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**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

The Cherokees and Christianity, 1794–1870: Essays on Acculturation and Cultural Persistence. By William G. McLoughlin.

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4rs0t58h>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 20(1)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

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**Publication Date**

1996

**DOI**

10.17953

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consciousness that publishers like to short-circuit into what Gerald Vizenor calls a “bankable simulation”: the Indian, one of Baudrillard’s “absolute fakes” on which American culture periodically depends.

One of the most hilarious trickster scenes in *The Absence of Angels* depicts Alley’s interview with an administrator of the Stanford IQ Test, frustrated because Alley has, impossibly, scored a zero. It turns out that Alley insists on answers that are not among the multiple choices and consistently rejects the absurd premises of the story-problems. For a puzzle that requires finding a lost set of keys on a baseball diamond by creating a Cartesian grid-map, Alley proposes searching by means of a spiral. Years later, a well-established misfit, he realizes the lesson the test did not intend to teach: It is the keys to America that you find on that baseball diamond. W.S. Penn keeps on his desk a snapshot that he took twenty-five years ago of the mass grave at Wounded Knee, to remind him that appearances do not always hide reality. He decided when he took it “that there wasn’t a politics equal to the silence of that grave and that, if I ever told stories, then what was Indian about them,” like America, “would be buried but present” (*All My Sins*, p. 200). Sometimes the cartoon reveals as much as the palimpsest, the transparent fake as much as the absolute: At Municipal Stadium in Cleveland, at Fulton County Stadium in Atlanta, Indians are buried, too. At its best, *The Absence of Angels* spirals across those diamonds and chances upon some keys.

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**The Cherokees and Christianity, 1794–1870: Essays on Acculturation and Cultural Persistence.** By William G. McLoughlin. Edited by Walter H. Conser, Jr. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1994. 343 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

The death of William McLoughlin on 28 December 1992 left a void in Cherokee studies. An outstanding scholar of American religion, he devoted the last twenty years of his life to an exploration of nineteenth-century Cherokee people at the intersection of Christian and Indian cultures. Other scholars, notably Francis Paul Prucha, Robert Berkhofer, Pierce Beaver, and Henry Bowdon, preceded McLoughlin in scholarly analyses of Christian reform

programs among Native Americans. McLoughlin's singular contribution to their earlier studies was his exhaustive mining of records, particularly those of missionaries, to extract the complex history of Cherokee resistance and accommodation to "Christianization," a term he appropriately put in quotation marks. McLoughlin set a standard for documentary research and included in many publications appendices with original texts that have enriched the libraries and approaches of other Cherokee scholars. His thorough grasp of American religious history provided a broad context for Cherokee missions that has no equal.

The eleven essays, three appendices, and the epilogue in this volume continue the major themes and arguments of his earlier publications. Concentrating on the nineteenth century, McLoughlin explores the role of Christianity in transformations of Cherokee culture, the differences between various Christian missions, the ramifications of the tension between "full-blood" and "mixed-blood" Cherokee, and the connection between politics and religion. Underlying these themes is the assumption that Christianity ultimately became a vital part of Cherokee culture and contributed to its survival.

Part 1 contains five essays, four of which have been published previously and cover familiar ground. These essays focus on the Christian aspect of Cherokee acculturation, a process McLoughlin portrays as sporadic and often discordant. The strongest essays compare mission programs and the individuals engaged in them. Taken together, they are careful examinations that readily predict the ultimate failure of the elitist ABCFM's Samuel Worcester, who concentrated on "mixed-bloods," and the relative success of Methodists and Baptists, who lived and worked among "full-bloods." McLoughlin is at his best describing these diverse evangelists, some of whom obviously won his admiration and sympathy. The three essays that draw from McLoughlin's earlier works and feature Baptist missionary Evan Jones are particularly rich and provocative.

The essays in part 1 also demonstrate the politics of Cherokee Christianity. Those missionaries who aligned themselves with Cherokee causes won support, trust, and converts. Those who faltered or withdrew ultimately failed. As the essays imply, however, Christian conversion among the Cherokee was more than a matter of collective pragmatism or personal epiphanies. Conversion occurred in the context of particular relationships that empowered individual Cherokee people and sanctioned

aspects of their indigenous culture, such as language or healing practices. McLoughlin leaves little doubt that Cherokee people required the emissaries of Christianity to live by the tenets of brotherly love they so often espoused. Such love among the Cherokee included mutual support and defense. In the removal crisis, the standard was one few missionaries could meet, and their failures shaped their missions' futures.

Part 2 contains six essays that address historical evidence of Cherokee acceptance or rejection of Christianity. Two offer clarifying discussions of the Keetoowah Society and explicitly expand the theme of the convergence of politics and religion. McLoughlin argues that the society united two disparate groups, "full-blood traditionalists and full-blood Christians," in the interest of political and cultural survival (p. 219). Formed in the 1850s as a secret organization to oppose political alignment with the South, the Keetoowah Society "marked a new level of social and political sophistication" among full-bloods (p. 224). Well organized and widely supported, the society benefited from the leadership of native Baptist preachers. Meetings included Christian prayer as well as Cherokee spiritual customs such as night gatherings, central fires, ceremonial smoking, declarations of familial unity and fraternal love, and commitment to mutual aid. These essays support McLoughlin's assessment of Cherokee Christianity as more syncretic than metamorphic. The forms of Christianity that survived and prospered in the Cherokee Nation were those most compatible with Cherokee customs and most responsive to political crises.

The essay "Cherokee Syncretism: The Origins of the Keetoowah Society, 1854–1861" exemplifies McLoughlin's careful scholarship. Enriched with excerpts from missionary records and political correspondence, it also includes three appendices. The first is an unpublished set of Keetoowah Society bylaws that appeared in Howard Tyner's 1949 master's thesis; the second is James Mooney's late nineteenth-century description of the society; and the third is an excerpt on the Keetoowahs from D.J. MacGowan's 1866 article on secret societies. Along with passages from contemporary correspondence and Sequoyan records, the essay contains "all of the contemporary evidence available" on the Keetoowahs (p. 219). It clarifies a century's worth of scholarly contradictions about a significant Cherokee institution.

Just as these essays continue McLoughlin's major themes, they contain their common discontinuities. McLoughlin positions Christian hegemony or even "Christian imperialism" (p. 4) alongside

clear distinctions between mission philosophies and practitioners. The distinctiveness of each mission, mission board, and missionary undercuts the presumed hegemony, creating a conceptual tension. Although he addresses the distinctions among Christians, McLoughlin does not engage the conceptual tension in his narrative. He remains more descriptive than analytical and thus forfeits an opportunity to explore deeper subtleties in the dialogue between the politics of American theology and indigenous cultures.

A similar disjunction affects his comparisons of Cherokee and Christian values. He describes the immense variety of opinions, expressions, and behaviors in Christianity, conjoining it with capitalism and colonialism. Yet he follows other scholars in presenting a static, universal, and even romantic Cherokee belief system (pp. 15, 159–62). Just as harmony and order characterized the Cherokee spiritual ideal, love of neighbor and rejection of material goods characterized the Christian ideal. Just as the ideal was never realized among Christians, it was doubtless elusive in Cherokee society. Comparisons of ideal and real expressions inevitably oversimplify both the expressions and their practitioners.

The essays reveal the political nature of the Christianization program, but McLoughlin identifies it as such only when missionaries overtly “meddled in politics” by opposing federal or state policies or those of their own governing boards (pp. 21, 22). Although controversies over Indian removal and chattel slavery involved missionaries directly in political issues, even the earliest efforts to assimilate Native Americans were fundamentally political. Christianity was but one facet of a complex political process that began with the arrival of Europeans on American soil. It was not only “in the crucible of the removal controversy” that “politics and Christianity became inseparable” (p. 91).

Regrettably, no depictions of Cherokee Christians balance McLoughlin’s skillful portrayals of white Christians. His frequent allusions to native Baptist preachers intensify our interest in them. A comparison of Cherokee and white Baptists would illuminate both. Inasmuch as *Cherokee* is the leading word in so many of McLoughlin’s titles, we come to his work anticipating more about Native Americans than European Americans.

McLoughlin does not address gender issues, although he provides the startling data that two-thirds of the converts to Christianity after 1839 were full-blood women (p. 209). Rather than gender, his greater interest consistently lies in differences between full-bloods and mixed-bloods, who are identified by

their “cradle language” and their “lifestyle, values, and norms” rather than their bloodlines (pp. 189–90). Here, as in other instances, an examination of the significance of gender would seem to be compelling and to offer an opportunity to explore another intersection of Cherokee and Christian societies.

McLoughlin’s career as a historian of missionaries among the Cherokee testifies to the importance of the process of Christianization. Yet, by 1860, only 12–15 percent of the Cherokee belonged to Christian churches (p. 191). The significance of the movement lies, McLoughlin argues, in the role Christianity played in the revitalization of Cherokee culture. He credits Christianity with bridging the divide between diverse elements of Cherokee society and reinforcing certain traditional values such as family solidarity, mutual assistance, and the maintenance of moral and behavioral codes. To indicate how far the Cherokee Nation had come in the process of Christianization, he ends this final volume with the 1870 “Fast Day Proclamation” of Chief Lewis Downing. It is a prayer “for National preservation” (p. 309), publicly issued as the Cherokee Nation faced the dissolution of its boundaries, the opening of Indian Territory to railroads and white homesteaders, the elimination of tax exemptions for Indian manufactures, and the Dawes allotment act. Although the proclamation may indeed indicate that the Cherokee had become a Christian nation, it surely speaks as well to the inextricability of Christianity and politics. Downing’s soaring, Biblical rhetoric distinguishes him not only as a Baptist minister but also as a consummate politician addressing indirectly a “Christian” Congress poised to dissolve his nation.

*Cherokees and Christianity* is a collection that adds to our understanding of Cherokee and Christian people, and historical processes. Each essay can be read independently, making the volume a useful text for teachers and students as well as researchers. Just as the book leaves unresolved issues for further work, the sources point to new arenas for research. Given the current political climate, McLoughlin’s scholarship seems more relevant than ever. He directs our attention to the role of Christianity in the attempted destruction of a particular society. He highlights the convergence of religious and political ideologies. He identifies differences between Christian institutions and between those they seek to transform. McLoughlin has left a legacy for which Cherokee, history, and religion scholars will long be indebted.