians and the territorial expansion of the United States come to seem inevitable and natural even as slavery came to seem unnatural? One piece of the puzzle of why evangelicals lost the political will to support missions during the era of Indian

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[2] The distinction drawn here between various kinds of providentialism relies on Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876*.

[3] Ibid., 173–74.

[4] McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*; Martin, "Crisscrossing Projects of Sovereignty and Conversion: Cherokee Christians and New England Missionaries During the 1820s."

removal can be found in the emotional structure of Israelite Indian stories. The religious narratives that northeastern evangelicals like Boudinot and Ethan Smith introduced into American culture were meant to evoke sympathy for American Indians and hope for the future, but they did so in ways that relied on an assurance of Native vanishing. They argued that converted American Indians would return voluntarily to Israel, an event that showed no sign of happening. More fundamentally, in their haste to make Native religions seem like preludes to Christianity they associated them tightly with an "Israelite" society that, to many Americans, was an artifact of the past rather than a model for the future.

Not all Americans abandoned the views of providentialism common among northeastern evangelicals early in the century, however.[5] Early Mormons, as we have seen, maintained an apocalyptic culture that assumed that God had made covenants with certain human lineages and would soon sort them out in apocalyptic judgment. The descendants of Israelites—Jews and American Indians—would be included in the coming age by right of God's enduring care for the progeny of his covenant people. Mormons, meanwhile, would be adopted into the lineage of

[5] Nicholas Guyatt strongly separates more intimate and personal providentialism, such as the belief that an illness or disaster might signal God's displeasure, from national providentialism, such as the belief that God might visit an unworthy nation with defeat in war or economic misery. The former, he claims, was largely abandoned as "superstition" by the end of the seventeenth century, while the latter endured at least through Reconstruction and continues to appear in political rhetoric today. Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876*. As Richard Godbeer points out in his review of Guyatt's work, however, it is not obvious that the separation between personal and collective providentialism was ever so clean. Richard Godbeer, "Nicholas Guyatt. Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607–1876. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2007.," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (December 1, 2008): 1515–16. Elias Boudinot, certainly, looked to his personal life as well as the national stage for signs of the workings of Providence. Populist evangelicals like William Apess, meanwhile, might have been less likely to see an illness as a sign of God's displeasure, but nevertheless scrutinized the workings of their emotional lives carefully for signs of divine will and direction. What would seem to be distinctive about northeastern evangelicals was that they retained earlier covenantal theologies that strongly linked personal righteousness, communal religious observance, and the temporal fortunes of the group. Belief in what Guyatt calls "judicial providentialism"—that God might judge the community for misdeeds—as opposed to later naturalistic views that saw the agency of God in the creation of distinct races and "natural laws" seems more likely to have been undergirded by theologies that strongly linked the personal and political, rather than ones that separated them.

Israel, or, as later theology had it, literally transformed into biological descendants of Israel by the ritual work of baptism.[6]

Israelite Indian stories became vital to the succession crisis that shook the early Mormon movement after the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith in 1844 and to the plans of the church leadership to find a site for a Mormon settlement in the west. The majority faction under Brigham Young attempted to balance religious separation from white Protestants with a pragmatic desire to preserve the lives and property of church members. Because Mormons imagined Lamanites as powerful enemies of white Protestants, they came closest to embracing Lamanite prophecies when it seemed likely that Mormons might find a refuge from the Federal Government in the territory of Native nations such as the Comanche and the Cherokee. When their efforts to secure such alliances did not result in immediate success, Brigham Young's faction turned to more standard white American approaches toward land and assumed that their own status as God's chosen people entitled them to find a refuge in the west without securing the permission of the people whose territory it was.

### *Israelite Bones and the American Past*

After 1825, Israelite Indian narratives appearing in print cultures for white American audiences tended to argue that American Indian people and their land claims were part of a vanished past. They sometimes explicitly invoked the trope of the "vanishing Indian" who would, sadly and inevitably pass away before white expansion.[7] More often, however, they implicitly associated American Indians with graves, artifacts, and the Ancient Israelite past,

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[6] Cannell, "The Blood of Abraham: Mormon Redemptive Physicality and American Idioms of Kinship."

[7] For the appearance of "vanishing Indian" tropes in New England local histories, see O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*.

thereby surrounding even living people with an aura of antiquity. Hence, although these narratives often evoked wonder at and sympathy for Native people, they did so in a way that isolated white Americans from any political consequences for those feelings. It was easier for the authors of these narratives to appreciate American Indians who, like the Israelites, were not only part of the past but part of a past that white Protestants saw as their inheritance.

Material objects, the landscape, and the human body became key reference points for these narratives. Where evangelical accounts often focused on alleged “Israelite” features of American Indian cultures such as oral histories that echoed the Hebrew Bible or the supposed “Yehowah” dance, these narratives prized their interpretations of material objects. Bones, mounds, and artifacts came to speak more loudly than the testimony of Native people or even than whites’ ethnographic observations. Earlier evangelical authors had seen Israelites as both their spiritual ancestors and as patterns for their own church communities. Israelites, therefore, were in continuity with evangelicals even if they belonged to a supposedly less-enlightened time. Later authors, however, removed from their Israelite Indian stories any sense that there might be kinship or continuity between themselves and the people they wrote about. In doing so, they built on the logic of Protestant supersession in earlier versions of Israelite Indian narratives to affirm both the antiquity of American Indians and the modernity of whites.

Despite their later adoption for quite divergent goals, material objects first became part of discussions about Israelite Indians thanks to evangelical authors. In an appendix to the 1825 second edition of *View of the Hebrews*, Ethan Smith related his researches into a Jewish prayer phylactery—a *tefillin* —supposedly recovered from an Indian burial mound near Pittsfield,

Massachusetts in 1815.[8] What later historians called the "Pittsfield *tefillin*" proved one of Smith's more enduring contributions to discussions of Israelite Indians. This element of Smith's narrative captured the attention of an Indiana real-estate speculator named Epaphras Jones (1764-1847), who conducted his own inquiries and published the results in the 1837 edition of his *On the Ten Tribes of Israel and the Aborigines of America &c. &c.* (1831).[9] Jones's work was a millennialist reading of the Bible that anticipated that missionary work to American Indians would bring about the second coming—most likely by 1867.[10]

Both Smith and Jones approached the subject with intense interest in first-hand accounts of the phylactery's material details. Their published accounts dwell on conflicting stories about where it was found and what condition it had been in when dug up. All agreed that a Pittsfield innkeeper named Joseph Merrick had found a stitched leather object in the ground on his property in 1815, near the site of a hill variously called "Indian Hill" or "Fort Hill" for the British fort that had been on the site. Once opened, it was found to contain four parchments with Hebrew writing. Three of the parchments—one having been destroyed by the men investigating

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[8] *Tefillin* is the plural form of the singular *tefilah*, and is most strictly used for the set of arm and forehead phylacteries.

[9] Jones surfaces in records as the major backer of a brigantine, the *Peru*, that was fined $204.47 for incompetent registry, and later as the major landholder in a new community near New Albany, Indiana to be called Providence. His turn to the Israelite Indian theory seems to have been a preoccupation of his late life: in addition to the two printings of *On the Ten Tribes of Israel*, he also published an 1840 broadside that was a precis of his views on the subject, and an 1837 review of Josiah Priest's *American Antiquities Explained*. Third Congress of the United States, *An Act for the Relief of Epaphras Jones and Others* (Philadelphia, PA: Francis Childs, 1795); Epaphras Jones, *The Town of Providence, Indiana. This Town Is Situated on the Bank of the Ohio River ... Lots Are Now Offered for Sale* (New Albany, IN, 1821); Epaphras Jones, *A Concise Review of a Work Entitled American Antiquities, and Discoveries in the West. By Isaiah [I.e. Josiah] Priest.: Also, Remarks on the Deighton Rock, and the Fall River Skeleton. : A New-Year's Gift, for January 1, 1838.* (New Albany, Ind.: Printed by Collins & Green, 1837).

[10] Jones, *On the Ten Tribes of Israel and the Aborigines of America &c &c*, 28.

the object—were sent to Cambridge and identified as three of the passages from Deuteronomy usually stitched into sets of *tefillin*.[11] Smith was interested enough in reports that reached him of the discovery to travel to Pittsfield, where he interviewed Elkanah Watson (1758-1842), a businessman who come to Pittsfield to run a Merino sheep farm in his retirement.[12] Smith's account focuses on two details Watson related to him: that the parchments were intact and that they were enclosed in a rawhide box "sewn up with the sinews of some animal; a thing which no Jew in Christendom would have done."[13] In an 1815 letter, Watson described the object as if it were an ancient artifact "incrusted in a manner to evince its having been probably exposed for many ages." It was, in Watson's opinion, in "exact conformity" with a Jewish prayer phylactery as "described in the Old Testament," a strange assertion since the Hebrew Bible does not, in fact, describe *tefillin*. Since he had "read with intense interest on the subject" and already decided that "the Indians of America were descended from the lost tribes of Israel," Watson concluded that the phylactery had obviously been left there by an Israelite Indian.[14] William Allen, another witness, seemed to agree, and claimed that it was made from "untanned deer skin" as were many objects manufactured by Native people in the eastern woodlands. As with the "animal sinews" in

[11] Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 9:13-21, Exodus 13:11-16. The destroyed parchment presumably was Exodus 13:1-10.

[12] Elkanah Watson and Winslow C. (Winslow Cossoul) Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; Or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson, Includng Journals of Travels in Europe and America, from 1777 to 1842, with His Correspondence with Public Men and Reminiscences and Incidents of the Revolution* (New York, Dana and Co, 1856).

[13] Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 169–70.

[14] Elkanah Watson to Hugh Williamson, November 10, 1815. Reproduced in Watson and Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; Or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson, Includng Journals of Travels in Europe and America, from 1777 to 1842, with His Correspondence with Public Men and Reminiscences and Incidents of the Revolution*, 388–90; Lee M. Friedman, "The Phylacteries Found at Pittsfield, Mass," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 25 (January 1, 1917): 82.

Watson's account, Allen seems to have regarded the object as having material characteristics he would have associated with American Indians as well as characteristics he would have associated with Jews.[15] Both Smith and Jones seem to have preferred to present these accounts, with all their discrepancies and rich detail, than to gloss them over.

Smith's and Jones's turn toward material objects in the appendices they added to their works in 1825 and 1837 was at odds with their larger emphasis on prophecy and ethnography as sources of authority for Israelite Indian narratives. In contrast to their appendices, their main narratives drew on Anglo-American providentialist thought, which tended to look for historical patterns and clues to the future by matching contemporary and past events to narratives in the Bible. Their focus on materials pulled forth from the ground, by contrast, drew on an Anglo-American tradition of opening Indian graves to assert a right to ownership over the land. Although early English settlers had exhumed Native dead hoping to find both material riches and evidence of a line of nobles that would correspond to what Spanish invaders encountered in the Inca, by 1800 Anglo-Americans had come to see Native graves as evidence that North American Indians possessed neither any appreciable history nor any sovereignty over the land worthy of recognition.[16] Corresponding growth in the prestige of archaeology after 1820, meanwhile,

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[15] Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 168–70; Jones, *On the Ten Tribes of Israel and the Aborigines of America &c &c*, 33–44.

[16] Christopher Heaney, "A Peru of Their Own: English Grave-Opening and Indian Sovereignty in Early America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (October 2016): 609–46.

created the impression that the past that lay under the ground was an ancient past, rather than one that might reveal the immediate ancestors of American Indians.[17]

The turn from prophetic and ethnographic toward material evidence from under the ground that Smith made in 1825 and Jones made in 1837 only accelerated after 1830. Texts relying on such evidence articulated a version of Israelite Indian narratives that reinforced the idea that American Indians were inert parts of the American landscape, literally represented only by burial mounds, bones, "artifacts," and other objects that could easily be possessed by white Americans.[18] In doing so, they drew on Protestant readings of the distinction between honored, but old and vanished, Israelite figures in the "Old Testament" and the Christians who inherited their history to draw a sharp distinction between "modern" white Americans and "primitive" American Indians.[19] The fictional depiction of two contemporary sets of people—white Americans and American Indians—as belonging to two separate historical eras was consonant with a shift in American political theology toward seeing the hand of providence in supposedly-natural laws of the age.

Ira Hill, a teacher from Baltimore, connected the presence of pre-contact mounds and earthworks in the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio river valleys to the "Semitic" ancestry of American Indians in his *Antiquities of America Explained* (1831). Hill's history differs from

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[17] Conn describes this obsession with the power of objects to reveal more information than linguistic analysis or oral histories ever could as an "object-based epistemology" shared by many of the pioneers of archaeology as a separate discipline in the early United States. Conn, *History's Shadow*, 116–53.

[18] Ibid., 117–18.

[19] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, xi–xxiii.

Boudinot's and Smith's speculations in that he seeks to explain material evidence of the past, not the customs of living American Indians. Hill sought to excite readers by promising to reveal the secrets behind "languages engraved on rocks" and "tombs where greatness has been mouldering to dust for thousands of years" in North America.[20] It also represents a turn from Boudinot's and Smith's work in that it attributes an Israelite past to American Indians without claiming that their ancestry had any millennial or religious significance. He claimed that Ancient Israelites had migrated indeed to America along with Phoenician colonists, but that they had quickly lost their cultural and religious distinctiveness through intermarriage and "corruption" to the worship of multiple gods. The united Israelites and Phoenicians landed in Nova Scotia and moved south and west, leaving mounds and earthworks in their wake. In each move the Phoenician-Israelites left behind the least enterprising and lowest classes of their society. Hence, the Mexica, Maya and Inca cultures that built impressive stone cities were obviously remnants of the most advanced and enterprising leading edge of Israelite-Phoenician settlement who moved the farthest from Nova Scotia. The Native peoples of North America, by contrast, were the descendants of those who had been left behind and had fallen into disorder without the elite classes of their societies.[21]

For Hill, then, the presence of impressive mounds and earthworks in North America proved that American Indians had a generalized Semitic ancestry, but not that they were Israelites in any meaningful way. His interest in uncovering what had happened to Semitic peoples in the Americas stemmed from his worries about the effects of westward expansion on white Americans. Hill wrote during a debate over the risk to western settlements of

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[20] Ira Hill, *Antiquities of America Explained* (Hagerstown, MD: William D. Bell, 1831), v–vi.

[21] Ibid., 30–54.

"demoralization," or the unwinding of society because of the destruction of its moral underpinnings. Americans debating land policy asked whether settlers' morality could best be maintained by distributing land to a few wealthy owners who would encourage a mix of agriculture and manufacture, or whether they should be parceled out to poor Americans at low prices to avoid the development of a landless, white underclass.[22] Hill understood this question in racial terms. He attributed variation in human skin color to climate and feared that Europeans who moved too far from Europe—say, into the interior of North America—might expect their racial identity to change.[23] But, he argued, the continued resemblance between American Indians and the peoples of the middle east meant that North America was "designed by the God of Nature but for one people, who without inconvenience, can inhabit any of the climates, from one extremity to the other of the continent. The climate being so nearly on a medium as not to alter the complexion of the human race it cannot essentially effect the constitution, though men should move from one region to another."[24] White Americans, in other words, had nothing to fear from spreading their dominion over all the Americas. They would not have their skin color, and hence their racial identity, altered as they expanded west and south. Indeed, they might even find their bodies improved, since God has "never formed more perfect bodies as habitations for immortal spirits, than he has the Indians of America." American Indians' remarkable bodies, in his

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[22] John Van Atta, *Securing the West: Politics, Public Lands, and the Fate of the Old Republic, 1785-1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 170–204.

[23] Hill's racialized understanding of the risks of settlement echoed earlier European writing about the supposed "degeneration" that might affect settlers in the Americas. Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 156–64, 213–25.

[24] Hill, *Antiquities of America Explained*, 90–95.

estimation, led to robust health and easy child-bearing.[25] In the context of European debates about white American bodies, the implication was clear: white Americans would inherit the physical virtues of American Indians just as they came to inherit the physical territory in which their "Jewish" ancestors' bodies and artifacts lay. The metonymic association of these vanished "Israelites" with the American landscape, and the new association of white Americans with that same landscape, seemed to allow the transfer of their histories and positive qualities. That Protestants already imagined themselves as the "spiritual"—that is, in Protestant terms, real or true—successors of Israel only made the transfer easier.

The pamphleteer Josiah Priest drew on a similar set of concerns about physical bodies and artifacts in his *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*. Priest similarly believed that American Indians were Semites, but not Israelites in their sacred history or destiny. The key element in Priest's theory was that humanity could be divided into three groups descended from Noah's three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth— and that all their cultural and physical traits were determined by which son they could trace decent to. The descendants of Japheth built cities, he argued, whereas the descendants of Shem were wanderers and nomads. He argued that only a small fraction of Shem's progeny, comprising the direct descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had been given the revelations preserved in the Hebrew Bible. The rest maintained only "contradictory and monstrous" ideas.[26] The American Indians were Semites, possibly even descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes, but they had interbred with and become identical with Scythians and Tartars. These Semitic Indians were "usurpers" who, through "bloody warfare,"

[25] Ibid., 109, 115–18.

[26] Priest, *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*, 98, 160, 198–99.

had “exterminated the original inhabitants of America” that had built the mounds of the trans-Appalachian west. Those original inhabitants had been a race of people descended from Japheth—Priest could not quite decide if they were Celtic or Chinese— who had an inborn inclination to settlement and city-building. [27]

Israelite Indian narratives influenced Priest’s account, but the idea lacks any immediate millennial consequences. American Indians, in this rendering, are not Israelites but rather Semites. There is no implication that they ought to be redeemed, that there might be redeemable elements of their religion, or that whites must be identified with them to merit a place in the Providentially-ordained conquest of the continent. Rather, they are Semites simply because “Semite” in Priest’s thought equates to wanderers and barbarians. Behind this designation lies centuries of alienation of Jews from the land of Europe and their association with travelling trades. His narratives, and others like them, transferred that alienation to American Indians.

The fissures between earlier Israelite Indian narratives that argued that America’s millennial destiny involved what their authors conceived of as fair treatment of Native peoples and later manifest destiny narratives that posited white conquest as the will of a nearly-interchangeable God or Nature is apparent in later narratives about America’s “Israelite” past that folded into developing ideas about racial nature. Whereas Smith, Boudinot and other conservative evangelicals believed that the fates of nations or peoples—terms that sometimes, but not always, indicated something like biological race—were determined by God in accordance with their adherence to high moral standards, later theorists believed the traits of the races to be fixed. Whether they attributed this to God or to Nature, there was little chance of

[27] Ibid., 96.

direct intervention by a transcendent force in the racial order. By their imagined existence, white mound-builders implied that only people of certain biological lineages were blessed by God. Israel's claims to God's special attention and favor were, in these accounts, artifacts of the past rather than facts of a millennial future to be anticipated.

Although these later stories shared with evangelical Israelite Indian narratives the assumption that the history of the Americas had to be consonant with the Bible and the assumption that the God of Israel oversaw history, the structures of feeling they proposed were substantially different. The shift in feelings about the past of the Americas after the early 1830s is one index of larger changes in white Americans' approach to territory and the enduring presence of Native nations.

The versions of Israelite Indian narratives that evangelicals proposed and which Apess, Noah, early Mormons, and Cherokee Congregationalists refashioned relied on a shared mood of divine immanence. They assumed that Providence manifested its decisions through events that determined the fate of nations. They assumed that nations were distinct and had been separated for divine purposes, each with their own languages, cultures, and, originally at least, territories. Nations endured through bloodlines but were not reducible to them. Religious conversion, above all else, seemed to offer a possibility for the transformation, renewal, or integration of nations. Alive to the possibility that God's will was made manifest by shifts in collective memory, moral standards, economic fortunes, and military success, their curiosity about the past of America extended to multiple kinds of evidence. Reading Boudinot, Smith, and works drawing directly on them, one finds arguments based on whites' observations of language, ceremonies, and customs and well as collected fragments of Native oral histories. They sifted through this evidence under

the assumption that it could be used to read the signs and figures they saw throughout the Hebrew Bible and to discern the future course of God's plans.

This approach to Israelite Indian narratives had political consequences. White American Protestants, in Smith's and Boudinot's readings, were manifestly a chosen people, but they were not necessarily the only or the most important nation in God's millennial plans. They saw danger in the future: should white Protestants not obey God by participating in missions to American Indians, they would invite God's wrath. Early Mormons elaborated on this assumption by representing themselves as auxiliaries to the true, "Lamanite," army of God. Although Mormon millennial culture shifted away from this perception of themselves, they maintained the assumption that God worked directly in history and might choose to curse governments or nations of people who did not conform to expectations.

The narratives about Israelite Indians that emerged after the early 1830s posited that God interacted with humans as races, rather than nations, meaning groups whose most meaningful characteristics had been set by Providential intervention in the biological past. These narratives referenced alleged parallels between American Indians and Israelites only to gather evidence connecting American Indians to a "Semitic" lineage, ostensibly defined by descent from one of the three sons of Noah. Although this narrative, like parallel narratives tracing African Americans' descent to Ham, relied on a Biblical story, it assumed that the agency of God in the differences between human groups had been limited to the primordial division of humanity into three strains with their own determinative characteristics. Although God's sovereignty over history and the reliability of the Bible as history were still ground assumptions for these authors, God's actual intervention in the world was biological and geographical, not political or

apocalyptic. Their dominant emotional keys were not fear and hope, but wonder and pride at their own fortune to be part of a chosen race inheriting a continent prepared for them.

The epistemic shift in these narratives toward physical objects mirrors this shift in assumptions about God. Believing that Providence acted primarily by shaping the in-born capacities and nature of biological lines and by designing climates, they limited the range of their curiosity to artifacts, human remains, and earthworks. Earlier Israelite Indian narratives had relied on interactions with Native people, however misunderstood or filtered through Euro-American intermediaries. Such interactions were, by contrast, entirely extraneous to Priest's, Hill's, and Delafield's narratives. For them, physical evidence supplanted, rather than supplemented, earlier European and Euro-American ethnographies and histories.

### *The Rise of Manifest Destiny*

This shift in narratives about Israelites, or Semites, in America is an index of larger changes in the ways that Americans thought and felt about territories in North America. Boudinot published *A Star in the West* as the national fortunes of Federalists were waning, and Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* was published when they had definitively passed. The settlement of the west only accelerated in ensuing years. By 1830, Americans poured into the Ohio, Mississippi and Missouri river valleys even as lands in western New York, Pennsylvania, and the Piedmont South remained relatively scarcely settled.[28] The passage of the Indian Removal Act signaled that the Jackson administration intended to ensure that lands for settlement would continue to be available by pursuing the strategy of ethnic cleansing favored by settlers on the frontier and land speculators. American expansionists looked to the republics of

[28] Van Atta, *Securing the West*, 48, 148.

Latin America and saw decadence and racial decay that left their governments unable to make rational use of the territories they held.[29] Mere decades earlier, the Latin American republics had excited great admiration in the United States. Only in the immediate context of expansion into northern Mexico did that excitement curdle into contempt.[30]

The way that pro-expansionist authors transformed Israelite Indian stories after 1825 demonstrates one way that white Americans came to feel that all this new territory was truly their possession. Racial arrogance was a necessary but not sufficient component of the expansionism of this era. It took complex emotional work to transform the republic that Elias Boudinot knew—threatened by European powers, ringed by powerful Native polities, and looking with hope toward Latin American independence movements—to the one that James K. Polk knew—confident in its right to seize territory, triumphant in its conflicts with Mexico and Great Britain, and insulated from existential threats from Native nations if not able to extend control over all the territories it claimed.[31]

Where white evangelical proponents of Israelite Indian narratives had begun from the assumption that civilization was achieved through upbringing, the Romantic narratives that rose in popularity after 1830 depicted American Indian inferiority as biological. It is remarkable how deftly these narratives fold out of view the legal machinery and state violence that made removal

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[29] Pinheiro, *Missionaries of Republicanism*.

[30] Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolutions* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016).

[31] Large sections of the southwest remained under Comanche dominion, parts of central Florida effectively belonged to the Seminoles, and the powerful equestrian tribes of the northern plains would not lose territorial control until late in the century.

possible, as well as the integration of eastern nations like the Cherokee into the market economy that made it desirable for those who wanted land rather than economic and political competition.

In 1845, the journalist John O'Sullivan famously invoked white Americans' "*manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent* which Providence has given us for the development of a great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us."[32] O'Sullivan's phrase, "manifest destiny," has become a fixture of our understanding of United States history since the early twentieth century. Abstracted from mid-nineteenth century politics, it has been apotheosized into a supposedly enduring belief in American election stretching from puritan New England to the Vietnam War. The most common lineage of manifest destiny traces it to puritan settlements in New England, where the idea that God gave sanction to English expansion was first supposedly developed and passed on more-or-less seamlessly to the early American republic.[33] Defined classically as a national ideology that posited that America both deserved and would ultimately come to rule the continent, manifest destiny has also been linked to white supremacism insofar as the "America" it posited denoted a white ethnos as well as a democratic nation-state.[34] So common has the phrase manifest destiny become in our histories that it has at times taken on an agentic force, as if it were a spirit

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[32] Miller, "The Doctrine of Discovery, Manifest Destiny, and American Indians."

[33] A New England genealogy for manifest destiny stretches back to Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*. Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny*; Johannsen, "The Meaning of Manifest Destiny"; Woodworth, *Manifest Destinies*.

[34] Drinnon, *Facing West*; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*; Horsman, "The Dimensions of an 'Empire for Liberty': Expansionism and Republicanism, 1775-1825."

haunting America since the beginning of English settlement which might possess white settlers, politicians, and writers and move them of its own will.[35]

It is understandable to see New England radical Protestants' continual representation to themselves of their divine mission to build godly communities in New England as an antecedent of later tendencies to see America as uniquely blessed by God. New England puritan communities, however, were more interested in their collective destiny and the establishment of new towns than in the kind of entrepreneurial trespassing that came to characterize American expansion by the 1840s. Although Congregationalist clergy in the eighteenth century had expanded their understanding of covenant beyond the individual community to embrace national politics by the early republican period, their limited influence outside the northeast calls into question whether that sense of covenant could have underlain a national theology as supposedly influential as manifest destiny.

Israelite Indian stories, in fact, drew far more directly on Congregationalist collectivist political thought than did mid-nineteenth century Romantic ideas about white American's racial destiny. In the hands of conservative evangelicals, Israelite Indian stories argued that American Indians and white Protestants both had divinely-appointed destinies that would only be fulfilled in the millennial age. Manifest destiny rhetoric, however, saw America's destiny as due to the biological nature of white Americans and to the special moral virtues cultivated on the frontier. Pro-expansionism in the 1840s argued that frontier whites were closer to moral purity because of, rather than despite, their simplicity—an attitude that harmonized with individualistic revivalism more than with the collectivist hierarchies of New England. The idea that whites

[35] Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism*.

expanded westward because God had ordained it so made the efforts of pro-expansionists to confirm squatters' rights, limit American Indian settlements, and resort to state violence when necessary feel both natural and virtuous. The production of manifest destiny rhetoric in the 1830s and 1840s reveals the immense emotional work that it took to develop a frontier culture of Indian-hating into a nearly-universal sense that American Indians belonged to a vanished past.[36]

### *Mormon Expansionism*

The possibility of claiming western territory from "Israelites" attracted early Mormons as much as white Protestants. As violence against Mormons intensified from 1840 to 1848, the church's leadership looked to American Indians not only as visionary figures but at possible sources of military and material support. Mormons had attempted to establish settlements near American Indians since their first official mission to the "Lamanites" in 1830-1.[37] After state militia attempted to drive Mormons from Missouri in 1840, the church's leadership began to seriously consider alliances with Native nations. They hoped that their claims to a refuge in the west could be secured by casting their lot with American Indians, rather than by driving them from their land. Millennial beliefs continued to shape their expectations about American Indians, however, and led to disappointment when their initial overtures met with mixed, rather than resounding, success. In part because of this disappointment when reality failed to match the expectations set by Mormons' stories about Israelite Indians, the faction of the Mormon

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[36] This rhetoric was produced in multiple genres throughout the early nineteenth century. On its production in New England town histories, see O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*.

[37] An 1841 mission to the Menominee and Ojibwe in the Wisconsin river valley, for example, was intended to secure land as well as lumber and alliances with American Indians. Taylor, "Telling Stories About Mormons and Indians," 161–64; Klaus Hansen and Jedediah Smart Rogers, *The Council of Fifty: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2014), 20–27.

movement under Brigham Young followed typical white settlement patterns by driving Utes and Paiutes out from the area of the Great Salt Lake when they migrated to Utah beginning in 1847.[38]

Newly-available administrative records make it clear that the leadership of the Mormon movement considered alliances with American Indians more seriously than previously thought. From 1844 to 1850, the main body of the Mormon movement was administered by the Council of Fifty, also called the Kingdom of God and His Laws with the Keys and Power thereof, and Judgment in the Hands of his Servants, Ahman Christ. Joseph Smith imagined the Council of Fifty as the first step in the government of God on earth through a unity of civil and religious power that he described either as "theocracy" or "theodemocracy." Believing that the democracy of the United States had become riven with party strife and insufficiently protected the lives and property of citizens, Smith envisioned a civil government that would, in close cooperation with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, prepare society for the return of Christ and the creation of the millennial kingdom. The Council of Fifty was meant to govern temporal affairs, especially those in the Mormon community of Nauvoo, Illinois, but also had a substantial voice in church policy because of a large degree of overlap between its members and highly-placed members of the church.[39] In the wake of Joseph Smith's murder in June of 1844, the Council of

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[38] Jared Farmer, *On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 54–104.

[39] The overlap was not complete. Under Joseph Smith, the Council of Fifty included three non-Mormons, since Smith anticipated that the Kingdom of God would have to govern people of all religions. Young summarily removed these non-Mormon members, along with several men who had led groups that rejected his leadership, when he became chairman of the Council after the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Grow et al., *Council of Fifty Minutes, March 1844-January 1846*, xxxvi–xxxvii, 216.

Fifty helped to secure Brigham Young's claim to leadership over the majority faction of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.[40]

As tensions in Missouri rose, and especially after the assassination of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, the Council of Fifty began to consider alternate locations for the headquarters of the church. In 1845, their debates ranged over several locations. Brigham Young favored Alta California—he regularly had Erastus Snow open Council meetings with a hymn entitled "Upper California"—but other councilors raised the possibility of settlement in Texas or Canada.[41] The Council seems to have been under the impression that if Mormons settled among American Indians they would be out of the reach of the laws of the United States government. They envisioned a union between Mormons and an American Indian group—the Lenape, Choctaw, Menominee, Oneida, and Cherokee were all named as possibilities—that would allow them to circumvent the Nonintercourse Act of 1834, which limited white settlement in Federally-designated and controlled Indian Territory. Union with American Indians, the Council of Fifty came to hope, would allow Mormons to possess land in North America by divine assent that overrode white land claims.

Lewis Dana, an Oneida man who was the first American Indian ordained an elder of the Church, was appointed in March 1845 to a mission with Jonathan Dunham with the expectation

[40] Matthew J. Grow et al., eds., "Series Introduction: Joseph Smith's Administrative Records," in *Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 1844-January 1846*, The Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church Historian's Press, 2016), xx–xxii; Matthew J. Grow et al., eds., "Volume Introduction: The Council of Fifty in Nauvoo, Illinois," in *Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 1844-January 1846*, The Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church Historian's Press, 2016), xxviii–xxix.

[41] Alta California or Upper California was officially part of Mexico until 1848, although the U.S. occupied parts of the territory beginning in 1846. The territory comprised the modern states of California, Nevada, and Utah as well as parts of Arizona, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico.

that they would help to “unite the Lamanites” and find “a location where the Saints can dwell in peace and health.”[42] Brigham Young commented on Dana’s mission that “The object of this organization [i.e. the Council of Fifty] is to find a place where we can dwell in peace and lift up the standard of liberty. It is for the purpose of uniting the Lamanites, and sowing the seeds of the gospel among them…[43] The two purposes Young mentioned, finding a refuge for Mormons and “uniting the Lamanites” were one and the same. The members of the Council of Fifty had begun to think of Lamanites as inhabiting specific areas, principally the Indian Territory, Texas, the Oregon Territory, and Alta California. They believed that their missionaries could unite the tribes of these territories in an alliance that would be strong enough to protect Mormons and to oppose the United States government.

What came to be called the Western Mission relied heavily on Lewis Dana’s knowledge of Native communities—which council members often assumed was effectively limitless—and ability to initiate diplomatic relations. Orson Spencer hoped that “brother (Dana) call upon the red men to come speedily to the help of the Lord against the mighty. They have been driven from their homes and the~~ir~~ graves of their fathers and massacred like unto us, then let him carry the fire amongst to them and tell them that God has set up his kingdom and that the day of deliverance is at hand.”[44] This sense of sympathy between American Indians and Mormons would allow Dana, Jonathan Dunham and the other missionaries to initiate diplomatic relations

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[42] Hansen and Rogers, *The Council of Fifty*, 85–86.

[43] Grow et al., *Council of Fifty Minutes, March 1844-January 1846*, 255.

[44] Ibid., 273–74.

with little difficulty. The Council's initial plans, although shaped by unwarranted assumptions, demonstrated some understanding that Native people might have their own goals and grievances. The Council believed that American Indians who had experienced removal would be sympathetic to the violence that Mormons had experienced. George Miller exhibited some knowledge of Native diplomatic protocols when he suggested that the missionaries arrive with gifts and smoke "a pipe of peace with them— [to] form a league of friendship with them."[45] Reynolds Cahoon argued that the missionaries should identify Native leaders who could be trusted "to leave things in their charge and be brought about. Let there be some men left with them to council with them and communicate to us that we may know what is going on."[46] Hence, although white Mormons expected that, once Mormons had settled among Native people, they would "govern by principle," their original plans for settlement in the wake of the Western Mission called for Native leadership.[47]

The consent and continuing political authority of Native governments was, in fact, central to the Council's plan. Their interpretation of the Indian Nonintercourse Act of 1834 led them to believe that, until a political, military and religious union of the tribes could be achieved, they would require the permission of Native peoples to settle with them and acquire territory in their lands. Once there, they assumed, they would be out of the reach of the state and, possibly, the Federal governments because they would be settled with a sovereign Native nation. As George

[45] Ibid., 289.

[46] Ibid., 283–84.

[47] Ibid., 410.

Miller put it, “As to [the Federal] government this is all the Land of the Lamanites and the white people are nothing but intruders; the devil gave it them…If we can get the consent of the Camanches or Cherokees to locate among them, or any other tribe there is where we want to go.”[48] Miller, in other words, endorsed a divine grant of the land of North America to American Indians that trumped the legal claims of the U.S. government.

This argument was parallel in construction to the one put forward by O’Sullivan in his famous articulation of manifest destiny. Just as O’Sullivan argued that white American’s supposed divine title to North America was surer and better than Mexican and British titles based on international law, so did Miller believe that American Indians possessed a divine title to North America that was surer than those recognized by Federal law. That both men reached for this idea to justify breaking laws governing territorial claims reveals a common assumption underlying disputes over land in the early United States: that justification of title by reference to a divine grant had the potential to arrogate human laws.

Mormons’ hopes for the Western Mission were high. Miller charged the missionaries to tell American Indians that “God has set up his kingdom. This is the only Israel on the earth…we have nothing to fear.” The immediate conversion of American Indians could be expected because the coming of the kingdom indicated that “the time has come when the Lord will restore to Jacob his land,” that is, when Native people would regain their traditional homelands. The tribes hosting the missionaries would then “send their messengers from tribe to tribe and will have the intelligence communicated in a trice, and then they can look out for a place for a location” in

[48] Ibid., 306.

which to gather Mormons together with “the tribes from North to South.”[49] Once the Mormons began to live among Lamanites, Miller continued, they would find that their internal dissensions would cease as well: “We can go amongst the red men in the forest and be safe. There is no treachery among them, and the reason why there is treachery among us is because the blood is not pure,” that is, because not all Mormons were lineal descendants of Israel.[50] W.W. Phelps concurred, and commented that “Wen the Lamanites learn the truth they will obey it to a man, it is only the gentiles who are vessels of dishonor.”[51] American Indians’ swift acceptance of the Mormon missionaries’ message would inaugurate a new nation, independent from the “gentile” United States that the members of the Council of Fifty increasingly despaired of converting. “These United States has set us off as a nation to ourselves and what does it prove to us…We have a kingdom established but they have rejected the kingdom and here is a nation standing ready to receive it…” [52] Clearly, although the Council of Fifty had come to recognize the desires of Native nations for the return of their territories and for freedom from encroaching settlement in ways that Parley Pratt’s millennial prophecies had not, they continued to believe that Lamanites were a holy people who would joyfully accept the teachings of the church. Dana, whose diplomatic acumen and knowledge was supposed to make all this possible, spoke remarkably little during these meetings. When the Council of Fifty appointed him head of the

[49] Ibid., 289.

[50] Ibid., 270.

[51] Ibid., 272.

[52] Ibid., 283–84.

mission, he responded only by lifting his hand and saying "in the name of the Lord I am willing to do all I can."[53]

The Council of Fifty not only believed that settling with American Indians who agreed to shelter them would fulfill a divine plan for the last days, but also that doing so would be practical. Their debates turned around the likelihood of various tribes receiving them, the distances involved in getting to them, and the material support that settlers would be able to call on once they got there. Jonathan Dunham, for example, encouraged the Council to think about sending the missionaries to the Cherokee Nation in the Indian Territory, since they could travel there by steamboat along the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers. The council considered sending emissaries to the Comanche, whose military prowess gave them *de facto* control of substantial portions of modern Kansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico, but Dunham argued against settlement with them. The Comanche, he argued, suffered from "a scarcity of timber" that Mormon settlers would need. Whereas "if we can get the Cherokees to admit us amongst them we can have a place to stay one, two or three years in peace" and a base of operations in the heart of Indian Territory from which to commence the project of uniting the tribes.[54]

Some American Indian groups did see Mormons as possible allies. Groups that had already come to regard Protestant Christianity as a viable or necessary element of their national identities were especially likely to express interest in the Mormon movement. With the American Board in disarray and tensions with both Methodist and Baptist missionaries common, Native peoples were inclined to seek out new allies. Mormon overtures to Menominee who had been

[53] Ibid., 255.

[54] Ibid., 303.

displaced from their territories in Wisconsin, to Cherokee "old settlers" who had migrated west in advance of most of the Cherokee Nation, and to Stockbridge peoples who were moving west on their own forced migration were all received with some measure of optimism. At least some Potawatomi seem to have regarded Joseph Smith as a prophet like Tenskwatawa rather than a white missionary.[55] In none of these cases, however, did Mormon leadership follow up on initial diplomatic overtures to build any of the alliances that would allow them to settle in Native territories. By the time the members of the Western Mission had made most of the contacts expected of them, the Council of Fifty had already abandoned the plan of settlement by treaty in favor of migration across the Rockies to land they regarded as empty.[56]

Frightened by an upswing in mob violence in the autumn of 1845, Young decided that the church could no longer wait to form alliances with American Indians. He unequivocally stated that the Mormon inhabitants of Nauvoo would go west. Rather than planning to settle with Native people, Young now believed that the "Lamanites" would come to the Mormons. "If ever we get the City of Zion once organized the idea of men going and telling tales to our enemies will be put an end to. Let us get by ourselves and in a little while the Indians will join in with us, and as soon as we get cousin Lemuel [i.e. American Indians] converted I don't fear."[57] Even during the planning discussions for the Western Mission, Young had been ambivalent about

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[55] Taylor, "Telling Stories About Mormons and Indians," 180–81, 201–5, 246–47; Grow et al., *Council of Fifty Minutes, March 1844-January 1846*, 469–71.

[56] Spencer delivered Lewis Dana's report to the Council of Fifty on September 9, 1845, having met Dana while returning from a mission to the Seneca in the Indian Territory. Grow et al., *Council of Fifty Minutes, March 1844-January 1846*, 465–77.

[57] Ibid., 303.

whether Mormons should settle among American Indians to begin the new Zion, or whether they could set up a colony outside of the reach of the United States and wait for "cousin Lemuel" to flock to the Mormon banner. When conditions worsened in Illinois, therefore, and when the Western Mission did not bring back immediate word of invitations to settle with any tribes, he began to steer the Council toward emigration to Alta California without having first secured a relationship with the Utes and Paiutes who lived in the area. He had come to regard the permission of American Indians to settle among them as inessential. After all, he expected that once Mormons had staked a claim in the west American Indians would follow. The vulnerable position of Mormons on the edge of Indian Territory and their willingness to negotiate with American Indian nations had been the major points in their favor from the perspective of their Native interlocutors. Once Young moved to what he regarded as a position of strength in the Great Basin, he had entered a new political world of Native people who knew nothing about Mormons and saw them as simply more white intruders.

***Conclusion***

There was no single point at which Israelite Indian stories vanished from the American scene. They were still occasionally invoked in the decades after the Civil War, but as fringe theories advanced by cranks, not as ideas deserving of mention in textbooks as in the 1810s and 1820s.[58] For example, an 1884 letter to *The American Hebrew* dismissively reviewed a lecture in favor of the Jewish Indian theory by mocking those who "continue to cling to what is generally considered as the exploded theory viz., that the Red race are descendants of the ten Lost Tribes

[58] See Parish, *A New System of Modern Geography*, 22–23; Morse, *The American Universal Geography*, 87; Robbins, *A View of All Religions; and the Religious Ceremonies of All Nations at the Present Day*, 153–162 [355–364].

of Israel."[59] But the bulk of books, newspaper articles, and pamphlets arguing for or invoking the Jewish Indian theory were published between 1810 and 1850.

The increasing professionalization of knowledge production about American Indians doubtlessly contributed, particularly since it produced and reinforced new genres of writing—the research paper, the conference presentation, the dig report—that proscribed the wild comparative leaps and selective use of sources that Israelite Indian theories depended on. Empirical evidence as it presented itself to the uneducated mind was no longer enough to form theories about the past, as new techniques requiring special training, such as stratigraphic evaluation of archaeological digs, became commonplace.[60]

But Israelite Indian stories faded from view before the post-Civil War ascent of scientific professionalism in America, and certainly before the new science of anthropology had arrogated to itself the sole right to research American Indians. [61] It was already noticeably changing by the 1830s, when the "racial" or Semitic narratives had emerged and had begun to feed into the fiction of racially-distinct mound-builders who, whatever their origins, were not American Indians.[62] Such theories, whether they invoked the idea that mounds were Jewish remnants or not, had already moved toward an interpretation of Native difference as based in the biological

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[59] "Correspondence," *The American Hebrew*, August 1, 1884.

[60] Conn, *History's Shadow*, 127–53.

[61] Ibid., 154–97; Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

[62] See, e.g. John Denison Baldwin, *Ancient America: In Notes on American Archaeology* (Harper & brothers, 1872).

body, rather than based in divine will. The decline of Israelite Indian narratives therefore, is not a story about scientific knowledge replacing religious pseudoscience. It is a story of a shift from a racial theory that posited that God designated and ordained destinies for racial groups to one that posited that superior or inferior biology determined racial destinies. Neither, from the perspective of modern knowledge about the North American past, was accurate.

Shifts in U.S. Indian policy, not in scientific knowledge, led to the decline of Israelite Indian stories. The signing of the Indian Removal Act signaled a new era in American Indian relations: a policy of ethnic cleansing that played over the next twenty years as a powerful political coalition of the Jackson and Van Buren administrations, land speculators, and state governments forced the bulk of Native people east of the Mississippi onto new lands in the west.[63] Missionaries such as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions initially resisted this change in political moods, but by 1838 had accepted a federal buyout of their most valuable mission stations in the Southeast.

The shift toward biological discourses and subsequent decline of Israelite Indian narratives coincides more neatly with this shift in Federal policy than with the rise of scientific investigation into America's past. It suggests that the idea that American Indians were Israelites was less attractive as missionary organizations conceded that Christianizing Native peoples in their traditional homelands would not be possible. Missionary strategies shifted with the times and became entangled with the Federal administration of Native peoples on reservations. Access to the reservation system required organizations such as the American Board to surrender their attempts to assist in defending Native land claims. The suggestion that American Indians were

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[63] Taylor, *The Divided Ground*; Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears*.

Israelites whose destiny was, ultimately, both divinely-ordained and of great consequence to Christian salvific history was less attractive in the wake of Federal decisions to relocate American Indians and administer them in reservations.

The Latter-day Saints, who held out a belief in the significance of American Indians to Christian sacred history the longest, came after the disappointment of the Great Western Mission to regard good relations with Native people as an ornament to, rather than a precondition of, the establishment of Zion in America. As the power of American Indians over territory in North America waned, they had less to offer the Mormons. Conflicts with Utes and Paiutes around the Great Salt Lake after 1847 soured many Mormons on "cousin Lemuel." Other Mormons came to expect, with Brigham Young, that Native people would come to the land that Mormons had claimed rather than the other way around. As Mormon missionary success in the South Pacific and Latin America provided new peoples to consider "Lamanites," American Indians gradually lost their millennial significance to Mormons as well.[64] Although, unlike Protestant missionaries, Mormon leaders could not simply abandon the belief in Lamanites that was central to the message of the *Book of Mormon*, they similarly turned their attention away from American Indians as Federal policies reduced Native peoples' control over territory. In one index of this change, Lewis Dana, who had endured months of hardship on behalf of the Latter-day Saints while leading the Western Mission, did not follow the majority faction of the Church to Utah but remained with Alpheus Cutler's dissidents, who had settled with the Potawatomi.[65]

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[64] Duffy, "The Use of 'Lamanite' in Official LDS Discourse."

[65] Taylor, "Telling Stories About Mormons and Indians," 129, 209.

## Conclusion

Historians have often noted that Israelite Indian stories were "in the air" in the United States during the early nineteenth century to contextualize specific figures who embraced the idea.[1] The most common way of explaining its presence has been to gesture to a longer trajectory of European responses to the intellectual challenge posed by the existence of American Indians.[2] When they are read together in their historical context, however, the Israelite Indian stories told in the early American republic clearly deal with a few persistent themes other than Indian origins. They dramatized connections between Christian theologies and empire. By drawing discursive connections between Indians and Israelites, however poorly supported by evidence, these narratives allowed those who used them to imagine racial boundaries and claims to land in new ways. They died away once newer narratives—such as the idea that white Americans were chosen by God to subdue biologically-inferior American Indians and African Americans— arose to explain Indian removal and assuage white Protestants' consciences.

Based on their interpretations of Reformed covenantal theology, the conservative evangelicals who first introduced Israelite Indian narratives to American reading publics understood the emerging racial hierarchy of the early United States as a product of God's

[1] John Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 142–43; Bushman and Woodworth, *Joseph Smith*, 84–109; Laurie Maffly-Kipp, "Introduction," in *The Book of Mormon* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), ix–xiii; Gura, *The Life of William Apess, Pequot*, 127–28.

[2] Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians; European Concepts, 1492-1729.*; Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, 135–37; Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*, 35–36.

Providential judgments on human “nations” or ethnic groups. The blessings that white Americans enjoyed, in this view, were contingent on their continued moral behavior. Unchecked expansion could therefore be dangerous, since God would surely judge a nation that conquered through the “bad influences” of alcohol and aggressive settlement. The only sure way to expand while staying in God’s favor was through missions. Israelite Indian narratives played a double role in encouraging missions. First, they reinterpreted American Indians as “Israelites” rather than “heathens,” implying that they were not so different from evangelicals and could be expected to accept Christianity quickly. Second, they argued that converted American Indians would vacate the continent, rewarding evangelicals for their virtue with millions of acres of open land.

Because “Israel” was both a widely-understood and thoroughly ambivalent trope, it could easily be re-imagined for uses other than the ones intended by conservative evangelicals. Authors representing non-white and non-Protestant communities to evangelical audiences, such as Mordecai Noah and William Apess, found that narratives about Israelite Indians allowed them to imagine new roles for contemporary American Jews and American Indian Protestants in the racial hierarchy of early America and to claim lands by right of descent from the people to whom God has ostensibly given North America. Cherokee intellectuals, similarly, told stories about their “Israelite” ancestors to insist that they had divinely-backed claims to their territory and to resist the implication that their Native ancestry made them less fit Christians than white missionaries. Mormon uses of Israelite Indian narratives extended the ambivalence found in their conservative evangelical versions. Their stories about “Lamanites” assumed that American Indians had primordial claim to the North American continent and to divine favor. They imagined that Mormons would be saved through being adopted into the same bloodlines as

Lamanites and looked to treaties with American Indians to give Mormon refugees unquestioned title to land. At the same time, Mormon versions of these narratives still retained evangelicals' assumptions that only white Christians could properly interpret sacred history and American Indians' place in it. Accordingly, although Mormons did not call for Israelite Indians to leave the continent, they did imagine them gathering into Zion under Mormon direction.

As odd as they might seem, therefore, Israelite Indian stories provided a cross-cultural idiom that white Protestants, American Jews, American Indians, and early Mormons all used to make sense of the world around them. These stories persistently reflected on the conditions of American colonialism, which distributed territories and organized and regulated humans using racialized categories. The possibilities they presented for imagining the world otherwise and their eventual disappearance speak to the power and the limits of religion in the history of empire in America.

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**ABC** American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions North American Indian missions records, 1803-1883. American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Archives. By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

**EAI** Early American Imprints Series I: Evans and II: Shaw-Shoemaker, America's Historical Imprints, Readex Archive of Americana.

**EAN** Early American Newspapers Series 1 and 2, America's Historical Newspapers, Readex Archive of Americana.

**HAN** Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress Digital Collections

**JSP** The Joseph Smith Papers. The Church Historian's Press, Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. www.josephsmithpapers.org

**MNP** Mordecai Manuel Noah Papers P-75, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY and Boston, MA.

**SEB** Stimson Collection of Elias Boudinot, Princeton University Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton, NJ.

**TEB** Thorne Collection of Elias Boudinot, Princeton University Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton, NJ.

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