

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Cultural Colonizers: Persistence and Empire in the Indian  
Antiremoval Movement, 1815-1859

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

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2010

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Chair

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2010

## DEDICATION

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On behalf of their support and sacrifice I dedicate this dissertation to my family. My mother Linda Gonzales, and my father Gilbert Gonzales, have encouraged me in everything I have chosen to do in my life. My brother Garrett Gonzales, my sister-in-law Stephanie Gonzales, my sister Nicole Gonzales, and my step-mother Lindy Gonzales,

have supported me throughout my graduate career. I give a special thanks to my grandparents, Joseph and Rose Gonzales, who worked to give me opportunity. My in-laws Theresa Horan, Janet Horan Paul, and Clark Paul have always been enthusiastic about my work, and have sacrificed by respecting the time my writing demands. This dissertation is also for my two fathers-in-law, Michael Horan and Professor Thomas Massey. I wish both were here to see the completion of this phase of my life. Mike would have made a joke to convey his love and respect, and Tom would have been proud. My discussions with Tom on philosophy, literature, politics, and travel helped me grow as a scholar. I also dedicate this to my two boys, Owen Gonzales and Hayden Gonzales. They have kept me centered through my years in graduate school. My most profound gratitude is to my wife Erin Horan Gonzales. Without her, I would never have been able to achieve what I have in life, nor been able to finish this dissertation. She has consistently sacrificed for me, and supported me. For her love and for making me a better man, this dissertation is dedicated to her.

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## FIELDS OF STUDY

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Studies in Antebellum Era Social Reform Movements  
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Cultural Colonizers: Persistence and Empire in the Indian  
Antiremoval Movement, 1815-1859

by

Christian Michael Gonzales

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Professor Rachel Klein, Chair

This study investigates collaboration among missionaries, evangelicals, Quakers, Cherokee, Choctaw, and Seneca that developed in opposition to Indian removal. In 1829, a vigorous national antiremoval movement arose dedicated to the prevention of Cherokee removal. Nearly a decade later, a coalition of Seneca, Quakers, and New York citizens lobbied to prevent Seneca dispossession. Anglo antiremovalists worried removal would interrupt Indian evangelism; while Natives feared forced emigration from their ancestral homelands and erosion of tribal sovereignty. Why did these varied groups join forces

against removal? Despite their divergent motivations, Native and Anglo antiremovalists shared a belief that Indian incorporation of Anglo cultural practices would bring Natives rights. They hoped Native adoption of formal education, family farming, and Christianity would yield social and political rights that could be leveraged to prevent removal. My story develops through examinations of Native-Anglo political alliances, mission Indian schools, black slavery in the Cherokee and Choctaw Nations, and Native cultural change in the post-Removal era.

Scholars have created an increasingly sophisticated narrative in which the Native-Anglo military and trade alliances of the colonial era gave way in the late eighteenth century to brutal, coerced dispossession. However, the story of Native history is not only about force and power. I describe how a complex process of cooperation helped to foster American empire, yet also enabled Natives to maintain tribal identity and sovereignty.

## Introduction

In 1820 the Choctaw signed the Treaty of Doak's Stand, an agreement in which the Indians ceded land in Mississippi to the United States in exchange for land in what is today Oklahoma. Five years later, the Choctaw and the United States entered into a new agreement. For an annuity of \$6000, the Indians returned about a fourth of their western lands to the United States. The money was earmarked for the education of children and the "improvement" of the Choctaw people. David Folsom, a Choctaw chief, was one of the signatories to the 1825 treaty. Shortly after the agreement was reached, Folsom wrote to Jeremiah Evarts, the Corresponding Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, a Boston based evangelical organization. "It is... encouraging to me that this treaty has taken place," wrote Folsom. "I ... firmly believe that after few years, god will bless the labours of the Christian people - And the Indian will become... enlightened and be like their white Brethren...I hope the good and wise people of the US will go hand and hand and promote the great good for the Indian people."<sup>1</sup> Folsom's letter raises a host of questions. What "labours" did the "Christian people" perform? What did Folsom mean by "enlightened" and "great good?" And what did he envision when he said that Indians would be "like their white Brethren?" If the letter leaves us with questions that invoke the subjects of assimilation, acculturation, and interracial relations, it also provides us with the important insight that some like Folsom saw benefit in nurturing a relationship with Anglo Americans. Why? What did he, and others who shared his view, hope to gain?

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<sup>1</sup> David Folsom to Jeremiah Evarts, January 19, 1825, Folder 6, #15, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

The Native-Anglo collaboration Folsom lauded would soon intensify and become more deeply politicized as the United States became embroiled in the most heated national political debate of the late 1820s – the contest over Indian removal. Removal was a policy that called for the migration of virtually all eastern Native peoples to the west of the Mississippi River. When President Andrew Jackson took office in 1829, he planned to center his Indian policy on removal. That same year Congress began debate on the Indian Removal bill, which would give the President the power to negotiate land exchanges in order to induce Natives to move westward. The invigorated support for removal generated a storm of protest from Natives, evangelicals, Quakers, and missionaries living among the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Seneca. Anglo antiremovalists believed that removal would disrupt Indian evangelism, while Natives feared separation from their ancestral homelands. In the fall of 1828, Jeremiah Evarts and Cherokee Principal Chief John Ross developed a strategy for a national antiremoval campaign, in which Natives and Anglos would work collaboratively. Their plan was to publish a host of antiremoval articles in the nation's leading newspapers, and to flood Congress with antiremoval memorials. The documents that subsequently filled the papers and reached the halls of Congress laid out legal and moral arguments against dispossession. Though focused on the prevention of Cherokee removal, the antiremoval campaign was aimed broadly at persuading the United States government and the American people that removal was a misguided policy.

By the winter of 1829 the antiremoval movement had gained considerable steam. The vast majority of Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole opposed removal. In addition, thousands of Anglo Americans, represented through memorials and

petitions drafted by numerous Quaker Yearly Meetings, Protestant churches, and even New England towns, came out against dispossession. Other than temperance, the antiremoval movement was the earliest of the antebellum social reform movements, and was the first to prominently feature an interracial cast of leaders.

This dissertation, *Cultural Colonizers: Persistence and Empire in the Indian Antiremoval Movement, 1815-1859*, examines an important and relatively neglected story: the collaboration of evangelicals, Quakers, missionaries, Seneca, Cherokee, and Choctaw which developed in opposition to Indian removal. I argue that a complex process of cooperation helped to foster American empire, yet also enabled Natives to maintain tribal identity and sovereignty. Collaboration among these groups rested on the shared belief that Indian adoption of certain Anglo practices would entitle Natives to legal and political rights that could be mobilized against removal. Such hope induced both Natives and Anglos to cooperate in extending religious and educational institutions into Native societies. I refer to this process of cultural adaptation as “trans-culturation” to emphasize that Anglo hope for acculturation was blunted by Natives who selectively choose what cultural practices they would adopt.<sup>2</sup> Trans-culturation was a double-edged sword. It facilitated the development of empire by funneling Anglo-American cultural institutions into some Native communities; yet it also provided Natives with social and political leverage. They used that leverage to maintain core cultural beliefs and to preserve a degree of tribal sovereignty. Natives were complicit with elements of Anglo

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<sup>2</sup> I borrow this term from Fernando Ortiz, the Cuban Anthropologist. For a discussion of Ortiz and his scholarly contributions see Enrico Mario Santi, *Fernando Ortiz: contrapunteo y transculturación* (Editorial Colibri, 2001).

efforts to alter Indian cultures precisely because it gave them power to protect the integrity of their communities and ethnic identities.

Despite the failure of the national antiremoval movement to achieve its primary goal – the prevention of Cherokee removal - it has considerable historical significance. It opens a window on an important alternative element of U.S. imperialism: the spread of Anglo-American cultural practices and institutions. Usually, when we think of nineteenth century U.S. imperialism, we envision geographic expansion, and picture the United States as a juggernaut, whose power swept Natives aside. While violence, military force, and Manifest Destiny were all vital to the geographical expansion of the United States, the antiremoval movement shows that complicated and enduring Native-Anglo alliances were vital to the spread of American practices. Moreover, it reveals that the cultural adaptations that arose in Native societies resulted from the intersecting interests of Native and Anglo-Americans.

The antiremoval movement is also significant for scholars. Rather than focusing on Native defeat, it points to the history of Native struggle and agency. The movement offered a real alternative to forced migration, and Indians were wholly engaged in it. By illuminating how Natives pressed their interests, the antiremoval movement helps us better understand their struggle against U.S. imperialism, and how that struggles benefited Indian communities even after the United States became dominant.

Over the last few decades scholars have shown the multiple ways Native Americans shaped the trajectory of American history. We have learned that Indians were instrumental in abetting European colonization of the Americas, key players in the

Atlantic world trade system, important allies or antagonists in the various imperial conflicts among European nations, and sophisticated strategists in their efforts to contend with the continental expansion of the United States. However, much of the current historiography on nineteenth century Native America shares with antecedent histories a common endpoint to the story. Natives ultimately succumbed to Euro-American power and were defeated. From defeat, they suffered both economic and cultural impoverishment. With the triumph of American military power and expansion of the United States in the nineteenth century, older social and economic systems, predicated on Native and Euro-American partnerships, collapsed. Natives were left with the dismal choice of reliance on government handouts and confinement within reservations, or futile resistance and devastating loss of life. At this point, Native societies experienced severe cultural degradation as older economic and social practices fell by the wayside in the face of dispossession, confinement to reservations, and the socio-political dominance of the United States. On-going changes in Native cultures had obviously been occurring since the early colonial era, but the pace and scope of change accelerated during the late nineteenth century as Indians became enmeshed in a vicious cycle of poverty, social marginalization, despair, and deepening decadence. In other words, the United States' rise to a clear position of military superiority led to severe cultural disruptions within Native societies.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and empires in the early American West* (Cambridge, MA, 2006); Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (Oxford, 2009); Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: a Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, 2001); and Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, 1991).



For all the insights afforded by this narrative, the historical literature too often reads late nineteenth century transformations backward into the history of early nineteenth century Native Americans. The Indians' ultimate defeat casts an aura of weakness over early historical subjects. It is understandable that historians have focused on Native suffering, the violent seizure of land, and the overwhelming military might of the United States government. Yet this narrative obscures important aspects of Native American history. Indians were not just defeated victims doomed to suffer cultural and economic poverty. In the long and bloody contest over land and socio-economic power, they lost. But they did not know they were going to lose. Their struggle deserves to be understood on its own terms as Natives worked, with great ingenuity, to protect themselves and their communities.<sup>4</sup>

More specifically, Natives incorporated American cultural institutions, notably Christianity and formal education, into their societies. They did so in order to make the case for sovereignty and rights to land. Unlike Anglos who had viewed Indian adoption of American institutions as coterminous with eventual abandonment of tribal identity, Natives saw this phenomenon from the opposite perspective. They believed they could selectively incorporate Anglo-American practices without forfeiting their tribal identity. They created dual identities – one tribal and the other American – that allowed them to maintain distinct ethnic communities even as they created cultural, political, and economic ties to the United States.

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<sup>4</sup> See Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*, Brian W Dippie, *The Vanishing American : White Attitudes And U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, CT, 1982), Laurence M Hauptman, *Conspiracy Of Interests : Iroquois Dispossession And The Rise Of New York State* (New York, 1999), and Mark Rifkin, *Manifesting American: the Imperial Construction of U.S. National Space* (Oxford, 2009).

Some scholars see this strategy as lamentable – as a representation of cultural apostasy and a sign of the profound depths of Native defeat. For example, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn in *New Indians, Old Wars* has argued that Native “accommodationists,” or those Natives who cooperated with Euro-Americans, contributed to cultural genocide by aiding Anglo assimilation efforts. And in *Anti-Indianism in Modern America* Cook-Lynn concluded that colonialism and oppression of Native peoples has been supported by ideologies of multiculturalism and assimilation.<sup>5</sup> The problem with this approach is that it elides Indian motivations for cooperation. It also presumes that Anglos had the ability to force cultural change upon the Indians. I take a different view. I see selective adoption of American practices as a resourceful strategy that yielded some tangible results. In many instances, Natives took control over cultural change in ways that allowed them to preserve limited sovereignty, central tenets of indigenous culture, and ethnic identity.<sup>6</sup> In addition, I see Indian openness to American practices as in keeping with indigenous practices. Willingness to participate in another group’s socio-cultural rituals, either to acquire new sources of power or to facilitate relations, was and is an indigenous value. For Natives, unlike for Anglos and some modern scholars, the adoption of new cultural practices did not mean that indigenous ones had to be abandoned. By failing to recognize this point, we lose sight of an important indigenous perspective that pervaded early

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<sup>5</sup> See Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Anti-Indianism in Modern America: a voice from Tatekeya’s Earth* (Urbana, IL, 2001), and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *New Indians, Old Wars* (Urbana, IL, 2007). See also Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: an Indigenous Manifesto* (Oxford, 2009), and Patrick Mingos, *Slavery In The Cherokee Nation: The Keetoowah Society And The Defining Of A People, 1855-1867* (New York, 2003)

<sup>6</sup> Recent scholars who see cultural adaptations as reflective of Native attempts to serve Indian interests include Izumi Ishii, *Bad Fruits of the Civilized Tree: Alcohol & the Sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation* (Lincoln, NE, 2008), Introduction; and Joel Pfister, *The Yale Indian: The Education of Henry Roe Cloud* (Durham, NC, 2009), Introduction. Ishii examines how Indian attitudes towards alcohol, particularly temperance, reflect an attempt by the Cherokee to claim that they were a “civilized” people. Pfister’s analysis includes discussion of how Roe Cloud parlayed Indian education into service of tribal interests.

nineteenth century Native-Anglo relations.

Other scholars have engaged in a larger project to explain how Natives exploited cross-cultural relations to their own advantage. For instance, in *Native Ground*, Kathleen Duval argued that Indian socio-cultural mores, more than those of Euro-Americans, shaped Native and Euro-American relations in the Arkansas River Valley. With this advantage, Natives profited from trade that moved through the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Brett Rushforth has described how Natives of the Ohio Valley used indigenous notions of slavery to force the French to accommodate Indian cultural and political demands.<sup>8</sup> Most recently, Pekka Hamalainen in his book, *The Comanche Empire*,<sup>9</sup> pointed out that the Comanche's development of a trade and military empire during the later nineteenth century posed a formidable challenge to the expansive United States. I see my work as part of this historiographical project which emphasizes strategies Natives employed to counter Euro-American imperialism without over reading the tragic ending into the process itself.

This study makes several other historiographical interventions. I challenge the contention that Native-Anglo cooperation east of the Mississippi dissipated after the close of the War of 1812. Scholars such as Richard White and Daniel Richter see the War of 1812 as a watershed moment because it marked a decisive realignment of the military balance of power between eastern Native nations and the United States. With clear military superiority, Anglos found it unnecessary to cooperate with or accommodate

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<sup>7</sup> Kathleen Duval, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Brett Rushforth, "'A Little Flesh We Offer You:' The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France" in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60:4 (Oct, 2003), p. 777-808.

<sup>9</sup> Pekka Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT, 2009).

Indians.<sup>10</sup> However, the relationships between Natives and Anglo missionaries show that cooperation and mutual accommodation persisted as defining characteristics of Anglo relations with large and strategically important Native nations, notably the Cherokee and Seneca.<sup>11</sup> This study also contributes to Amy Kaplan's argument that "domestic ideology" abetted American continental expansion.<sup>12</sup> Kaplan explained that domestic discourse provided a justification for United States expansion and Anglo American subordination of Natives and African Americans, yet also created an ideological barrier against subaltern cultural influences on whites. My study explores how subordinated populations contributed to American expansion through selective adoption of particular American cultural practices central to domestic ideology.

Cultural Colonizers is the first book length study of the antiremoval movement. The little existing work on antiremoval has either used the movement as a window onto white women's political activism, or focused on the movement's connection to abolition. Alisse Portnoy's *Their Right to Speak* claimed that antiremoval gave Anglo women a legitimate public forum in which to articulate their beliefs and concerns. In addition, Portnoy argued - that scholars should see the debates over removal and slavery as connected. The only other significant work on antiremoval comes from Mary Hershberger. Her article "Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition" asserted that the

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<sup>10</sup> See Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: a Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, 2001); and Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Those scholars who have investigated Native-Anglo cooperative relations in the period after 1815 have tended to assert that it was detrimental to Native Americans. For example, John W. Hall in his study of the Black Hawk War argued that the United States' defeat of Black Hawk was greatly facilitated by the cooperation of Dakota allies. However, the result of the American victory negatively impacted all Natives because after its victory, the U.S. sought to rid the state of Illinois of all Indians. See John W. Hall, *Uncommon Defense: Indian Allies in the Black Hawk War* (Cambridge, MA, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 2002).

antiremoval movement directly contributed to the emergence of abolition by leading antislavery advocates to see colonization of freed slaves back to Africa as another form of coercive “removal.”<sup>13</sup> Hershberger also found that many Anglo women, who would go on to support abolition, cut their political teeth on the fight against removal. Building on their insights but moving in new directions, I focus on how participation in the antiremoval movement empowered Natives.

Five chapters comprise this study. The first chapter explores antiremoval arguments articulated by Natives and Anglos between 1815 and 1828. It argues that antiremovalists envisioned a future in which Natives and Anglos intermixed. The second focuses on the national political debate that erupted over removal between 1829 and 1830. It explores the arguments voiced against removal and points out that a multiracial coalition criticized removal as an immoral policy that violated Native rights and American conceptions of justice. In fact, the movement’s focus on Native rights encouraged Indians to pursue selective adoption of American culture as a strategy of collective defense against coerced dispossession. Chapter three analyzes formal education in the Cherokee and the Choctaw Nations through an analysis of the mission schools established by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. I argue that many Indians believed that by embracing education, they could claim that they had become civilized, earn recognition of their rights, and then use those rights to stop removal and preserve tribal sovereignty. Chapter four explores how slavery complicated

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<sup>13</sup> See Alisse Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak: Women’s Activism in the Indian and Slave Debates* (Cambridge, MA, 2005) ; and Mary Hershberger, “Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle against Indian Removal in the 1830s” in *The Journal of American History* Vol. 86, Issue 1 (1999), p. 15-40.

relations between American Board missionaries and the Cherokee and Choctaw. It argues that the missionaries and Native slaveholders used slaves and slavery to promote their distinctive interests. The final chapter explores the antiremoval coalition that developed between the Seneca and the Philadelphia Orthodox Quakers. It looks at the protracted fight over the 1838 Treaty of Buffalo Creek which was designed to prompt Iroquois emigration to what is today the state of Kansas. The chapter chronicles the joint efforts of the Seneca and Quakers to stop ratification of the treaty. The chapter argues that Seneca-Quaker antiremoval collaboration contributed to cultural adaptations that infused American practices into Seneca society, and also helped the Seneca to protect sovereignty and central values. In sum, this is a story of cross-cultural relations and cultural adaptations that chronicles how Natives both contributed to, and survived, the expansion of the United States.

## Chapter One

### Merging the Tribes of Men: Early Antiremoval, 1815-1828

#### A Different Vision of American Democracy

In the first two decades of the nineteenth century Anglo Americans showed little opposition to Native American removal. Those involved with Indian affairs generally sought ways to speed up the acquisition of Native lands. Ohio Valley settlers, for example, believed that the liberty promised by the American Revolution entitled them to Indian lands.<sup>14</sup> And in New York, Native lands came under pressure with the development of transportation networks. Historian Laurence Hauptman has argued that a coalition of private interests and state government conspired to weaken Iroquois power. The Ogden Land Company, United States Indian Commissioner Ransom H. Gillet, and New York State officials sought to remove the Indians, pave the way for canals and roads, and grow the economy of the empire state. Similar efforts to dispossess Indians were underway in the South. Georgians, for example, vociferously agitated for removal and the fulfillment of the Compact of 1802 – an agreement in which Georgia relinquished claims to western lands in return for a pledge by the federal government to extinguish Indian claims to lands within the newly agreed upon state lines. Many Georgians asserted that the Compact granted a legal justification for Indian removal. More broadly, the cotton boom energized removal efforts among southern farmers and planters.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: constructing colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1763-1800* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997), introduction.

<sup>15</sup> See Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American expansion and the origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

The 1820s produced another model of Native-Anglo relations. Many Indians, along with Quakers, evangelicals, and the missionaries they sent to the Indians argued that Natives should adopt the practices of American “civilization.” They sought to turn Natives to Christianity, small scale agriculture, formal education, and the rule of statute law. Anglo supporters of this plan were deeply concerned with Indian evangelism and believed that “civilizing” the Indians was a vital concomitant to Christian conversion. They saw in acculturation the potential to foster values such as thrift, dedication to labor, church attendance, and family farming by individual male heads of household, that would facilitate the social order and communal stability needed to hasten Christian conversion.

Indians, for their part, exploited these schemes to their own advantage. They viewed “civilization” projects as their best opportunity to prevent removal. They believed that adoption of American cultural institutions would bring legal rights and power that could be leveraged to prevent forced dispossession. Many Natives consequently supported Anglo acculturation and Christianization efforts. However, they never envisioned a wholesale abandonment of their cultures, but rather believed that selective adoption of Christianity, formal schooling, and family farming would yield social power. Unlike Anglos, Natives did not see the incorporation of new practices as mutually exclusive with the preservation of distinct Natives cultures. Though they had different motivations, Natives and Anglos allied in efforts to alter certain Native cultural practices, or to encourage Indians to adopt new ones. This development was extraordinarily important. As the momentum to remove Indians strengthened, it was met by growing efforts to promote Native cultural adaptation as an alternative.



The Native-Anglo partnerships that developed around cultural change were tremendously significant to debates about race and society in Antebellum America. Most notably, they offered an alternative to the notion that the races were separated by permanent biological differences, and they rejected a social order that sought to displace Natives for the benefit of Anglos. In this chapter, I argue that missionaries, evangelicals, Quakers, and Natives were articulating a vision of American democracy that has not been fully recognized by historians. Eric Foner has argued that Reconstruction, and in particular the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, witnessed the nation's first serious attempt at "interracial democracy."<sup>16</sup> Yet the debate over Indian removal in the early 1820s reveals an antecedent attempt to define a path through which non-whites would eventually vacate subordinate roles in American society. More precisely, early antiremovalists envisioned Native adoption of American cultural institutions as a way for Indians to shed the status of socially marginalized peoples. They defined the races as equally capable of intellectual, social, and moral development. In addition, they argued that the supposedly underdeveloped state of Native societies resulted from lack of instruction in the religious, educational, agricultural, and social practices of "civilized" life. They sought to promote intermixture in schools, churches, and marriage; and they asserted that Natives should become farmers, wives, husbands, laborers, preachers, congregants, and students. In sum, early antiremovalists delineated a vision of American society in which Natives and Anglos would intermix and occupy the same fundamental social roles.

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<sup>16</sup> Eric Foner, *Reconstruction Revolution, 1863-1877* (Harper & Row, New York, 1988).

## **Race, Land Conflicts, and the Path to Antiremoval**

Historians have argued that the Early National period represented a watershed moment in racial ideology – a shift from environmental explanations of human difference that allowed, at least in theory, for subaltern transformation and improvement, to notions of immutable, biologically distinct races. Influenced by the Enlightenment, many eighteenth century missionaries and educators, such as Samuel Kirkland and Eleazer Wheelock, had concluded that Indians were capable of knowing and acquiring universal laws. Such men believed that differences between Anglos and Natives were the result of environmental variations, and they hoped that once Natives learned “civilized” behavior, they could attain the same level of social development as Anglos. However, beginning during the Seven Years’ War, Anglos increasingly argued that the differences between themselves and Natives were rooted in biology. Consequently, no degree of “civilization” or acculturation would ever change the “natural” inferiority of Indian peoples. By the 1820s many whites justified dispossession by citing the immutable racial differences between themselves and Indians.<sup>17</sup>

Daniel Richter has argued that Indians also embraced notions of racial separation during the early nineteenth century. Whereas during the early eighteenth century Anglos and Indians had attempted to share the continent and live near or among each other, the nineteenth century witnessed sustained efforts to create various types of racial

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<sup>17</sup> See Reginald Horsman *Race and Manifest Destiny: the origins of American racial anglo-saxonism* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), Daniel Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), and Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, 1991).

boundaries.<sup>18</sup> Eric Hinderaker and Richard White have noted that a hardened racial ideology, which highlighted the immutable differences between red and white, accompanied escalating efforts by Anglos to push Natives off their lands.<sup>19</sup>

Though the belief in permanent racial differences certainly gained currency in the early nineteenth century, the earlier environmental conception of race never completely faded away. It persisted among evangelicals and Quakers. While they still held a racist view that targeted Native cultures as “savage” and therefore inferior, they did not believe that Natives were biologically less capable than whites. In other words, they were cultural chauvinists and thought that Natives should adopt Protestant practices and values, but believed Indians were capable of the task. Other incarnations of this belief sprouted during this time. Abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison for instance, believed that slavery had degraded blacks and that once emancipated they would improve through participation in wage labor.

A similar rejection of immutable racial difference occurred among Indians. Native antiremovalists cast the races as basically equal, even though they acknowledged distinctions such as skin color that distinguished one race from another. Native antiremovalists often referred to “red” and “white” people, however they asserted that the races were entitled to equitable standards of treatment. For example, when Joseph McMinn was appointed U.S. Agent to the Cherokee Nation, a group of Cherokee including Pathkiller and John Ross, urged McMinn to treat the Indians as he would whites. “We hope that your acceptance to that appointment will influence you to seek the

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<sup>18</sup> See Daniel Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA, 2001). Richter develops the argument that Anglos and Natives came to see themselves as racially different in Chapter 6, which is entitled “Separate Creations.”

<sup>19</sup> See White, *The Middle Ground*, and Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*.

*true interest Welfare & happiness of the Cherokee People as a true friend & Brother-so that equal justice may be extended to the red man as well as the whiteman.*"<sup>20</sup>

As with Anglos, there was disagreement among Natives about race relations. Though Native antiremovalists advocated for equitable treatment, many Indian nativists rejected the view that Natives and whites shared more similarities than differences, and that they could peacefully coexist. Rather, they argued that the differences between whites and Natives made it impossible for Anglos and Indians to cooperate. In particular, they rallied against the idea that Indians could or should adopt Anglo cultural practices. They repeatedly asserted that white practices worked for Anglos, while Native ones suited Indians. They also justified policies, such as voluntary removal, that sought to create physical separation between Natives and Anglos by noting the immutable racial differences between Indians and whites.

The brewing controversy over Indian removal brought debates about race into the forefront. Both pro and antiremoval forces used race to validate their respective positions. Proponents of removal argued that race explained why Natives and whites could not peacefully coexist on the same lands. They rejected Jeffersonian assimilation and the idea that Natives could be incorporated into American society. Because Indians and whites were so different, Natives would never be capable of living within a "civilized" society. Attempts to integrate Natives into American society would result in violent conflict. Antiremovalists, on the other hand, supported a strategy based on cultural adaptation. Native and Anglo antiremovalists shared the belief that racial differences between

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<sup>20</sup> Pathkiller, John Ross, and twenty two other Cherokee to Joseph McMinn, April 26, 1823 in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 47-8.

Indians and whites were cultural and mutable, rather than biological and permanent. Antiremovalists hoped culture would link Indian communities to the United States. Anglos saw this move as a preliminary step on the way to outright assimilation of Indians into American civilization, while Natives viewed it as a path to political and social power.

These ideas about race developed within the context of a political history centered on land conflict. From the founding of the nation to the antebellum period, the United States pursued a variety of policies designed to transfer land from Natives to whites. At the end of the Revolutionary War, the national government attempted to acquire land through treaties, or through declarations that Indians were “conquered peoples” subject to the will of the United States. Many of the War’s Native combatants were simply left out of the negotiations surrounding the Treaty of Paris. When informed of their status, however, they refused to submit to American authority. In response, the new United States turned to force. In the 1790s, the national government sent military expeditions to subdue Indians living on the western frontier. However, the Indians were not subdued, and remained on lands that farmers desperately wanted.<sup>21</sup>

Though Natives held still held much land, many Anglos believed this would change in the near future. Indian would cede large tracts of land to the United States,

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<sup>21</sup> For an overview of federal Indian policy during the post Revolutionary War period, see David Andrew Nichols, *Red Gentlemen & White Savages: Indians, Federalists, and the Search for Order on the American Frontier* (Charlottesville, VA, 2009). See the same work for the failed American military expeditions of the 1790s. Barbara Alice Mann has also recently argued that President Washington sought Native lands immediately following the close of the Revolution. See Barbara Alice Mann, *George Washington’s War on Native America* (Lincoln, NE, 2009). For the defeat of General Josiah Harmar see p. 116-118. For an overview of U.S.-Indian war in the 1790s, see Chapter 6, “War and Appeasement, 1790-1793,” p. 128-159. On the absence of a Native presence at the Treaty of Paris, see Colin G. Calloway, *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History, third edition* (Bedford/St. Martin’s, Boston, MA, 2008), p. 179. On the declaration of Natives as conquered people see *First Peoples* p. 221.

paving the way for white farmers to “improve” them through cultivation. Presidents Washington and Jefferson both believed that Indians possessed “excess” or “surplus” lands that they did not need or fully exploit. They also believed that if the Indians were to adopt Anglo-American agriculture, they could support themselves on far fewer acres. When he took office, President Jefferson clarified the Indian policy begun under Washington. He pursued a course of “benevolent assimilation,” according to which Indians would become yeomen farmers, who would eventually merge into American society. As Indians adopted semi-subsistence family farming, they would free up land for Anglo yeomen, create peaceful relations between Natives and whites, and bring Indian lands into what Anglos considered productive use.<sup>22</sup>

The development of a Native yeomanry would be accompanied by government efforts to acquire “surplus” Indians lands. From Washington to Jackson, United States presidents, along with the Congress, envisioned the treaty as the main instrument to obtain these lands. In a change from what had been expressed at the end of the Revolution, United States presidents of the early nineteenth century argued that Native nations were sovereign powers. As such, they held the legal authority to enter into treaties. By defining Native nations as sovereign entities imbued with many of the powers and authority the term denoted, Anglos created a legal mechanism for the appropriation of Native lands. The huge land cessions that the United States squeezed from many

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<sup>22</sup> Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1973). See Chapter V “Incorporation,” p. 119-147.

Native peoples assumed the character of a legal contract that was entered into through mutual consent. The end result was Native land loss.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, up and down the western frontier land hungry settlers put pressure on Natives. They shared the government's desire to alienate land; however, they were less concerned with Indian assimilation into American civilization. Indeed, many favored removal as the only solution to the "Indian problem." For some, life on the frontier had lead to Indian hatred as a history of violent land disputes had left many believing that Anglos and Indians could not peacefully coexist.<sup>24</sup>

Despite their differences over the proper place of Indians in American civilization, the United States government and frontier settlers formed a two pronged attack on Native lands. Settlers would squat on lands and then simply wait and see if the national government would forcibly remove them. More often than not, the government would be too weak or simply too unwilling to do so. As Eric Hinderaker has explained, settlers argued that it was the government's duty to protect settler "liberty" by ensuring they had access to resources that would help them become or remain economically solvent. As free men, settlers argued that they were entitled to improve Indian lands, and that the government's role was to aid them in these endeavors.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, settler efforts

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<sup>23</sup> For the use of treaties to acquire land see Herman J. Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney: Architect of America's Early Indian Policy: 1816-1830* (Sage Books, Chicago, IL, 1974), p. 116-7. For the U.S. attempt to secure legal framework for land acquisition, see Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land: law and power on the Frontier* (Harvard, 2005), especially chapter 3 "From Contract to Treaty."

<sup>24</sup> See Erik Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires, Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (Cambridge, UK, 1997), introduction, and David Andrew Nichols, *Red Gentlemen & White Savages: Indians, Federalists, and the Search for Order on the American Frontier* (Charlottesville, VA, 2009), introduction.

<sup>25</sup> Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (Cambridge, UK, 1997), p. xiv.

to seize land, often worked in concert with those of the United States. As settlers squatted, the United States relentlessly sought land cession treaties.

Many Natives acquiesced to the pressure for land and alienated their holdings. Often, they sold land to the United States, hoping that by so doing they would prevent further demands. Sometimes chiefs or headmen sold land without getting the consent of tribal members or authorities. On other occasions, Natives sold because they had fallen into debt to Anglo traders. Indians also parted with land simply because they could not keep squatters off of it. They consequently viewed the sale of lands already occupied by whites as a sort of Pyrrhic victory. They would acquire money, goods, and guarantees that remaining Native lands would remain in their hands.<sup>26</sup>

Natives pursued a variety of other means to contend with pressure from settlers and the government. Many saw voluntary removal as the best, or perhaps the only option available to them. For example, many Iroquois groups moved instead of attempting to share land with Anglos. A group of Mohawks emigrated northward to Canada, while many Oneida left their lands in Western New York and headed to Wisconsin.<sup>27</sup> Southern Indians adopted a similar course of action. A contingent of Cherokee decided to emigrate to the Arkansas valley in 1810. As Kathleen Duval has explained, they did so in order to preserve their sovereignty and way of life. The migrating Cherokee set up a “native

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<sup>26</sup> See Reginald Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812* (Norman, OK, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> See Laurence Hauptman, *The Oneida Journey: from New York to Wisconsin, 1784-1860* (Madison, WI, 1999).



ground” in the Arkansas valley. They warred on and ultimately defeated the indigenous Osage, which allowed them to pursue a mixed hunting and horticultural economy.<sup>28</sup>

Natives also used various forms of accommodation to deal with American demands for land. As Claudio Saunt has explained, a powerful faction of the Creek Nation transformed their society by enforcing new understandings of property in the hope of protecting both individual and tribal land. Others, such as the Cherokee, formed alliances with the United States against other Indians. The important Cherokee leader, Major Ridge, acquired his English name through his participation in Andrew Jackson’s military campaign against the Creeks in 1814. Driving these alliances was the belief that they would provide leverage in the struggle to protect Native lands.

Finally, many Natives attempted to define and enforce the physical borders between themselves and the United States. They staked claim to distinct geographic areas, and then attempted to persuade Americans to recognize Native sovereignty within those areas. The Mohawks under the leadership of Joseph Brant pursued this policy during the early Republic. Brant hoped to maintain Mohawk sovereignty and land holdings by delineating the geographic boundaries between the Mohawk nation and the state of New York.<sup>29</sup> The Shawnee leader Tecumseh pursued a similar strategy by trying to define the Shawnee and the Americans as distinct groups who interacted with each other as equals. According to Richard White, Tecumseh attempted to resurrect the “middle ground” in his efforts to protect Indian lands in the Ohio Valley. In the early nineteenth century, Tecumseh cast Native relations with the United States as a

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<sup>28</sup> See Kathleen Duval, *The Native Ground: Indians and colonists in the heart of the continent* (Philadelphia, PA, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> See Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, settlers, and the northern borderland of the American Revolution* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY, 2006).

relationship between two sovereign powers. He hoped to compel the United States to use its power as a sovereign to protect Natives from increasing numbers of squatters.<sup>30</sup>

Ultimately, these strategies did not prevent conflict, and Native-Anglo contests erupted into violence. Despite Indian efforts to negotiate American demands, Americans relentlessly pushed for more land. Squatting was a persistent source of conflict while private land companies, state governments, and the United States government continued to seek additional land cessions. These tensions came to a head during the War of 1812. Many Creeks, for instance, parted from the accommodationist policies of their leaders and followed those who advocated armed conflict. The so-called Red Sticks offered a furious resistance to American encroachment on Native lands through their prolonged fight against the U.S. army in Alabama and Georgia. Similarly, in the Ohio valley, Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa led several northern tribes in military resistance against settlers and American soldiers during the War.<sup>31</sup>

The War of 1812 proved central to Native-Anglo relations because its outcome demonstrated that Indians in the trans-Appalachian west could no longer rely on military power to contend with American expansion. By the War's end, Indians from North to South had experienced military defeat. Tecumseh fled to Canada and his followers were dispersed. In the South, Andrew Jackson defeated the Red Sticks, and additional land cessions followed in the wake of Native surrenders. The Treaty of Fort Jackson in 1814 moved a huge swath of Creek land to the United States, and compelled the cession of

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<sup>30</sup> See Richard White *The Middle Ground: Indians, empires, and republics in the Great Lakes region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, 1991).

<sup>31</sup> See Gregory Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: the North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore, 1992), R. David Edmunds, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership* (Boston, 1984).

some Cherokee land despite the fact that the Cherokee had been instrumental in helping Jackson defeat the Red Sticks. For many Natives, experiences during the War of 1812 demonstrated two troubling realities; the United States military had grown more powerful, and white settlers on the western borders of the United States had grown more numerous and more voracious in their appetite for land.

### **Cultural Change, Power, and Antiremoval**

After the War of 1812, the United States increased pressure on Natives to cede more lands, or to remove to the West. While the United States was successful in acquiring more land, officials failed to convince most Indians to remove. For instance, Joseph McMinn, the former governor of Tennessee who was appointed Agent for Removal of the Cherokee, met with some success as the Cherokee signed cession treaties in 1817, 1818, and 1819. However, McMinn's efforts did not realize the goal of removal. The Choctaw also signed land cession treaties in the post war years. The 1820 Treaty of Doak's Stand ceded a substantial area of land to the United States. However, like the Cherokee, the Choctaw did not agree to wholesale removal to the West. In the North the Iroquois tribes faced continual pressure to migrate westward. Land speculators, the state of New York, and Secretary of State John C. Calhoun all worked towards removal, yet many Iroquois remained on their ancestral homelands.<sup>32</sup>

By the late 1810s Natives were fearing for the economic and social integrity of their communities. Even leaders who had previously been willing to sell had, by the middle of the decade, decided against any further cessions. For example, in 1816, a

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<sup>32</sup> Laurence Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests: Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State* (Syracuse, NY, 2001).

Cherokee Deputation wrote to George Graham, the American land commissioner stating “We candidly & frankly say to you that we the Deputation cannot make a cession of the lands to your Government.”<sup>33</sup> Similar language was used repeatedly in the early 1820s. Charles Hicks, the influential Cherokee leader, spoke in clear terms to Governor Clark of Georgia when he observed, “I wish you Sir to understand definitely that we are unwilling to sell one more foot of our much circumscribed country.”<sup>34</sup>

Unwilling to cede more lands and unable to use military force to keep them, some Indians employed another strategy to protect their country. They believed that acceptance of Christianity, formal education, the use of English, and family farming would provide rights and power that they could wield in defense of their interests. The Seneca James Robinson explained that he and others “were afraid to oppose the views of the President & have nothing to do with improvements because they believed their situation would be very critical & dangerous if they should do so: for to the President they looked for safety, respecting the holding of their lands”<sup>35</sup> By “improvements” Robinson was referring to Christianization, education, and farming. During the 1810s and 1820s, many Indians came to the same conclusion, namely; that adaptation to new cultural demands provided the best chance to remain on ancestral lands. As Robinson’s words show, many Indians assumed that selective adoption of American culture would lead powerful whites, such as the President, other politicians, religious group, and missionaries, to come to the Indians’ aid. In one typical instance, the Seneca, in requesting a political favor, reminded the

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<sup>33</sup> John Lowry, John Walker, The Ridge, Richard Taylor, Cheucunsenee, and John Ross to George Graham, March 4, 1816, in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, vol. 1, p 25.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Hicks to John Clark, January 29, 1822, ABCFM 18.3.1 v.3, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Records, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

<sup>35</sup> JE to PYMIC, September 16, 1821, AA 41 Box 2, Folder 3, #128, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

Quakers that they had promised assistance if the Indians embraced acculturation.

“Brothers” wrote the Seneca, “... you have often told us if we would live soberly, be industrious and learn the good ways of the white people, it would be a lasting benefit to our Nation, and also encourage you in assisting us.”<sup>36</sup>

In addition to compelling whites to come to their aid, many Natives thought that the adoption of American practices would yield or secure rights. In particular, they hoped to gain protection of land rights. For example, the Cherokee repeatedly tried to persuade the President to secure their lands by citing progress in “civilization.” In 1824, Cherokee leaders wrote to President Monroe and asked him to intercede on their behalf regarding land disputes with the state of Georgia. Their request began with a status report on their cultural acquisitions. “Your magnanimous and benevolent exertions have not been in vain, as respects the Cherokees; education, agriculture, manufacture, and the mechanic arts have been introduced among them, and are now progressing.” They followed this account of their “progress” with a request for the President to protect their land rights:

The Cherokee Nation have now come to a decisive and unalterable conclusion not to cede away any more lands...therefore it is an incumbent duty on the nation to preserve unimpaired the *rights* (my emphasis) of posterity to the lands of their Ancestors.... Father. We would now beg your interposition with Congress in behalf of your red children the Cherokees, so that provision may be made by Law to authorize an adjustment between the United States and the State of Georgia, so that the former may be released from the existing compact [of 1802].<sup>37</sup>

From the Cherokee perspective, adoption of American culture had entitled them to claim the President’s aid, and to call on him to guard their land rights.

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<sup>36</sup> Seneca Deputation to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, Dec 12, 1819, AA41 Box 1, #83, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>37</sup> John Ross, George Lowrey, Major Ridge, Elijah Hicks to President James Monroe, January 19, 1824, in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, vol. 1, p. 59-61.

One reason Indians made direct and explicit connections between cultural adaption and rights was because many Anglos drew the same link. As their documents reveal, some Quakers saw Indian cultural change as the most powerful way for Natives to secure their rights. In 1819, the Indian Committee of the New York Yearly Meeting reported “It was concluded that it would be proper to recommend the committee to memorialize our legislature to adopt some general and liberal plan, that would effectually secure the protection of those rights to which they [the Indians] are justly entitled, and to instruct them in school learning, the useful arts and agriculture.”<sup>38</sup> Indians were well aware that Anglos made these connections. Indeed, while in Council with the Quaker missionary, Joseph Elkinton in 1821, the Seneca explained that they had decided to continue with the schooling of their children because the U.S. Indian Agent had told them that to do so would help protect their lands. “We enquired of our Agent what we were to do in our present trying situation & he after some pause recommended us to use our endeavours to progress in improvements & have our children educated.”<sup>39</sup> In sum, the hope and promise that adoption of American culture would bring power and rights was enormously influential in persuading Natives to alter some of their cultural practices, and cooperate with Anglo acculturation schemes. The Seneca made these connections explicit when they informed their “Brother Quakers” that “we persevere in having our children instructed under your care & we wish you to know that we are determined to remain upon

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<sup>38</sup> New York Yearly Meeting Indian Committee to the New York Yearly Meeting, Jan 1, 1819, AA41 Box 3 #56, Letters of NYMIC, PYMIC Correspondence, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>39</sup> JE to PYMIC, July 6, 1821, paraphrase of Blue Eyes, James Robinson, Long John, John Peirce, George Silverheels to Joseph Elkinton, AA 41 Box 2, Folder 3, #127, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

our present possessions at Allegany & not remove therefrom.”<sup>40</sup> This strategy of linking cultural change to rights and the prevention of removal did not stand on its own. Rather, Natives also developed and articulated a host of antiremoval arguments.

One oft-repeated idea was that removal would disrupt the progress Indians had made in “civilized life.” The Cherokee often met demands for land cessions by explaining that further alienations of land would impede their “progress.” In one case they responded to a demand for land by stating that they were “proud to acknowledge that their people are improving fast in agricultural pursuits” and that “[t]hey think it would be impolitic in the Nation to bind themselves in a smaller compass of country than they now occupy.”<sup>41</sup> Less land would imperil Cherokee adoption of “civilized life” by making it harder for families to farm. The Seneca offered the same basic argument. In 1818, a Seneca Council “talk” addressed to the President argued “Father, We have confidence in you; you cannot see your red children with their little bones driven off of their land...leaving the sepulchers of their fathers, their farms, their farming tools and cattle, dying by families on the road through hardship and privation. Exchanging all their advances in civilization, and all its comforts, for the hardship of the chases, without house or friend.”<sup>42</sup> Their words painted a picture of civilized Seneca being driven from their homesteads into the wilderness to exist by the precarious hunt.

Natives also claimed that cultural adaptation was far more humane than removal. For example, John Ross, writing to fellow Cherokee David Brown, averred that

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<sup>40</sup> Blue Eyes, James Robinson, Long John, John Peirce to PYMIC, March 13, 1825, AA41 Box 2, Folder 3 # 159, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>41</sup> Hicks to Clark, January 29, 1822, ABCFM 18.3.1 v.3.

<sup>42</sup> “Seneca Indians No. 1” in the *New York Daily Advertiser*, Vol. II, Issue 489, November 4, 1818.

Americans' natural sympathy would certainly lead them to see cultural change as preferable to removal.

Surely there are motives and feelings daily engendering, in the minds and hearts of the citizens of the U. States, which have never been heretofore pursued, or even felt, by them towards the Aborigines of this vast continent. The small experiment made by the exertions of benevolent societies, through their faithful missionaries, has awakened the American people to a sense of what might be done to better the condition of the Indian race....I cannot believe that the united States Government will still continue to pursue the luke-warm system of policy, in her relations with the Indians...to effect the purpose of removing nation after nation from the lands of their fathers...<sup>43</sup>

Ross believed that Americans would not knowingly persist in a destructive Indian policy when another more benevolent option was available.

The Cherokee suggested that settlers who illegally occupied lands bred social vice that would derail the Indians' moral growth. In a letter to John Calhoun they explained "Our lands on the frontier are thickly settled by Intruders....those intruders are generally of the lowest grade in society; such as introduces all varieties of vices into our country....We cannot but believe it would mortify the feelings of our Father & Brother to see our children sinking into those bad practices and laying aside the excellent qualities which they are receiving from a moral & religious education."<sup>44</sup> In this case, the Cherokee cleverly played on social tensions present among white Americans. They used the desire of religious reformers, who sought to reduce social vices like drinking and a lack of adherence to religious moral principles, to protect their lands. They hoped that by painting squatters as irreligious and unethical, reformers would make efforts to have them removed so that immoral practices would not contaminate Native communities.

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<sup>43</sup> John Ross to David Brown, July 13, 1822 , in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross, vol. 1*, p. 42-3.

<sup>44</sup> John Ross and sixty two other Cherokee to John Calhoun, October 24, 1822 in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross, vol. 1*, p. 44-5.



Natives also characterized removal as an unjust policy. Indeed, they already had a history of painting land conflicts as matters of justice, rather than simple economic disputes. In 1816, when the Cherokee protested an attempt by the U.S. government to use the 1814 Fort Jackson Treaty to acquire a tract of land, they explained “We can only observe, that we confide in the justice of the Government, and hope such justice as our nation are entitled to, will not be withheld from us, by the Government.”<sup>45</sup> A few days later the authors of the previous missive explained that the government’s attempt to acquire their lands was not “agreeable to justice,” and that it contravened the Cherokees’ “legal right.”<sup>46</sup> When in the early 1820s, the state of Georgia began to push for the fulfillment of the Compact of 1802,<sup>47</sup> the Cherokee resisted by asking “Will the [United States] trample justice under foot, and compel us to yield what we have peaceably and respectfully refused to let the United States have, for the benefit of the State of Georgia?”<sup>48</sup> In 1824 the Cherokee again explained that “we have no hesitation in saying, that the true interest, prosperity and happiness of our nation demands their permanency where they are, . . . we cannot see in the spirit of liberality, honor, magnanimity, equity & justice, how they can be exposed to the discontent of Georgia or the pressure of her citizens.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> John Lowry, John Walker, The Ridge, Richard Taylor, John Ross, and Cheucunsenee to George Graham, March 4, 1816, in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 25.

<sup>46</sup> John Lowry, Jon Walker, The Ridge, Richard Taylor, John Ross, and Cheucunsenee to William Crawford, March 12, 1816, in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 26-7.

<sup>47</sup> The Compact of 1802 was an agreement between the United States and Georgia in which Georgia gave up claims to its western lands in return for a promise that the United States would remove Indians living within Georgia’s state boundaries as soon as such a measure could be reasonably accomplished.

<sup>48</sup> Path Killer, Major Ridge, John Ross, and A. McCoy to Duncan G. Campbell and James Meriwether, October 27, 1823, in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 55.

<sup>49</sup> John Ross, George Lowrey, Major Ridge, and Elijah Hicks to John C. Calhoun, February 11, 1824, in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 66.

The Cherokee also pointed out that removal would bring untold suffering to the Indians. In 1817, the missionary Cyrus Kingsbury reported that many Cherokee women were worried about the consequences for their children if the Nation opted for removal. He wrote that “the women in these parts are about to draw up a memorial to the National Council against an exchange of country. This is done in cognizance of the hardships & suffering to which it is apprehended the woman (sic) & children will be exposed by a removal.”<sup>50</sup> They also argued that removal would not solve land disputes between Natives and whites. “We have ever been opposed to Emigration to the west of the Mississippi knowing that we could not get out of the way of the white people by going there”<sup>51</sup> wrote the Cherokee. By the 1820s the Cherokee also claimed that if they went west, only violence and suffering would await them. They claimed that the experiences of the Old Settler Cherokee, a group of about one thousand Cherokee who in 1809 had emigrated to the Arkansas Territory, proved the point. John Ross wrote

encroachments on the hunting grounds of other Tribes has been attended with the unhappy consequences of quarrels, wars, and bloodshed. Has not this been the result of the removal of our own nation to the Arkansas? Yes! The uplifted tomahawk is now wielding, and the scalping knife is unsheathed, between the Arkansas, Cherokees and the Osages, for the horrid destruction of each other. Let the American people look to the prominent causes which have led to these unhappy consequences, and they will not fail to see it in the system of policy pursued by their government towards those wretched and oppressed people, in removing them from the lands of their inheritance...<sup>52</sup>

By arguing that removal would result in endemic warfare, Ross was playing on Americans’ sense of ethics. He believed that if he could persuade Americans that removal

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<sup>50</sup> Brainerd Mission Journal, entry by Cyrus Kingsbury, February 13, 1817 in Joyce B. Phillips and Paul Gary Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal: A Mission to the Cherokee 1817-1823* (Lincoln, 1998), p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Path Killer, Charles Hicks, and John Ross to James Monroe, November 2, 1819 in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 39.

<sup>52</sup> John Ross to David Brown, July 13, 1822, in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p.43.

would end with violence, then he could undercut a central pillar of the pro-removal argument. Proponents of removal repeatedly asserted that emigration was ethical because it would quell perennial Native-Anglo violence by putting an end to land conflicts.

Finally the Cherokee argued that the United States had a fiduciary duty to abide by its treaty obligations, and to recognize Cherokee title to their lands. Removal, they claimed, was an abrogation of the United States' legal obligations. As they wrote to Secretary Calhoun, "Confiding in the good faith of the United States to respect their treaty stipulations, with the Cherokee Nation, we have no hesitation in saying, that the true interest, prosperity and happiness of our nation demands their permanency where they are, and to retain their present title to their lands."<sup>53</sup>

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, Northern Indians, like their southern counterparts, also formulated arguments against removal. The Seneca asserted that they had a divine right to their lands. "We declare to you...that it is our fixed and determined purpose to live and die on our present seats [land]...It is the heritage of the Almighty. He gave it us." By invoking the Christian God, the Seneca were appealing to a white audience. The infusion of Christianity into their plea was designed to persuade Anglos to support the Indians' position. Just as God had given Israel to the Jews, the Seneca hoped to convince whites that he had also given the Seneca their lands. If whites were to remove the Indians, it would be a subversion of God's will. The Seneca also pointed out that their land and culture were inextricably tied together. "It is sealed to us by the bones of our fathers.," they observed in 1818. "They obtain it by their blood-our bones shall lies

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<sup>53</sup> John Ross, George Lowrey, Major Ridge, and Elijah Hicks to John C. Calhoun, February 11, 1824, in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 66.

besides theirs.” Finally, the Seneca asserted that the move west would bring conflict with other Natives. “Where father would our white brothers have us go? The Indian claim to land is put out for more than a thousand miles to the west.”<sup>54</sup>

The Seneca did not present as detailed a case against removal as the Cherokee because their response was complicated by political division within their own ranks. One group of Seneca, who called themselves the “Pagan Party,” wished to preserve Seneca culture as much as possible. Its members were far less willing than the rival “Christian Party” to compromise with Quakers and missionaries on matters relating to farming and religion. When in 1821 the Philadelphia Quakers proposed a new school at Tunessasah, chiefs from the Pagan Party felt so strongly against any institution designed to create cultural change that they offered voluntary removal as an alternative. They explained that Seneca residing on the Allegheny reservation should move to the Buffalo or Tonawanda reservations in lieu of building a new school. As the Quaker Joseph Elkinton explained in 1821, “those of the nation in favour of former customs intend using their endeavours to have all those of their people removed to another reservation who will not unite with them in discarding schools.”<sup>55</sup> The Seneca’s internal political disputes, however, did not stop the Christian Party from pursuing an alliance with Quaker missionaries. When the Seneca in 1838 were faced with the possibility of forced removal from the Buffalo Creek Reservation, they would build upon antiremoval arguments that had roots in the history of cooperative Seneca-Quaker efforts to create cultural change.

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<sup>54</sup> “Seneca Indians No. 1” in *the New York Daily Advertiser*, Vol. II, Issue 489, November 4, 1818, available online through the Archive of Americana published by Readex, America’s Historical Newspapers, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

<sup>55</sup> Joseph Elkinton to Thomas Wistar, Aug 20, 1821, AA41 Box 2, Folder 3 #126, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

Through the 1820s, Natives in both the northern and southern sections of the United States characterized cultural adaptation as a better, more humane, policy than removal, and developed carefully crafted arguments against the policy. From the end of the War of 1812 through the late 1820s, Natives placed their hopes of remaining on their lands in a strategy that replaced coerced dispossession with selective adoption of American culture, and alliance with religious groups whose interests lay in converting Indians, rather than removing them to the West.

Though Indians made up the majority of those opposed to removal, a small minority of whites, comprised mostly of Protestant missionaries and Quakers, began to grow uneasy during the early and mid-1820s with forced dispossession. Unlike Natives who feared the social, cultural, spiritual, and economic dislocation associated with removal, Anglo antiremovalists were most concerned about the impact of removal on the related processes of Christianization and acculturation. They were concerned, more specifically, that removal, or even continued land loss, would create a large population of dislocated Natives who would be overwhelmed by the struggle to survive. If survival consumed Native energy there would be little room left for religious development.

Missionary Cephas Washburn's articulated these concerns as he expressed apprehension about a 1827 removal treaty between the western Cherokee and the United States. In a letter to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the organization that supported him, Washburn presented his reasons for opposing the treaty. "The plan appears chimerical and unwise," he wrote. Washburn's first worry was that the land could not support the Cherokee because the "water is insufficient in quantity" and because the country could "never be settled" due to its poor quality. The Indians would

face “poverty” and “starvation unto death” in the West. He also made the point that emigrating Natives would conflict with those already living in the west as the “original Indian title is not extinguished,” by which he meant that the United States government had not yet purchased the land from its original inhabitants. Neither had those inhabitants vacated the land. Washburn also asserted that the Indians could not be convinced to remove voluntarily and he feared that even if the Indians were to move, white settlers would eventually agitate for the Indians’ western lands. As he put it “[a] numerous class of whites depend wholly for a subsistence upon the lands...& if the Indians were removed to the shores of the Pacific, these would follow them.” Finally, and most importantly, Washburn believed that removal would have detrimental effects on conversion and acculturation. “[S]urely,” he wrote, “it must be vain to hope they will be able to accomplish anything when the Indians shall be removed into the wilderness.” He added that “it may be confidently predicted that the removal would at once undo all that has been begun towards their civilization.” From Washburn’s point of view, removal would do nothing but create a litany of challenges that would quickly eradicate the advances the Cherokee had made in adopting the secular and spiritual components of “civilized life.” He therefore concluded his letter by stating “my heart sickens when I think of this subject.”<sup>56</sup>

Like Washburn, the Philadelphia Quakers worried about the effects of land loss on Natives. They feared that if the Seneca were either removed or continued to lose land to white settlers, that they too would be unable to survive. As the white population

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<sup>56</sup> Cephas Washburn to Jeremiah Evarts, May 28, 1828, ABCFM 18.3.1 v. 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

became more numerous on the borders of the Seneca reservations, the Quakers became increasingly anxious to speed up the process of cultural change. In particular, they wanted the Seneca to become economically viable and self-reliant as quickly as possible.

In a speech to the Seneca council Joseph Elkinton exclaimed

Brothers, you are few in number surrounded by many white people and it is probable you will become more closely so. How do you expect to get your living in years to come? Do you calculate to continue where you now are? . . . . If you calculate to continue where you now are, is it not high time that you looked around you and endeavored to understand how you are getting along? You have enlarged your fields some, you have better houses, and some of you have better barns, but brothers we think you are yet very deficient in these things; you might generally have better houses, you might have more barns, and you might have larger fields.<sup>57</sup>

Elkinton's call for redoubled acculturation efforts were not motivated solely by his desire to see the Indians remain on their land. Like other missionaries, he believed that cultural change would enable the Indians to survive in a world dominated by whites. For Elkinton, Indian economic solvency was vital to their eventual conversion to Christianity as only when their worldly needs were met could they concentrate on their spiritual ones.

It is important to point out that, during the early 1820s, some Anglo missionaries still saw removal as consistent with Christianization and acculturation. In fact, they saw potential benefits in the policy. For example, Cyrus Kingsbury, who in 1830 would decry Choctaw dispossession, perceived Cherokee removal in the late 1810s as advantageous. He considered removal as "rather a favorable circumstance, as it will give them longer time to become civilized, before their toes are trod upon, as they say, by the whites"

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<sup>57</sup> Journal entry on April 21, 1827, AB 39, Journal of Joseph Elkinton, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

wrote Kingsbury.<sup>58</sup> He believed by moving west, Natives would gain valuable time, which could be exploited to become “civilized” without molestation from white settlers.

For reasons that will be explicated in the following chapter, Anglo antiremovalists would not take a unified and staunch opposition to removal until 1829. However, as the removal debate intensified during the 1820s, antiremovalists argued, more fervently, for a vision of an interracial American society. Moreover, they began to lay the foundations for such a society through arguments in favor of equal capabilities between the races.

### **Anglo Antiremovalists, Racial Equality, and a Vision for Social Democracy**

While northerners and northern missionaries formed the majority of antiremovalists who wished to see Natives incorporated into American society, there was at least one prominent southerner who publicly shared important elements of their position. William Gilmore Simms. Simms was born in Charleston, South Carolina in 1806. During the mid 1820s he took four trips through the southeast and observed Native peoples. Simms claimed that contact with Indians had developed within him “an early and strong sympathy with the Red Men.”<sup>59</sup> From the mid 1820s until his death in 1870, Simms wrote a number of stories and poems about Indians, many of which revealed sympathy for Native American suffering. Though his writings were laced with a racialized perspective that cast Indians as culturally inferior to Anglos, Simms’ work is important for what it reveals about the intersections of race and antiremoval thought. More specifically, Simms’ desire to prevent dispossession led him to develop a vision in

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<sup>58</sup>Cyrus Kingsbury to Samuel Worcester, October 15, 1816, ABCFM 18.3.1 v. 3, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>59</sup>William Gilmore Simms to Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, March 18, 1851, in John Caldwell Guilds and Charles Hudson, eds., *An Early and Strong Sympathy: The Indian Writings of William Gilmore Simms* (Columbia, SC, 2003) p. 114.



which a non-white race would be incorporated into southern society, without its members remaining permanent vassals to whites.

Simms envisioned Native assimilation into American society as an alternative to dispossession. Two reasons led him to reject removal. First, he believed removal of the “five civilized tribes” of the South was an ineffective policy that would lead to suffering. He worried that in the west Native migrants would be killed by Indians already living the area. “It may be well to observe,” wrote Simms in 1828, “that in the course of a short time it is but likely we shall hear of their final extermination by the more warlike and numerous tribes of Indians already occupying that district of country.”<sup>60</sup> And even if Indians were able to establish themselves anew in the West, he feared whites would eventually desire their lands and create new conflicts. Simms’ 1825 poem “Broken Arrow” captured this concern:

Farther West? farther West? Where the buffalo roves  
And the red deer is found in the valley he loves;  
Our hearts shall be glad, in the hunt once again,  
‘Till the white man shall seek for the lands that remain.<sup>61</sup>

The second and more important reason for Simms’ discomfort with removal was his belief that Indians could be a source of labor for the South’s economy.<sup>62</sup> In particular, he thought that poor whites who could not afford to buy slaves, should hire Indians as wage

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<sup>60</sup> William Gilmore Simms, review of James Buchanan, Esq., “Sketches of the History, Manners and Customs of the North American Indians, with a Plan for Their Melioration,” in John Caldwell Guilds and Charles Hudson, eds., *An Early and Strong Sympathy: The Indian Writings of William Gilmore Simms* (Columbia, SC, 2003) Simms’s Note p. 16.

<sup>61</sup> William Gilmore Simms, “Broken Arrow,” in John Caldwell Guilds and Charles Hudson, eds., *An Early and Strong Sympathy: The Indian Writings of William Gilmore Simms* (Columbia, SC, 2003) p. 438.

<sup>62</sup> Simms was not the first to see Natives as an important labor force. Historian Alan Galloway has explained that in the early seventeenth century, whites in the American South, the West Indies, and New England bought Indian slaves in greater numbers after the price of African slaves rose sharply. See Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven, CT, 2002), p. 301.

laborers. If instituted broadly, Natives would provide the manpower needed to carve out new farms for the southern yeomanry. Simms detailed this idea in an 1828 review of James Buchanan's opus on Indian history. He wrote "our sister state of Georgia instead of ridding themselves of this people as is their evident desire ... would have been far better to have brought them more closely into contact with themselves."<sup>63</sup> He explained that "the adventurers upon this new country, like all other pioneers in the wilderness must be generally very poor. Without any assistance from the possession of negroes, an admirable and cheap substitute is presented in the class of people [Indians] they so injudiciously desire to be rid of."<sup>64</sup> Removal undercut white access to an important labor source and therefore was not the most prudent strategy with which to contend with the South's Indian nations. In lieu of removal, Simms believed white settlers should use the very people whose lands they were occupying as the labor force that would cement Anglo presence on the frontier.

Simms believed Indians would benefit from his scheme. They would receive wages, and would be afforded opportunities to observe the examples set by their white employers. By watching whites, Indians would see how to build permanent homes, to grow foodstuffs, and to sell their surplus on the market. Simms wrote that when whites "employ them...the Indians [become]...the architects who frame his log house, build his outhouses, erect his fence, fell his trees, roll and burn his timber, and clear his land." He then explained that an Indian's experience working for whites "teaches him a habit of labor" which he soon emulates. "He now builds for himself a more commodious and

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<sup>63</sup> William Gilmore Simms, "Sketches of the History, Manners, and Customs of the North American Indians," in John Caldwell Guilds and Charles Hudson, eds., *An Early and Strong Sympathy: The Indian Writings of William Gilmore Simms* (Columbia, SC, 2003) p. 17.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

more decent hut;...corn and then a ground nut patch appears.” Indians also learn to sell what they have grown. They discover “that the white man sells corn for money to the traveler, and that this money buys power, shot...He also discovers that it is not necessary that he should be always hunting.”<sup>65</sup>

Simms believed that Native imitation of Anglos would eventually prepare them for assimilation into American society. “[I]f generally incorporated among us they would by sensible and by rapid degrees adopt our rules of life, diet and language, and become in time valuable portions of our community.”<sup>66</sup> In sum, Simms envisioned a South in which whites temporarily commanded Indian labor so that Natives would gain the knowledge to merge into southern society.

Simms rejected the widely held racist view that Natives were threatening savages who were beyond redemption. Though he held to a vision of white cultural superiority, he rejected elements of common racial stereotypes. He characterized Indians as “savages” and explained that the Indian was “a rude, uninformed, and unpolished, but still, highly intellectual being.” But, Simms left room for “improvement.” If he believed the Indian was uninformed and unpolished, he also believed Indian intelligence made it possible for him to become educated, instead of ignorant, and civil instead of rude. Indians could be “improved” because they did not possess permanent racial qualities that precluded them from advancement.

Simms’ belief that Indians were capable of social and intellectual advancement is clear from the arguments he anticipated would be cast against his plan. “It may be urged

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

that this [Simms' Indian plan] is impracticable from the nature of the Indian character," wrote Simms. He countered by writing "We say again that this character is generally unknown, and where it has been treated of, is mistaken." In other words, Anglos did not fully know Native capabilities. Moreover, many beliefs that purported to explain Indian racial abilities were, according to Simms, incorrect. In fact, he asserted that Native racial characteristics actually predisposed Indians for assimilation. They were "highly imitative... and closely observant." From this, suggested Simms, "we may perceive... the feasibility of that plan which would give them employment among ourselves and by degrees, from our example convey to them our customs and pursuits."<sup>67</sup> Indians may have been lesser than whites, but they were nonetheless, assimilable.

We can better glimpse why Simms' view of Natives was exceptional if we compare it to his attitudes towards Africans. Simms believed in the inferiority of blacks, supported the South's racial hierarchy, and adhered to the racist beliefs of his time and his class. Yet, his biographer, John Caldwell Guilds has written that "Simms trained himself to judge individuals-black, red, or white...on his personal experience with them, his knowledge of their ability, performance, and character."<sup>68</sup> Guilds contends that, for Simms, non-whites who could demonstrate their talents were exceptions, and revealed that the rules of southern white racial thought were not absolute. While this may be an overly generous view of Simms, what is clear is that Simms gave more latitude to Natives than to blacks. Indians-who whites generally viewed as less degraded than blacks-had the capacity to imitate and adopt Anglo cultural practices in preparation for their eventual

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p. 16-17.

<sup>68</sup> John Caldwell Guilds, "William Gilmore Simms and the Portrayal of the American Indian," in John Caldwell Guilds and Charles Hudson, eds., *An Early and Strong Sympathy: The Indian Writings of William Gilmore Simms* (Columbia, SC, 2003) p. xii-xiv.

assimilation into American society. Though he would not have abandoned the notion that Natives were an inferior race, Simms envisioned that Natives could carve out a space in southern society without the need for whites to contain, control, and subordinate them in the same fashion as blacks.

Like Simms, northern Anglo antiremovalists espoused a racial ideology that deviated in important ways from other strains of thought. For example, they affirmed a belief in an Enlightenment inspired form of racial equality, which viewed all races as inherently capable of learning universal laws. For evangelicals, who filled the ranks of those opposed to removal, this meant that Natives had the ability to understand the message Protestants peddled. Many Christian antiremovalists believed that they were God's instruments whom he used to lead "lost" populations of Indians to eternal salvation by bringing them into the brotherhood of Christian believers. "Go among the Indians, to build up Christ's Kingdom and to instruct and save the souls of these inhabitants of the wilderness....The object of the missionary...is to save the heathen..." thundered Jeremiah Evarts.<sup>69</sup> Such a vision of Native regeneration affected through the instrumentality of Anglo missionaries was predicated on Indians' ability to learn and apply new religious knowledge. Racial ideology that cast Indians as permanently lacking the intellectual capacity to comprehend the mysteries of Christian doctrine was antithetical to the evangelical aims of many Anglo antiremovalists. To remain viable, the evangelical vision for Indian salvation required Natives to be equally capable as Anglos of religious contemplation and advancement.

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<sup>69</sup> Jeremiah Evarts to Reverend Jess Miner, Feb. 14, 1827. ABC 1.01 v. 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

In addition, evangelism led many Anglos to argue for Native spiritual equality. In much the same way that southern planters viewed their slaves, evangelicals maintained a sense of their social superiority even as they perceived Natives as possessed of the same inherent worth as others. Though whites had obtained a higher plane of social development through Christianity and “civilization,” they nonetheless believed that Indians were “men” whose souls were just as valuable to God as those of whites. The belief in spiritual equality was evident in the letters written by applicants for missionary work. For example, Isaac Fisk explained that “since the establishment of the mission among the Cherokee I have thought...I would most cheerfully spend my life to instruct those perishing and long neglected creatures, whose souls were as valuable (original emphasis) as my own.”<sup>70</sup> Prospective missionaries not only asserted the equal worth of Native and Anglo souls, but also claimed that both groups were members of the same “human family.” As Judith Chase observed “...I have been reflecting that many millions of my fellow creatures of the human family were perishing for lack of vision...”<sup>71</sup> Scholars have noted that such beliefs in spiritual equality did not mean that there was earthly equality among the races.<sup>72</sup> Despite acknowledging spiritual equality, many evangelicals certainly continued to cast themselves above Indians, blacks, and poor whites.

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<sup>70</sup> Missionary application testimonial of Isaac Fisk, January 4, 1819, ABCFM 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>71</sup> Missionary application testimonial of Judith Chase, April 21, 1818 ABCFM 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>72</sup> See Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: yeoman households, gender relations, and the political culture of the Antebellum South Carolina lowcountry* (Oxford, 1995); and Rachel Klein, *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1990), p. 269-70.

However, some Anglo antiremovalists asserted that spiritual equality between Natives and whites had ramifications on earth. More specifically, evangelical antiremovalists often asserted that Indians had equal capabilities as whites. Missionaries argued that Indians and whites displayed equal prowess with regard to academic performance. After a missionary at the Brainerd school hosted visitors from North Carolina, he recalled that the men expressed “surprise at the appearance of the children.” He observed “that the sentiment very generally prevails among the white people near the southern tribes (and perhaps with some farther to the north) that the Indian is by nature radically different from all other men, and that this difference presents an insurmountable barrier to his civilization.” The missionary countered this racial logic by asserting an environmental explanation for Indian difference. He explained that those who held such views “might be reminded that the Indians are men, and their children, education above excepted, are like the children of other men [and] considering the advantages of the children under our care, we think they are as bright and promising as any children of equal number we ever saw collected.” Indians could develop and excel intellectually when put in the right environment, and as such, were no different than white children.<sup>73</sup>

Not only did schooling reveal equal capacity for intellectual prowess, but it also showed that Anglos and Natives were capable of the same degree of social development. In 1824 the missionary William Chamberlin paid a visit to a mission school whose teacher was the Cherokee Elias Boudinot. Chamberlin was “highly gratified” with what he saw, and believed that the school was excelling just as well as any other school to be found in the United States. “The scholars,” he observed, “appeared to be under excellent

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<sup>73</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Mission Journal* June 24, 1818, p. 65-6.

discipline and are learning fast. I think there are but very few common schools in New England that appear better.” Chamberlin marveled at the transformations the school had engendered among those Cherokee involved with it. “To witness the order and docility of the children, the manly appearance of the teacher, the attentive and aprobating [sic] countenances of the parents, and then to reflect that they were all Cherokees, and but a few years ago were heathen and have been brought to their present state of improvement by means of the gospel, was truly encouraging.” For Chamberlin, “Indian” was not coterminous with “heathen” as Natives could progress beyond “heathenism” if given the chance. In the case of the Cherokee, education not only provided children with knowledge, but also imbued them with desirable traits (order, docility, manliness, and attentiveness) that denoted an impressive degree of social evolution.<sup>74</sup>

As the above examples illustrate, those who believed in Indian “improvement” thought that Natives needed the guidance of Anglos. This aid was crucial because proponents of Native acculturation believed that the more readily Indians adapted American cultural practices, the greater their ability to convert. For example, missionary Alfred Finney asserted that Indians needed to be literate so that they could read the Bible. He further explained that teachers, ministers, farmers, and mechanics should live among Indians to support their progress as they learned to live as “enlightened members” of the community.<sup>75</sup> Finney’s argument explicitly connected cultural change to religious conversion. In addition, it highlights an important assumption about American society:

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<sup>74</sup> William Chamberlin to Jeremiah Evarts, September 5, 1824, ABCFM 18.3.1 v. 4, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>75</sup> Alfred Finney to Jeremiah Evarts, July 11, 1824, ABC 18.3.1 v. 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.



Anglos and Natives were to intermix as whites disseminated those cultural practices that would reinforce Indian conversion.

The assumption that social integration would hasten Native conversion was the most powerful causal factor leading Anglo antiremovalists to develop a more democratic vision of American society. Though Anglo antiremovalists assumed an arrogant position, in which they were obligated to teach Natives to be “civilized,” they also believed that Natives eventually would occupy the same social roles as Anglos. Indians were to become Christians, farmers, students, husbands, and wives, similar to their white counterparts.

Those who shared this vision attempted to bring it to reality through a variety of means, not least of which was formal education. Through schools, missionaries and teachers provided Indians with training that would allow them to reproduce American work patterns, indoctrinate them with American gender relationships, and provide access to church. Part of the school day was devoted to teaching Natives how to farm using Anglo American practices. Students did field labor for a few hours each day, both to produce the school’s food supply, and also to allow for direct instruction in agricultural techniques.<sup>76</sup> In addition, Natives received vocational training in a variety of trades including blacksmithing, carpentry, and medicine. Missionaries at the Brainerd school recorded that one Cherokee was an “apprentice to the blacksmith” and that another had

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<sup>76</sup> This practice of using students as field laborers caused conflict between the missionaries and Natives. Many Indians felt that students were being taken advantage of and worked without remuneration. I will discuss this issue in depth in Chapter 3.

“commenced the study of medicine” and “promised to make a useful man in that profession.”<sup>77</sup>

The schools also worked to inculcate anglicized gender roles. In particular, girls were taught how to sew and cook, and instructed to become “good wives.” Missionaries and teachers believed that Indian women would assume care of husband and home. By so doing, they would contribute to family stability by raising children, and by doing household chores that would free the men to work family farms.

Finally, mission schools funneled Indians directly into church. Once they demonstrated “promise” or “interest” in religion, many Native pupils were invited to join the mission church as congregants. For example, the Cherokee Samuel Worcester “became serious” and consequently was “baptized & became a member of the Church.”<sup>78</sup> In short, missionaries designed the schools to enable Natives to assume social roles associated with Christian farming communities.

During a period when concerns about “amalgamation” and miscegenation were on the rise, it is significant that antiremovalists supported marriages between Indians and Anglos as a means to Christianization. Missionaries produced many reports that demonstrated a connection between marriage and conversion. For example, Cephas Washburn’s 1825 report on alumni of the Dwight mission school cites many cases in which intermarriage either hampered or supported conversion. A “mixed blood” Cherokee girl named Cynthia Rodgers had “made good improvement” until she married a “most worthless and abandoned white man.” As a result of her union, Rodgers led a

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<sup>77</sup> Cephas Washburn to Jeremiah Evarts February 2, 1825, ABCFM 18.3.1. v. 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

“wicked and miserable life.” In another case, the missionaries implied that an Indian-Anglo marriage had contributed to the continuing “progress” of a former student. Washburn explained that Susannah Rogers was “studious and attentive” as well as “amiable” while at school. Shortly after she left the school, she married “a white man of considerable enterprise and intelligence.” Washburn’s hope was that her white husband would continue to mold his new Indian wife into a “civilized” and pious individual.<sup>79</sup> That Washburn saw marriage as part of the process of Christianization was apparent in yet another case he reported. The “full blood” Betsey Young was unable to speak English when she entered the mission school. However, after a couple of years of instruction she had “made valuable improvements” in reading and writing, had “acquired a practical knowledge of most of the domestic arts,” and had given “evidence of piety.” Washburn’s report of Young concludes with an optimistic hope that her subsequent marriage would reinforce her “improvements.” He observed that “she was married... to a young pious man lately from the Old Nation and a member of the Pres[byterian] ch[urch] at Wills Town. The prospect now is very flattering in relation to this couple. May it not be blighted.”<sup>80</sup>

These cases reveal that marriage could be integral to successful conversion because a spouse had the power to abet or thwart a partner’s turn to Christianity. Consequently, the race of one’s spouse was less important than whether or not that spouse was supportive of conversion. In cases in which an interracial marriage would

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

support Christian conversion, the mixing of the races was not just tolerated, it was in fact encouraged.

Supporters of unions between Anglos and Indians faced considerable opposition. Marriages between Anglo women and two prominent Cherokee illustrate the point. Both John Ridge (son of Major Ridge) and Elias Boudinot married women from Connecticut. Ridge and Boudinot were students at the American Board's Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut. The school was dedicated to teaching promising Natives to live a "civilized" life, and to hastening their Christian conversion. The ultimate hope was that graduates of the school might someday work as missionaries to other Indians. The first of these unions involved John Ridge. While at Cornwall, John Ridge became ill and went to recuperate in the home of John Northrop who, as superintendent of the Foreign Mission School, took in the ailing Cherokee boy. Ridge spent two years with the family and was nursed by Sarah, John Northrup's daughter. The two fell in love. Ridge was educated and smart, had converted to Christianity, and had accepted the cultural practices of "civilized" life. Ridge may well have assumed, perhaps naively, that New Englanders would tolerate, if not entirely accept, his union with Sarah. Ridge and Northrop married in 1824, but news of their engagement was met with attacks in the local newspaper, and charges against the school. Disillusioned by this response, Ridge and his bride moved to the Cherokee Nation.<sup>81</sup>

The announcement in 1825 of the engagement between Elias Boudinot and Harriett Gold set off another storm of protest, not only in the town of Cornwall, but

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<sup>81</sup> For a short description of the Ridge-Northrop marriage see Theresa Strouth Gaul, ed., *To Marry an Indian: The marriage of Harriett Gold & Elias Boudinot in Letters, 1823-1839* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005), Introduction, pages 8-10.

within Harriet's family. Harriet explained how the "respectable young people," among whom was her brother Stephen, burned her in effigy. "Payne carried the corpses & Brother Stephen set fire to the barrel of Tar or rather the funeral pile-the flames rose high & the smoke ascended."<sup>82</sup> Other members of Harriet's family also openly opposed her marriage. Her brother-in-law, Daniel Brinsmade, declared "I have not words to express my indignation at the whole proceeding-the whole family are to be sacrificed to gratify if I may so express it the animal feeling of one-of its members-and lo!"<sup>83</sup>

While Brinsmade worried that Harriet's transgressions might bring opprobrium upon the family, others of the Gold family argued that the marriage would injure missionary work. Brother-in-law Herman Vaill counseled Harriet to "give up all present intentions, & all thoughts, of becoming united in marriage with an Indian." He explained that the union would "greatly injure the cause of Christ, both in its relation to the Mission School, & to the interests of missions from our churches to the heathen."<sup>84</sup> Because Harriet's marriage would only confirm fears that the missionaries and the Foreign Mission school were promoting interracial marriage, the Christian community would withdraw its support for missionary work. "[I]f confidence...be so withdrawn by Christians...it will naturally follow that their confidence...will be diminished as it respects other branches of missionary operations."<sup>85</sup>

Vaill's letter linked missionary work to a social vision of racial segregation, rather than integration. He explained that missions were designed not to assimilate Indians into

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<sup>82</sup> Harriett Gold to Herman and Flora Gold Vaill, 25 June 1825, in Gaul, *To Marry an Indian*, p. 84.

<sup>83</sup> Daniel Brinsmade to Herman and Flora Gold Vaill, 29 June 1825, in Gaul, *To Marry an Indian*, p. 89.

<sup>84</sup> Herman Vaill to Harriet Gold, 29 June 1825, in Gaul, *To Marry an Indian*, p. 92-3.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

American society, but rather to create separate communities of Indian believers. “The object of it [the mission] was to civilize, & to Christianize the heathen; to prepare them to become...the sober, chaste, kind husbands of wives from *among their own people* (my emphasis); & to qualify them to become the enlightened, converted, & obedient subjects of the kingdom of Christ.”<sup>86</sup>

As Susan Ryan points out, benevolence flowing from one racialized group to another implies and maintains hierarchy. The group that bestows benevolence can do so only because it occupies a superior social position. Actions that demonstrate some form of racial equality dissipate the social superiority of the benevolent group and thereby create discomfort within it. Hence, antebellum reformers strove to maintain their superiority even while they tried to improve conditions for subaltern groups. Vaill’s vision of a separate Native Christian community fits this pattern; it maintained the racial superiority of Anglos, but also supported Native conversion.<sup>87</sup>

Nonetheless, if the Ridge-Northrop and Boudinot-Gold marriages caused some like Vaill to argue for racial segregation, they caused others to clarify a vision of racial integration. Those who were most directly involved in the church’s acculturation and Christianization project were also the strongest supporters of interracial marriage and social equality. Missionary Daniel Butrick, for example, was dismayed by New England’s reaction to Boudinot’s marriage to Gold, and asserted that Boudinot had risen to an equal level of social and civil development as whites. He wrote “Half the State Rise against him?...What! against our dear brother Boudinot?...whom, by their prayers, and

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Susan Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions: Race and the antebellum culture of benevolence* (Ithaca, NY, 2003).

tears, and pains, they have brought forth into immortal glory...and raised to an equality with the polished sons of Europe? Whose learning, wisdom, virtue, & honour, deservedly place him in the first circles of civilized life?...Even the heathen world blushes, and humanity sickens at the thought.”<sup>88</sup> From Butrick’s perspective, Boudinot’s conversion and acculturation had raised him to a level of “equality” with whites. The opposition voiced to his marriage was not only an attack on the couple, but also on larger efforts to convert and “civilize” Natives.

An exchange between Major Ridge and the missionary William Chamberlin reveals that these men likewise supported intermarriage. Recalling an interview with Ridge relative to the marriages in Connecticut, Chamberlin wrote “he wanted to know if my northern friends had any grounds from scripture or any thing else to justify them in their violent opposition to intermarriages with the Cherokees. I told him I knew nothing in the Bible that would justify their violent opposition. I told him I could not answer for the northern people, for my own part I was willing that the young people of the different nations should marry where they pleased.” Chamberlin then asked Ridge about Cherokee opposition to intermarriage. “What is the reason that the Cherokee are so much opposed to having white people marry among them,” he asked. Ridge responded that it was due to ignorance on the part of the Cherokee, which caused them to be “prejudiced against white people.” However, Ridge claimed that “he had no such prejudices.” Chamberlin summed

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<sup>88</sup> Daniel Sabin Butrick to Jeremiah Evarts, March 1826 in Gaul, *To Marry an Indian*, p. 18. The emphasis is in the original.

up the exchange by concluding that “the ignorant people on both sides were opposed to intermarriages, but he was in favour of it and so was President Monroe.”<sup>89</sup>

Ridge’s question reveals an intersection between religion and interracial marriage. Missionaries and their Indian allies well understood that a scriptural injunction against intermarriage could potentially disrupt their alliance and thwart each group’s objectives. Leaders like Ridge had hoped that Indian conversion would bring them social power and rights by showing that they had become “civilized.” Ridge feared a prohibition on interracial marriage would discredit that belief thereby leading the Cherokee to abandon efforts at cultural adaptation. Missionaries worried that injunctions against intermarriage would weaken Indian motivation to convert. Prohibiting intermarriage would reveal to the Indians that Anglos would never accept them as equals. The specter of remaining a permanent inferior people would undermine both the promise of Christian brotherhood and the Indian hope that cultural change would bring them social power. Such a conclusion would lead Natives to abandon their efforts to convert.

Two letters written by Jeremiah Evarts bespoke similar fears. Evarts sent these letters to officials at the Foreign Mission School following a controversy that erupted over the Boudinot-Gold engagement. When the couple announced their plans, the directors of the Foreign Mission School publicly denounced the lovers as “criminals.” Evarts was both dismayed by the school’s actions and concerned by the town’s fervent opposition to the marriage. He wrote “I am extremely distressed to learn of the violent

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<sup>89</sup> Brainerd Mission Journal, August 24, 1825, ABCFM 18.3.1 v. 4, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.



opposition made at Cornwall to the marriage of Boudinot and Col. Gould's daughter."<sup>90</sup>

Primarily, he worried about the effects such opposition would generate on Indian evangelism. In scolding both school officials and the townspeople, he explained that their rejection of Boudinot's right to marry Harriett Gold endangered the entire Cherokee mission. "I do not know of any event which has so threatening an aspect upon the Cherokee mission ... as that this promising young man should be treated with harshness and cruelty by his Christian father and brethren of the north."<sup>91</sup> A month later he provided a clearer explanation of why opposition to Boudinot's marriage threatened Indian evangelism.

Is it not to be feared that the publication by the agents [of the Foreign Mission School] will affect the Cherokee mission injuriously? Does it not tend strongly to irritate the young men, who have been educated at Cornwall, not only in the Cherokee nation, but wherever else they live? Will it not strike their minds as equivalent to a declaration that they and their people are doomed to perpetual inferiority? And that every attempt to rise to an equality with the whites is imprudent and criminal?<sup>92</sup>

Evarts drew a clear link between Indian social mobility and evangelism. He realized that Indians, at least in large part, were motivated to convert because they believed it would obviate the inferior social status with which whites branded them. If it was shown that they would be relegated to "perpetual inferiority" their motivation to convert would be removed, and the missionaries' project to save the Indian would be doomed. Acceptance of some form racial and social equality, in this case the right to intermarry, became a vital component of the success of Native evangelism.

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<sup>90</sup> Jeremiah Evarts to Rev. Dr. Chapin, July 5, 1825, ABCFM 1.01 v. 5, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Jeremiah Evarts to Rev. Timothy Stone, August 26, 1825, ABCFM 1.01. v. 5, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

Evarts explicitly argued that race was not a valid reason to oppose intermarriage. “How does it appear to be the will of God that individuals of different tribes and nations should not intermarry: Is there anything in the Bible that asserts or implies that man and wife should be precisely of the same complexion, or members of the same clan...?”<sup>93</sup> Evarts and other Anglo antiremovalists conception of “race” hinged on cultural differences and skin color. While they often used biological terms, such as “full blood,” and “half-breed” and “complexion,” when referring to race, the terms could not be disentangled from culture. By determining if one was a “half breed,” or of mixed Native-Anglo descent, one could more readily predict the cultural practices and values of the person in question. This kind of environmental conception of race opened space for adaptation and change. Consequently, Evarts explained that God had never asserted that the races could not intermarry. Members of different races could form “connections” because each was capable of adapting to new practices. Early antiremovalists believed such an attitude represented an enlightened view of social relations. This is one reason why Evarts claimed that opposition to racial intermixing was backward and antithetical to the progress. “Can it be pretended at this age of the world that a small variance of complexion is to present an insuperable barrier to matrimonial connexions or that the different tribes of men are to be kept forever and entirely distinct?”<sup>94</sup> The trajectory of modern history, according to Evarts, was moving towards racial intermixing. Opposition to intermarriage represented an outmoded, less developed, and less enlightened world vision.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Jeremiah Evarts to Rev. Dr. Chapin, July 5, 1825, ABCFM 1.01 v. 5, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

Evarts also used the Boudinot-Gold marriage to address the question of whether or not interracial marriage was a moral practice. “If the parties have conducted honorably in this matter and a firm engagement of marriage has been entered into, I do not see how the contract can be proved to be morally wrong...”<sup>95</sup> The behavior of those entering the marriage contract, not their race, was what determined whether a marriage was moral or not. Evarts reiterated his point “How does it appear in itself immoral for a person of one tribe to marry a person of another tribe?”<sup>96</sup>

The proclamations in defense of interracial marriage, the assertions of Indian students’ intellectual capabilities, and efforts to persuade Natives to adopt American labor patterns and gender ideology all derived from an important relationship between evangelism and racial ideology. Missionaries and their supporters held as their foremost goal the successful conversion and the consequent spiritual salvation of Indians. Sincere and genuine conversion required a rational and intelligent mind that was willingly able to give itself to God. A racial ideology that cast Natives as permanently inferior and somehow deficient in these traits ran against the tide of evangelical goals. Consequently, those who supported Indian evangelism often espoused a racial ideology that characterized Indians as possessing the same inherent worth as whites. In addition, it painted them as equally capable as whites of intellectual and social development. In sum, these beliefs laid the foundation for a vision of American democracy, which incorporated, rather than dispossessed, Native Americans.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Jeremiah Evarts to Rev. Timothy Stone, August 26, 1825, ABCFM 1.01. v. 5, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

Between the close of the War of 1812 and the late 1820s, Natives and Anglos engaged in a mutual project to foster Indian cultural change and Christian conversion. Assertions that Natives possessed equal capabilities for intellectual, moral, social, and religious development laid the ideological foundations for this project. Anglo antiremovalists believed that Natives would eventually be assimilated into American society as they continued to convert to Christianity and adopt American practices. In rejecting notions of immutable racial difference, Anglo antiremovalists promoted cooperation from Natives who hoped that cultural adaptation would prevent removal by enhancing their social and political power. The evangelical interests of Anglos, coupled with the desire of Natives to stop forced dispossession, led to cooperative and ongoing efforts to alter Native cultures. Finally, the gestures toward an inchoate form of racial equality made by early antiremovalists would be expanded in 1829 as a national political debate erupted around the removal question. Beginning in 1829, Native and Anglo antiremovalists formed political alliances. In the process they extended their arguments on behalf of the Indians' natural and legal rights to land and sovereignty. They also pursued their vision of equality based on Christianity and culture.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The National Antiremoval Movement, 1829-1830**

#### **The National Mood on the Eve of the Removal Debate**

The end of the 1820s witnessed an important shift in Anglo opposition to removal. Those northern evangelicals, Quakers, and missionaries who in the earlier part of the decade had seen removal as potentially threatening, by early 1829 saw it as downright ominous. They consequently assumed a stronger, more sustained, and more organized stance against removal. Their voices joined those of Natives who had voiced antiremoval sentiment since the beginning of the century. In 1829, various Anglo and Native constituencies would form a coalition whose efforts to stop forced dispossession would coalesce into a vigorous national antiremoval movement.

The removal question became the nation's central political controversy of the late 1820s. Andrew Jackson, who had, to a considerable extent, predicated a large portion of his presidential campaign on the promise that he would enforce removal, thrust the debate more clearly onto the national scene. After Jackson assumed office, political contention over removal filled the halls of Congress, as members debated the Indian Removal bill. Simultaneous with these internal government debates, were the direct and concerted efforts by antiremovalists to persuade Congressmen to vote against the bill. Tribal leaders sent both houses of Congress detailed antiremoval petitions which explicated their reasons for opposing the bill. Northern churches likewise drafted antiremoval memorials, which were signed by congregants and other local citizens before they too were sent to Washington. Over 1400 memorials from Natives and Anglos eventually reached

Congress. The removal debate also led to a flurry of argument in the print media as antiremoval forces organized a focused campaign through published newspaper articles. Finally, the political tension over the Indian question percolated through the judicial branch, as two landmark cases, *Cherokee v. Georgia*, and *Worcester v. Georgia*, reached the Supreme Court in the early 1830s.

While Natives displayed visceral opposition to emigration because they did not want to be forced from their homes, it is not so clear why removal proved so troubling to a number of white Americans. On one level, Anglo opposition to removal derived from the same fear expressed earlier in the decade; that removal posed a serious threat to evangelical efforts among Native Americans. Religious leaders, missionaries, and common churchgoers worried that removal would deprive Indians of the means to support themselves and that it would be emotionally distressing. This combination would inevitably lead Natives to lose focus on conversion to Christianity. Removal, therefore, disrupted what many Anglos perceived as a divine directive to spread the Christian faith to those who had not yet heard “the good news.”

Anglo antiremovalists, however, were also profoundly troubled by the secular ramifications of removal. They worried particularly about removal’s impact on America’s national character. During the Jacksonian period the United States was still in the process of determining its collective identity, and antiremovalists believed that if enacted removal would define America as an avaricious and inhumane society. The policy would give official sanction to the greed of individual settlers clamoring for Indians lands, and brook a conscious decision by the nation’s political leaders to turn away from what antiremovalists saw as a paternalistic duty to protect and “improve” the

Indians. Indians would be subjected to a cruel fate in which they were simultaneously exploited and abandoned. The fear of what removal would do to the nation's character, along with the threat that it would thwart Indian evangelism, drove particular Anglos to unite with Natives in fervent opposition to removal. They argued that removal was an immoral and illegal policy.

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The American Revolution with its ideological focus on independence, freedom, and equality had created possibilities for profound social changes.<sup>97</sup> By promulgating the value of individual freedom, the war encouraged many to improve their economic and social positions through work or "industry," and through exploitation of their natural abilities. Just as America was no longer subject to the dictates of Britain, the American Revolution disseminated the radical notion that individual Americans were, theoretically at least, to be less subject to the will of social superiors and elites. No one knew exactly what profound social and cultural changes might emerge from encouraging free, equal, and independent citizens to pursue their own desires. There was great hope and promise that a new more free society might create a vastly "improved" civilization. However, many also feared that the American experiment might fail miserably. As Colin Wells has argued, many worried that America might become a hyper competitive society focused

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<sup>97</sup> See Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (Vintage Books, New York, 1993). Wood has argued that the American Revolution was an extraordinarily radical event that changed the nature of American society. Beyond a simple war for independence, the Revolution was a war on "dependency," that did much to dismantle the paternalistic social structures of the American colonies. Under paternalism, members of colonial society were "bonded" to one another through a series of fictive parent-child relationships - master and servant, master and apprentice, reverend and parishioner - that were regulated by social inequality and mutual obligation. This system created a web of stable social relations in which high ranking individuals were obligated either to give care and protection, to social subordinates who were duty bound to obey their superiors.

on individual greed and untroubled by exploitation of the weak.<sup>98</sup> The possibility that the rhetoric of the American Revolution might lead to corrosive social changes that bred greed, exploitation, and conflict led many, including the Founding Fathers, to take steps to restrict democracy and to shape social changes so as to benefit wealthy elites rather than the masses.<sup>99</sup>

On the eve of the Jacksonian Period, however, socio-political changes created deep discomfort and uncertainty. For example many churches, particularly in the North, broke into new sects as new found freedom led some to express their disagreements with older theological doctrines. The Society of Friends, or Quakers, split into the Orthodox and Hicksite branches, and soon Charles Finney's perfectionist ideas would "burn over" the state of New York as evangelicals rejected the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Changing labor patterns also created profound social change, and with it angst. In New England, many young girls left farms and the protection of their families to work as factory employees, spinning and weaving. Boys too left families for lands in the west, where they could afford to start their own farms, rather than wait on their fathers to bequeath the family farm to them. The movement of youngsters away from the protection of family created anxiety. The physical distance between families and young adult children left many parents unsure of their children's well being. Moreover, they felt less power to ensure the social, economic, and moral health of their children who could be cavorting with, or under the control of, people who were literally strangers to the family. Finally, a welter of political problems added to the social anxiety of Antebellum

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<sup>98</sup> See Colin Wells, *The Devil and Dr. Dwight: satire and theology in the early American republic* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002).

<sup>99</sup> Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: "The People," the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (Oxford, 2009).



America. There was a seemingly unending line of threats to the Union's political stability. The Hartford Convention in 1814 raised the specter of secession, the festering debate over slavery, which was only kept from boiling over by a series of political maneuvers like the Missouri Compromise, and the nullification crisis of 1830 all posed the serious possibility that the Union might dissolve. In sum, Antebellum America's environment of social and political uncertainty created a ubiquitous and deep sense of anxiety among Americans.

In response Americans used evangelical religion to distill visions of social order.

<sup>100</sup> However, northeastern perfectionist evangelism was quite different from its southern proslavery variant. Perfectionist preacher Charles Grandison Finney argued that individuals must rely on self-discipline to guide behavior. He believed that inner discipline would lead to a Godly government that would replace the authority of earthly government. Perfectionists supported social reform movements, such as temperance and antislavery, precisely because they sought to remove hindrances to self-discipline.<sup>101</sup>

Quakers adhered to another form of perfectionism. They believed in the "Inner Light," or the notion that God was present in all people. Each person could attain his or her own

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<sup>100</sup> See Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Baltimore, MD, 1980). Smith has argued that the separation of church and state and the consequent lack of moral authority distilled through the government provided the church with a unique opportunity to assume a greater role in American society. The church's role as the sole institution of moral authority, Smith has asserted, explains why Americans had a uniquely strong attachment to religion.

<sup>101</sup> See Ronald Walters, *American Reformers: 1815-1860* (Hill and Yang, New York, 1978), Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: the family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge, UK, 1981), chapter 3; Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: society and revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York, 1978), chapter 5; Paul Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Mathias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America* (New York, 1994), and Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA, 1990) chapters 8-9.

salvation by communing with God through the Inner Light present within.<sup>102</sup> Southern evangelism focused on family government as the most appropriate model for social relations. Authority figures would provide paternal care and discipline over those whom they governed. In return, social subordinates, whether children, slaves, or wives were to give obedience to the male head of the family.<sup>103</sup> This vision of social relations perpetuated an inegalitarian social order by casting inequality as beneficial to social stability. Consequently, southern evangelism reinforced racial ideologies and gender relations that sharply delineated social hierarchies. For example, threats to the southern racial hierarchy were met with mechanisms designed to strengthen the power of white men. In response to real or perceived slave rebellions, whites created “home guards” and black codes to further confine blacks within a social apparatus of Anglo control. In sum, North and South contended differently with social tensions. Northern evangelicals looked to self-discipline, and Quakers to the doctrine of the Inner Light, to contain any deviant impulses which might arise in a society that gave its members more freedom to pursue self-centered goals focused on earning wealth or improving social status. Southerners, sought to ward off any social or economic instability by reinforcing social hierarchies,

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<sup>102</sup> See Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: the Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment* (Oxford, 2009), Ryan Jordan, *Slavery and the Meetinghouse: The Quakers and the Abolitionist Dilemma, 1820-1865* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN, 2007), Introduction; Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000), p. 27 & 29; and Meredith Baldwin Weddle, *Walking in the Way of Peace: Quaker pacifism in the seventeenth century* (Oxford, 2001), p. 35.

<sup>103</sup> See Rachel Klein, *The Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1990), chapter 9; Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: yeoman households, gender relations, and the political culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York, 1995), Jewel Spangler, *Virginians Reborn: Anglican Monopoly, Evangelical Dissent, and the Rise of The Baptists in The Late Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville, VA, 2008), chapter 4; and Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), chapter 3.

and in particular, by centering the family as the central source of authority and governance.

Removal cut right to the heart of both these strategies. On one hand, it seemed to cast aside the self-discipline northern evangelicals prized as central to the promotion of a just and moral world. Removal raised the basic question of whether or not the President and the Congress would restrain themselves from using force to obtain the Indians' land. If they gave in to the temptation to take Native lands by force, then they would reject the entire notion that self-discipline was the principle defense against immoral behavior. The possibility of such a rejection upset northern evangelicals and stoked fears that removal would lead the United States down a path of moral turpitude. Quakers shared their fear. They saw removal as a violent transgression against the Indians' ability to contemplate salvation through communion with the Inner Light. Evangelicals and Quakers alike recoiled at removal's reliance on force, as they believed coercion interfered with the individual's ability to pursue salvation. On the other hand, removal's displacement of a non-white race provided the land needed to ensure the authority of southern white men, and therefore to maintain family centered systems of governance. New land provided economic opportunities for planters who desired virgin cotton lands to replace those lands in the east which had been exhausted of nutrients.<sup>104</sup> The new lands would also perpetuate the alliance between planters and yeomen by ensuring that the sons of yeoman farmers would have the land needed to start their own farms and assume the role of an "independent" master. The removal debate that would erupt in 1829, principally over

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<sup>104</sup> Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American expansion and the origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

Cherokee removal, was consequently intensified by its intersection with conflicting sectional interests.

### **The Birth, Constituency, and Strategy of the National Antiremoval Movement**

The summer of 1829 witnessed the birth of a vigorous, national antiremoval movement that galvanized sentiments that had been developing for years. The triggering event was the election of Andrew Jackson to the presidency. Jackson had campaigned on the promise that he would support removal, or at least not interfere with any state's effort to enact it. Jackson's victory in 1828 changed the political dynamics surrounding removal. Prior to Jackson, presidents generally had followed Washington's Indian policy. They had used treaties to wrest lands from Indians, but had stopped short of using force. At the same time they had continued to support Jefferson's policy of assimilation, calling upon Natives to take up farming and become assimilated into American society. This would free up "surplus" lands upon which Indians had previously hunted for sale to whites.

Jackson however broke with this policy by opening up the possibility of forced removal. In his first speech to Congress he stated that he had no choice but to turn to removal, particularly since the large southern tribes had asserted their sovereignty by establishing new governments. He explained that since the southern tribes existed within state boundaries, their exercise of sovereignty contravened that of the states. The United States could not recognize Native sovereignty because it would be tantamount to "destroying the States which it was established to protect." Jackson therefore told the Indians that "their attempt to establish an independent government would not be

countenanced by the Executive of the United States.” As an alternative he “advised them to emigrate beyond the Mississippi.”<sup>105</sup>

Jackson also saw removal as a way to empower the common man. His vision of democracy centered on shifting political and economic power from elites to a broader base of Anglo-American men. “In a country where offices are created solely for the benefit of the people no one man has any more intrinsic right to official station than another. Offices were not established to give support to particular men at the public expense” said Jackson.<sup>106</sup> From his perspective, the vast tracts of Indian held land, particularly in the South, offered a huge source of economic wealth that could be transferred to white men looking to secure independence and manhood.

Of course Jackson’s position elated white men, and particularly southern backcountrymen, who were thirsting for land. Not only was Jackson promising to transfer tens of thousands of acres from Natives to whites, but his position on removal was also an explicit affirmation of the South’s racial hierarchy. It foreclosed upon the possibility of any form of Native sovereignty or autonomy within the borders of the southern states and represented a de facto rejection of the idea that large numbers of Indians might eventually integrate into southern society. Jackson’s support for removal represented a shift in which the national government would throw its weight and support behind southern attempts to secure white economic opportunity and to entrench the racial stratification of southern society.

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<sup>105</sup> Andrew Jackson, First Annual Message to Congress, December 8, 1829, accessed through The American Presidency Project at <http://www.presidency.ucsd.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29471>

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

At the same time though, Jackson's support for removal flew in the face of the goals of northern religious reformers. Rather than encouraging the spread of religion and morality, removal did the opposite. As antiremovalists argued, removal disrupted Anglo efforts to convert Natives to Christianity. Uprooted Natives would be occupied with meeting their basic necessities; food, shelter, and security. They would not have the ability to contemplate the mysteries of Christian theology. Since the end of the Revolutionary War, religious organizations had made sustained efforts to evangelize and acculturate Indians. Removal threatened to undo all those efforts in one fell swoop.

Removal not only disrupted the evangelical efforts of northern religious reformers, but also challenged their belief that religious activism would resolve social and political tensions. Instead of Native integration into Christian brotherhood and American society, removal rested on the premises of racial separation and Anglo economic advancement. As such, removal represented the antithesis to the reformers' vision of racial equality and social democracy described in the previous chapter. Because removal discarded not only reformers' solution to the Indian problem, but also their larger vision of American society, it took on a more onerous countenance. In many ways, it seemed to represent the beginning to the unraveling of the moral foundations of American civilization. It signified a rejection of self-discipline as a means to restrain greed and self-centeredness, and it developed a precedent that the strong could exploit the weak for economic gain.

Most concretely, removal dealt devastating blows both to law and to a shared sense of social morality. In a free society, the viability of law was critical as it acted as the last and most definitive line of social protection against those individuals whose own

sense of social duty or moral value were not strong enough to keep them from antisocial or criminal behavior. Removal undercut the force and value of law by making a mockery of past treaties that had guaranteed Indian possession of their lands “forever.” From the point of view of religious activists, removal also promoted decadence in social morals by justifying Anglo exploitation of Indians. It legitimized Anglo efforts to acquire Native lands by force, and cast the consequences Indians would suffer as secondary to the economic benefits that would fall to whites. Removal assaulted two of the most basic constructs of social stability: law and duty of the constituent groups of a society to treat each other humanely.

This assault threatened to transform the United States into a different and less humane nation; one which would be guided by greed and corrupt individualism. If enacted, removal would move America from a nation that protected the weak, to one that exploited them. The United States would be transformed from a society that held the rule of law as preeminent, to one that bent or disregarded the law for opportunistic reasons. It would degenerate into a nation in which the accumulation of wealth was the paramount value.

Jackson’s election and the changes in Indian policy he articulated intensified all of these fears. In turning away from assimilation and towards removal, the United States under Jackson became an enemy, rather than a friend to Natives. And it left them defenseless against both the states and individual settlers. The eruption in 1829 of staunch antiremoval sentiment was therefore the result of two related factors connected to Jackson’s assumption of the Presidency: the abandonment of U.S. protection of the Indians, and the government’s official sanction of a cruel policy that many reformers

feared would transform America into a less humane nation. This possibility spurred them to launch a national campaign dedicated not only to the prevention of removal, but more deeply, to the protection of national morality.

The introduction of the Indian Removal Bill in Congress in fall of 1829 was the catalyst for a heated national political debate. A number of groups came together to form the foundation of the antiremoval movement. The most significant Native antiremovalists included Cherokee leaders such as Principal Chief John Ross, The Ridge, Charles Hicks, and Elias Boudinot, editor of the Cherokee Phoenix. Anglo antiremovalists were comprised mostly of northern evangelicals, protestant missionaries, and Quakers from both the Orthodox and Hicksite branches. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was instrumental in the antiremoval movement, as were members of northern evangelical congregations. The Board and evangelicals became heavily involved in antiremoval when in 1829 northern churches launched an antiremoval petition campaign, through which hundreds of petitions were sent to Congress. Important politicians from New England also embraced antiremoval. Included among these were Massachusetts Governor Edward Everett. And in Congress, the most vocal antiremovalist was Senator Theodore Freylingheusen of Vermont. Others, like Representative Bates of Massachusetts, also vigorously opposed removal on the floor of Congress.

The actual number of people who considered themselves antiremovalists is hard to determine. Tribal leaders repeatedly asserted that the vast majority of their people



opposed removal. There were approximately 60,000 Indians in the southern nations, and in the North, there were probably an additional 5000 people in the Iroquois tribes.<sup>107</sup>

It is harder to determine the number of Anglo antiremovalists. Both branches of the Quakers were opposed to forced removal, but the various Quaker Indian Committees did not necessarily speak for all of the Friends. However, judging from the amount of antiremoval memorials written and published by several Quaker Yearly Meetings, it is safe to assume that thousands of Quakers opposed the policy. For instance, the Ohio Yearly Meeting, which published an antiremoval memorial, numbered 6238 Orthodox, and 2846 Hicksite members.<sup>108</sup> Assuming most members were against removal would mean that several thousand Ohio Quakers would number among the ranks of Anglo antiremovalists. Quakers from the Philadelphia area numbered 2926 Orthodox, and 1461 Hicksite members.<sup>109</sup> Their respective Yearly Meetings also drafted antiremoval petitions. In addition to those of Ohio and Pennsylvania, yearly meetings from New England, New York, New Jersey, and Indiana, wrote antiremoval memorials. Their members would have represented thousands opposed to forced removal. Other religious sects also contributed to the groundswell of antiremovalists. Alisse Portnoy has identified over 1400 antiremoval memorials written by northern evangelicals.<sup>110</sup> These memorials were signed in the name of churches, church districts, and often entire towns. They must have spoken for thousands of individuals in total.

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<sup>107</sup> "Indian Tribes," in Robert, Smith, ed., *The Friend*, Vol vii, n. 48, September 5, 1835, p. 383, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>108</sup> These numbers are taken from *The Friend*, Vol. II, n. 34, June 6, 1829, p. 266, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>109</sup> The numbers for Philadelphia area Quakers come from *The Friend*, Vol. II, n. 18, February 14, 1829, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>110</sup> Alisse Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak: women's activism in the Indian and slave debates* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

The two people most directly responsible for the formation of the national antiremoval movement were John Ross, Principal Chief of the Cherokee, and Jeremiah Evarts, the Corresponding Secretary of the American Board. Together they devised the movement's basic strategy. First, Natives would lobby on their own against removal; second both Native and Anglo antiremovalists would attempt to win the support of Anglo Americans by revealing the immorality of removal; third antiremovalists would show that Indians had become civilized, and therefore were entitled to rights that protected them from forced removal.

This plan seems to have been based upon efforts Cherokee leaders had been following for a number of years. Throughout the 1820s, tribal leaders like John Ross, George Lowrey, Charles Hicks, and others had pinned much hope on Indian cultural adaptation, and the support of sympathetic Americans. In 1824 Cherokee leaders explained "we do thank God, sincerely, and our benevolent White Brothers...who...came into our help, with letters and the lights of civilization & Christianity....the chase is abandoned, and churches are rising, and the Great Spirit is felt in his influence upon our hearts and our gratitude and our little ones are learning to read his blessed word...our cause is with God and goodmen, and there we are willing to leave it."<sup>111</sup> By 1829, Jeremiah Evarts had appropriated their strategy. In a letter to missionary Cephas Washburn he explained that convincing Americans of Cherokee "civilization" was vital to their cause. He discussed the evils that would result from removal and then told Washburn to continue "vigorous efforts to instruct & evangelize them." Evarts then explained that

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<sup>111</sup> John Ross, Major Ridge, George Lowrey, and Elijah Hicks to Joseph Gales & William Seaton, April 20, 1824 in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 79.

“These efforts, if anything will turn the attention of the public to their case & awaken that sympathy in their behalf which will not suffer their rights to be disregarded.”<sup>112</sup> In this explicit articulation of antiremoval strategy, Evarts explained his hope that awareness of the Indians’ progress in adopting “civilized life” would move Americans to protect Native rights.

Antiremovalists disseminated their ideas through a well organized political campaign. When the Removal Bill was introduced into Congress, antiremovalists responded with a strong counteroffensive that distributed their argument through a variety of media. First, Natives wrote memorials to Congress pleading their case. Second, northern preachers excoriated removal and cited its evils. At the same time, Natives and Anglos drafted a host of antiremoval articles and published them in periodicals such as *Niles’ Weekly Register* and the *National Intelligencer*. Notable among these were a series of essays by Jeremiah Evarts, entitled “the William Penn Essays,” which appeared in the *National Intelligencer* between August and December of 1829, and which developed detailed and explicit arguments against removal. This vast literature articulated a variety of reasons why Americans should oppose removal. At the most profound level, however, antiremoval literature shared the basic premise that removal was an immoral policy.

### **Antiremoval, Morality, Law, and Native Rights**

Antiremovalists hoped that their focus on the moral issues of removal would sway public opinion to their side. “What may yet come of the multiplied declarations indicative of public feeling on this deeply affecting and momentous subject, we are not able to

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<sup>112</sup> Jeremiah Evarts to Cephas Washburn August 9, 1829. ABC 1.01 v. 8, ABCFM records, Houghton Library.

perceive, but have reason to believe that at least a powerful sensation has been produced in the minds of our rulers at Washington...” stated *The Friend* in April of 1830.<sup>113</sup> To create this “powerful sensation” antiremovalists employed a discourse designed to force people to recognize the immorality of removal. They characterized removal as an unjust and inhumane policy, and an affront to justice that would cause untold suffering. In an antiremoval memorial written to the Georgia State Senate, Robert Campbell, “a resident of Savannah,” stated “Your memorialist feels it to be his duty ...to approach your honourable body...against a measure fraught with so much impolicy, injustice, and disgrace.”<sup>114</sup> Native antiremovalists used similar language. “A crisis seems to be fast approaching when the final destiny of our nation must be sealed....The United States must soon determine the issue-we can only look with confidence to the good faith and magnanimity of the General Government,...whose obligation are solemnly pledged to give justice and protection.”<sup>115</sup> This language conveyed the clear message that if the United States government enacted removal, it would turn from its obligation to protect the Indians and violate its duty to govern justly.

Antiremovalists articulated other explicit explanations of the evils of removal. For instance, they often explained that removal would constitute an inhumane exploitation of weak and defenseless people. Jeremiah Evarts made this point in his first William Penn essay. “Most certainly an indelible stigma will be fixed upon us, if, in the plenitude of our

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<sup>113</sup> Introduction to a Memorial of the New England Yearly Meeting in Smith, ed., *The Friend*, Vol. III, n. 25, April, 3, 1830, page 200, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>114</sup> Robert Campbell, “Memorial To the Honourable the President and Members of the Senate of the State of Georgia,” in *The Friend*, Vol II, n. 34, June 6, 1829, p 265, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>115</sup> John Ross and George Lowrey Annual Message to the Cherokee Nation, October 14, 1829, in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 172.

power, and in the pride of our superiority we shall be guilty of manifest injustice to our weak and defenceless neighbors.”<sup>116</sup> Such portrayals of removal’s ramifications were twofold in their purpose. First, they were designed to cause people to react in disgust at what seemed an obvious abuse of power. But secondly, it was hoped that the rejection of forced removal would sway more people to support the “benevolent” cause of Indian evangelism. Removal was a question for the American public in which they would choose either to abuse power, or to throw support behind the cause of Indian salvation.

Native antiremovalists focused attention on the human suffering that such an abuse of power would engender. Just a month and a half before the passage of the Indian Removal Act, John Ross predicted what would happen to the Cherokee if they were to be removed. “If the U. States...should ever compel them to make a general removal... Wretchedness, dispersion and extinction must inevitably await them.” He explained that the western lands “cannot afford a sufficiency of wood & water.”<sup>117</sup> Others focused less on the physical consequences of removal, and more on its psychological ramifications. They argued that forced removal would create great emotional suffering. “To the land of which we are now in possession we are attached—it is our fathers’ gift—it contains their ashes—it is the land of our nativity, and the land of our intellectual birth,”<sup>118</sup> wrote a group of Cherokee memorialists. Uprooting the nation from their ancestral land disrupted attachments to Cherokee history and culture, and as such represented an existential threat to the entire nation. Finally, others revived the long standing argument that emigration to

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<sup>116</sup> Jeremiah Evarts, William Penn Essay I, in Francis Paul Prucha, *Cherokee Removal: The William Penn Essays and Other Writings by Jeremiah Evarts* (Nashville, TN, 1982), p. 49.

<sup>117</sup> John Ross to Jeremiah Evarts, April 6, 1830, in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 188.

<sup>118</sup> Cherokee Memorial, in Smith, ed., *The Friend*, Vol. III, n. 19, February 20, 1830, p. 152, Special Collections, Haverford College.

the west would simply result in conflict and violence between emigrant and indigenous Natives.

In addition to these descriptions of secular suffering, antiremovalists contended that removal was immoral on the grounds that it interrupted Indian evangelism and “civilization.” Coerced dispossession would put in danger any future progress Natives would make in conversion and acculturation, leading to death in both the secular and spiritual realms. According to a Cherokee memorial of 1830, the Indians “existence and future happiness are at stake—divest them of their liberty and country, and you sink them in degradation, and put a check, if not a final stop, to their present progress in the arts of civilized life, and in the knowledge of Christian religion.”<sup>119</sup> Individual Natives made the same claim. A writer from Wilstown, calling himself “A Cherokee Farmer” asserted “This posture of affairs is adverse to the progress of religion and other improvements, in the nation.”<sup>120</sup> Anglos made similar arguments about disruptions to Indian “civilization.” As the Quakers of the New England Yearly meeting put it “your memorialists cannot but anticipate, that if laws, foreign to the habits, and oppressive to the feelings of the Indians, be allowed to be extended over them, the ultimate effect must be to render their situations so uncomfortable as to drive them...again into the wilderness, and again to those habits of uncivilized life, from which they seem now to be in progress of emerging.”<sup>121</sup> A letter signed simply “Journal of Humanity” explained that Natives routinely objected to

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> A Cherokee Farmer, “Letter to the Editor of the Cherokee Phoenix,” in the *Cherokee Phoenix*, Vol. II, n. 1, March 18, 1829. Cherokee Phoenix 1828-1829, AN 151.N43 C56 Item 1, Special Collections, Northeastern Oklahoma State University.

<sup>121</sup> New England Yearly Meeting, “Memorial to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress Assembled,” in Smith, ed., *The Friend*, Vol. III, n. 25, April 3, 1830, p. 199, Special Collections, Haverford College.

removal because of its adverse effects on Indian evangelism. “Remove us from our cultivated lands and we shall again roam the desert. Separate us from the place where we have learned heavenly wisdom, and our children will live and die ignorant of the blessing of Christianity.”<sup>122</sup>

Casting removal in this light allowed antiremovalists to set the whole removal question within a larger moral environment. More specifically, they argued that the outcome of the removal question struck at the heart of the national character of the United States. Either the United States would emerge from the debate as a nation that protected the weak, or one that prosecuted them. “The great crisis is fast approaching which is to decide the fate of these poor aborigines, and which is to fix an indelible mark of honour or infamy upon the people of the United States according as we act,” explained the editors of *The Friend*.<sup>123</sup> And Jeremiah Evarts thundered that “there is a danger of our national character being most unhappily affected, before the subject shall be fairly at rest.”<sup>124</sup> Others attempted to personalize the crisis facing America. They argued that the defacing of the nation’s character would result from a multitude of individuals failing to heed the call to protect what was moral and humane. “The present crisis in the affairs of the Indian nations...demands the immediate and interested attention of all who make any claims to benevolence or humanity.”<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> “The Duties of Christians towards the Aborigines of this Country,” printed in *the Cherokee Phoenix*, Vol. II, n. 32, November 11, 1829. Cherokee Phoenix 1828-1829, AN 151.N43 C56 Item 1, Special Collections, Northeastern Oklahoma State University.

<sup>123</sup> Introductory comments on two documents reproduced from the Cherokee Phoenix, in Smith, ed., *The Friend*, Vol. III, n. 6, November 21, 1829, p. 44, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>124</sup> Jeremiah Evarts, William Penn Essay No. I in Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Cherokee Removal: The “William Penn” Essays and Other Writings by Jeremiah Evarts* (Knoxville, TN, 1981), p. 49.

<sup>125</sup> “Circular addressed to Benevolent Ladies of the United States,” printed in the *Cherokee Phoenix and Indians’ Advocate*, Vol. II, n. 39, January 6, 1830. Special Collections, Cherokee Phoenix 1828-1829, AN 151.N43 C56 Item 1, Northeastern Oklahoma State University.

In making their case for the immorality of removal, antiremovalists drew on notions of womanhood that were helping to shape the northern middle class. They argued that women had the power to create an “empire of affection” in which they would use their familiarity with “literature, refinement, charity, and religion,” to prevent the Indian “race” from being “swept from the earth.”<sup>126</sup> As Alisse Portnoy has explained, the removal debate gave women a significant opportunity to exercise their political voices.<sup>127</sup> One reason why centered on the belief that women’s attuned moral sensibilities placed them in a particularly strong position to articulate the ethical lapses of political policies.

Antiremovalists cast the net of removal’s moral consequences wider still. Evarts explained that the question went beyond America’s national character. In exultant prose, he explained that the removal question had such profound moral ramifications that they would reverberate through space and time. Calling removal “a grave question of public morality,” Evarts explained that “It should be remembered...that this controversy will ultimately be well understood by the whole civilized world. No subject, not even war, slavery, nor the nature of free institutions, will be more thoroughly canvassed. ....Any course of measures, in regards to the Indians, which is manifestly fair, and generous, and benevolent, will command the warm and decided approbation of intelligent men, not only in the present age, but in all succeeding times.” According to Evarts, the United States had the opportunity to be known and remembered for its “benevolence” if it were to decide the removal question in favor of the Indians. However, if the United States “in the blazing light of the nineteenth century, [were to] drive away these remnants of

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> See Alisse Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak*.



tribes...then the sentence of an indignant world will be uttered in thunders, which will roll and reverberate for ages after the present actors in human affairs shall have passed away.”<sup>128</sup> Accordingly, the United States was at a cross roads that would both define its place in the current world, and establish its historical legacy. It and its people had to make a choice redolent with deep moral overtones. As Evarts would later write “The great principles of morality are immutable. They bind nations, in their intercourse with each other, as well as individuals.”<sup>129</sup>

Nor was Evarts alone in his perceptions of the moral reach of the removal controversy. An antiremoval memorial from “a meeting of the citizens of New York City” explained that removal would legitimize the use of force as the guiding principle of relations between the nations. They asserted “this doctrine appears in a high degree alarming” because “it is subversive of the plainest principles of justice and if followed out in all its legitimate consequences, would make force the first and only arbiter between separate communities.” As perfectionists the memorialists found force anathema. They believed that compulsion interfered with each individual’s ability to be a free moral agent, able to decide for him or herself proper courses of actions. Consequently if one group exercised force upon another, they would be degrading the ability of a whole group of people to make decisions in accordance with their own sense of ethics. However, even more insidious consequences would follow as the entire nation would be judged by the rest of the civilized world for the great moral transgression it would perpetrate through

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<sup>128</sup> Jeremiah Evarts, William Penn Essay No. I in Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Cherokee Removal* p. 49-50.

<sup>129</sup> Jeremiah Evarts, William Penn Essay No. XXIII in Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Cherokee Removal* p. 184.

removal. The New York memorialists declared that “by the dread of incurring reproach from the wise and good, in remote countries and distant ages; and above all, by the apprehension of the Divine displeasure, which will not fail to punish a nation...by all these considerations, your memorialists intreat your honorable body to interpose and save the Cherokees from such injustice and oppression, as can hardly fail ...of bringing opprobrium and perpetual shame upon our country.”<sup>130</sup> For these New Yorkers, the moral outrage of removal would reach across space and time and even bring Divine justice upon the United States. A memorial from the citizens of Hartford, Connecticut, perceived the issue in much the same light. “We approach it as a question which imperiously demands their attention” they wrote of removal. Their seriousness derived from their belief that if removal were to be “tolerated” then they would be “exposed in common with the whole country to disgrace in the eyes of all nations; to the shame of violating solemn engagements to our fellow men and to the judgments of heaven.”<sup>131</sup>

Defining removal as a great moral problem was more than just a shrewd political strategy designed to sway Americans to mobilize against the policy. On a more profound level, it helps us explain why Anglo antiremovalists so fervently and passionately worked to stop removal. From their perspective, removal truly cut to the heart of their moral universe. The outcome of the debate would define the character of their nation, and either help or hinder their efforts to save Indian souls. Given the magnitude of the controversy,

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<sup>130</sup> “The memorial unanimously accepted by a meeting of the citizens of the City of New York, convened by public notice,” in the *Cherokee Phoenix and Indians’ Advocate*, Vol. II, n. 41, January 27, 1830. Special Collections, Cherokee Phoenix 1828-1829, AN 151.N43 C56 Item 1, Northeastern Oklahoma State University.

<sup>131</sup> “The Memorial of the citizens of the city of Hartford, in the State of Connecticut,” in the *Cherokee Phoenix and Indians’ Advocate*, Vol. II, n. 48, February 10, 1830. Special Collections, Cherokee Phoenix 1828-1829, AN 151.N43 C56 Item 1, Northeastern Oklahoma State University.

it is not surprise that they also developed a series of arguments which explained that removal was not only an affront to morality, but also a violation of the law and of Native rights.

Legal arguments marshaled by antiremovalists focused on the Cherokee, but their principles applied to most, if not all, Natives threatened with removal. The Cherokee garnered so much attention because they were highly vocal in their opposition, and because their land was extremely valuable to the southern states. One of the most frequently cited claims used in attempts to prevent Cherokee removal was that United States law recognized the Cherokee as sovereign. For example, in the second “William Penn” essay, Evarts explained “all our legislation concerning them [the Cherokee] shows, that they are regarded as a separate community from ours, having a national existence, and possessing a territory, which they are to hold in full possession, till they voluntarily surrender it.”<sup>132</sup> And John Ross claimed that “It is the received opinion of some among the ablest Jurists that the Cherokees are a sovereign nation.”<sup>133</sup>

Establishing Cherokee sovereignty was vital because a host of antiremoval arguments derived from the claim that the Indian Nations were in fact sovereign. Many antiremovalists, both Native and Anglo, asserted that Native sovereignty predated any claim of sovereignty by European powers. Neither the British nor the United States had ever been able, or in the future would be able, to justly claim sovereign powers that superseded those of the Indians. Conversely, proponents of removal had argued that Indian nations could not be sovereign because if they were recognized as such, then they

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<sup>132</sup> Jeremiah Evarts, William Penn Essay No. II in Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Cherokee Removal: The “William Penn” Essays and Other Writings by Jeremiah Evarts* (Knoxville, TN, 1981), p. 58.

<sup>133</sup> John Ross to the General Council, July 10-16, 1830, in Moulton, *The Papers of John Ross*, p. 193-4.

would constitute a sovereign power inside the territorial boundaries of the states, which would weaken both state sovereignty, as well as that of the United States.

Antiremovalists faced these arguments head on and claimed that recent history had shown that they were baseless. Anglo recognition, both in law and in practice, of Native sovereignty had not in any way attenuated the sovereignty of the individual states or the United States. They asserted, moreover, that the sudden outcries that Native sovereignty was now a threat were merely a legal smokescreen to justify dispossession.

Despite the assertions of antiremovalists, many in the South remained convinced that Native nations could not remain sovereign. Sovereign nations stood in the way of the Indian lands southern yeomen coveted. And planters saw sovereign Indian nations as a threat to slavery. They worried that slaves might run to the Indians, or that Indians and slaves might unite in a rebellion against the South's racial hierarchy.<sup>134</sup>

In addition to the argument that Native sovereignty predated that of the United States, antiremovalists declared that neither the national or state governments could infringe upon Native sovereignty. They directed this argument most squarely at state efforts to extend their laws into Native nations. Opponents of removal also argued that the preeminence of Native sovereignty meant that the attempts by the states to acquire Indian lands through dubious legal arguments about the supremacy of state powers were void. "[C]ertain claims are made by the State of Georgia, and certain other claims by the States of Alabama and Mississippi. The Indians do not admit the validity of any of these positions or claims; and if they have a perfect original title to the lands they

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<sup>134</sup> See Patrick Mingos, *Slavery In The Cherokee Nation: The Keetoowah Society And The Defining Of A People, 1855-1867* (New York, 2003).

occupy...their rights cannot be affected by...the acts of provincial legislatures, nor by the compacts of neighboring States...The state of Georgia after the Revolution, nor the United States ...have acquired any title to the soil, or any sovereignty over the [Indian] territory.”<sup>135</sup> Such recognitions of Indian, and particularly Cherokee, sovereignty were important because they allowed Natives to undercut the legality of removal by characterizing it as an illegal abrogation of Native sovereignty. As John Ross wrote “the permanent security of our territorial boundary and our right to exercise sovereign jurisdiction over the country embraced by the same have been very unjustly called in question. And are infringed upon by the State of Georgia.”<sup>136</sup>

Besides mounting antiremoval arguments derived from the legal issues surrounding sovereignty, antiremovalists also developed a host of antiremoval assertions that derived from treaty law. They claimed the United States had entered into a series of treaties which protected Cherokee lands from coerced alienation. For instance, in a memorial to the American public, the Cherokee asserted that treaties unambiguously and contractually pledged the United States to protect Native lands. According to the Cherokee, “in acknowledgment for the protection of the United States and the consideration of guaranteeing to our nation forever the security of our lands, etc, the Cherokee nation ceded by treaty a large tract of country to the United States.”<sup>137</sup> The Cherokee asserted that the duty of the United States was clear; America must protect Cherokee lands. Moreover, this duty was all the more sacrosanct as it was born from a

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<sup>135</sup> Jeremiah Evarts, William Penn Essay No. I, in Prucha, *Cherokee Removal*, p. 52.

<sup>136</sup> John Ross to George Lowrey, William Hicks, Lewis Ross, Richard Taylor, Joseph Vann, and William S. Coodey, November 27, 1829, in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 178.

<sup>137</sup> Memorial of John Ross, Richard Taylor, David Gunter, & William S. Coodey, Representatives of the Cherokee Nation of Indians in the *Cherokee Phoenix and Indians' Advocate* V. II N. 11 June 17, 1829, Special Collections, Northeastern Oklahoma State University.

legal instrument, the treaty, which was rooted in the deepest principles of American law. “Our treaties of relationship are based upon the principles of the federal constitution, and so long as peace and good faith are maintained, no power, save that of the Cherokee nation and the United States jointly, can legally change them.”<sup>138</sup>

These arguments were designed not only to undercut the legality of removal, but also to show that issue of treaty rights had broader implications for Americans’ trustworthiness and for the legitimacy of the United States government. If the United States did not live up to its treaty obligations, then no trust could be placed in its people or in its government. They would be seen as frauds who did not live up to their promises or ideals. “If the...United States shall withdraw their solemn pledges of protection, utterly disregard their plighted faith, and wrest from us our land-then,...we may justly say, there is...no confidence left in the United States,” wrote John Ross and George Lowrey.<sup>139</sup> Jeremiah Evarts also called into question what faith could be placed in Americans and American government should they disregard treaty obligations. “Are the people of the United States unwilling to give a fair, candid, and natural construction to a treaty thus made?” he asked. He put a similar question to the government. “How can it for a moment be apprehended, that the co-ordinate branches of our Government-our high, legislative, executive, and judicial functionaries, will manifest so total a disregard of every principle of public morality?”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Annual Message of John Ross to the Cherokee National Council, October 14, 1829, in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 170.

<sup>139</sup> John Ross and George Lowrey, “Annual Message to the Cherokee Nation, 1829,” October 14, 1829 in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 169-172.

<sup>140</sup> Jeremiah Evarts, “William Penn Essay VIII, in Prucha, *Cherokee Removal*, p. 94.

Ignoring treaty obligations had other troubling implications for American law. If the legal protections American law provided to Natives carried no force, then Anglos could mistreat or exploit Natives. And even more troubling, Anglos could enact laws that would immunize whites against any legal reprisals Natives might bring against them for alleged crimes. During a speech given just prior to the final vote on the Indian Removal Bill, Sen. Theodore Frelinghuysen cited a case in point. He explained that Georgia's extension law, which would not allow Natives to testify in court against whites, paved the way for violent abuses by whites against Natives because it did not allow for any legal recourse through which Indians could redress crimes committed against them by Anglos. Referring to the Indians he argued that "they were shut out of the protection of Georgia laws. For, sir, after the first day of June next, a gang of lawless white men may break into the Cherokee country, plunder their habitations, murder the mother with the children, and all in the sight of the wretched husband and father, and no law of Georgia will reach the atrocity."<sup>141</sup> Georgia's new law would create a legal environment which would permit whites to perpetrate heinous acts of crime against Indians.

Advocates of removal tried to dismiss treaty obligations by arguing that treaties were no longer in effect. Senator Hugh White and John C. Calhoun, claimed that treaties were "not now in force," or that they were "not binding upon the whites." They reasoned that subsequent wars between Natives and the United States had voided those treaties in which promises of friendship and protection of lands had been made. Prominent Anglo antiremovalists tried to poke holes in such arguments. Jeremiah Evarts, for instance,

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<sup>141</sup> Theodore Frelinghuysen, Speech to the U.S. Senate, April 9, 1830 quoted from Harry Watson, *Andrew Jackson vs. Henry Clay: Democracy and Development in Antebellum America* (Boston & New York, 1998) p. 173. Jeremiah Evarts made a similar argument in the seventh of his William Penn Essays. See William Penn essay Number VII in Prucha, *Cherokee Removal*, p. 85.

asserted that the validity of treaties had not been previously called into question, and indeed, noted that virtually all treaties ratified since the end of the eighteenth century had specifically acknowledged that earlier treaties, such as the 1794 Treaty of Hopewell, were still in force. It was not until the push for forced removal that past treaties were suddenly labeled as void. Legal precedent showed that the treaties remained legally binding.<sup>142</sup>

Such debates over treaty law were centrally important because they spoke directly to Natives' land rights. More specifically, antiremovalists claimed treaties protected and affirmed Native land title under the auspices of United States law. The Philadelphia Orthodox Quakers made such claims in an antiremoval memorial they sent to Congress. They pointed out that "to protect the Indians in the entire right, perpetual occupancy, and undisturbed possession of their lands, part of a law of the United States formerly enacted, is now by treaty stipulation forever operative." They went further and contended that treaties formed a historical precedent that established Indian land title under American law. "From the testimony of a series of treaties under the sanction of the first five presidents...your memorialists conceive that they have conclusively demonstrated that the United States of America have guaranteed in the most solemn manner to the Cherokee nation, in the first place-the entire title-undisturbed possession-and complete enjoyment of all their lands." Given this legal recognition of Cherokee title, the United States could not carry out removal without "undermining the faith of the United States pledged to the Cherokees."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> See William Penn essay Number III in Prucha, *Cherokee Removal*, p. 59-65.

<sup>143</sup> Memorial of the Philadelphia Orthodox Quakers, dated January 11, 1830. Published in Smith, ed., *The Friend*, Vol III, Jan 23, 1830 n. 15, p. 116, Special Collections, Haverford College.



Treaties established other legal rights. Most important in relation to the removal debate, was the question of who had power to alienate Native lands. Antiremovalists argued that treaties established that Indian lands could be sold or exchanged only if Indians gave their consent. John Ross explained that the Cherokee people by and large believed that treaties guaranteed this right. “The Cherokees generally are fully sensible of their acknowledged rights ...and they can never believe that that Genl. Washington and his predecessors in the execution of Treaties with them for upwards of forty years had been influenced by motives of policy to deceive them...they have resolved never to exchange this country for any other west of the Mississippi.” Claiming they had the right to decide whether or not to sell their lands, Ross argued that the Cherokee would move west only if the U.S. would “commit a breach of faith and forcibly compel them” to go.<sup>144</sup>

In addition to legal rights to their lands, antiremovalists contended that Natives possessed natural rights to their lands. Both Anglo and Native antiremovalists argued that Natives’ historical occupation on their lands gave them clear title. “It must certainly be admitted by all that the descendents of the aboriginal inhabitants of this country are entitled, by immemorial inheritance, to a home and a resting place upon the land of their fathers, that *their* (emphasis in original) title to the soil by priority of occupation and constant possession, is paramount to that of every other claimant.”<sup>145</sup> Others made similar arguments. “They [the Cherokee] have a perfect right to their country, -the right of peaceable, continued, immemorial occupancy” claimed Evarts. Moreover, this right was

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<sup>144</sup> John Ross to Jeremiah Evarts, April 6, 1830, in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 187.

<sup>145</sup> Philadelphia Orthodox Quakers in Smith, ed., *The Friend*, Vol III, Jan 23, 1830 n. 15, p. 114-5.

not diminished by the claims of others. To demonstrate this point, Evarts asked “by what right do the people of the United States hold the lands which they occupy?” The answer he offered was “by the right of occupancy.” He then argued that if some European power were to claim Ohio or Connecticut, it would make no difference as “our right is not at all affected by their claims.” Similarly, the claims of Georgia and her citizens on Cherokee lands did not override the Indians’ natural right, derived from occupancy, to their lands.<sup>146</sup>

Finally, antiremovalists argued that Indians possessed unique political rights that protected them from coerced dispossession. More precisely, they had the political right to call on the President’s direct assistance. This right derived from the historical relationship between the United States and Native nations. In the case of the Cherokee, there existed a long standing paternalistic relationship in which the President acted as the fictive “father” to his Cherokee “children.” “The various tribes of Indians emphatically call the President, *Father* (original emphasis), and to him, they as children look for protection and preservation” wrote the Cherokee.<sup>147</sup> This relationship embodied Native notions about reciprocity, which held that each party in a relationship was to give, according to their means, to the other. This kept the relationship strong by establishing fictive family bonds between unrelated individuals or parties. With the Cherokee and the United States, the President’s primary duty was to provide protection and guidance. The obligation applied to political favors, which meant that the Indians could demand that he intercede on behalf of their political interests.

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<sup>146</sup> Jeremiah Evarts, “William Penn Essay No. II, in Prucha, *Cherokee Removal*, p. 57-8.

<sup>147</sup> John Ross, George Lowrey, and Elijah Hicks to President John Quincy Adams March 12, 1825 in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 104.

The Cherokee consequently called on the President to prevent removal once Georgia and other states took more drastic steps to dispossess the southern nations. They asked President Adams in 1825 to settle the Compact of 1802 so that Georgia would no longer be able to threaten them with removal. “For the peace and tranquility of our nation we do sincerely hope that measures may be adopted by the United States & the State of Georgia so as to close their compact without teasing the Cherokees any more for their lands.”<sup>148</sup> When President Jackson assumed office and it became clear that he would not intercede to stop removal, the Cherokee called on the Congress to take the President’s place as the fictive father who would protect the Indians. “Between the compulsive measures of Georgia and our destruction we ask the interposition of your authority, and a remembrance of the bond of perpetual peace pledged for our safety,”<sup>149</sup> stated a Cherokee memorial sent to Congress. The historical and “perpetual bond” between the Cherokee and the United States gave the Indians the political right to call on the Congress to intercede on their behalf.

In sum, antiremovalists argued that Natives possessed a variety of rights that protected them from forced removal. Legal rights derived principally from claims of sovereignty and from treaties, natural rights derived from historical occupancy, and political rights established through historical relations between Natives and the United States, protected Native land titles. These rights were sufficient in the minds of antiremovalists to create a compelling case against removal. However, they also made concerted efforts to establish another, equally compelling, line of argument against

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Memorial of a Delegation from the Cherokee Indians presented to Congress January 18, 1831, Phillips Pamphlet Collection, Folder 7311, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

removal. They claimed that those rights which protected Native lands were strengthened by Native efforts to become “civilized.”

### **Cultural Adaptation and the Validation of Rights**

As stated in the previous chapter, antiremovalists viewed Indian cultural adaptation as an alternative to removal. Instead of dispossession, Anglo antiremovalists hoped Indians would be “civilized” and merged into American society. Natives did not so much envision themselves becoming entirely acculturated or assimilated, but rather saw cultural change as a means for Natives to develop economic, social, and political ties to the United States. They hoped to maintain ethnic identities and tribal sovereignty even as Native communities became tied to American civilization. In their national political fight against removal, however, Native and Anglo antiremovalists alike called for Indian acculturation because they believed it would strengthen the case against removal. Moreover, they supported the viability of Indian acculturation through direct assertions of Natives’ inherent capacity to become “civilized.” They argued that it was America’s moral duty to see to it that Indian improvement was realized. The United States had the choice to either abandon Indians and allow them to suffer forced dispossession, or to exercise a paternalistic care over them. “Let us save them now, or we never shall. For, is it not clear as the sunbeam, sir, that a removal will aggravate their woes?”<sup>150</sup> thundered Senator Frelinghuysen.

For their part, advocates of removal attacked arguments for Native inclusion through racialized assertions that claimed Natives were incapable of social development.

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<sup>150</sup> Frelinghuysen to the Senate in Watson, *Jackson vs. Clay*, p. 174.

In turn, antiremovalists responded by repeating arguments about Native capacity for social and moral growth, which they had made earlier in the decade. As Frelinghuysen put it:

Wherever a fair experiment has been made, the Indians have readily yielded to the influence of moral cultivation. Yes, sir, they flourish under this culture, and rise in the scale of being. They have shown themselves to be highly susceptible of improvement, and the ferocious feelings and habits of the save are soothed and reformed by the mild charities of religion. They can very soon be taught to understand and appreciate the blessing of civilization...<sup>151</sup>

Like others, Frelinghuysen attempted to shift the terms of the removal debate from invidious comparisons of racial capacities to a question of morality, in which Americans could either help or hinder Native “improvement.”

More specifically, antiremovalists claimed that Natives would benefit by remaining on their lands because it would allow them to continue to adopt a civilized life under the paternalistic guidance of Anglo “benevolence.” “Your memorialists are encouraged to hope, that if these interesting natives are permitted to remain in their present location...that the influences of the customs and manners of civilized life, with which they are immediately or more remotely surrounded...will prepare them for a participation in the rights and duties of citizenship in common with other civilized people,” stated a memorial from the Quakers of the New England Yearly Meeting. By retaining their lands, Natives would eventually adopt the accoutrements of civilized life and merge into American society.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> New England Yearly Meeting, “Memorial to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of American in Congress assembled,” dated March 3, 1830, in Smith, ed., *The Friend Vol. III, No. 25, April 3, 183,0 p. 199*, Special Collections, Haverford College.

This moral imperative to shield Natives from removal and ensure their improvement, worked in tandem with another powerful antiremoval argument. Namely, antiremovalists declared that Native adoption of American practices reinforced their rights. Native cultural change showed that they were “civilized” people possessed of the same natural and civic rights as others. To support this claim, antiremovalists cited historical precedent in the treaties between the United States and Native nations. More specifically, they explained that treaties made explicit connections between acculturation and land rights. For example, Jeremiah Evarts argued that the Fourth Treaty of Washington, which was entered into on February 27, 1819 contained an article that granted some Cherokee families land title because their “industry” made them “capable of managing their property.” Evarts referenced this treaty as a moral and legal precedent, whose basic principle applied to Natives currently threatened with removal. He insisted that acculturation strengthened Indian land claims. “It is incontrovertible,” he argued, “that the Cherokee nation has been improving to the present day. The number of industrious person has been greatly increased.” Consequently, he claimed that the Cherokee should not be forced off their lands. Evarts infused his argument with explicit moral overtones in order to strengthen it. “The words of the treaty are not more plain, therefore, nor its principles more just, than its spirit is humane and benevolent.”<sup>153</sup>

Other Anglo antiremovalists made similar arguments. For example, the editor of the New York Observer claimed that precisely because of their “improvement,” the Cherokee should be able to remain on their land. “The truth is they have seen, and see daily, the rapid advances of the Indians in the arts of civilization as well as in morals and

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<sup>153</sup> Jeremiah Evarts, “William Penn Essay XIII in Prucha, *Cherokee Removal*, p. 116.

religion....It is such a people...rapidly improving in agriculture, manufactures, education and religion,--that...the government of the United States propose to drive into the wilderness.”<sup>154</sup> Quakers also argued that Indian acculturation validated Native rights. “It also appears self-evident that the various Indian nations within our territorial limits, must retain the rights of freedom and self government...” stated one memorial from the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. The memorial explained further that “the Cherokees by...the aid and assistance of the government of the United States itself, have for a series of years past, been rapidly advancing in civilization...your memorialists feel bound earnestly to petition that no measures may be permitted to take place, which shall compel this nation to leave the small residue of their ancient patrimony, now rendered doubly dear by the meliorations of civilized life.”<sup>155</sup>

Natives lent support to the argument that acculturation legitimized their rights. Cherokees R. Taylor, John Ridge, and W.S. Coodey made such an argument in one of the numerous memorials the Cherokee sent to Congress. They declared “we cannot better express the rights of our nation than they are developed on the face of the document we herewith submit,” they stated. The Cherokee proceeded to enumerate the indicators that Anglos saw as signs of civilization: “The schools where our children learn to read the word of God, the churches where our people now sing to his praise, and where they are taught that ‘of one blood he created all the nations of the earth,’” the field they have cleared, and the orchards they have planted; the houses they built, are all dear to the

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<sup>154</sup> “Indians,” printed in the *Cherokee Phoenix and Indian Advocate*, Vol. I, n. 44, January 14, 1829. Special Collections, Cherokee Phoenix 1828-1829, AN 151.N43 C56 Item 1, Northeastern Oklahoma State University.

<sup>155</sup> Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, “Memorial to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of American in Congress assembled,” dated January 11, 1830, in Smith, ed., *The Friend Vol. III, No. 15, January 23, 1830, p. 114-116*, Special Collections, Haverford College.

Cherokees, and there they expect to live and to die, on the lands inherited from their fathers...”<sup>156</sup> In this instance, the Cherokee used the Biblical reference, “of one blood,” which would be repeatedly quoted by abolitionists, to undercut any argument to the effect that Indians were somehow less entitled to land rights than whites. Natives and Anglos enjoyed the same basic legal rights by virtue of their shared participation in civilized life.

The links Native and Anglo antiremovalists drew between acculturation and rights was part of their broad strategy. They hoped to establish the fact that Natives possessed rights, and then to justify those rights by showing that Natives were civilized people. Casting removal as a violation of Natives rights, would give Indians legal and political power, and provide means of obstructing the enforcement of forced dispossession.

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The antiremoval movement failed in its ultimate objective. In a series of close votes, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in May of 1830. In the House, the vote was extremely tight as the bill only passed by five votes.<sup>157</sup> Even after the bill became law, many continued to fight removal, even as others such as the Choctaw signed removal treaties.

Despite its failure, the antiremoval was extraordinarily consequential. The movement encouraged Natives to continue the process of cultural adaptation that many had been pursuing for at least the past decade. In great part, antiremoval’s ideological tenets persuaded Natives to put their faith in cultural change. The movement undercut

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<sup>156</sup> R. Taylor, John Ridge, and W.S. Coodey, “Memorial of a Delegation from the Cherokee Indians,” January 18, 1831, Folder 7311, Phillips Pamphlet Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>157</sup> The bill passed on 26 May 1830 by a vote of 102 to 97; Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, Volume I (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), p. 206.



racist arguments used to legitimize unequal treatment of Indians. Instead it fostered the idea that Indians and whites were equal because they were all “civilized men.” Senator Frelinghuysen claimed that “it is not now seriously entertained that the Indians are not men.” Such statements gave Natives hope that they could work with and within American society in ways that would provide them opportunities to protect and advocate for Native interests. In addition, the movement’s focus on the moral connotations of removal reinforced Indian hopes that they would not be forced from their lands. With thousands of Americans decrying removal as a ruthless and unethical use of force that violated law, common decency, and the dictates of Christianity, many Natives found it unlikely that removal would actually occur. They did not think the American public would countenance such a bald abuse of power. Finally, the movement’s focus on Native rights encouraged Indians to stick with cultural change and adaptation, especially as antiremovalists argued that Indians’ natural rights were only substantiated and strengthened by their adoption of American culture. In sum, the antiremoval movement persuaded Natives to continue selective adoption of American culture. In this strategy they perceived a path to power.

The result of Natives’ decision to continue to pursue cultural change was an alternative process of American expansion. American cultural institutions spread into Native societies by a partnership of Indians and Anglos who saw in Native cultural change the empowerment of Native communities. The next two chapters will explore how the promise of rights and socio-economic empowerment led Natives to partner with Anglos, and in the process, to absorb formal education, statute law, and Christianity into their communities.

## Chapter Three

### White Knowledge, Red Power: Mission Schools in the Cherokee and Choctaw Nations, 1815-1850

#### Education and the Path to Power

Missionaries who traveled to the southern Native nations in the early nineteenth century made education the centerpiece of their evangelical efforts. Schoolhouses were almost as common as churches in many missions. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions believed that children were less attached than adults to Native culture, and would therefore more readily imbibe American cultural practices. This predilection for schools derived, as well, from a belief that education would promote successful evangelism by giving Natives tools that would aid their conversion. Alfred Finney, of the American Board's Dwight mission in Arkansas, argued that it was vital for the Cherokee to go to school and learn to read. He explained that by becoming literate, Indians could read the Bible themselves, and become inspired through this experience to accept God.<sup>158</sup> Others believed Natives needed "civilization" in order to secure their worldly needs so that they would then be free to focus on meeting their spiritual ones. Antiremovalists saw Indian integration into the American economy as vital to the social and economic security of both Indian families and Native communities. Schools would teach Natives to create small family farms, and by working the land in accordance with American practices, Natives would secure title to their lands and thereby keep their most important and reliable economic resource. The solvency of individual families would in

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<sup>158</sup> Alfred Finney to Jeremiah Evarts, July 11, 1825, ABCFM 18.3.1 v. 6, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Records, Houghton Library.

turn reinforce the stability of the larger community. Many missionaries believed that only when their basic economic needs were met, could Natives turn their attention to the daunting goal of spiritual salvation.

The links between evangelism and education were not new in the nineteenth century, but rather had a long history dating back to the early colonial era. In the middle of the seventeenth century, for example, John Eliot, a Puritan missionary, created his well known “praying towns” in Massachusetts. They comprised English speaking Natives who had adopted Christianity. Some religious leaders in the Bay Colony saw these settlements as models of the potential education held for Native improvement.<sup>159</sup> Between Eliot’s experiment and the opening of missions in the early nineteenth century, others tried their hand at Indian education. For instance, in the middle of the eighteenth century, Eleazar Wheelock, a Congregationalist minister from Connecticut, founded his Indian School<sup>160</sup> with the specific intention of promoting Christianization. He envisioned a cadre of Native preachers, who having come to God, would serve as ministers to other Indians. Joseph Johnson, and the more famous Samson Occom, were among his most successful pupils as both learned English, became ordained ministers, and spent many years preaching to various Native peoples.<sup>161</sup>

A host of reasons had motivated Anglos to pursue these education schemes. To preachers and their coreligionists, the Bible presented a clear and divinely sanctioned

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<sup>159</sup> For a study of John Eliot see Richard Cogley, *John Eliot’s Mission to the Indians Before King Philip’s War* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

<sup>160</sup> Wheelock’s school, once reserved only for Indian students, eventually opened its doors to all races, and later morphed into Dartmouth College.

<sup>161</sup> For an autobiographical account of Samson Occom see Samson Occom, “A short Narrative of My Life,” in Bernd Peyer, ed., *The Elders Wrote: An Anthology of Early Prose by North American Indians, 1768-1831* (Berlin, 1982). For Joseph Johnson see Laura Murray, ed., *To Do Good to My Indian Brethren: The Writings of Joseph Johnson 1751-1776* (Amherst, MA, 1998).

duty to spread the “Word,” and thereby give the Earth’s “unenlightened” masses a chance at salvation. Others supported Indian education for more pragmatic reasons. Leaders and officials of the earliest colonial governments had believed that Christian Indians, versed in Euro-American cultures, might act as interpreters and cultural brokers who would facilitate trade relationships and military alliances.

Given the ideological and historical factors that bound evangelism and education, it is not at all surprising that when missionaries first approached the Indians to establish missions, they generally spoke about schools. Indeed, they shrewdly suggested that the schools would raise the social standing of Indians and their communities. In his initial meeting with a group of Cherokee headmen, missionary Ard Hoyt stated that “The missionaries...& others in our own country...[had an] ardent desire that their red brethren might enjoy the same privileges they did.”<sup>162</sup> Another missionary, Moody Hall, similarly connected education to Native social empowerment. In 1818 he asked a Cherokee deputation en route to treaty negotiations in Washington DC to secure lands for mission schools. He explained “You must be sensible that the education of your children demands your serious attention; that without something is done for this purpose, you are lost-you are all lost....We have had the candor to propose to you the following plan, which ...will greatly promote the best interests of your nation...[and]... in due time make you an honorable, enlightened, and respectable nation.”<sup>163</sup>

Tribal leaders reacted positively to the promise of missions. The chiefs who received Hoyt responded favorably, explaining that they “were all well pleased” with his

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<sup>162</sup> Joyce B Phillips and Paul Gary Phillips, eds., *The Brainerd Journal: A Mission to the Cherokees, 1817-1823* (Lincoln, NE, 1998), November 2, 1818, p. 88-90.

<sup>163</sup> Moody Hall to Cherokee Deputation, December 4, 1818, ABC 18.3.1 v. 3, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

words.<sup>164</sup> Indeed, exchanges such as those between Hoyt and the Cherokee occurred repeatedly during the establishment of the American Board missions in the South. In 1816 Cyrus Kingsbury approached the Cherokee to explain the Board's wish to establish schools. One chief responded in an exceptionally enthusiastic manner, pointing out "that they [the Cherokee] wished to have the school established and hoped they would be of great advantage to the nation."<sup>165</sup> Likewise, the Choctaw David Folsom in 1818 wrote to missionary Elias Cornelius that "the Choctaw are very much anxious to see the school in operation in our nation."<sup>166</sup>

That the Indians endorsed institutions designed to create radical cultural change requires explanation. Promises such as those given by Hoyt to the Cherokee resonated strongly with Indians who increasingly worried that they were losing the ability to protect their lands and communities. The War of 1812, and the end of the associated Creek War, had made it abundantly clear that the southern tribes had all but lost the power to use military force against Americans. In increasing numbers, Native leaders arrived at the understanding that armed conflict would not put a stop to white encroachment on their lands.<sup>167</sup> With force off the table as a viable option to protect their interests, the missionaries' offer appeared attractive. The care they took to connect the missions to

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<sup>164</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*, November 2, 1818, p. 89-90.

<sup>165</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to Sam Worcester Oct. 15, 1816, ABC 18.3.1 v 3, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>166</sup> David Folsom to Elias Cornelius October 9, 1818, Jay L Hargett Papers, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma at Norman.

<sup>167</sup> On the Creek War see Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: property, power, and the transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (New York, 1999). Like southern nations, many northern Natives also perceived force as an unworkable strategy for their protection. The defeat of the Shawnee brothers Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa in 1815 spelled a virtual end to Indian military power in the northern section of trans-Appalachian west. On the end of Native military power east of the Mississippi see Daniel Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), and Francois Furstenberg, "The Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier in Atlantic History," in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 113, Number 3 (Chicago, June 2008) 647-677.

“privileges” and Native social empowerment seemed to lay open the possibility of Native legal, and perhaps even political, equality with whites. From the perspective of many Natives, the language missionaries used to frame evangelism seemed to provide a path to power, which Indians believed they could wield in service of their interests, and most importantly, in defense of their lands.

This chapter argues that the Cherokee and Choctaw supported the schools because they believed the incorporation of education into their societies would yield rights that could be exploited in defense of their sovereignty and lands. The promise of social empowerment and political rights induced Natives to cooperate with Anglo missionaries in constructing formal education systems, and encouraged Indians to become complicit with the acculturation process promoted by the schools. However, Natives did not simply leave the American Board missionaries to their own devices in shaping and running this educational project. Rather, they sought as much control as possible over the running of the schools. Native-Anglo collaboration and negotiation shaped the opening of the schools, the cultural change generated by the schools, political efforts to overcome tribal resistance to the schools, and attempts to use the schools to make the case against removal. Natives worked with the American Board preachers because they believed education could help protect their lands and sovereignty.

The Cherokee and the Choctaw envisioned several ways in which their adoption of formal education would enhance their power, particularly in relation to whites. Pragmatically, they viewed knowledge of the English language and familiarity with American culture as vital to their ability to negotiate with the United States government. The influential Choctaw chief David Folsom provides a good case in point. The Folsoms

were a prominent family that had become wealthy through participation in the burgeoning plantation economy. In 1818, Folsom sent two of his brothers to the American Board's Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut. Writing to Reverend Elias Cornelius he stated "I give my two brothers up unto you. I hope the great Spirit will give them happiness so as they may be useful to our Nation."<sup>168</sup> Folsom's support for education was not just personal. Seven years later, he helped to broker the 1825 Treaty of Washington, which ceded Choctaw tribal lands in return for an allocation of money earmarked for Choctaw education. This agreement stipulated that in exchange for these lands, the U.S. would pay \$6000 a year in perpetuity for "the sole object of educate [sic] our children and for the use of improving our people." In giving his reasons for endorsing the treaty Folsom stated "we have signed a cession of treaty today and I am glad that so much as been done toward the civilization of the Choctaw people. I am so destitute of education and I labor [with] so much difficulty for not having a good learning-for to transact business for the nation. I therefore wish [that the] young aspiring generation may be educate."<sup>169</sup> From personal experience, Folsom had learned the usefulness of English and cross-cultural knowledge to Choctaw relations with the United States. He hoped to strengthen the Choctaw's position by utilizing education to create a cadre of young Choctaw with the requisite skills to advocate effectively for tribal interests.

The Cherokee and Choctaw also saw education as important to economic and social stability. Elites, who had begun to embrace the central tenets of American political

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<sup>168</sup> David Folsom to Elias Cornelius October 9, 1818, Jay L. Hargett Papers, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>169</sup> David Folsom to Jeremiah Evarts, Jan 19, 1825 Folder 6, Number 15, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

economy<sup>170</sup> by establishing plantations, wanted others to follow their example and begin to work family farms. For instance the wealthy Cherokee Charles Hicks argued that schooling and acceptance of Anglo-American agriculture was necessary for Cherokee survival. One missionary reported that

Mr. Hicks says many of the people are very anxious to receive instruction and this anxiety is increased from the conviction that their very existence as a people depends upon it. The experience of the last 20 years in which they have turned their attention more to agriculture and less to hunting he says has convinced them that they can live much more comfortably by tilling their land and raising stock than they can in their old way. They find also that their new way of living tends to increase their population. While they lived in their old way...their numbers were constantly diminishing: but since they have provided homes for their women and children, where they can be warm and have enough to eat the whole year, they are increasing like the white people.<sup>171</sup>

When Hicks uttered this statement, white encroachment on Cherokee lands was increasing, bolstered by the argument that such lands were “unimproved” and “unused,” and were therefore liable to seizure by those who would build upon them. Tribal leaders like Hicks hoped that such arguments would lose their force if the lands in question supported Cherokee farms and homes. If, through education, the Cherokee would be induced to adopt American agriculture, then it would be more difficult for neighboring whites to seize their land.

Other Native leaders made the same case. Old Glass, a chief of the Arkansas Cherokee, specifically connected schooling to land security. When he stopped at the Brainerd school in April of 1818 after returning from a visit Congress, he told the missionaries that “the white people crowded upon them so much, that they must go over

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<sup>170</sup> For an examination of this transformation among the Creek see Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: property, power and the transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge, UK, 1999).

<sup>171</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*, July 15, 1818, p. 73-75.



the Mississippi.” However, he concluded that education would help the Cherokee secure their western lands. “He expressed confidence in the good will of the general government and the good people...at the north, who were sending teachers to instruct their red brethren. He said, schools were very good for them, and added ‘As soon as we get a little settled over the Mississippi we shall want schools there.’”<sup>172</sup>

Natives also believed that the relationships forged with missionaries through the schools would have beneficial political results. More specifically, Indians saw the missionaries as key allies who could help mediate conflicts between themselves and neighboring whites. Again, the Cherokee afford a good example. Writing to the missionary Samuel Worcester, John Ross and the aforementioned Charles Hicks explained “when we complain of those bad white neighbors around our frontier, we seek our distress, we are not impressed with a belief that all whitemen are our enemies. We know that great many are our friends and without this fact, we also know that we could not exist.”<sup>173</sup> Though their assertion that the Cherokee might not be able to “exist” is hyperbole, the ability of white “friends” to protect Cherokee interests represents the underlying message of Ross and Hicks’ letter.<sup>174</sup>

Indeed, the Cherokee Chief Pathkiller hoped that the missionaries would directly intercede in the Indians’ political fight against Georgia’s attempts to acquire their lands. On May 7, 1823 Pathkiller, with John Arch as his interpreter, paid a visit to the missionaries at Brainerd and explained that he was “night and day grieved for his children,” whom he feared would be forced to remove by the state of Georgia. He

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<sup>172</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*, April 16, 1818, p. 53.

<sup>173</sup> John Ross and Charles Hicks to Samuel Worcester, March 6, 1819, ABCFM 18.3.1 v 3, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>174</sup> Hicks and Ross to Worcester, March 6, 1819 in Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*.

explained that the Cherokee had followed the advice given by both the United States government and the missionaries to “leave hunting” and “raise cattle, hogs, corn and cotton.” The Cherokee now wanted only to remain on their lands, but Pathkiller worried that Georgia would “take this little last [land]” and leave his Cherokee children destitute.

Pathkiller believed that the relationship forged in Native-missionary efforts to promote Native cultural change would compel the preachers to action. He argued that the Cherokee had, for all intents and purposes, kept their end of the bargain. They had adopted formal education, enmeshed themselves in the American economy, and sold off much of their lands. In return, the Cherokee had been told that their efforts to embrace “civilization” would ensure that remaining lands would stay securely within their hands. With this arrangement in danger, Pathkiller voiced his grievances and appealed for help. Unfortunately, the best response the missionaries could muster was to “soothe the poor old man by mentioning some things,” which they hoped would “inspire confidence in the [U.S.] government.”<sup>175</sup>

Natives supported mission schools principally because they believed education would help them contend with an expansionistic United States whose growing white population was eager to seize their lands. Unable to rely on military power to guard their interests, Natives turned to a process of cultural change, which they believed would yield political power. Education would prepare Indians to negotiate with the United States government, and provide them allies who would advocate for them in disputes with white neighbors. For these reasons, Natives cooperated with the missionaries’ desire to educate Indian children.

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<sup>175</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*, May 7, 1823, p. 355.

### **The Path to the First Schools**

In 1817 the American Board opened its first school in the Cherokee Nation, and in 1818, the organization's first school appeared among the Choctaw. As discussed above, the mission schools were institutions of formidable social and cultural change designed to create radical transformations in Indian students. Consequently, there was always Native opposition to the schools. Such opposition came from political leaders, the common people, and even enrolled students. For example, missionary Isaac Proctor explained that "the child no doubt feels that he cannot be restrained from his vain amusements all that length of time," and that the daily routine of spending several hours in school was hard to maintain. He reported that "the novelty has ceased, daily attendance has become wearisome, and the restraints painful."<sup>176</sup> However, despite such complaints, missionaries and Natives worked together open a number of schools.

Even before arriving in the South, the missionaries sought to establish cooperative relations with Natives. They used government officials as proxies who could pave the way for productive missionary-Native relations. Generally, government agents would be the first to broach the subject of missions with the Indians. Later, missionaries would talk directly with tribal leaders, conduct negotiations, and gain permission to open schools. In 1816, for example, Cyrus Kingsbury accompanied General Andrew Jackson to a treaty ratification ceremony commemorating a Cherokee land cession. Jackson, who as President would later preside over Cherokee removal, at this date pursued quite a different policy. He "politely introduced the subject of the schools and urged the

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<sup>176</sup> Isaac Proctor to Jeremiah Evarts, Annual Report of the Hightower School, July 30, 1825, ABCFM 18.3.1 v. 4, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

importance of Indian education.” After Jackson had broached the topic, Kingsbury stepped in and spoke directly to the Cherokee chiefs. “I told them that we would take their children [sic] teach them freely, without money. That we would feed as many as we could and furnish some clothes to those who are poor,” wrote Kingsbury. This approach was designed to clearly communicate that the plan for mission schools was not a unilateral demand, but rather represented an opportunity for cooperation. He “further told them that if they wished to have the school that they must let me know it, that I might inform those who sent me.” The Cherokee seized upon the opportunity. After Kingsbury spoke, a Cherokee chief “took [him] by the hand very affectionately” and explained that the Indians did indeed want the school. Under the auspices of a treaty ceremony and the patronage of Jackson, the Cherokee and Kingsbury began negotiations to open an American Board school.<sup>177</sup>

Kingsbury followed a similar plan of action with the Choctaw when, in 1817, he left the Cherokee Nation in order to found the Choctaw mission. Before arriving, he asked U.S. Indian Agent John McKee for as much information as possible regarding Choctaw receptiveness to schools. He wanted to know where a school might be established, and how easy it would be to obtain labor for the mission. McKee did not act the part of a passive player, but rather took the liberty to prepare the Choctaw for Kingsbury’s arrival. He explained to Kingsbury that he had already informed the Indians about the missionaries, and that they would not be an “obstacle” to the Board. Signaling

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<sup>177</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to Samuel Worcester, October 15, 1816, ABCFM 18.3.1 v. 3, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

his personal support, and presumably that of the United States, McKee commented “The sooner the work can be commenced, it will be the better.”<sup>178</sup>

While government officials initially acted as mediators, it was between Indians and missionaries that agreements about missions and schools were arranged. Indeed, Natives ensured that the process would be formal. They often insisted on drafting official treaties that granted specific rights and privileges to each side. For example, in 1823 the Choctaw Council entered into an agreement with the Board to establish two new schools. The treaty contained three articles. The first granted the missionaries the right to build the schools and the “privilege of establishing mechanical shops, cultivating land, and keeping stock for the benefit of the school.” The second article protected Choctaw land rights, and explained that the schools existed for the “sole benefit” of the tribe. It further stipulated that if a school closed, then “the right of soil shall revert to the nation.” The third article dealt with finances and laid out a plan in which the Choctaw Nation, Choctaw parents, and the Board would share in the costs of supporting Indian students.<sup>179</sup>

As this treaty suggests, funding the schools was an important issue. The schools were expensive as they often supported around 25 to 30 students at a time. For the most part, the missionaries and Indians tackled this problem by sharing operating costs. The American Board paid the salaries of teachers, assistants, and missionaries, and gave money to support a limited number of pupils. A considerable amount came from the Indians. In 1820, the Choctaw National Council appropriated the colossal sum of \$10,000 for schools. This money was earmarked to feed and clothe students. While Kingsbury

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<sup>178</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to Agent John McKee, March 18, 1818, Folder 10, Item 15, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>179</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to Jeremiah Evarts, July 18, 1823, Folder 7, number 4, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

hailed this development as “a new era in the history of missions,” and gushed that “the fact that the natives have done this freely and unitedly is worth volumes,”<sup>180</sup> it also shows how seriously Choctaw tribal leaders viewed the project to educate their youth, and reveals the depths to which they believed the investment in schooling would empower the tribe.

Besides the Indians and the Board, the schools benefitted from other important sources of income. The United States government allocated substantial funds directly to missionary organizations through the 1819 Indian Civilization Act. This law provided \$10,000 grants to religious groups involved in acculturating Native peoples. Private individuals and benevolent societies also represented important sources of pecuniary support. A large fraction of the money the American Board sent to the mission schools came from northerners who donated sums to the Board’s missionary operations. However, southerners, both individuals and benevolent societies, also made donations. John McKinney of Augusta, Georgia, who visited the Cherokee school at Brainerd station, “expressed great satisfaction in the appearance of the children,” and “manifested his good will to the Institution by a donation of fifty dollars.”<sup>181</sup> Local organizations gave money as well. Ard Hoyt reported that “two small societies formed in Georgia for the express purpose of aiding this mission,” and that both had “promise[d]...small sums.”<sup>182</sup>

The cooperative manner in which missionaries and Natives worked from initial negotiations about schools, to the development of official contracts that governed the

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<sup>180</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to Samuel Worcester, December 20, 1820, Folder 10, Item 2. Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>181</sup> Brainerd Mission Journal, August 19, 1818, ABC 18.3.1 v.2, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>182</sup> Ard Hoyt to J. Evarts, Mar 11, 1820, ABCFM 18.3.1 v.3, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

schools, and to joint funding of the schools were all vital to the opening and sustained operation of the American Board's first schools in the Cherokee and Choctaw nations.

From their very inception, the American Board schools were designed to promote acculturation and Christian conversion. The social and cultural environment of the schools, the subjects under study, and the expectations for student progress all reflected these goals. The schools were designed to foster student interaction with teachers and hasten the acculturation process. Generally, the schools operated as local boarding schools, drawing students from a school's immediate vicinity. Indian pupils lived either in a dormitory, or in the home of a teacher or missionary. The schools provided food and clothing, in addition to their living quarters. This system represented an effort to cloister children from their families and communities while immersing them in Anglo culture. For that reason, students not only studied during school hours, but also performed religious ceremonies such as the singing of hymns during evening hours, and engaged in basic social activities like eating under the supervision of their teachers.

Missionaries also strove to foster student dependence on teachers. Children of all ages entered the schools, but most were older - usually between 8 and 15 years of age - when they began their studies. They were old enough to learn, but still young enough to be dependent on adults for their basic needs. By controlling and furnishing these needs, teachers increased their influence over their pupils, and acquired more power to compel students to study and engage in religious activities.

Central to the schools' acculturation process was a renaming practice. Upon entering school, Indian students were literally given new identities by receiving English names. This new identity was to be cultivated through a student's participation in school

activities, and symbolized the new person who emerged from association with the school. The names Native students most often assumed were those of “benefactors,” or donors who provided money to support the student. The majority of benefactors were northerners, though there were a number of southern benefactors.<sup>183</sup> The extraordinary fact that if one gave money, a student would take on one’s name, reveals that renaming was also deeply connected to the paternal relationship that missionaries envisioned as governing Anglo-Native relations. The act of giving to the school went beyond support for a benevolent cause. Rather, it was a personal, individual act that was reflected in the creation of a fictive facsimile of oneself.

On another level, renaming illuminates the hopes and aspirations the missionaries held for Native acculturation. Just as the mission church sought to save Indian souls through rebirth or regeneration, the schools strove for the secular rebirth of Indian students. A student’s new name and identity reflected the new knowledge and cultural practices he or she was to acquire at school. And on its most profound level, it was hoped that a new name would lead Indian pupils to become a certain type of person; an educated and pious individual who cultivated his own spiritual development while also nurturing the broader community.

The schools also employed a liberal racial ideology in order to support evangelism and acculturation. The missionaries solicited students of all races to enroll in the schools. For example the schools eagerly sought out black students. In fact, when the schools first opened, the majority of students were black, not Native. Though the

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<sup>183</sup> The fact that southerners acted as benefactors is important because it shows that while most in the South were embracing removal as the most desirable solution to the “Indian problem,” others supported assimilation and trans-culturation. Southern support for removal, in other words, was by no means universal.



missionaries almost always segregated the schools,<sup>184</sup> this did not mean that they believed blacks were less eligible for secular and spiritual salvation. On the contrary, they saw education as an essential way to bring blacks to Christianity and social improvement. Through education, blacks gained the power to read the Bible, paving for themselves a path to salvation. For example, the Brainerd mission journal recorded that “our black school continues to prosper.” The writer then explained that one black man had become “united to the church,” and commented that he was of “great usefulness to his coloured brethren” because he desired to “instruct them all he can.” Through his education at the mission school, this black congregant had become literate, converted, and then assumed the responsibilities of a missionary to other blacks. It was the black school that had initiated this chain of events.<sup>185</sup>

Unlike blacks, white students were integrated with Native pupils. These students came from families living on the borders of the Indian Nations. It is not exactly clear what reasons motivated Anglo parents to send their children to mission schools. Perhaps they simply wanted their children exposed to education, religious instruction, and vocational training. It is clear, though, that the integration of whites into Indian schools challenged the notion that whites were innately more intelligent than Natives. Indeed, missionaries often commented that their Indian students were just as capable of learning as their white counterparts. “We have reason to believe that the sentiment very generally prevails among the white people near the southern tribes...that the Indian is by nature

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<sup>184</sup> In a few instances the schools were fully integrated, and contained Native, black, and Anglo students. In the early 1820s the Cherokee Mission decided to allow teachers at some of the smaller mission stations to use their discretion regarding whether or not to admit black students. Though some blacks seem to have been admitted to study with Indian students, it is unclear how many blacks actually attended integrated schools.

<sup>185</sup> Phillips and Phillips., *The Brainerd Journal*, June 28, 1818, p. 67

radically different from all other men, & that this difference presents an insurmountable barrier to his civilization... [T]he Indians are men; and their children, education alone excepted, [are] like the children of other men...we think they are bright & promising as any children of equal number we ever saw collected.”<sup>186</sup>

Along with race, sex was important to the schools’ social organization. Schools were segregated by sex as boys and girls attended separate facilities. Moreover, the missionaries almost always placed female teachers with the girls, while only male teachers took charge of the boys. They believed that teachers who were of the same sex as their students were most capable of preparing their pupils to meet the gendered labor and social expectations of American civilization.

Despite the fact that there were large areas of overlap in the curricula for male and female students, there were also important differences. Both sexes engaged a curriculum composed of a variety of academic, religious, and vocational subjects. Academically, all students learned to speak, read, and write English, while they simultaneously studied subjects such as arithmetic and geography. For example, a twelve year old Cherokee student, given the English name of Samuel Worcester,<sup>187</sup> studied “reading, writing, Geog[raphy], gram[mar], & Arith[metic].” Every student also had religious instruction as part of his or her day. Pupils read the Bible, prayed, and studied Christian theology and doctrine. Often students gathered together to sing hymns, listen to sermons, or to conduct catechism. Despite these similarities, vocational training formed a stark contrast between the boys’ and girls’ curricula. In the boys’ schools, children spent a few hours each day

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid, Jun 24, 1818, p. 65-6.

<sup>187</sup> Samuel Worcester’s Cherokee name was Sun-e-ky-yah. Quoted from Joyce B. Phillips and Paul Gary Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal: A Mission to the Cherokees, 1817-1823* (Lincoln, NE, 1998) p. 19.

tending to the fields. This practice created knowledge of Anglo agricultural techniques, and provided the labor needed to grow the mission's food. Other pupils acquired apprenticeships and worked under local artisans. Student Daniel Webber, age twelve, was "an apprentice to the blacksmith," and John Thornton, who was eighteen years old, "commenced the study of Med[icine] with Doct. Weed." The female teachers, meanwhile, instructed girls in accordance with early nineteenth century notions of female labor. Though the girls like their male counterparts studied academic subjects, they were also taught to spin, sew, cook, and clean house. Catherine Radcliffe, a 12 year old Cherokee, is a good case in point. A report on her school performance noted that she had become "dexterous and tasteful in the use of her needle," while also pursuing the study of "reading, writing, gram[mar], geog[rrophy, and] arts."<sup>188</sup>

The divergent labor in which males and females engaged, prepared students to assume new roles in adulthood. By working the fields, boys acquired the experience to become farmers, giving them the means to assume the idealized stereotype of the freehold yeoman who supported his family by working his land. The domestic training girls received was designed to help them become "goodwives." Girls who learned to cook, sew, and clean at school would grow to be useful to their husbands and capable of maintaining a household. Such a focus derived from the missionaries' tendency to connect female education to success in marriage. In evaluating Charlotte Radcliffe, the sister of the above mentioned Catherine, the missionaries stated "It is expected that she will attend the school more & it may be hoped will make a useful woman."<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Cephas Washburn to Jeremiah Evarts, February 2, 1825, ABC 18.3.1 v 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

### **Negotiating the Growth and Governance of Mission Schools**

The same reasons that initially prompted Natives to support the schools, also sustained cooperative Anglo-Indian efforts to increase their number during the early 1820s. After the initial school was established at Brainerd in the Cherokee Nation, other Cherokee schools opened at Creek Path, Taloney, Fort Armstrong, Wills Town, and Chatoga. In the Choctaw Nation, Cyrus Kingsbury opened the first school at Eliot, and then left it to the supervision of Cyrus Byington. He then moved to Mayhew in 1819 to open another school for Choctaw youth. By the removal period, the number of schools had grown substantially in both the Cherokee and Choctaw Nations. Seven mission schools operated among the Cherokee, and thirteen among the Choctaw.

A collaborative Native-missionary political process governed the opening of new schools. Often, it was the Indians who would initiate the process of establishing a new school. Usually a headman, or a group of local residents, would send word to the missionaries that a new school was desired. The missionaries would open negotiations about the number of students to be boarded, what land would be used to support the school, and if structures capable of housing the school and the teacher already existed. Once these issues had been resolved, the missionaries would send a teacher to open the school.

The establishment of the schools at Creek Path in the Cherokee nation illustrates this process. Creek Path was approximately one hundred miles southwest of Brainerd station, and held both a boys' and a girls' school. On March 4, 1820, the Cherokee John Brown, along with other local chiefs, requested a school. Three days after receiving their

request the missionaries agreed to open the school. Initially they had decided that school would not commence until a teacher from the North could be obtained. However, they changed their minds after considering their previous experience at Taloney. The Taloney school had failed to open because the missionaries could not get a schoolhouse built. This had caused disappointment and anger among the Cherokee. Fearing any delay would cause similar discontent, the missionaries sent Daniel Sabin Butrick, along with Cherokee John Arch, to open the school at Creek Path. Butrick would teach, while Arch would act as translator. Butrick and Arch left Brainerd for Creek Path on March 11, and two days later, they, along with local leaders Captain John Brown and Pathkiller, built a schoolhouse. Captain Brown and Pathkiller had commanded the labor of approximately fifty other Cherokee. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, John Arch returned to Brainerd and reported that the school had opened and that it currently held forty five scholars. In just a month's time, the Cherokee and missionaries had worked jointly to build and open a school. Their partnership continued after the school's opening as Butrick and Arch stayed on together, with the former teaching and the latter translating.<sup>190</sup>

Arch's return to Brainerd in May brought news of the opening of the Creek Path boys' school, and initiated work on a school for the district's girls. Arch explained that the Cherokee wanted a girls' school, and that if a female teacher could be found, they would immediately construct another schoolhouse. Just as they had done before, the missionaries reacted quickly to the Indians' request. They considered that a young Cherokee woman named Catherine Brown, who had already spent a couple of years at

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<sup>190</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*, see entries for March 3,7,8, and 11, 1820 and see entry for April 13, 1820.

the Brainerd school, might be competent to teach. In early May, the missionaries gathered and voted on a resolution on whether or not Brown would be allowed to teach. The resolution passed and Brown was confirmed as the new teacher. Upon learning of this decision, the Cherokee fulfilled their promise and in late May completed a new schoolhouse. On the last day of that month, Catherine Brown set out from Brainerd for Creek Path. By the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June, missionaries had reported that she had successfully opened the school.<sup>191</sup> Not only had the Cherokee initiated the opening of the Creek path schools, but they were also directly involved in providing instruction. John Arch interpreted, and Catherine Brown acted as headmistress. Far from simply acting as passive recipients of knowledge dispensed by the missionaries, Natives became active participants in disseminating knowledge.

The increase in the number of schools, however, had direct consequences for Native cultural change. They exposed a sizeable minority of Choctaw and Cherokee youth to the process of transculturation. The Choctaw mission recorded that its thirteen schools enrolled 2309 students between the years 1819 and 1831.<sup>192</sup> Given that the Choctaw population numbered roughly 14,000 people, and considering student attrition, this number of students is nonetheless significant. Contrary to previous interpretations, it seems clear that the schools reached many young Choctaw.<sup>193</sup> The reach of Cherokee schools was similar. The Cherokee also had a population of roughly 14,000. The two

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid, see entries for May 4,8,24, and 31, 1820, and entry for June 23, 1820.

<sup>192</sup> Peter Pitchlynn Papers, June 1832, Folder 113a, Call number 3026.328, Gilcrease Museum.

<sup>193</sup> Clara Sue Kidwell has argued that among the Choctaw “education had little or no impact.” See Clara Sue Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1818-1918* (Norman, OK, 1995) p. 68.

schools at Brainerd enrolled 297 students between 1817 and 1823.<sup>194</sup> Other Cherokee schools often held fewer students than Brainerd. However, considering that Brainerd and many other schools did not close their doors until the late 1830s, just before the Cherokee were removed, it is reasonable to assume that at least a couple of thousand students experienced some schooling.

Mission schools also impacted their students' adult relatives. Students served as vectors for culture change as they took what they learned in school and shared it with their families. Sometimes relatives would come to the mission to seek religious instruction or schooling. For example, the father of a student came to the mission "to be further instructed in the things of religion," and brought with him his "wife and mother."<sup>195</sup> While no further mention is ever made of the women, the father returned often for instruction, and was named by the missionaries "the Enquirer," due to his verve for learning. Nor was his case unique. In 1823 a girl became a "candidate for communion" after having been introduced to the church by "believing parents."<sup>196</sup> Though only a small percentage of the total population of both the Cherokee and the Choctaw ever enrolled in the schools, their effect was magnified beyond the students. It was for this reason that John Arch could report that many were "entirely ignorant of the Gospel, except in the vicinity of the missions." Arch explained that "he begins to discover the light when he gets within 40 miles of Brainerd."<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> On the number of students enrolled at Brainerd see Phillips and Phillips, eds., *The Brainerd Journal*, tables 4 & 5, p. 406-23.

<sup>195</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Mission*, p. 242.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 342.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 337.

Cultural change reached others in less direct ways. Some Natives who labored for the missions learned English or imbibed knowledge of Christianity. For instance, a Cherokee named Wicked Jack was a “faithful laborer in the mission,” and was believed to “have experienced a radical change in the temper and desires of his heart,” since he first labored and knew “but little of the Savior.”<sup>198</sup>

Though school authorities attempted to control the acculturation process, they never had enough power to do so. Rather, they engaged in ongoing negotiations with Natives that shaped the experiences of students. It was a negotiated process that governed cultural change. Disagreements that erupted over school discipline highlight this point.

Teachers disciplined students using tools that were common to early nineteenth century American schools, including corporal punishment, lecturing and scolding, and expulsion. These methods caused consternation among the Indians. Native parents were particularly upset about the use of corporal punishment, which did not fall within the purview of the southern tribes’ disciplinary tools. Rather, the Cherokee and Choctaw used shame and embarrassment to control behavior. They often corrected children with words or exposed them to public ridicule. These techniques exasperated the missionaries. The journal for the Mayhew station, for example, complained that Choctaw parents did not discipline their children, which made the task of educating Native students more difficult. “Those who have not had experience in educating children in heathen lands can hardly conceive of the difficulties which are to be encountered. There is almost no family government or moral restraint of any kind...No exertions are made by the parents to

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid, p. 342.



produce in their children a kind affectionate obedience.”<sup>199</sup> The disparities between Anglo and Native disciplinary methods drove some Indians to remove their children from school. On one occasion, grandparents removed their two granddaughters from the Brainerd school having “expressed great dissatisfaction that one of the girls had been whip[p]ed.”<sup>200</sup> Similarly, at Mayhew in the Choctaw Nation, an uncle removed his nephew because he “was much displeased that his nephew was reprov[ed] and threatened with punishment (whipping).”<sup>201</sup>

To address these problems and keep students in school, teachers or missionaries often worked out disciplinary disputes with local leaders, or directly with a student’s elders. For instance, the Choctaw chief Mushulatubbe formulated an agreement with the missionaries that permitted some use of corporal punishment. Mushulatubbe informed Cyrus Kingsbury “that it would do to whip the small scholars, but not the large ones.”<sup>202</sup> In another case, an uncle pulled three boys from the Mayhew school after one of the children had provided his parents with “false reports” about the school. He subsequently returned and re-enrolled them in the school. The boys had most likely complained about school discipline methods, as their uncle had a long talk with the missionaries “relative to the government of the school.” The uncle, Captain Mishanhaniah, explained that he “wished them to continue at school and be obedient.” However, he also “did not wish his nephews to be punished,” but rather if “they were disobedient we must send for him and

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<sup>199</sup> Mayhew Journal, January 19, 1823, Folder 9, Item 21, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>200</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*, May 29, 1819, p. 117.

<sup>201</sup> Mayhew Journal, May 31, 1823, Folder 9, Item 21, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>202</sup> Mayhew Journal, May 8, 1823, Folder 9, Item 21, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

he would give them a talk.” The missionaries responded by explaining the “rules of schools among white people and the importance of government.” They consented to “first make use of persuasion,” and promised that “punishment would not be resorted to unless other means failed.” This seemed to appease Mishanhaniah as he reportedly “assented and said he was willing the teacher should govern as he thought best.” Ultimately, Mishanhaniah accepted that his nephews would be, at least potentially, subject to corporal punishment.<sup>203</sup>

Native efforts to negotiate agreements over discipline were vitally important because they legitimized the authority of school teachers and missionaries, and therefore augmented their power to change students’ cultural values. From the vantage point of Native pupils, the deferral of parental figures to the authority of the teachers meant that teachers had to be taken seriously. Indeed, some parents explicitly commanded their children to regard the missionaries and teachers as parental figures. Major Ridge told his children at the Brainerd school that they “must obey them (the missionaries) as you would me.”<sup>204</sup> Imbuing the missionaries and teachers with parental authority led many students to accept and internalize the new values or beliefs taught in the school.

Sometimes lessons learned at school came into direct conflict with the student’s native culture. In those cases, the authority of the teachers was critical. A case involving a young man, who experienced a conflict between what he had learned at school and the expectations of his culture, reveals why. In November of 1821 he left the Brainerd school unexpectedly and without obtaining permission. He stayed away for one day before

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<sup>203</sup>Ibid, June 8, 1823.

<sup>204</sup>Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*, July 6, 1817, p. 37.

returning. When questioned about his behavior, the boy “wept” and walked away from his interrogator, William Chamberlin. Chamberlin followed the young man to his “cabin” and asked what was troubling him. The youth explained that he wanted to travel to the Arkansas River and “go to war against the Osages.” Proving one’s self in battle was an important rite of passage for young Cherokee men, and the border hostilities between the Western Cherokee and their Osage neighbors presented a good opportunity. Yet the boy returned to the school because he was torn between adhering to Cherokee traditions and following the dictates of the school. Chamberlin explained that he could “either go or stay as he chose” because he could never “run away from God.” The young Cherokee chose to leave, but then again changed his mind. He explained to another missionary that he was haunted by his decision. He claimed that “he was sorry he left the school, and would go back but feared he could not be received.”<sup>205</sup> After speaking with the other missionary, it appears that the boy entered another school in a different part of the nation. The authority of missionaries and teachers contributed to this youth’s questioning of indigenous values and practices.

In other instances the authority of the missionaries was enough to prod students to abandon Native beliefs. One such case involved a young girl who attended the school at Dwight mission, located among the Arkansas Cherokee. After an encounter with the mission’s superintendent, Cephas Washburn, the girl chose to give up the widely held Cherokee belief in the existence of witches and their capacity to cause human suffering. In a school report, Washburn explained that he had convinced an eleven year old girl named Jane that the Cherokee belief in “witches” was false. Washburn had addressed the

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid, see entries for November 15-17, 1821, p. 245-6.

children in school, and at one point explained that witches did not exist. He reported that Jane's face expressed shock and concern because he "had invaded an important article of her creed." Washburn reported that the little girl brooded over the subject for two days before finally telling him that she had seen a witch once before. He then told her that she had "been deceived on the subject." After more discussion and persuasion, Washburn concluded that Jane's "belief and fear of witches" had vanished. Finally, he commented that ever since this incident, the girl had focused serious attention on "religious subjects" and that she had later "spoken of herself as a Christian." Washburn did not simply report what he had hoped to see, as Jane stayed at the Dwight school and continued to embrace religion. Indeed, when Jane's mother became distraught after her infant child died, Jane counseled her to turn to God for solace.<sup>206</sup>

By the early 1820s it had become clear that not everyone was pleased with the schools, or comfortable with the radical cultural transformations they strove to affect. Indians worried about cultural change and the loss of honored values and beliefs. In addition, a growing suspicion that the missionaries, like other whites, sought to acquire Indian land stirred popular political discontent. Often, Indian disapproval took seemingly benign or innocuous forms, like keeping children from enrolling in the schools, or removing those who were already attending. Such opposition, however, was not insignificant as it weakened the schools and threatened to disrupt the course plotted by tribal leaders.

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<sup>206</sup> Cephas Washburn to Jeremiah Evarts, February 2, 1825 ABC 18.3.1 v. 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

Those tribal leaders who supported the schools responded by engaging in a grassroots political campaign to reinvigorate popular support for the schools. They reiterated the argument that the schools would serve the interests of the tribe and its members. In 1820, for instance, Pathkiller had been “telling his people...that schools are very good for them, & they must keep their children at school.”<sup>207</sup> Seeking to ensure that the Nation would produce a class of educated Indians capable of dealing with white Americans, the Cherokee Council took the extraordinary step of passing a law that required parents to keep their children in school once they had begun attending. The law also stipulated that a student could not leave school until a teacher had confirmed that he or she had learned a sufficient amount.<sup>208</sup>

Though the passage of this law was important, the grassroots effort targeting parents and students proved to be the most powerful weapon in the hands of the schools’ supporters. The opening of the Chatooga school reveals how Cherokee leaders worked to secure local support. Problems first surfaced prior to the school’s opening. The headmen had promised that they would build a schoolhouse if the missionaries would open a school. After this agreement was reached, the headmen compelled the local residents to begin construction. However, after the job had begun, missionaries Darius and Milo Hoyt reported that the Indians appeared very “dissatisfied,” and were unwilling to finish the building. The Hoyts, along with the headmen, completed construction themselves. This proved to be a Pyrrhic victory as no children arrived to school on the day it opened. The Chatooga headmen promised the frustrated missionaries that children would attend and

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<sup>207</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*, March 24, 1820, p. 160.

<sup>208</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*, November 1, 1820, p. 195. For the text of this law see Scholarly Resources, Inc., *The Constitutions and Laws of the American Indian Tribes-Vol V* (Wilmington, DE, 1973), p. 13-14.

spent the next few days meeting with parents. There is no record of what was said in these meetings, however, the headmen's politicking worked. A few days later a group of parents had been persuaded to send their children to school. Though the initial attendance was disappointingly low, the Chatooga school remained open until the Removal era.<sup>209</sup>

Cherokee leaders also addressed children directly. They sought to persuade them that education was vital to Native empowerment. In January of 1819 two chiefs conducted a two day visit at the Brainerd school. On the second day they addressed the students and explained that as they grew up "they would do much good to their people."<sup>210</sup> A similar scene played out three years later when the local chief in the Wills Town district asked permission to speak at the school. The chief explained that he had learned English only with difficulty and that the children's ability to attend school was a "privilege." He then urged the students to "learn as fast as they could every day-that they could be a great advantage to them and to their people."<sup>211</sup>

Nonetheless, the school environment remained uncomfortable for many students. Many of them simply wanted to quit, and soon the number of students attending began to level off or decline. For example, at Creek Path, the number of students attending in the first month of its opening was 45,<sup>212</sup> while Taloney during its first month held 37 students.<sup>213</sup> However, both schools eventually saw their numbers drop to between 20 and 25 students.

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<sup>209</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*, May 13, 1820, p. 173.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, January 2, 1819, p. 100-1.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, July 19, 1822, p. 289.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, see entries for April 13, 1820 and May 4, 1820.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, see entries for May 17, 1820 and June 10, 1820.

In addition to the political efforts of tribal chieftains, missionaries worked directly with Native parents to keep children enrolled in school. The student Horace Loomis is a case in point. Loomis was an older Cherokee boy who had gone absent without permission. When he returned the following day and was asked why he had left, Loomis responded that he had “felt uneasy.” Whatever the source of those feelings, both the missionaries and the boy’s parents worked to keep him in school. The day after his return, “Mr. Hoyt conversed with the lad alone,” and told him to ask God to give him “rest and peace.” When on the following day Loomis was still unhappy, the missionaries “sent for his father.” Upon his arrival nearly two weeks later, the father reported through an interpreter that “he had given his son a long talk, & thought he would no more be so foolish, but would hereafter be obedient & stay out his time contentedly.” Loomis returned to school, reportedly with a better attitude.<sup>214</sup>

Though we have no record of the conversation between Loomis and his father, we can infer from the missionaries’ records that the father, like other Cherokee, perceived education and the larger trans-culturation project of the missions as vital to Cherokee empowerment. The missionaries recorded that Loomis’ father had stated that “he had always been glad of the coming of the missionaries,” and that “people all over the nation are seeing more & more clearly the great good of having such teachers.”<sup>215</sup> Explaining what the father meant by this, the missionaries wrote “Many [Cherokee] consider it an honor to have been among the first to discuss the national advantage of these institutions [the schools],” and that they see it as “a mark of a weak mind not now to see” the

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid, see entries for July 18-19, 1822, and for August 3, 1822.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

advantage accrued to the Nation through education.<sup>216</sup> The larger political advantages of Native education persuaded some to support the schools regardless of the personal discomfort Native children might experience.

### **Removal, Education, and Native Rights**

While Native leaders managed to keep opposition to the schools in check during the early 1820s, by the middle of the decade, opposition increased significantly. Two factors drove the escalating political opposition. First, Indians became increasingly suspicious about the missionaries' intentions. Many of them claimed that missionaries used the schools to enrich themselves, particularly by taking Indian lands and by compelling Native students to work in the fields. The missionaries at Brainerd reported that "while so many white people are grasping for their land it is no wonder if the poor misinformed Cherokees sometimes suspect that missionaries...have the same object in view."<sup>217</sup> Choctaw chief Mushulatubbee reported that much "bad talk" was heard among his "warriors" who say "that Capt Folsom has been selling land to the Missionaries and that the missionaries will ruin the nation."<sup>218</sup> Two Choctaw chiefs, Cole and McCurtain, also voiced distrust of the missionaries, characterizing them as "liars and cheats." They fulminated against the schools and claimed that during "the balance of the day they [the students] were driven in the field in the same manner that negroes were on the plantations

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid, August 3, 1822, p. 294-5.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, Dec 11, 1822, p. 321-2.

<sup>218</sup> Mayhew Journal, April 12, 1823. Folder 9, Item 21, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.



in the southern States.”<sup>219</sup> Similar complaints about student field labor compelled teacher Joel Wood to explicitly state how much time Choctaw students spent doing field work.<sup>220</sup> Though the missionaries were not interested in procuring Native lands, those who disliked their influence found an effective weapon in the claim of land theft.

The other significant reason for the rising discontent with the schools was Indian concern that not enough children were being educated. School supporters feared that the schools would not produce a sufficient number of adults who would have the requisite skills to negotiate the cultural demands of the Anglo-American world, or to strengthen the Cherokee and Choctaw in their dealings with the United States. This fear is most evident from the anger caused when schools failed to open. As discussed above, the delayed opening of the Taloney school in the Cherokee Nation caused discontentment with the missionaries. A similar attitude manifested among the Choctaw. Cyrus Kingsbury reported that “the natives... are beginning to say that we have not fulfilled our promises. And some have even gone so far as to say, that if we do not get a school into operation by such a time, we must quit the county.”<sup>221</sup> Problems also arose when missionaries failed to accept new students into a school. On one occasion the refusal to accept new scholars actually forced a school closure. When teachers at Bethany in the Choctaw Nation explained that they simply could not board more students, many local

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<sup>219</sup> Extract of a letter dated July 9, 1825 from Mr. Holcomb contained in Cyrus Kingsbury to Jeremiah Evarts, Aug 8, 1825 Folder 6, number 47, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>220</sup> Joel Wood to Cyrus Kingsbury, Apr 12, 1822 Folder 9, Item 27, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>221</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to the American Board, July 16, 1821 Folder 10, Item 4, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

Choctaw became agitated. “Much dissatisfaction had been manifested almost from the first, because we would not board more scholars,”<sup>222</sup> reported Kingsbury.

In addition, some Natives worried that the schools did not adequately teach children to speak English. One missionary reported that a Choctaw man had complained that “instead of learning the Choctaws to talk English we ourselves [the missionaries] were learning to talk Choctaw”<sup>223</sup> The aforementioned Coles and McCurtain also lamented that the children did not spend enough time learning English. Students, they argued, did not have enough time to practice speaking, reading, and listening to English, as they “were allowed only two hours in a day for story.”<sup>224</sup>

Waning confidence in the schools placed the missionaries and their Native allies on the political defensive, and forced them to explicitly address Indian concerns. In 1823 the Choctaw chief Mushalatubbee visited the Mayhew station to address some troubling “reports in circulation.” He averred that the “best way to keep friendship was to state... [the grievances] frankly,” and then relayed the concern “that the missionaries had become merchants.” He also described reports about teachers taking clothes from the students. “When the scholars leave the school to go home, they are stript [sic] and their clothes taken from them.” Finally, the chief argued that students worked too much in the fields. The missionaries personally rebutted these charges, asserting that they derived no personal financial benefits from the schools. They explained that any money generated by selling the produce grown on school lands was “not kept on their own accounts, but for

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<sup>222</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to Jeremiah Evarts, Feb 10, 1825 Folder 6, Item 53, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>223</sup> Mayhew Journal, June 25, 1824, folder 9, item 21, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>224</sup> Extract of a letter from Mr. Hocomb, Aug 8, 1825, folder 6, item 47, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

the benefit of the school[s] solely.” Such profits were reinvested in student clothing and school supplies, they argued.<sup>225</sup>

The missionaries’ personal responses to Mushulatubee were not sufficient to contain the growing momentum against the schools. Consequently, they made a more concerted attempt to quell concerns. Four days after Mushulatubee’s visit to Mayhew, Cyrus Kingsbury answered Choctaw complaints directly within the public forum of a council that had been called to inquire into “wicked reports which have been put in circulation relative to the Missionaries, the Chief and Capt. Folsom.” Kingsbury made explicit answer to the charges against himself and others, and then later reaffirmed the importance of maintaining an ongoing collaborative partnership with the Choctaw. He informed Jeremiah Evarts that the missions could give “no just occasion of offence,” otherwise the “progress of light and truth” would be impeded.<sup>226</sup> Kingsbury well understood that the widening political cleavages between those Choctaw who supported and opposed the schools needed to be mended if the missions were to continue.

The Choctaw were not alone in their growing opposition to the missions and the schools; similar complaints arose among the Cherokee. By 1824 William Chamberlin had reported to Jeremiah Evarts that opposition to the schools was increasing, and that some prior supporters had now reversed their position. Many Cherokee were preparing to argue in open council for closure of the schools. Chamberlin explained that “Pathkiller and the Speaker are violently opposed” to the mission and schools. He was very worried that “as they have great influence among common people, and the unenlightened chiefs, it is very

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<sup>225</sup> Mayhew Journal, May 6, 1823, folder 9, item 21, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>226</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to Jeremiah Evarts, May 10, 1823 folder 9, item 19, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

probable that there will be a very powerful opposition to mission in the next council.” But Chamberlin also reported that opposition was not yet universal, and explained that the missionaries still had allies among influential Cherokee, who had already taken the initiative to deflect the political power of those inclined against the schools. “At the last council in the summer some of the chiefs were calculating to deliver speeches against the missionaries, but Major Ridge took the advantage of them and delivered a very long and animated speech in favour of the mission.”<sup>227</sup>

In the face of growing opposition, important Native leaders continued to support the missions and the schools. Major Ridge, Charles Hicks, and others continued to link trans-culturation to rights and empowerment. One missionary, for example, declared “Mr. Hicks is unshaken in his confidence in the Amer. [Board] Com. and more than ever convinced of the utility of their mission among his people. This I believe is the case with all the enlightened chiefs...”<sup>228</sup> Indeed Hicks was not the only Cherokee leader to support the mission. In 1825, Isaac Proctor wrote “I am happy to find that missionaries are becoming more and more highly esteemed by the chiefs and head men of this nation.”<sup>229</sup>

By 1829, both the Cherokee and the Choctaw were singing the praises of the schools. In addition, student attendance shot up, so much so, that many would-be students were refused admission. From Brainerd, John Elsworth gleefully reported that among the Natives “all were gratified so far as I can learn, and there is no doubt but the schools are

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<sup>227</sup> William Chamberlin to Jeremiah Evarts, September 11, 1824, ABCFM 18.3.1 v 4, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Isaac Proctor to Jeremiah Evarts, Annual Report, July 30, 1825, ABCFM 18.3.1 v 4, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

regarded with much more interest by the people than formerly.”<sup>230</sup> That same year, Cyrus Kingsbury summarized Choctaw attitudes towards the schools by writing “there never has been a time since we came to this nation when instruction was so much sought for and attended with such encouraging fruits as at the present...The schools are becoming important in the estimation of many of the natives. Applications for admission at this place have become so numerous that we have an opportunity of selecting the most promising.”<sup>231</sup> Kingsbury was not viewing Choctaw attitudes through rose colored glasses as many Indians were now openly praising the schools. For instance, a group of Choctaw parents whose children attended the school at Elliot drafted a letter expressing their gratitude and to the mission, and their “approbation” for the school. “The improvement of the children in every instance has fully equaled our expectations and in many instances altogether surpassed our most sanguine hopes and we do hereby express our warmest thanks to the teachers and patrons of the school for the interest they have manifested in behalf of ourselves and our children,” they wrote.<sup>232</sup>

The imminent threat of removal was the root cause of the dramatic increase in Cherokee and Choctaw support for the schools. Andrew Jackson had strongly supported removal in his presidential campaign, and with his victory in the 1828 election, removal became a real possibility. Significant efforts by Indians, such as the Cherokees’ adoption in 1827 of a new constitution predicated on the U.S. Constitution, Sequoyah’s development of the Cherokee Syllabary, and publication of the Cherokee Phoenix, were

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<sup>230</sup> John Elsworth to Jeremiah Evarts, August 8, 1829, ABCFM 18.3.1 v 4, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>231</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to the Board, April 9, 1829, folder 9, item 2, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>232</sup> Letter of Choctaw Parents, June 27, 1829, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

meant, in part at least, to prove that Indians had become “civilized.” Reinvigorated support for the schools and the increased student enrollments formed yet another attempt to by the Cherokee and Choctaw to demonstrate their commitment to cultural adaptation in the hopes of strengthening the political and natural rights they believed would shield them from forced removal.

During the late 1820s, English-speaking Cherokee and Choctaw became involved in the national removal debate by publishing an array of newspaper and periodical articles in which they linked acculturation with civic and political rights that entitled them to stay on their lands. In a typical article, originally published in the *Cherokee Phoenix* and republished in *Niles' Weekly Register*, a Cherokee author explained that President Washington had signed a treaty of “peace and friendship” with the Cherokee, and that the United States had promised to help lead the Cherokee to “a greater degree of civilization.” He went on to say that the Cherokee were now “civilized” and that they had become “herdsmen and cultivators.” The author concluded that this accomplishment had underwritten new political rights which Georgia transgressed by pressing for removal. “The State of Georgia has taken a strong stand against us; and the United States must either defend us and our *rights*, or leave us to our foe...”<sup>233</sup> Another Cherokee named Young Beaver came to a similar conclusion. “The examples of the surrounding states possess a great influence over us. Our political Government keeps pace by gradual changes, as we imbibe new principles of legislation, with our domestic advancement.” The Indians, in other words, had emulated the political and economic practices of the

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<sup>233</sup> “The Cherokees,” from *Niles' Weekly Register* March 14, 1829, p. 40, available through Proquest at <http://proquest.umi.com>.

surrounding white populations. Accordingly, Young Beaver concluded that “the great American republic” would never “lose sight of justice, and cruelly despoil a tribe of innocent Indians of their most sacred rights and privileges.”<sup>234</sup>

Missionaries who had long engaged in local politics in the hopes of strengthening the missions, now became involved in national politics. The missionary Cephas Washburn expressed hope that “the wise and good will not suffer their (Cherokee) rights to be disregarded.” He further explained that Cherokee “improvement” necessitated that whites respect Native rights. “No one who is intimately acquainted with these Cherokee, and compares their present state with what it was when this mission was first established, but must approve that a great moral change has been effected... which already presents a comparatively formidable barrier to the views of those who are desirous of sacrificing the Indians to their own avarice.”<sup>235</sup>

The leadership of the American Board also became involved in antiremoval efforts. As explained in the previous chapter, the Board’s Secretary, Jeremiah Evarts, was one of the men most directly responsible for organizing and leading the antiremoval movement. In support of these efforts, he published the influential “William Penn Essays” which appeared in the *National Intelligencer* between August and December of 1829 and laid out a detailed case against removal. In his second essay, Evarts explained that the Cherokee possessed rights that protected their land title. “The Cherokees are human beings, endowed by their Creator with the same *natural rights* as other men.” He continued “If the Cherokees are interrogated as to their title, they can truly say, ‘God

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<sup>234</sup> Young Beaver, “Indian Emigration,” in *The Cherokee Phoenix*, vol. 1, n. 29, September 17, 1828, AN 151.N43C56 Item 2, Special Collections, Northeastern Oklahoma State University.

<sup>235</sup> Cephas Washburn to Jeremiah Evarts, September 27, 1828, ABCFM 18.3.1 v. 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

gave this country to our ancestors... We own the land which we now occupy, by the right of the original possessors.”<sup>236</sup>

This argument was echoed by United States government officials. In his impassioned Senate speech against the Indian Removal Bill, Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen stated “I believe, Sir, it is not now seriously denied that the Indians are men, endowed with kindred faculties and powers with ourselves; that they have a place in human sympathy, and are justly entitled to a share in the common bounties of a benignant Providence. And, with this conceded, I ask in what code of the law of nation, or by what process of abstract deduction, their *rights* have been extinguished?”<sup>237</sup> Frelinghuysen claimed that forced removal would represent a blatant abrogation of Native rights. A month after Frelinghuysen’s speech, Representative Bates of Massachusetts also asserted on the floor of Congress that the Indians held rights that protected them from removal. He argued that the Indians possessed “rights of sovereignty” and that “the United States are pledged to defend their boundary, to protect them in the enjoyment of all their rights and privileges as a nation.”<sup>238</sup>

Despite the eloquence of their speeches, and the detailed arguments repeatedly laid out in pamphlets and periodicals, the combined efforts of Natives and Anglos failed to prevent Removal. Antiremovalists’ first major defeat occurred in late May of 1830

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<sup>236</sup> “William Penn,” “Present Crisis in the Condition of the American Indians, Number II,” August 12, 1829 originally published in the *National Intelligencer*. Taken from Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Cherokee Removal: The “William Penn” Essays and other Writings by Jeremiah Evarts* (Knoxville, TN, 1981) p. 53-4.

<sup>237</sup> “Speech of Mr. Frelinghuysen of New Jersey delivered in the Senate of the United States, on the bill for an exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any of the states or territories, and for their removal west of the Mississippi, April 6, 1830.” “Cherokee Documents,” E99.C5C44 Vol. 16, p. 7. Special Collections, Northeastern Oklahoma State University. The emphasis on the word “rights” is mine.

<sup>238</sup> “Speech of Mr. Bates, of Massachusetts, On the Indian Bill, House of Representatives, May, 1830.” “Cherokee Documents,” E99.C5C44 Vol 17, p. 4-5. Special Collections, Northeastern Oklahoma State University.



when the Indian Removal Act passed Congress. Fearing that they would be forcibly dispossessed, the Choctaw subsequently became the first of the large southern tribes to sign a removal agreement. The 1830 Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek laid out a plan in which the United States would provide the provisions and supplies to move the Choctaw to lands that had been set aside for them west of the Mississippi River.<sup>239</sup>

The Cherokee, on the other hand, continued to fight removal despite the passage of the Indian Removal Act. John Ross advised Cherokee delegates en route to Washington to inform President Jackson that “the Cherokee Nation will never consentingly abandon this country to remove west of the Mississippi River.”<sup>240</sup> The missionaries also continued the battle against removal. In 1832 they won an important victory in the Supreme Court when the *Worcester v. Georgia* case was decided in their favor. The ruling held that Cherokee sovereignty could not be extinguished or disregarded by any individual state, and that state sovereignty was not supreme over the sovereignty of Native nations. This should have meant that Georgia could not extend state law over the Cherokee Nation or claim Cherokee lands. However, as historian Tim Garrison has explained, President Jackson used the rulings of state courts to ignore the Supreme Court and allowed Georgia and other southern states to pursue their land claims.<sup>241</sup> By 1835, a group of influential Cherokee, including the Ridges, Stand Watie, and Elias Boudinot formed the “Treaty Party.” Their name derived from their desire to

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<sup>239</sup> On political history surrounding Removal see Ronald Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln, NE, 1975).

<sup>240</sup> John Ross to John Martin, John Ridge, and William Coodey, December 1, 1831 in Gary E. Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross, vol. I, 1807-1839* (Norman, OK, 1985) p. 232.

<sup>241</sup> Tim Alan Garrison, *The Legal Ideology of Removal: The Southern Judiciary and the Sovereignty of Native American Nations* (Athens, GA, 2002).

sign a removal treaty which they did by year's end. In December, the Treaty of New Echota, which provided for the tribe's removal to Indian Territory, was signed.

Even though they were unable to prevent the passage of the Removal Act, Natives did not abandon education. In an 1834 letter to a Seneca Delegation in Washington D.C., Cherokee leaders made an explicit connection between education and empowerment. "We are sensible that it is by education the mind is cultivated and enlightened...And that in wisdom & Superior Knowledge, the force of power exists. Let us therefore encourage schools and the education of our children and the adoption of the habits of civilized life – for the superiority of the white people over the Indian mainly consists only in their cultivation and acquirements, of the arts and sciences."<sup>242</sup> Power and equality with whites resided in education.

It is no wonder that during the immediate pre-removal years, American Board schools remained open in the Cherokee Nation. Indeed, additional schools opened with Cherokee instructors. For example, at one point two Cherokees, Jesse and Run About, had several schools in operation.<sup>243</sup> Prior to their westward move, the Cherokee reaffirmed their allegiance to education. They asked the missionaries to move west with them, and made it clear that they wanted to reestablish the mission schools beyond the Mississippi. John Ridge and Elias Boudinot, only a few months prior to the signing of the Treaty of New Echota, asked schoolteacher Sophia Sawyer to move West with the

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<sup>242</sup> John Ross, Richard Taylor, Daniel McCoy, Hair Conrad, John Timson to Seneca Delegation, April 14, 1834, in Gary E. Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross, vol. I, 1807-1839* (Norman, OK, 1985) p. 285.

<sup>243</sup> Elizur Butler to David Greene, April 28, 1836, ABC 18.3.1 v. 7, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

Cherokee.<sup>244</sup> In 1837 as the tribe was preparing to emigrate, Ridge informed Board Secretary David Greene that the Cherokee expected a host of missionaries, including William Chamberlin and D.S. Butrick, to move beyond the Mississippi with them.<sup>245</sup>

After Removal, the Choctaw and Cherokee constructed new schools in Indian Territory. Moreover, they built upon the cooperative relationships they had established with missionaries and religious organizations in the East. Choctaw leaders such as David Folsom, Greenwood Leflore, and Mushalatubee, all of whom had at one time or another supported education, ensured that new schools would open in the West. As signatories to the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, they had demanded that the agreement contain a provision for funding of new schools.<sup>246</sup> Subsequent to the signing of the treaty, they requested that Cyrus Kingsbury and Cyrus Byington move West with the tribe to reestablish the mission and to open new schools.<sup>247</sup> In 1842 the Choctaw “established an elaborate system of schools” including Spencer Academy, Fort Coffee Academy, and Nanawaiya Academy. These were schools for males. Four Choctaw girls schools- Koonsha Female Seminary, Chuwala Female Seminary, Wheelock Female Seminary, and Ayanubbee Female Seminary-were established by the Choctaw Council but run by the American Board missionaries.<sup>248</sup> The Cherokee also set up schools. On September 26, 1839 the National Council passed an act “for the promotion of education, by the

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<sup>244</sup> Sophia Sawyer to David Greene, April 17, 1835, ABC 18.3.1 v. 8, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>245</sup> John Ridge to David Greene, February 20, 1837, ABC 18.3.1 v. 8, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>246</sup> Clara Sue Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1818-1918* (Norman, OK, 1995).

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>248</sup> Clara Sue Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma* (Norman, OK, 2007) p. 9.

establishment of schools.”<sup>249</sup> This included a system of eleven lower schools and two national Seminary Schools. One seminary served males and the other females.<sup>250</sup>

These developments represent one of the most significant effects of the missions’ ambitious project to affect cultural change within Native nations. While only a minority of Cherokee and Choctaw attended the mission schools prior to removal, many former students rose to become tribal leaders. It was these former students turned tribal leaders who in the removal and post removal eras supported educational institutions in the West. For example, Peter Pitchlynn, the influential Choctaw chief who had been educated at the Choctaw Academy, explained in 1848 “My heart is ever turned towards the schools of my country, for on them I build all my hopes of the prosperity of the Choctaws.”<sup>251</sup> In addition to Peter Pitchlynn, other Choctaw leaders such as Israel Folsom supported education. Folsom had attended the Mayhew mission school and the Board’s Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut. In the post-removal period he explicitly explained the importance of female education. “If we have our girls educated, civilized, Christianized, enlightened...they will put a stamp in society & character & weight to our nation, & their offsprings will be considered civilized as soon as they are born-O, what advantage.”<sup>252</sup> The two Cherokee leaders John Ridge and Elias Boudinot who had asked the missionaries to move to the West, had in their youth been students. They each attended the Brainerd mission school and the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall.

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<sup>249</sup> *The Constitutions and Laws of the American Indian Tribes, vol. V*, “Laws of the Cherokee Nation: Adopted by the Council at Various Periods. Printed for the Benefit of the Nation, 1852,” Scholarly Resources Inc. (Wilmington, DE, 1973) p. 30.

<sup>250</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*, p. 401.

<sup>251</sup> Peter Pitchlynn to Thomas McKenney, December 13, 1848, Jay L. Hargett Papers, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>252</sup> Israel Folsom to Peter Pitchlynn, n.d., Box 1 Folder 76, Peter Perkins Pitchlynn Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman. Quoted in Clara Sue Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma* (Norman, OK, 2007) p. 10.

Boudinot's brother Stand Watie, also a former mission school student, became an influential political figure who advocated for education and continued Cherokee integration into the plantation economy of the South.

Not only former students, but also those who had been the missionaries' closest early allies, ensured that education would continue in the West. In 1818, David Folsom had supported the establishment of the Choctaw mission, and in 1830 he pushed to include the education provision in the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. Among the Cherokee, John Ross had been an ardent early supporter of the American Board missionaries. Prior to removal he had become Principal Chief, a position he exploited to push for the establishment of new schools in the post-Removal era. Like many others, he linked tribal empowerment to cultural change, and specifically to the inclusion of formal education into Cherokee society.<sup>253</sup> After Ross arrived in the West, he submitted a proposal for schools to the National Council. He stated that "the establishment of Schools, and a printing press for the dissemination of knowledge, & such other subjects of general interest as would conduce to the improvement and happiness of the people, are respectfully referred for your consideration"<sup>254</sup>

The decision of Native leaders to support schools after Removal fostered the spread of American cultural institutions beyond the borders of the United States. The Cherokee and Choctaw continued to learn English and to embrace family farming and Christianity. As Clara Sue Kidwell has commented, mid nineteenth century Choctaw

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<sup>253</sup> See Devon Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds: the education of women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909* (Urbana, IL, 1993). Mihesuah has argued that Cherokee leaders hoped the Seminaries would show others that the tribe was modern and "civilized."

<sup>254</sup> John Ross to the Cherokee National Council, September 12, 1839 in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross, vol. I, 1807-1839* (Norman, OK, 1985) p. 760.

society was heavily influenced by education. She has argued that “changes in Choctaw society were apparent primarily in the extent to which laws began to supplant custom and formal education influenced children.”<sup>255</sup> In other words, by the post-Removal period, formal education had become a part of Cherokee and Choctaw societies.

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In the face of an increasingly powerful and expansionistic United States, the Cherokee and Choctaw abandoned the use of force as a viable defense of their interests. Instead they turned to selective adoption of Anglo American cultural practices in the belief that this strategy would lead to social empowerment and political rights. Such rights would strengthen Natives in their dealings with Americans and make removal more difficult. Missionaries and others made this strategy viable in Native eyes. They approached the Indians with claims of “benevolent” intentions, and argued that through adoption of American culture - formal education, Christianity, the English language, and monoculture - Indians would acquire the rights due to any “civilized” peoples. Natives responded by exploiting these promises for their own ends.

The hope that cultural adaptation would yield power led the Cherokee and Choctaw to accept the missions and schools. From the 1820s to the late 1830s, the same hope underwrote political alliances between Natives and missionaries, who engaged in cooperative efforts to open schools, increase their number, and promote grassroots political campaigns to confront growing Native opposition to the schools. By the end of the 1820s, Jackson’s election to the Presidency and the increased threat of forced removal

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<sup>255</sup> Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*, p. 13.

led the Cherokee, Choctaw, the missionaries, and the American Board to become embroiled in the national debate over Indian removal. This debate directly affected local Cherokee and Choctaw politics as the opposition to schools quickly dissipated, and was replaced by soaring support. After removal, the Cherokee and Choctaw opened new schools with the continued hope that education would secure rights that could be used to protect tribal sovereignty, lands, and people.

The history of the mission schools illuminates two valuable insights. First, it reveals that Natives responded to American imperialism in complex ways that helped them retain a degree of sovereignty. Indians were not simply defeated belligerents or the abject and powerless victims they are often portrayed as. Rather, their embrace of selective adoption of American culture – of which formal education was a central component - allowed them to garner power within an environment that was increasingly shaped by Anglo interests. In terms of the schools, Natives did not simply succumb to the demands of Anglo missionaries, but rather controlled the processes of cultural change the schools engendered. And by enrolling in mission schools, Natives gained the skills to exercise sovereignty over the formal education systems they developed in the West. In addition, the schools show how Natives used alliances with Anglos to maintain a degree of sovereignty in their political dealings with the United States. Native acceptance of formal education led missionaries and Anglo antiremovalists to demand recognition of tribal land rights and tribal sovereignty. The combined Native-Anglo efforts to force the United States to recognize those rights and sovereignty failed in terms of preventing removal. However, they were successful in that the removal controversy generated important legal precedents, in the form of the famous Cherokee Supreme Court cases,

and documents, in the form of removal treaties, that explicitly recognized Native nations as distinct entities with limited sovereign powers. In sum, what emerges from Native participation in the missionaries' education schemes is recognition that Natives used inventive strategies to exercise agency and maintain some sovereignty in the face of near insurmountable forces that threatened to destroy their communities.

Native involvement with the schools also unmask an important aspect of American imperialism - the expansion of Anglo American cultural institutions. Collaboration between Natives and Anglos during the 1820s and 1830s laid the groundwork for the incorporation of schooling into Cherokee and Choctaw communities. Influenced by their educational experiences, and by arguments about the benefits of education, tribal leaders of the post-Removal era used their power to make education a prominent feature of their societies.



## Chapter Four

### Servants of God, Masters of Men: Slavery and the Making of a Native-Anglo Alliance, 1817-1859

#### Native American Slavery from the pre-Columbian to Antebellum Eras

This chapter explores how the institution of slavery complicated the relationship that developed between the American Board missionaries and the Cherokee and Choctaw. It argues that both Natives and missionaries used slavery to shape their alliance. On the one hand, Native masters took advantage of their position as slaveholders to gain power in their relations with the missionaries. On the other hand, missionaries used slave labor to open and run the missions. As the debate over slavery escalated in the Antebellum Era, missionaries found that they had to appease Native slaveholders in order to secure their right to preach. Slavery was a vitally important tool that both Natives and Anglos exploited to support their objectives.

Native slavery as it developed from the pre-Columbian period was more a social than an economic institution.<sup>256</sup> Indians acquired slaves in one of two ways. Either they enslaved enemies captured in battle, or they received slaves as gifts. In both instances, enslavement had important social connotations. Capture and enslavement shamed the slave and demonstrated the dominance of the enslaving group. Degrading names or monikers, and physical scarring caused by laceration of the face or by amputation of ears and fingers, marked the slave's status and symbolized the weakness of his people.<sup>257</sup> The

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<sup>256</sup> Indians of the Pacific Northwest represent an exception to this generalization. Many groups in this area used slavery primarily for economic purposes. See Leland Donald, *Aboriginal Slavery on the Northwest Coast of North America* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997).

<sup>257</sup> See Brett Rushforth, "A Little Flesh We Offer You": The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France," in the *William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 60, n. 4, Oct. 2003, 777-808.

second case, in which one group of Natives gave slaves as gifts to another group, held a host of social meanings. Captive gift giving could redress grievances or could mark significant occasions such as an end to hostilities, the beginning of trade relations, or the establishment of a military alliance. Some tribes used slaves for yet another purpose; adopting slaves as replacements for lost members. If a person had been killed or died for some reason, tribes such as the Haudonosaunee would take a captive slave and put him or her through a series of torture rituals. If the slave was judged to cope with the pain in a satisfactory manner, he or she could be adopted by the family or clan of the person who died. The slave would “requicken” the dead person by assuming his or her name and social roles.<sup>258</sup>

The presence of Europeans in North America fundamentally altered Native slavery. The Choctaw and the Cherokee, who had traditionally enslaved enemy captives, put their raiding to a new purpose when they became involved in an Indian slave trade with the English during the colonial period. Both tribes captured slaves from tribes farther west and sold them to the British, who in turn shipped the slaves through Charleston to the West Indies to work on sugar plantations.<sup>259</sup>

By the middle of the eighteenth century the Cherokee and Choctaw had begun to hold black slaves.<sup>260</sup> While traditional captivity-slavery persisted through the Antebellum

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<sup>258</sup> For Iroquois adoption of captives see Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1992).

<sup>259</sup> The most thorough treatment of the Indian slave trade in the Colonial Southeast is Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: the rise of the English empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven, CT, 2002).

<sup>260</sup> For Indian involvement in black slavery see Theda Purdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Knoxville, TN, 1979), and R. Halliburton, Jr., *Red Over Black: Black Slavery among the Cherokee Indians* (Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1977). For the influence of mixed

Period, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Indian ownership of black slaves was becoming increasingly common especially, but not exclusively, among Cherokee and Choctaw of mixed Native-Anglo ancestry. Slaves now assumed a salient economic importance. They performed farm labor and worked with food crops like corn, beans, squash, and wheat. They cleared fields, and tended and harvested crops. They hewed logs, built farmhouses, and rounded up and butchered livestock. In other words, they did domestic labor that supported Indian households. There were also some Indians who owned plantations on which black slaves worked both cash and food crops. By the 1830s, when Removal occurred, the population of black slaves in the Cherokee and Choctaw Nations was sizeable. The Cherokee numbered 16,000 individuals. Collectively, they owned approximately 1600 slaves. Population numbers for the Choctaw were roughly 15,000 Choctaw and 502 slaves.<sup>261</sup>

Indians seem to have acquired their black slaves either through purchase or theft. Slaveholders of one tribe often bought slaves from masters of another tribe. For example, many Cherokee bought slaves from the Creek or Seminole. In January of 1841, a Cherokee named Webster Smith bought from the Creek woman Sally Factor “a negro woman slave named rose aged 18 years and also a negro girl slave named Margret aged 7 years.” Natives also went on raids and stole slaves. The Cherokee William Drew described a raid in the summer of 1850. “I have just returned from the Seminole Nation, I have been gone five weeks, there was quite a large party of us. When we got out there we had no difficulty, the Seminoles themselves assisted us in getting what negroes we did

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blood elites on acculturation efforts among the tribes of the Southeast see Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: property, power, and the transformation the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge, UK, 1999).

<sup>261</sup> For the Cherokee these figures comes from Halliburton Jr., *Red Over Black*, appendix B, Table V. The Choctaw numbers come from Clara Sue Kidwell, *Choctaw and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1818-1918* (Norman, OK, 1995 ) p. 108-9.

get.” Apparently Drew’s party went through the Seminole Nation on its way to raid slaves from white owned plantations. “We got eighty or ninety negroes” he reported. An article published in 1815 in the *Daily National Intelligencer* shows that this practice of Indian raids for black slaves was common enough to elicit attempts to redress it. The article reported that one George Hite of Virginia had petitioned Congress “praying compensation for a number of negroes stolen from his father by the Cherokee Indians.”

Cherokee and Choctaw involvement in slavery led both tribes to adopt the legal practices Americans had created to manage human property. Two examples, one from the Choctaw, and the other from the Cherokee, reveal this development. In 1817 a controversy erupted over a former black slave woman named Medlong. She had married a Choctaw man sometime after 1793. Medlong had belonged to a white man named John Trumbull who lived in the Choctaw Nation and worked as a trader. In addition to Medlong, Trumbull hired a Choctaw named William Cooper to work for him.<sup>262</sup> Cooper and Medlong apparently fell in love and at some point in the early 1790s, Cooper bought Medlong from Trumbull, paying him a “horse & stores & labour.”<sup>263</sup> The couple, who lived in the Choctaw Nation, proceeded to have several children. However, in 1817 someone questioned whether or not Cooper had fully paid for Medlong. The implication was that Medlong and her children might be subject to enslavement.

This case generated a series of legal maneuvers in which Cooper attempted to prove that he had indeed paid for Medlong. Cooper engaged John Pitchlynn, the father of

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<sup>262</sup> Deposition of James Allen, April 27, 1819, Folder 10, call number 4026.179, Peter Pitchlynn Papers, Gilcrease Museum.

<sup>263</sup> Deposition of Moses Laussey before a judge in Alabama, September 15, 1819, Folder 12, Call number 4026.183, Peter Pitchlynn Papers, Gilcrease Museum.

the famous Choctaw chief, Peter Pitchlynn, as his attorney, and he ultimately produced a fraudulent bill of sale for Medlong. In addition, Pitchlynn secured a series of depositions, both by Choctaw and white men, which attested to the fact that Cooper had legally purchased Medlong from Trumbull. The case disappears from the records before we learn the outcome, but it is instructive nonetheless. It is one example of how the vagaries of slavery prompted Choctaws to adopt and use American legal practices - bills of sale, deposition, courts, and attorneys - in order to contend with the problems associated with the ownership of people.

The life of John Drew, a Cherokee who became rich through legal work related to slavery, shows that the Cherokee, like the Choctaw adopted American legal practices to govern the inheritance of slave property, the transfer of slave property, and the use of slaves as payment for purchases or services rendered. In 1820, for example, Drew drafted a document transferring power of attorney from two Cherokee sisters Susan and Ellen Conetuk to another Cherokee named James Rodgers. "Susan and Ellen Conetuk of the Cherokee nation have appointed james rodggers of the same nation our true and full attorney ..to obtain for us the negro slaves left us."<sup>264</sup> Twenty three years later Drew wrote a will for Richard Ratcliffe who bequeathed to his son, William "one negro man, one negro boy and the plantation."<sup>265</sup> Drew also drafted a myriad of sales receipts to document the transfer of slave property. For instance, Sally Factor sold to Richard Fields

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<sup>264</sup> Susan and Ellen Conetuk transfer of power of attorney to James Rodgers a Cherokee, Dec 1820, Folder 4, Call number 1556, John Drew Papers, Gilcrease Museum.

<sup>265</sup> Division of slave property between Thomas Chisolm and R. Ratcliffe, June 26, 1835, Folder 26, Call number 1574, John Drew Papers, Gilcrease Museum.

“3 slaves for \$650,”<sup>266</sup> and “Joseph Coodey Junior...sold a negro boy known by the name of Jesse for the sum one hundred and twenty five dollars.”<sup>267</sup> Finally, Drew’s records show that the Cherokee often used slaves to pay for goods or services. Indeed Drew was paid a “negro girl slave” for legal services rendered to the Cherokee Moses Melton.<sup>268</sup>

By the time the American Board sent emissaries to the Indians, the Cherokee and Choctaw were already linked to the United States and were familiar with American practices. More to the point, the Indians were part of an Atlantic world economy. They were enmeshed in its slave system and engulfed in the racial hierarchies that pervaded the United States. It is not surprising then, that the Cherokee and Choctaw would exploit their slaves in order to position themselves favorably as they developed a partnership with the arriving American Board preachers.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions first established missions in the southern nations in 1817. Their largest enterprises located among the Cherokee and Choctaw included a series of “mission stations” comprised of a church, a school, farms, and a staff consisting of four or five missionaries along with their families, two or three teachers, a doctor, and hired help. The smallest stations held only a single missionary and his family.

Cherokee and Choctaw involvement in slavery required the missionaries to define their relationship to the peculiar institution almost immediately upon their arrival in the South. As one missionary put it “When we came here, the [slavery] question with us had

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<sup>266</sup> See Sales Receipt, August 4, 1840, Folder 47, Call number 1591, John Drew Papers, Gilcrease Museum.

<sup>267</sup> Sales Receipt, May 27, 1848, Folder 122, Call number 1665, John Drew Papers, Gilcrease Museum.

<sup>268</sup> Sales Receipt, August 7, 1847, Folder 102, Call number 1646, John Drew Papers, Gilcrease Museum.

ceased to be a speculative one. It was a practical one. Necessity was laid upon us to learn the desired mode of treating it. For slavery was among the Choctaws.”<sup>269</sup> This was not an easy task as slavery generated controversy. Many missionaries harbored antislavery sentiment, yet they soon found that slaves could provide labor that was vitally important to the opening and running of the missions. Though it rattled the sensibilities of some of their brethren, American Board preachers responded to the presence of slavery among the Indians by incorporating it into mission life.

They had little choice as the labor demands of the missions were simply too great to be met solely by the preachers and those who attended them. Missionaries faced the challenge of conveying the precepts of Christian doctrine to Natives and teachers were charged with creating an entire educational system through which they would impart knowledge of reading and writing to pupils. This task was all the more difficult because Anglo education methods were alien to the Cherokee and Choctaw. In addition to the labor associated with these grand religious and educational undertakings, the missions also required continuous house and field labor. People had to till the fields, and plant and harvest crops, while others were needed to cook and clean. These varied and constant labor demands, in combination with a short supply of qualified individuals, kept the missionaries ever on the look out for artisans, blacksmiths, carpenters, and other skilled and unskilled workers.

Missionaries, their spouses, assistants, and a few volunteers from the North attempted to do much of this work, but the missions needed to hire laborers. They turned

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<sup>269</sup> Missionaries to the Choctaw to the Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, March 31, 1848, Folder 8, Item 53, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

not only to free people, but to slaves. On April 12, 1826, Cyrus Kingsbury, superintendent of the Choctaw mission, sent the Board a list of hired laborers who worked at the mission's central station at Mayhew. It contained thirteen workers, four of whom were black slaves. These slaves had been hired from Choctaw slaveholders, as well as from white masters who lived adjacent to the Choctaw Nation. "Joe a black man...[and] his wife" were the property of a white military officer, and worked "for \$120 a year and their cloths." Two single female slaves also labored for the missionaries. "Fanny, a black woman" was "the cook" and worked "for \$8 a month and her clothes." The other was "Hannah, a black woman," who was the property of "an Indian" and worked for "\$8/month," washing dishes, setting tables and milking the cows.<sup>270</sup>

Shortages of labor afflicted the other mission stations as well. Kingsbury reported that "frequently the other stations have work that they cannot get done, without going a great distance and incurring much expense."<sup>271</sup> It was especially difficult to find skilled labor. "I forgot to remark particularly respecting the wood Mechanick requested. We have constant employ for such a man." The missionaries compounded their problems through their distrust of available white laborers. They perceived many of them to be of suspect character, and worried that the "bad habits" of irresponsible white men would negatively affect the Indians. "We are obliged to hire constantly, & often very unsuitable men," wrote Kingsbury. "Such things are very distressing to us, and injurious to the cause in which we are laboring."<sup>272</sup> A later report reiterated Kingsbury's point. "When the

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<sup>270</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to ABCFM, April 12, 1826 Folder 8, Item 5, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>271</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to Jeremiah Evarts, October 6, 1825, Folder 6, Item 44, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.



missions of the Board were commenced among the Southern tribes of Indians, the situation of the mission families... caused a demand at the stations for much manual labor... Some white persons were obtained; but... in too many instances they were unworthy of confidence and their influence on the mission & on the surrounding Indians was most deleterious.”<sup>273</sup> Often, it was the excessive drinking of white laborers that most distressed the cautious missionaries. Labor scarcity, exacerbated by distrust of available white workers, afflicted virtually all of the mission stations.

Missionaries turned to black slaves to meet their needs. A report from the Choctaw mission explicitly linked the turn to slavery with the problem of labor scarcity. “The early missionaries were called to make it [slavery] a subject of inquiring and prayer... The large boarding school establishments & other multiplied & constant labors, in a hot & sickly climate... made the employment of considerable slave labor indispensable.”<sup>274</sup> The most readily available pool of slave labor was of course those held by Natives. The Indians understood the missionaries’ need for labor, and exploited it for their own purposes. Their ability to offer slaves held a host of advantages for the Cherokee and Choctaw.

Natives understood their relationship with the missionaries as a partnership based on equality rather than subservience. Unwilling to accept the missionaries’ paternalistic stance, the Cherokee and Choctaw went out of their way to demonstrate the decisive importance of their cooperation. The success of the missions depended on Indian compliance.

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<sup>273</sup> Statement respecting the employment of slaves at the southwestern missions, Jan 23, 1837, Folder 9, Item 11, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>274</sup> Letter from the Choctaw Mission, March 31, 1848, Folder 8, Item 53, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

Ownership of slaves gave Natives an opportunity to strengthen their position in relation to the missionaries. More specifically, both Cherokee and Choctaw slaveholders leveraged their roles as masters to gain power over the missionaries. Upon establishment of the missions, Indian masters hired out slave labor. In fact missionaries found slaves so vital to their enterprise that they quickly signed leases, usually for either 6 or 12 months, with Indian masters. The magnitude of the mission's need for labor meant that the practice of hiring slaves from the Indians soon became widespread. Discussing the practice with Jeremiah Evarts, Cephas Washburn of the Board's Western Cherokee mission, explained that "It is known to you that at this mission, as at all others among the southern Indians, we have employed blacks, who are in a state of slavery."<sup>275</sup>

Cyrus Kingsbury's experience opening the Cherokee mission illuminates the degree to which the missions relied on the Indians' slaves. When Kingsbury arrived to the Cherokee Nation he was given "a negro boy and girl." A week after his arrival, he returned the children, but soon found that he couldn't manage without them. He returned to the family that owned the children and hired two adult slaves, one to tend the garden and the other to clean his house. Only by securing these workers, would Kingsbury have the time and energy to gather a congregation and begin preaching.<sup>276</sup>

In addition to supplying the missions with slave labor, Native masters found other ways to use their human property to strategically position themselves in relation to the missionaries. For instance, Indians forced their slaves to attend church, thereby providing ready congregants for instruction and eventual conversion. In the early years of the

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<sup>275</sup> Cephas Washburn to Jeremiah Evarts, October 27, 1828, ABC 18.3.1 v. 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>276</sup> Journal of Cyrus Kingsbury, January 28, 1817, ABC 18.3.1 v.2, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

missions, Indian masters, with their slaves in tow, congregated before the missionaries to listen to sermons. Cyrus Kingsbury reported that on a violently stormy Sunday in February of 1818, “9 or 10 blacks, & about as many Cherokees” came to church.<sup>277</sup> Indeed, throughout the early years of the Cherokee and Choctaw missions, slaves and their masters made up a sizeable bulk of the missions’ congregants. By bringing their slaves to church, Indian masters demonstrated how vital they were to the mission project. Without their active assistance the mission churches would not have been filled, leaving the missionaries with far fewer souls to save.

Natives leveraged their power as masters in yet another, more curious way. They used their slaves as intermediaries, thereby shielding themselves from subservient relations with missionaries. For example, Natives used their slaves to help them learn English, rather than learning English through attendance at the mission schools. Indian masters learned to read and speak English from their slaves whom they enrolled in the schools. This is one reason why black attendance at the schools is so conspicuous in mission records. In June of 1818 the mission journal recorded that a Cherokee woman was “learning how to read” through her slaves.<sup>278</sup> In August of that year, a “full blood Cherokee youth applying for admission to the school was found to spell correctly in words of 4 or 5 letters.” The journal further recorded that “he had been taught solely by black people who had received their instruction in our sunday-school.”<sup>279</sup> As Kingsbury reported only three months after the opening of the Cherokee mission, “the blacks are

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<sup>277</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*, February 28, 1818, p. 48.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid*, June 7, 1818, p. 62-3.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid*, August, 17, 1818, p. 77.

much engaged” in Sabbath school.<sup>280</sup> And in December of 1818, the mission’s official journal recorded that “the Cherokees in general...are very willing their slaves should receive religious instruction.”<sup>281</sup>

### **From Missionary to Slaveholder**

While Natives exploited slavery to their advantage, the institution caused internal problems for the American Board preachers. Many missionaries were greatly agitated by reliance on slave labor. Disagreements arose as they found themselves caught between their need for labor and the antislavery sympathies of some of their brethren. The Board eventually stepped into the fracas. In essence, its members echoed a line of argument many missionaries had already developed – that the employment of slaves was ethical if it promoted the mission’s primary purpose: evangelism.

The belief that slave labor could serve a godly purpose is evident in the guidelines the Board laid out for mission employment of slaves. During 1823 and 1824, Jeremiah Evarts visited the southern missions and gave direct approval to hire slaves. As Cephas Washburn recalled in a letter to Evarts, “in 1824, I recollect that the practice of the several mission families in relation to the employment of slaves was distinctly approved by you.”<sup>282</sup> During his stay at the Choctaw mission, Evarts also approved mission employment of slaves. The missionaries held a special meeting in which “the matter of employing slave labor underwent an examination.” During this meeting “written views

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid, April 13, 1817, p. 33.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid, December 27, 1818, p. 98.

<sup>282</sup> Cephas Washburn to Jeremiah Evarts, October 27, 1828, ABC 18.3.1 v 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

against such labor were laid before the Secretary.”<sup>283</sup> Others then asked Evarts “whether it was or was not right for them to hire slaves of the Indians or white people around them.”<sup>284</sup> After some consideration, Evarts approved the hire of slaves. “His own [view] was clearly expressed...The early course of the mission was continued with his approbation,”<sup>285</sup> wrote one missionary.

Though Evarts sanctioned the hire of slave labor, he made it clear that the missionaries were to provide slaves with certain rights and privileges. Hiring slaves

would not be wrong, provided the colored man himself, after being fully informed of the labors which would be expected of him, the treatment he would receive, & the advantages he would enjoy, desired to enter into such an engagement; but that no step of the kind must be taken without regard to his wishes and benefits. The laborer so employed was to receive humane & Christian treatment, to have suitable opportunity and means for intellectual and religious culture.<sup>286</sup>

Such guidelines established a direct link between mission slavery and aid to blacks.

Evarts redefined the relationship, not as one of master and slave, but as one more akin to teacher and student. True, the missionary was in effect a master, but the work relationship over which he ruled was recast as an agreement in which the slave had both the ability to refuse to enter into the relationship, as well as input into what work he, or she, would do. It represented a cooperative enterprise in which the missions’ labor needs, and the slaves’ secular and spiritual needs would both be met. In other words, in return for labor, the slave received payment in the form of secular education and religious instruction. Though

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<sup>283</sup> Letter from the Choctaw Mission, March 31, 1848, Folder 8, Item 53, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>284</sup> Statement respecting the employment of slaves at the southwestern missions, Jan 23, 1837, Folder 9, Item 11, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>285</sup> Letter from the Choctaw Mission, March 31, 1848.

<sup>286</sup> Statement respecting the employment of slaves, Jan 23, 1837.

born from the need for labor, missionary participation in slavery evolved into a mechanism through which the missionaries prosecuted evangelism.

In keeping with this logic, the Board also argued that slavery held a legitimate place in the missions because slave labor freed the missionaries to attend to the education and conversion of the Indians. The Board clearly articulated this position in response to a dispute which arose in the Choctaw mission. Discomfort with the employment of slaves led the missionaries to take the extraordinary step of closing the mission schools as a way to reduce labor demands. Work would focus only on supporting the needs of the churches and missionaries. Missionaries reasoned that the schools could only remain open if they could run without slave labor. “The last vote was passed to diminish the schools at the end of the present year, provided we cannot otherwise dispense with slave labor,” reported Kingsbury.<sup>287</sup> The Board, however, saw this decision as a serious threat to its mission because the schools provided both religious and secular instruction and, along with the churches, represented the vital organs through which the mission converted the Choctaw. As soon as the news of the schools’ impending closure reached the Board, it responded by emphatically stating that it would not permit the missionaries to discontinue school operations. The Board tried to avoid an outright confrontation by counseling that every effort to hire free white laborers in place of hired slaves should be made. And in an apparent conciliatory move, Jeremiah Evarts proposed that the Board send “proper persons from the North,” or that the missionaries “hire white men, who have long resided in the parts of the country” bordering the mission. However, if these measures proved

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<sup>287</sup> Cephas Washburn to Jeremiah Evarts, October 27, 1828, ABC 18.3.1 v. 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

insufficient, Evarts made it clear that the missions could and should hire slaves. “[T]he Committee have no doubts as to the lawfulness of hiring slaves in your circumstances, unless some other provision can be made for necessary labor.” Well aware of the problems generated by the employment of slaves, the Board nonetheless asserted that the education of Indians was more important than avoidance of slave labor.<sup>288</sup>

In defending its position, the Board argued that the question at hand had implications for its larger evangelical project. If it allowed the schools to close, the repercussions could derail the entire Choctaw mission. Evarts explained that the missionaries had to fulfill the promises and obligations they had made in order that they not lose the Indians’ confidence in the mission. “We are under solemn obligations to these people to educate their children” he argued. He then asked “how would the general disgust and dissatisfaction of the Choctaws be avoided” if the Board agreed to the school closure. Revealing the depth of the Board’s anxiety, Evarts claimed that the missionaries’ decision threatened to undo all the success Indian evangelism had already generated. “These means of usefulness are placed at our disposal, and if we relinquish them, and they are perverted, we cannot clear ourselves from blame,” wrote Evarts. “It is a solemn and awful consideration, that though it is hard to go to the heathen and to build up Christian institutions among them, it is easy to do harm, to bring reproach upon a good cause, and to relinquish advantages, which it has taken so much time and labor to gain.”<sup>289</sup> Closing the mission’s schools would strain relations between the missionaries

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<sup>288</sup> Jeremiah Evarts to Cyrus Kingsbury, February 6, 1827, ABC 1.01 v. 5, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

and the Indians and threaten the “Christian institutions” the missionaries had so diligently worked to construct.

Members of the Board also feared that closure of the school would jeopardize their entire evangelizing project. Evarts cautioned that shutting down the schools would send the message that missionaries viewed the Indians as unassimilable. The public would assume that the missionary efforts to convert the Indians were unachievable. “Can this [closing the schools] be done,” Evarts asked “without discouraging missionary enterprise, and saying, in the most expressive language, that the situation of our Indians is hopeless: This subject is of great importance in its bearing upon the Choctaw mission, upon the state of the Indians generally, and upon missionary exertions at large.”<sup>290</sup> Larger political concerns most likely reinforced the Board’s worry that closing the schools would have broader repercussions. The debate over the Choctaw schools occurred in 1827 when the question of Indian removal was percolating as a topic of national political significance. Closing the schools could have lent support to pro-removal advocates – a growing number in the southern states – who claimed that Indians were incapable of assimilation.<sup>291</sup> The Board won this battle, as the Choctaw schools remained open and the missionaries continued to hire black slaves. The argument that slavery could promote evangelism prevailed.

Despite such efforts to cast slavery in the most favorable of lights, the institution continued to cause dissension and fracture. For example, in October of 1826 during a meeting of the southern missions, some of the attendees forced a vote on a resolution to

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> See Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier* (Cambridge, MA, 2005) and *The Legal Ideology of Removal: the Southern Judiciary and the Sovereignty of Native American Nations* (Athens, GA, 2002)



ban the hire of slave labor. Although the resolution passed, it was in effect for only a short time due to the missions' continued need for labor. "At one time a resolution of the family was passed not to hire slaves, but we soon found that we must yield to necessity," reported Washburn.<sup>292</sup>

The fact that slavery remained a problematic issue forced the preachers to seek a new way to address those most deeply concerned with it. To meet the objections of their antislavery brethren, pro-slavery missionaries decided to institute a new policy that appears, at first glance, to have been paradoxical. Rather than hiring slaves, missionaries would purchase them. Those who promoted this plan presented it as a means of helping enslaved people. Through purchase, missionary masters would be in a better position to provide slaves with religious instruction: they would also gain the ability to provide them with the promise of freedom. Preachers envisioned a process of gradual emancipation in which a missionary would purchase a slave who would then enter into a labor contract with his owner. The slave would agree to work for a number of years until he, or she, had paid off the purchase price. At that point the formerly enslaved person would be free to leave or to continue to work on the mission "as hired persons." Cyrus Kingsbury reasoned that it would take a slave "6 to 8 years" to repay his or her price, and remarked that this process could be repeated until the missionaries "ultimately became the owners of all the slaves [they] might need to hire."<sup>293</sup> The missionaries would foster symbiotic rather than exploitive master-slave relationships in which the preachers would have access to needed labor, and the slaves would ultimately be rewarded with freedom.

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<sup>292</sup> Cephas Washburn to Jeremiah Evarts, October 27, 1828, ABC 18.3.1 v. 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>293</sup> CK to JE, October 6, 1825, Folder 6, Item 44, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

As early as 1825, Kingsbury had already begun the task of convincing the Board of the benefits of this new plan. He started by pointing out that slaves would be freed. In a letter to Jeremiah Evarts, Kingsbury stated “Another subject I would submit for consideration is that of purchasing instead of hiring slaves.” “I presume,” he continued, “you will not be startled by this proposal,” as the purchase of slaves “would be with the full & explicit understanding, that they were to be free after a certain period.” Because the end result would be emancipation, missionaries would be providing a “service...to the cause of humanity...”<sup>294</sup> asserted Kingsbury. Apparently Evarts and the Board found the argument compelling. They soon approved of the new plan.

The plan likewise pleased missionaries in the field. By the late 1820s, this scheme had healed the rifts that slavery opened among the American Board preachers. Kingsbury reported that the “unhappy division of sentiment & feeling among ourselves, as to the propriety of hiring slaves...” had been removed, and that “[t]he brethren at this station have considered the subject, all approve.”<sup>295</sup> As a result of the agreement, both the Choctaw and Cherokee missions became more deeply involved in slaveholding. Missionaries began to bring slaves to the missions, and actively sought out slaveholders from whom they could make purchases. As a report of 1837 explained

The manner of accomplishing it [buying slaves] was briefly and substantially this, The missionary learned that some person holding slaves was willing to part with one: after ascertaining the sum demanded and making a liberal estimate of the annual value of the slave’s labor, deducting the necessary expenses, he would go to the slave, acquaint him fully with the labors, treatment & privileges to be expected at the station, and then ask him whether he was willing to labor there a specified number of years, perhaps five or six, at the expiration of that time, if

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

indeed he might become a free man? It was virtually proposing and advancing the money for the slave, with which he might purchase his own freedom.<sup>296</sup>

It appears that this procedure enabled missionaries to see slaveholding as beneficial to slaves. This is certainly how missionary Cassandra Sawyer Lockwood viewed slavery in the Cherokee mission. Lockwood, along with her husband, the Rev. Lockwood, served under Cephas Washburn at Dwight Station, Arkansas. Rev. Lockwood died at the mission in 1834, prompting his wife to return to her home in New England. Recalling her time with the Cherokee, she explained that the missionaries bought slaves with the intention of freeing them. “The missionaries always endeavor to contract with the master,” she wrote, “so that the slaves shall receive the rewards of their labor, & thus be able to buy their liberty.” She added that slaves also received the benefits of religion. “Many have consequently been relieved from bondage & some have become decidedly pious.”<sup>297</sup> From Lockwood’s perspective, slavery allowed the mission to advance the twin causes of freedom and evangelism.

Cephas Washburn likewise viewed missionary slaveholding as a way to provide slaves with freedom and religious instruction. He argued that slaves saw indenture as an opportunity because missionaries, in comparison to other masters, were in a strong and unique position to provide them with the means of “improvement.” Washburn explained that he had purchased a slave who had “begged” to be rescued him from his “cruel” master. Even though Washburn’s account suggests that the slave manipulated him by playing on Washburn’s desire to evangelize, it is nonetheless revealing of missionary

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<sup>296</sup> Statement respecting the employment of slaves at the southwestern missions, Jan 23, 1837. Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>297</sup> Cassandra Sawyer Lockwood to Female Reform Society. February 9, 1839. Roberta Robey Collection, Minor Archives, Box R-33, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

attitudes. The slave claimed that his master was “opposed to religion” and “unwilling” that slaves receive instruction in spiritual matters. Washburn’s slave must have known that this case would win Washburn’s sympathy, and Washburn was all too willing to take advantage of the situation. Through religious instruction, he provided the slave with “the rudiments of education” and the ability to “enjoy the means of grace.”<sup>298</sup>

Cyrus Kingsbury also used his role as master to evangelize. His slaves did in fact acquire freedom after working for him for several years. In the meantime, Kingsbury educated them, indoctrinated them in the Christian religion, and prepared them to negotiate the world as free people. In 1845 he wrote a letter to David Greene, then Corresponding Secretary of the Board explaining his personal history as a slaveholder. Kingsbury reported that he had become a slaveholder on the insistence of his slaves. His first slave, Hannah, had “requested that I purchase her, as she did not wish to return to her owner.” Likewise, George Freeman, Kingsbury’s second slave, “was very desirous that I should place him in a situation to obtain his freedom.” The third slave Bartley had “wished to be at a place where he would be comfortably provided for, and where he could enjoy the advantages of religious instruction.” According to Kingsbury, the slaves had sought him out because they believed he could provide freedom, religion, or better conditions than did their current masters.<sup>299</sup> He claimed, moreover, they were far better off for having been held by him. Through his stewardship they had earned freedom and placed themselves on the road to salvation. Hannah was a “member of the Church” and enjoyed “the inestimable privileges of freedom.” George Freeman after being

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<sup>298</sup> Cephas Washburn to Jeremiah Evarts, October 27, 1828 ABC 18.3.1.v. 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>299</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to David Greene, December 25, 1844, Folder 9, Item 8, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

emancipated had found “constant employment at the Dwight Mission, receive[d] liberal wages, & ha[d] a fair reputation as a Christian.” As for Bartley, he had become “united to the Church.”<sup>300</sup>

That Kingsbury used his power as a slaveholder to augment his ability to evangelize is evident from accounts of Hannah’s conversion. The Mayhew mission journal recorded that Hannah had strongly resisted conversion. “The black woman has lived in our family about 17 months . For some time she manifested no solicitude on the subject of religion.” To overcome her recalcitrance, Kingsbury forced her to listen to the counsel of several missionaries, and “for several weeks” efforts were made to convert her. The journal reported that she finally showed the “meekness which renders true religion” and she was therefore admitted as a member of the church. Hannah ultimately relented and apparently accepted Christianity. Hannah’s motivations remain unknown, but from Kingsbury’s perspective, her enslavement functioned precisely as planned.<sup>301</sup>

Just as black slavery mediated the partnership between Natives and missionaries, so too did the institution of Indian captivity. And just as both Natives and missionaries used black slavery in service of their interests, likewise did they each exploit captivity for their own ends. More particularly, Natives used captivity to place themselves in a position in which they could call on the missionaries as allies who would defend their lands. And missionaries used captivity to support evangelism. Though I have no specific numbers, it was not uncommon for the Cherokee to give the missionaries captives as gifts. Missionaries would accept these captives into their care, give them English names,

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Mayhew Journal, Choctaw Mission, January 4, 1823, Folder 9, Item 21, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

and then enroll them in the mission schools and churches. Several cases illuminate this practice. In September of 1818 the Cherokee captured a four or five year old Osage girl<sup>302</sup> and gave her to the missionaries, who then renamed her Lydia Carter. She was later baptized at Brainerd mission station, and lived with the missionaries until her death three years later.<sup>303</sup> In December of 1818, another Cherokee had obtained an Osage captive and “would leave this boy with us [the missionaries].”<sup>304</sup> In addition, John Ross acquired and then gave an Osage captive to the missionaries in 1818.<sup>305</sup> And in 1826, missionary and physician Marcus Palmer informed Jeremiah Evarts of the death of yet another Osage captive the missionaries had had in their care.<sup>306</sup>

Why did Natives give captured slaves to the missionaries? The answer lies in the social value Indians attached to captive gift-giving. The Cherokee traditionally used the practice to strengthen social relationships. According to the principle of reciprocity, the group that received the gift incurred an obligation. The Cherokee perceived the missionaries as potentially useful Anglo allies who could be called upon to intercede on their behalf, especially in regards to land, dealings with Americans, and relations with the United States. From their perspective, captive gift-giving obligated missionaries to provide assistance in the vital matter of disputes over land.

Captive gift giving also facilitated relationships between Natives and missionaries. For example, in 1817 the important Cherokee leader, Major Ridge, offered

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<sup>302</sup> Cherokee Mission Journal, September 28, 1818, ABC 18.3.1 v. 2, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>303</sup> Journal of the Arkansas Mission to the Cherokee at Dwight, Alfred Finney and Cephas Washburn, Jan 8 to May 2, 1821. ABC 18.3.1 v. 1, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>304</sup> Phillips and Phillips, *The Brainerd Journal*, p. 96.

<sup>305</sup> Ard Hoyt to Jeremiah Evarts, January 29, 1818. ABCFM 18.3.1 v. 3, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>306</sup> Marcus Palmer to Jeremiah Evarts, November 8, 1826, ABC 18.3.1 v. 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

the missionaries a captive to redress the misbehavior of his children.<sup>307</sup> Major Ridge had placed both his son and his daughter in the mission school at Brainerd station, and had subsequently heard that they had acted defiantly toward their teachers. Over a dinner with the missionaries he asked them about his children's behavior. "I hear" he stated "that my children were so bad." He then added "I have brought a little Loosa [Creek] girl, which I took in the war a prisoner, and design to leave her."<sup>308</sup> From Ridge's point of view, his offer to give the Creek captive to the missionaries was atonement for any offense caused by his children's actions. More specifically, the gift of the girl was meant to heal the relationship between the Cherokee and the missionaries by paying for the insult suffered by the teacher.

If Natives had their own agenda in supplying captives to missionaries, the preachers had their own reasons for accepting the gifts. In Indian captivity, the missionaries perceived an opportunity to extend the reach of evangelism. For one, captives represented promising prospects for conversion. After all, captives were removed from their families, homes, and cultures, and were consequently less able to resist efforts to alter their beliefs. In addition, captives were often young. The American Board and its missionaries had long believed that children were more susceptible to conversion as they had not grown as attached to the "customs of their fathers." This logic helps explain why every captive the missionaries mentioned as under their "care" was a child.

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<sup>307</sup> Major Ridge was also known as "The Ridge." He was a leading member of the Treaty Party. He signed the Treaty of New Echota in 1835, and was later killed by the Cherokee, along with Elias Boudinot and Ridge's son John Ridge, for doing so.

<sup>308</sup> Cherokee Mission Journal, July 6, 1817, ABC 18.3.1 v. 2, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

Beyond a supply of ready converts, the missionaries took in Indian captives because they believed they would be useful to efforts to expand the reach of Indian evangelism. The zeal of the American Board missionaries did not end with the Cherokee or Choctaw. They looked further afield, planning to reach tribes farther west. Their hope was that Native converts would provide the manpower for this ambitious project. Ideally, these converts would come from tribes that were already in the West. They envisioned captives eventually serving as missionaries and interpreters to tribes the American Board had yet to reach. In 1826 at the annual meeting of the southern missions, a resolution was drafted that read “Resolved that it is desirable that a competent number of Indian youths from the principal unevangelized tribes be procured & placed in circumstances to qualify them to become missionaries or to act as interpreters & teachers of their own language to missionaries & that measures ought, as soon as practicable, to be taken for the accomplishment of this object.”<sup>309</sup> Since captives generally came from those “unevangelized” tribes living on the western borders of the southern Indians among whom the missionaries resided, captives represented the most accessible pool from which to draw the “Indian youths” the preachers wanted. Missionaries perceived captives as prime candidates, who in the future would serve as agents of the Gospel.

The intersection of Native and missionary interests within the system of Indian captivity could lead to extraordinary cooperation. For example, in 1819 the Cherokee had sold a captive Osage boy to a white slave trader.<sup>310</sup> Missionary William Chamberlin

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<sup>309</sup> Cephas Washburn to Jeremiah Evarts, November 13, 1826. ABC 18.3.1 Vol. 6, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>310</sup> Indian captives of the Cherokee were subject to sale to white slave traders. Evidence of this practice is found in the Journal of the Cherokee Mission at Brainerd, October 10, 1819, ABCFM 18.3.1 v.2, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.



learned that the slave trader had subsequently sold the boy to a white man. Chamberlin became anxious that the boy would fall into “perpetual slavery” and brought his concerns to the influential Cherokee, John Ross. Ross pledged that he would reacquire the boy, and soon received written permission from President Monroe to enter the United States and, for all intents and purposes, steal the boy. After going to great effort to locate him, Ross and “two assistants” found the boy two hundred and fifty miles from the mission, lying “entirely naked in the yard before the house” belonging to his master. After they brought him back to the mission, they noted that the boy “appear[ed] delighted with his new situation.”<sup>311</sup> Missionaries took care to point out that they could now educate and convert him.

### **The Cherokee-American Board Alliance and the Recognition of Native Sovereignty**

The support slave systems provided to Native-missionary relations was important because Natives exploited those relations to defend their lands. As described in the preceding chapters, Natives did so in a variety of ways. During the 1810s and 20s, Cherokee leaders like Pathkiller, John Ross, and Charles Hicks approached missionaries for help in protecting their lands from whites. In addition, they used partnerships with Anglos to advocate for their land rights, and by the late 1820s they had teamed with Anglos in a national political campaign against removal. In particular, the American Board and its missionaries were central to efforts to prevent Indian dispossession, and were vital to the development and growth of the national antiremoval campaign. Board Secretary Jeremiah Evarts and Cherokee Chief John Ross were the two people most

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<sup>311</sup> Cherokee Mission Journal, August 17, 1819, ABCFM 18.3.1 v. 2, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

directly responsible devising the strategy that would launch the movement in 1829. For Natives and missionaries on the ground, slavery was an important and enduring aspect of their interactions that strengthened and helped sustain their relations.

Though the Native strategy of allying with sympathetic Anglos failed to prevent removal, it was not abandoned. After the Removal Act was signed into law in 1830, the Cherokee continued to exploit their alliance with the American Board in the hopes of keeping their lands. More specifically, the Cherokee and the Board developed a new strategy that centered on gaining legal recognition of Indian sovereignty. The Cherokee and the Board looked to the United States Supreme Court to establish the Cherokee as a sovereign nation. Acquiring legal recognition of Native sovereignty would help Indians more effectively challenge state laws designed to promote dispossession.

After the passage of the Indian Removal Act in May of 1830, John Ross and Jeremiah Evarts worked to establish Cherokee sovereignty as a matter of law. Georgia's extension law presented an opportunity to do so. The controversy centered on Georgia's claim that its sovereignty overrode that of the Cherokee Nation. Georgia argued that since much of Cherokee territory lay within state boundaries, it had the right to "extend" its laws over Cherokee lands. In June of 1830 the Cherokee travelled to Washington D.C. and engaged the services of attorney William Wirt. Wirt asked the Supreme Court to issue an injunction against the state of Georgia. He argued that the Cherokee were sovereign and that consequently Georgia could not extend its laws over them. In 1831 the Supreme Court denied the injunction request, ruling that the Cherokee did not constitute a state completely independent of the United States. The court's decision sidestepped the

issue of sovereignty by stating that the Cherokee constituted a “domestic dependent nation,” a ruling that left open the possibility of limited Native sovereignty.

Soon thereafter another controversy gave the Indians an opportunity to press their case again. Georgia had ordered that white men, including missionaries, apply for a permit to reside among the Indians. In response, the Cherokee asserted that Georgia had no basis for imposing the requirement as Cherokee lands were sovereign. The missionaries Samuel Worcester and Elizur Butler defied the law and refused to acquire the permits. Georgia authorities responded by arresting and imprisoning them. The missionaries sued, and in 1832 the case reached the U.S. Supreme Court under the name of *Worcester v. the State of Georgia*. The judges’ ruling was a significant legal victory for the Cherokee and for Native Americans more broadly. Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that the Cherokee, along with other Native nations, were distinct communities with limited sovereignty that could not be infringed upon by the states. Natives held sovereign powers second only to those of the United States. In effect, the case established that Native nations possessed a degree of sovereignty akin to that of the individual states. In relation to states, tribes were equally sovereign.

This ruling represents one of the most important outcomes of the Cherokee alliance with the American Board. Their joint legal fight led directly to United States recognition of Cherokee sovereignty. Far from being in vain, the Cherokee-American Board partnership yielded a significant if limited result. President Jackson ignored the *Worcester v. Georgia* ruling in order to remove the Cherokee and other tribes. Subsequently, others have used the ruling to attack tribal sovereignty. However, the

recognition of limited tribal sovereignty established a vital legal precedent that Natives have repeatedly employed to defend their claims.

### **Abolition and the Native-Missionary Alliance**

Just as Natives used alliances with the American Board missionaries to protect their lands, they also used them to protect their slave property. Native slaveholders, like their Anglo counterparts, became increasingly nervous as the abolition movement grew in the 1830s. To protect their human property, Indian masters put pressure on the missionaries and compelled them to defend Indian ownership of slaves.

Ironically, the American Board became one of the first, and certainly one of the most consistent, entities to direct abolitionist agitation towards the Indians. As many of its financial supporters warmed to abolition, they began putting pressure on the Board to force its missionaries to give up their slaves and to convince the Indians to do the same. Native slaveholders used the missionaries to block the Board's abolitionist efforts. For example, in 1836 the Board passed a resolution that, for all intents and purposes, was a directive to emancipate mission slaves. The resolution drew impassioned responses from the missionaries who argued that the adoption of any form of abolition would threaten evangelism by straining relationships with Native slaveholders. Speaking on behalf of the Cherokee Mission, Cephas Washburn, James Orr, and Aaron Gray argued that missionary slaveholding was vital to garnering the political support of Native leaders, some of who were on the verge of becoming "bitterly opposed to the Indian missions" due to their fear that the missions would become conduits for northern abolitionism. The preachers explained that many missionaries perceived "slavery as a sin," but Washburn, Orr, and

Gray warned that “it would not greatly surprise us, if the resolution in question should be the occasion of removing many if not all of the missionaries from the southwestern Indians.”<sup>312</sup> They worried that if Native slaveholders perceived the missionaries as proponents of abolition, they would turn fellow Indians against the mission. In response to these concerns, the Board withdrew its resolution.

However, as the national debate over slavery intensified during the 1840s, awareness and concern over mission slavery increased. The Board received several letters and numerous memorials from northern evangelicals expressing concern that mission slavery would encourage the spread of the institution. Authors of a typical memorial, feared the effects on the Indians of “members of mission churches holding slaves.”<sup>313</sup> Another memorial claimed that missionaries had become “propagators of a slaveholding Christianity”<sup>314</sup> who seemed to teach Indians that they could embrace God and slavery simultaneously.

The Board responded by forming a committee to investigate mission slavery. In 1845, Secretary Greene penned letters to both the Cherokee and Choctaw missions which, among other things, asked about “the number of slaves” held by church members, “the instructions...which the missionaries have given ...church members relative to slavery,” and “the manner in which slaveholders in the mission churches treat their

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<sup>312</sup> Cephas Washburn, James Orr, Aaron Gray to David Greene, May 26, 1836, ABC 18.3.1 v. 9, ABCFM Records, Houghton Library.

<sup>313</sup> David Greene to Cyrus Kingsbury, November 1844, Folder 3, Item 6, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>314</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury, Alfred Wright, Cyrus Byington, Ebenezer Hotkins, C.C. Copeland and D.H. Winshib to the Prudential Committee, March 31, 1848, Folder 8, Item 53, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

slaves.”<sup>315</sup> Greene also addressed the possibility of using the mission churches to promote abolition. What were “the prospects as to the abolishment of slavery,” and “what impediments [stood] in the way of emancipation?”<sup>316</sup> While portrayed as disinterested inquiries intended only to obtain information, Greene’s questions reveal the Board’s hope that the missionaries would use their position to diminish Native reliance on slaves.

The missionaries’ response was to argue that they could not force change upon the Indians, but rather needed to rely on cooperation to promote incremental, yet significant, changes. Behind the voices of the preachers, were those of Native slaveholders who had made it clear that they would not brook any involvement with abolition. When Cyrus Kingsbury drafted the Choctaw mission’s response to Greene, he stated plainly that “[a]s missionaries, we cannot interfere directly with the subject of slavery.” He added that collaborative relations had already yielded positive results in terms of ameliorating the evils of slavery. Kingsbury claimed that Native masters, who learned the Gospel, showed greater humanity towards their slaves. He explained that “painful instances still occur in which the life of the slave is sacrificed to the ungovernable passions of those who have no fear of God before their eyes.” However, “[t]hose who own slaves...& who are members of our churches, treat their slaves with humanity.” According to Kingsbury, Christianity’s ability to foster sincere transformations in the character and morality of slaveholders represented the best hope for an effective remedy to slavery. He concluded by reiterating the value of cooperation.

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<sup>315</sup> David Greene to Cyrus Kingsbury, November 1844, Folder 3, Item 6, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

“There can be no prospect of benefiting the slave, in a slave country, without the consent of the owner” wrote Kingsbury.<sup>317</sup>

Those Board members who most staunchly opposed slavery were not impressed with Kingsbury’s response, and they continued to argue that the missionaries should use their influence to promote emancipation. In November of 1845 a Board official, Dr. Bacon, introduced four policy resolutions that would have forced the missionaries to take a stronger stance against slavery and Indian slaveholders. He hoped to prevent slaveholding Indians from joining or remaining in the churches, and he wanted to make it clear that the missionaries favored antislavery. Among other things, the resolutions stated that “slavery...is at war with the principles of Christianity,” that “the existence of slavery...in the Choctaw and Cherokee nations is deeply to be lamented,” and that “the master who buys and sells human beings, as merchandise, for gain...does not give satisfactory evidence of being born of God.”<sup>318</sup> These resolutions were designed to create a hostile environment for Indian slaveholders, and to force the missionaries to withhold church fellowship from slaveholding congregants.

In the end, the Board retreated from this position because missionaries argued that any church support for abolition would alienate the very people they were hoping to convert. In voting to reject Bacon’s resolutions, the Board expressed fear that denunciations of slavery would destabilize missionary-Native relations and interfere with evangelism. Because “these resolutions, if adopted by the Board, might be used by

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<sup>317</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to David Greene, May 31, 1845, Folder 9, Item 4, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>318</sup> David Greene to Cyrus Kingsbury, Cyrus Byington, A. Worcester, and A. Hitchcock, November 19, 1845, Folder 3, Item 5, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

unfriendly persons, to embarrass the missionaries, and prevent their exerting the salutary influence which they might otherwise exert, in relation to slavery, they were not adopted by the Board,” wrote Greene.<sup>319</sup>

Though it retreated, the Board did not entirely surrender its position. Many of its supporters were abolitionists and the Board feared that they might withdraw their financial support if slavery persisted in the missions. “A desire was, however, expressed,” wrote Greene “that these resolutions should in some manner come under the notice of the Missionaries among the Choctaws and Cherokees, and that it should be understood that they express the feelings of the great body of ministers and private Christians, in New England, and elsewhere, who are most interested in the missionary work, [and] most liberal in supporting it.” More problematic for the missionaries was Greene’s instruction that they impart antislavery attitudes to the Indians. “[T]hey at the same time desire,” stated Greene, “that you should do whatever you can, as discreet Christian men, and missionaries of the Lord Jesus, to give the Indians correct views on this subject, and to induce them to take measures as speedily as possible to bring this system of wrong and oppression to an end.”<sup>320</sup>

The missionaries understood that the influence of slaveholding Indian church members would make it impossible for them to start espousing abolitionism. The Board’s position put them in an untenable position and set the stage for deepening conflict. Predictably, the missionaries responded to the Board’s directives by explaining that they could not promote abolition. They justified their position in pragmatic terms, arguing that

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.



an attempt to spread abolitionist ideology would be both impractical and ineffective in helping to improve the condition of mission slaves. They asserted that spreading the Gospel was the best means of aiding slaves. In 1848, members of the Choctaw mission drafted a letter to the Board in which they explained their position.

Of late years the subject of slavery has awakened a deep & growing interest in the minds of a large number of our best friends & patrons in our fatherland... we have been often told that a great change has taken place at the North & that we have not kept pace with the change... And we wish that you & all our friends here & elsewhere to be assured that we feel much more pleasure and satisfaction in the hope of doing masters & servants good by preaching the Lord Jesus directly to them, than we can in explaining & enforcing the prominent principles of equal rights ... We feel that the Bible contains all that we have need to know or teach. And we prefer to use the plain language of the bible just as it is upon the subject of slavery to any other code of principles or plans of operation.<sup>321</sup>

The Choctaw mission acknowledged that northern attitudes about slavery had greatly changed, and that many thought that the missionaries were out of touch with the depth of antislavery sentiment felt by many. However, they asserted that they were “doing good” for slaves and slaveholders in the most effective manner possible. In the slaveholding Cherokee and Choctaw nations, Native slaveholders constituted a powerful interest. “We should be careful how we risk the spiritual interest committed to us by attempting to manage worldly ones,” warned the members of the Choctaw mission.<sup>322</sup> If the American Board preachers were to evangelize, they had to protect Indian slaveholders by ensuring that the missions would not morph into conduits for abolition.

Native slaveholders did not rely solely on the missionaries’ goodwill to contain abolition. Rather they took decisive action to ensure missionaries would do so. Cyrus Kingsbury’s personal experience with the prominent Choctaw slaveholder, Israel Folsom,

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<sup>321</sup> Statement of Choctaw Missionaries, March 31, 1848, Folder 8, Item 53, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

illuminates one of their most effective tactics – the threat of leaving the church. Folsom had been educated at the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut, and had long been exposed to Christianity and Protestant culture. He had returned to the Choctaw Nation after leaving Connecticut.<sup>323</sup> In 1848, Folsom heard rumors that Kingsbury was an abolitionist and wrote to inform him that he was leaving the mission church because he feared the church's stance on slavery. "I think on the whole it will be best for me and [my] wife to form a connection with some other church whose sentiments are one with us on slavery." As further explanation, Folsom added that he feared "we can never agree on this question" and so felt "a desire within me to separate."<sup>324</sup>

To be more certain of Kingsbury's views on slavery, Folsom sent him a list of questions. Even though Kingsbury was himself a slave owner, Folsom felt the need to ask him if he would oppose a master selling his slave, and whether he would "make private and individual efforts to abolish slavery?"<sup>325</sup> To this Kingsbury replied that he would only teach the Gospel, but that he believed that the Gospel "is directly calculated to remove the evils of slavery." This stirred Folsom's ire. Three weeks later he wrote "I am convinced that there cannot be any prospect of our agreeing on this subject at all." He then added that he and Kingsbury so "widely differ in our views on the slavery question, that I do not see how we could all remain in one church...I find that you are more of a

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<sup>323</sup> The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, signed in 1831 provided for the removal of the Choctaw Nation.

<sup>324</sup> Israel Folsom to Cyrus Kingsbury December 20, 1847, Folder 9, Item 10, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>325</sup> CK to IF, April 8, 1848, Folder 9, Item 10, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

northern man and intermeddle yourself too much about the abolition doctrine.”<sup>326</sup> Folsom further warned that any hint of church support for abolition would drive other Choctaw away from Christianity. “[Y]ou will...stop the good work of God, by chilling the hearts of the Choctaw christians, who were just beginning to improve in the christian religion.” thundered Folsom.<sup>327</sup> Native slaveholders like Folsom did all they could to goad the missionaries into serving as allies on the slavery question.

The tactic worked. Rattled by the warning, Kingsbury sent a copy of the correspondence between himself and Folsom to Board Secretary S.B. Treat with the intent of demonstrating the harmful consequences of mission engagement in the politics of slavery. He explained that “Mr. F[olsom]’s letter may be of interest at this time as furnishing an index of the state of feeling among an important portion of the community, who have heretofore been under our instruction.” He added “there is a strong slavery interest...and it is easy to get up an excitement.”<sup>328</sup> For the missionaries, the most important question surrounding the slavery issue was not whether or not blacks would be emancipated. Rather, it was whether or not abolition would ultimately drive a wedge between themselves and the Indians. Choctaw slaveholders were well aware of the missionaries’ fear and used it to their advantage. In essence, they leveraged their religious participation against the missionaries in order to compel them to protect Indian slave interests.

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<sup>326</sup> IF to CK, May 1, 1848, Folder 9, Item 6, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to S.B. Treat, June 15, 1848, Folder 9, Item 6, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

Not only did missionaries protect Indian slave interests by keeping abolition out of the churches; they also did their best to downplay or conceal the Board's abolitionist sympathies. For instance, in 1848 the missionaries, at the Board's request, prepared a report on slavery within the Choctaw Nation. The missionaries advised the Board that they wanted the report to remain private. "It was... thought that it would not be best that it should go as a joint communication from the Missions; as in that case it would probably be made public, and come back again to the nation and produce an unfavorable excitement here." They feared Choctaw slaveholders would see the report as threatening and would consequently work to persuade the National Council to move against the mission. They explained that there was a "portion of the Choctaws interested in slavery...[and that] the influence of these few is great in the Councils of the Nation."<sup>329</sup> In order to keep these politically potent slaveholders "under their instruction" the Board would have to be kept quiet.

By the mid-1850s, despite the missionaries' conciliatory actions, Choctaw slaveholders were becoming increasingly suspicious. In response, the missionaries became more brazen in their efforts to suppress evidence of the Board's support for abolition. In 1854, the Board announced that it wanted to raise the subject of abolition directly with the Choctaw National Council. The missionaries counseled against it, observing that the slaveholders "generally urge no objection against the Board or its missionaries, except as relates to the subject of slavery." They warned that if the Board were to broach the subject of abolition, then Choctaw slaveholders would paint the

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<sup>329</sup> Statement of Choctaw Missionaries, March 31, 1848, Folder 8, Item 53, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

mission as a politically threatening entity. “But should the [Board] bring the subject before council, in a way that will bring about a discussion on slavery, there is strong ground to apprehend that it would be productive of no good result. It would be represented by those favorable to slavery, as a political movement, gotten up by northern people, to establish an Abolition community in the Choctaw nation.”<sup>330</sup> The Board disregarded this advice and drafted a letter to the Council. The missionaries intercepted the letter and refused to deliver it. Kingsbury explained the decision. “I did not present your letter to the Choctaw council ...I will now just say that had we presented that letter, we should have been regarded as approving all its sentiments...I think the Choctaws generally will have no objection to the continuance of the mission of the board among them provided the slavery question is not agitated.”<sup>331</sup>

As slavery became increasingly divisive, the missionaries found it impossible to maintain allegiances both to the Board and to Native slaveholders. By the mid 1850s, the pressure was mounting. On the one hand, abolitionists placed substantial pressure on the Board. Complaints and concerns came from both internal and external sources. For example, a member of the Choctaw mission named Elizabeth Backus resigned her post because she was upset that the Board had failed to stop its missionaries from holding slaves. “Can I remain where my daily bread is prepared by the slave of a missionary,” she asked “without appearing to approve of the institution of Slavery?”<sup>332</sup> Prominent abolitionists also expressed concern. Lewis Tappan attacked the American Board because

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<sup>330</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to S.B. Treat, Aug 14, 1854 Folder 5, Item 34, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>331</sup> CK to S.B. Treat Jan 30, 1855 Folder 5, Item 32, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>332</sup> Elizabeth Backus to SB Treat May 8, 1854 Wheelock, Folder 5, Item 47, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

he feared that “a slave state was about to be inaugurated ... under the auspices of the Missionaries of the American Board.”<sup>333</sup> On the other hand, supporters of slavery were equally passionate in voicing their fears. They worried that the Board would use the missions to promote abolition. In 1858, a group of Native and white slaveholders allied against the missionaries and portrayed them as agents devoted to abolition. “In consequence of reports which have been industriously circulated in the surrounding settlements ...it is generally believed in Arkansas and Texas that the missionaries have been the cause of all the troubles among the Choctaws; and that the foundation of the whole has been Abolitionism,” reported Kingsbury.<sup>334</sup> By the late 1850s the situation had become untenable. In a final gesture designed to shore up their alliance with Choctaw slaveholders, the missionaries concluded to sever their connection to the Board. In 1859 the Choctaw Mission at last broke all ties with the American Board. Fear that Choctaw slaveholders would force the mission to disband if the relationship with the American Board continued, drove the missionaries to this extraordinary step. On the eve of the Civil War, the missionaries decidedly threw in their lot with southern slaveholders.

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There is no doubt that cooperation on the matter of slavery affected both Cherokee and Choctaw culture in significant ways. For one, as the slavery debate intensified in the post-Removal era, both tribes increasingly aligned their racial ideology with that of the southern United States as they adopted harsher and more clearly defined

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<sup>333</sup> Cyrus Kingsbury to S.B. Treat, October 18, 1858, Folder 5, Item 25, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

<sup>334</sup> CK to S.B. Treat, July 17, 1858 Folder 5, Item 26, Cyrus Kingsbury Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.

ideas about black inferiority. Each nation for instance established laws that were similar to the slave codes of southern states. Choctaw statutes sought to prevent slaves from learning to read, made manumission more difficult, and restricted slave ownership of property.<sup>335</sup> In 1888, the Choctaw even made it a felony to intermarry with blacks.<sup>336</sup> Cherokee laws restricted blacks as well. For example, in 1839 the Cherokee Council passed “An Act to prevent Amalgamation with Colored Persons” The law prohibited free Cherokee from marrying black slaves.<sup>337</sup> In 1850, the Council passed a law that prohibited anyone to trade with a slave unless he obtained the consent of the slave’s master.<sup>338</sup> It is no surprise that the Cherokee and Choctaw would assure that their racial order mirrored that of the southern United States. Indian Territory bordered the slaveholding states of Texas and Arkansas. If planters of those states perceived Cherokee and Choctaw as being anything other than wholly supportive of slavery, the Indians’ position would have become even more precarious than it already was.

In addition to Indian adoption of the legal apparatus that reinforced a hierarchical racial order, it is clear that Native-Anglo cooperation around slavery facilitated the missionary project and helped to make Christianity a persistent part of Cherokee and Choctaw societies. However, the reach of the Christian religion was not all that the missionaries hoped. In 1855, it was reported that there were five churches supported by the American Board. Collectively, they held only 207 confirmed Cherokee members.

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid, p. 46.

<sup>336</sup> A.R. Durant, *Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation together with the Treaties of 1837, 1855, 1865, and 1866* (Scholarly Resources, Inc, Wilmington, DE, 1973) p. 206. See section on “Criminal Offenses” Section VIII.

<sup>337</sup> An Act to prevent Amalgamation with Colored Persons, Cherokee National Council, September 19, 1839 in *Laws of the Cherokee Nation, Adopted by the Council at Various Periods* (Scholarly Resources Inc, Wilmington, DE, 1973), in section entitled “Laws of the Cherokee Nation,” p. 19.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid, *Laws of the Cherokee Nation*, p. 212.

And among the Choctaw, the Board had eleven churches with 1094 confirmed members. These numbers show that only small percentages of Cherokee and Choctaw became Christian under the auspices of the Board; roughly 1% of the Cherokee population, and 7% of the Choctaw population. However, the Board reported that numerous others “had been received” into churches run by the Moravians, Baptists, and Methodists.<sup>339</sup> In sum, decades of missionary work had resulted in the growth of Christian communities, albeit small ones, in both the Cherokee and Choctaw nations. It is significant that shortly after Removal John Ross requested that the Cherokee National Council *permit* various missionary organizations to reopen missions in Oklahoma. On September 27<sup>th</sup>, and again on the 28<sup>th</sup>, John Ross asked the Council to grant requests by the Moravians, Baptists, and American Board to recommence missions in Oklahoma.<sup>340</sup> Slavery had helped secure a Native-missionary relationship that ensured that evangelicals would move west and maintain a Christian presence among the Indians.

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<sup>339</sup> Leonard Woods, Bennet Tyler, Reuben Walworth, Thomas Williams, Calvin E. Stowe, Benjamin Tappan, David Sanford James W. Mclane, and David Greene, American Board Committee Report in response to “Memorials on Slavery,” from the 1845 Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, in Charles Whipple, *Relation of the American Board of commissioners for Foreign Missions to Slavery* (Negro Universities Press, New York, NY, 1969) p. 43.

<sup>340</sup> See John Ross to The National Council, September 27, 1839, and also John Ross to the National Council, September 28, 1839 in Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, p. 762-3.



## Chapter Five

### **“Where we have so long lived in peace & harmony with our white brethren:” The Fight over Buffalo Creek, 1837-1859**

#### **The Political Fight against the Treaty of Buffalo Creek**

On January 15, 1838, the Seneca Council house at Buffalo Creek was tense and chaotic. The Indians had called a council to discuss a removal treaty recently proposed by United States Indian Commissioner Ransom H. Gillet. The treaty stipulated that the Seneca, along with the other Iroquois Nations, would enter into a land exchange agreement with the United States. In 1831, the United States had made a treaty with the Menomonee, which involved the sale by the Indians of a tract of land near Green Bay, Wisconsin. The United States government then gave this land to the Iroquois to induce them to emigrate westward. However, only a small percentage of the Iroquois had removed. The new treaty stipulated that the Iroquois would exchange their remaining Wisconsin lands for a large tract in what is today Kansas.<sup>341</sup> The Ogden Land Company had a major stake in the outcome of this treaty and its agents were present at the treaty council. The Ogden Company held preemption rights<sup>342</sup> to Seneca land and wanted the

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<sup>341</sup> Removal the Six Nations was part of larger efforts by the U.S. government to remove Natives from east of the Mississippi River. The proposed treaty stipulated that the exchange of the Wisconsin land for the tract in Kansas was authorized under the Indian Removal Act; a law that provided the United States government with the legal authority to enter into land exchange agreements with Natives.

<sup>342</sup> The preemption right was a right to Indian lands in New York. This right derived from a dispute between Massachusetts and New York. After the Revolutionary War, both states claimed lands in what is today western New York. They settled their dispute in 1787. Massachusetts agreed to give up its claim and allow New York to take the land. Massachusetts reserved a “preemption right” to any Indian lands in New York, which meant that if Indians vacated New York lands, Massachusetts would have title to them. Subsequently, Massachusetts sold its preemption right to the Holland Land Company. The Holland Company then sold the right to the Ogden Land Company. The Ogden Company wanted to remove the Seneca so that they could exercise the preemption right. See Mary Conable, “A Steady Enemy: The Ogden Land Company and the Seneca Indians,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1994).

Indians removed to the Kansas site. The Company could then take ownership of the Seneca's New York lands, survey them, and sell them off in smaller plots.

Despite the fact that both United States and Ogden agents had made sustained efforts to convince the Seneca to accept the agreement, most Seneca remained set against it. The majority of Seneca chiefs who offered their opinions in open council argued against the treaty, articulating a variety of reasons why the Seneca should not go west. During these proceedings officials of the Ogden Company tried to persuade individual Seneca to support the treaty "by offering them sums of money and other advantages," or "by intimidation." However, the Seneca voted on the treaty and it failed by a large margin. In response, Commissioner Gillet quickly asked the Indians to close the council. What happened next is not entirely clear. But from all accounts Gillet reopened the Council "at a tavern" where he and the Ogden agents pressured some of the Seneca chiefs to sign the treaty. They used threats, bribes, and other "artifices" to persuade them.<sup>343</sup>

The fight over the Buffalo Creek Treaty, as it was soon called, began well before January of 1838. Before the opening of the treaty council partisans on both sides of the issue had dug in and fortified their positions. United States Indian Commissioners had pressured the Seneca to remove. So too had the Ogden Land Company. Its agents went to great lengths to ensure passage of the treaty. They secured the "influence" of particular Indians by offering these individuals money, lands, or other bribes. In return, the Indian would "undertake and agree to use their best exertions and endeavours to dispose and induce the said Indians [Seneca] to adopt & pursue the advice and recommendation of the

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<sup>343</sup> Protest of the delegation from the Seneca Nation in the State of New York against the ratification of the Buffalo Treaty, March 20, 1838, AA 44 Folder 6 # 55, Records of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee (Orthodox), Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

Government of the United States in respect to their removal.”<sup>344</sup> On the other hand, Quakers, evangelical missionaries, and most Seneca wanted the Indians to remain. Anglos wanted to continue Christianization and acculturation projects, and the Seneca desired to stay on their ancestral homelands. Just as the treaty’s proponents had worked to ensure its passage, opponents worked tirelessly to prevent it. On August 17, 1837 a group of Seneca “chiefs and warriors” sent a petition to the United States House of Representatives to “ask your humble body to let us stay where we are.”<sup>345</sup>

Factional politics among the Seneca complicated the removal issue. The Christian Party and the Pagan Party vied for influence and power. Simply stated, the Christian party was more favorable to Anglo influences, adoption of Christianity, farming, education, and English; while the nativistic Pagan Party supported policies that would allow the Seneca to keep ancestral cultural values and practices intact to the greatest degree possible. These divisions influenced positions on removal. The Pagan party saw removal as an opportunity to preserve Seneca culture as the Indians would be farther from white influences. The Christian Party tended to prefer to remain on Seneca lands, even if it meant more, or more thorough, adoption of Anglo-American practices. Seneca on both sides of the removal debate sought to advance their interests through alliances with Americans. Those Indians disposed to removal worked with United States Indian Commissioners and the Ogden Land Company, while those opposed to removal made use of their relations with Quakers.

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<sup>344</sup> Testimony of Witnesses to Bribery 1838, AA 44 Folder 5 #73, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>345</sup> Petition of the Chiefs and Warriors of the Allegheny Against Making a Treaty, Sent to the House of Representatives, August 17, 1837, AA 44 Folder 4 #140, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

This chapter focuses on the antiremoval alliance that developed between Seneca on the Allegheny reservation and the Philadelphia Orthodox Quakers. More specifically, it investigates the political efforts to stop the enactment of the Treaty of Buffalo Creek; it also explores socio-cultural changes within the Seneca Nation that developed after the fight against removal. I argue that joint Seneca-Quaker antiremoval efforts simultaneously preserved important elements of Seneca culture and sovereignty, while also infusing Anglo practices into Seneca society.

The Seneca and the Quakers both saw cultural adaptation as the best means to prevent removal. However, their understandings of what this meant in practice differed. The Seneca perceived selective adoption of Anglo-American practices not only as a means to hold on to their lands, but also as an avenue through which to preserve Seneca sovereignty. They wanted to develop economic and social connections - through formal education, work, and Christianity - to the United States, but also believed that they should remain a distinct and sovereign people. They did not consider the inculcation of Anglo practices into Seneca society as concomitant with an abandonment of Seneca cultural values. The Quakers on the other hand favored more drastic cultural change focused on Christianization and Seneca adoption of family farming.

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Once the Treaty of Buffalo Creek was signed in January of 1838, the Seneca and the Quakers quickly mobilized a shared plan of attack to stop its ratification. They each sent delegations to Washington, DC to protest the treaty. Maris Pierce, John Kennedy,

Israel Jimerson, and James Robinson represented the Seneca,<sup>346</sup> while the Quaker delegation comprised Sam Bettle, Thomas Evans, Joseph Elkinton, and Enoch Lewis. The Seneca were well acquainted with Anglos. Maris Pierce attended a Quaker grammar school and later went on to Dartmouth College.<sup>347</sup> And James Robinson had sent his son to live with Quakers in order to become a cobbler. Of the Quakers, Joseph Elkinton had the most direct experience with Indians. From 1816 until 1832 he lived at the Allegheny Reservation, where he oversaw the Indian school at Tunessassa. He also spoke fluent Seneca. He met and married his wife, Mary Nutt, while she served as a missionary at the reservation. Elkinton was a silversmith and soap maker by trade. Though he had left the Seneca in 1832, he remained a member of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee until shortly before his death in 1868.<sup>348</sup> Thomas Evans was a druggist. In 1833 he was one of the founders of Haverford College, and in 1844 would become a minister.<sup>349</sup> The delegations planned to meet with members of Congress and the President to argue that the treaty was obtained fraudulently, and to assert that most Seneca opposed both the treaty and removal.

When the delegations arrived in mid January of 1838 they scheduled an appointment to meet with President Van Buren and Secretary of War Joel Poinsett. Both the Seneca and Quaker delegations attended the subsequent meeting. Joseph Elkinton, the

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<sup>346</sup> Governor Blacksnake, John Pierce, Sky Pierce, Jacob Blacksnake to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Oct 31, 1838, AA41 Box 1, #92, Letters of Seneca to PYMIC 1801-49, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>347</sup> See Conable, "A Steady Enemy," p. 183.

<sup>348</sup> For biographical information on Joseph Elkinton see "Elkinton, Joseph, 1794-1868," in the Dictionary of Quaker Biography, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College. Also see Elkinton's obituary in *The Friend*, v.41, n. 27, February 29, 1868.

<sup>349</sup> For biographical information on Thomas Evans see "Evans, Thomas, 1798-1868," in the Dictionary of Quaker Biography, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

Quaker missionary who resided among the Seneca at Allegheny, translated as “James Robinson...spoke in the Indian language.” Robinson explained that since the Seneca were opposed to the treaty, he too opposed ratification. He added that the Seneca were “attached to their homes” and did not want to be “compelled to move.” Van Buren replied that the treaty “should be fully & impartially investigated and justice should be done them.” The Quakers felt compelled to add that the treaty had been procured through fraud and mismanagement. They produced evidence in the form of a letter obtained from a New York Congressman that revealed a deliberate decision by Commissioner Gillet to withhold the Seneca’s annuity in an attempt to blackmail them into signing the treaty. In the letter, Gillet had written that he had withheld annuity distribution pending “negotiations with the New York Indians.”<sup>350</sup>

The delegations also pressed their case with Congress. After meeting with the President and the Secretary of War, both delegations consulted members of the Senate, including most of the “the members of the Committee on Indians Affairs.”<sup>351</sup> In their meeting with the Senator Ambrose Sevier, the Committee’s chairman, the Quakers moved “for the printing” of the memorials. Sevier consented and distributed the memorials to members of the Committee. Emboldened by their success, the Quakers asked Senator James Buchanan, the future President, to copy and distribute the memorials to the entire Senate. Senator Buchanan complied with their request. Nor did the Quakers stop there. They also sought an audience in the House, as they believed that if the Senate

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<sup>350</sup> “To the Committee for the gradual Civilization and improvement of the Indian Natives,” April 12, 1838, AA42, #70, Legal, Land, Legislative, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

ratified the Treaty, the House might be persuaded to block funding.<sup>352</sup> The Quaker delegation therefore asked John Sargeant to copy and distribute the memorials, which he “cheerfully” agreed to do.<sup>353</sup> Meanwhile, the Seneca delegation distributed anti-treaty memorials signed by hundreds of their people.<sup>354</sup>

The Seneca memorials built their case around the assertion that the Buffalo Treaty was fraudulent. Many of them opened with a claim that the Indians did not desire to emigrate. “The great mass of our people are opposed to emigration and are determined not to leave their reservations”<sup>355</sup> read one document. The Treaty was a subversion of the will of the Seneca Nation, and was only agreed to through gross and flagrant fraud. The Indians argued that they had not agreed to the Treaty under normal political procedures as the chiefs never consented to it in open council. Agreements made outside the public forum of the council were neither legitimate nor binding. In addition, the Indians pointed out that those who signed the treaty were not authorized to do so. “Those persons who are stated to have signed said alledged [sic] Treaty, are not chiefs, never having been duly appointed by the nation...and therefore are not competent to act for the nation.”<sup>356</sup> From the Seneca perspective, the illegitimate status of the signatories meant that the treaty itself was invalid.

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<sup>352</sup> Sam Bettle and Thomas Evans to John Sargeant, March 27, 1838, AA41.1, Folder 11, #61, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>353</sup> Information on Quaker efforts to copy and distribute the antiremoval memorials is contained in Subcommittee to PYMIC, April 12, 1838, AA42, #70, page 6 of the document, Land, Legal, Legislative, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>354</sup> Quaker records indicate that of the approximately 2300 Seneca living on the four reservations, 1813 opposed removal. See “Statistical documents prepared at the Several reservations,” AA44, Folder 5, January-February, 1838, Legal, Land, Legislative, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>355</sup> Protest of the Delegation from the Seneca Nation in the State of New York against the ratification of the Buffalo Treaty, March 20, 1838, AA44 Folder 6, #55, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

The Indians' strongest argument for fraud was that threats and bribes had compelled the Seneca to sign. For instance, they charged that Ogden Company agents had claimed that if the Seneca failed to sign the treaty, the President would stop payment of their annuities. In addition, both U.S. officials and Ogden agents attempted to influence voting during the council by repeatedly offering "advantages and compensations" to individual chiefs if they voted in favor of the treaty. Bribery did not occur solely during the council. Rather, the Seneca described a pattern in which specific individuals had been paid to persuade the chiefs to accept the treaty. They explained that Commissioner Schermerhorn had bribed his Seneca interpreter, James Young, to support emigration by offering him use of Schermerhorn's Buffalo home, by clothing him in "gentlemen dress," and by giving him \$100 in cash.<sup>357</sup>

The Seneca supported their claims with proof. They brought a parade of witnesses before the New York State Supreme Court in Erie County to give depositions that revealed protracted attempts to persuade Seneca to campaign on behalf of the treaty. The Indians had the court draft affidavits of this testimony. A delegation then carried the affidavits to Washington and presented them to President Van Buren and Congress. The evidence was damning. One affidavit showed that Commissioner Heman Potter asked John Barker, "one of the chiefs of the Seneca Nation," to meet him at Orlando Allen's tavern. When Barker arrived, Potter "fastened the door" and then asked him if he was willing to sign the treaty. When Barker answered that he was not, Potter and another commissioner offered him \$40 to sign. John Seneca experienced something similar. The

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<sup>357</sup> Petition of the Chiefs of the Seneca Nation "To the Honourable Samuel Prentiss member of United States Senate," February 28, 1838, AA44 Folder 5, #47, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.



commissioners arranged to meet him at the same tavern. When he arrived, the commissioners lied telling him that the treaty was already in effect and that the Seneca would soon be headed west. They explained that he needed to sign the treaty in order to receive money for his home. John Seneca signed the treaty on the spot, however, he explained that he did so only because he wanted to “get what he could for his improvements.”<sup>358</sup> In addition to these affidavits, the Indians produced a contract that proved commissioners had paid individuals to drum up support for the treaty. For instance, in August of 1837 Commissioner Potter paid Joseph Snow to “use his best exertions & endeavors to dispose & induce the said Indians to adopt & pursue the advice & recommendations of the Government of the United States in respect to their removal.” In return, Potter promised Snow the colossal sum of \$1000 “in consideration of such efforts,” as well as the ability occupy a fifty acre plot of land for the remainder of “his own natural life” on the Cattaraugus Reservation.<sup>359</sup> These documents revealed a calculated attempt to ensure passage of the treaty.

The Seneca also enlisted the help of their white neighbors to substantiate these claims. In concert with the Quakers, they convinced several citizens of Chattaqua County to draft a petition against the Buffalo Creek Treaty. The signatories included important officers such as the sheriff, officers of the court, the district attorney, fourteen other attorneys, and all twenty members of the grand jury. Eighty-nine other citizens signed the document. The petitioners explained that they were not against removal as a policy. “We admit the benefits that would result to the white population from their [the Seneca]

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<sup>358</sup> AA44 Folder 6, March 1838, Legal, Land, Legislative, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>359</sup> “Articles of Agreement between Heman B. Potter and Joseph Snow,” August 7, 1837, AA44#67, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

removal, & concede to the proper authorities the right to adopt such measure.” This notwithstanding, the citizens of Chattaqua were upset because the Indian Commissioners had used pressure and subterfuge to coerce the Indians to sign. As they put it, “we have been desirous that our Indian neighbors might judge it for their interest to emigrate; but no motives of interest can induce us to approve of that result, if effected [sic] by deception, fraud, or violence.” The petition confirmed that the Seneca had rejected the treaty in Council, and it detailed the “iniquitous” methods the Indian Commissioners had used after the council to obtain Seneca signatures, including “intoxication” and “large rewards.” The petitioners wanted the government to act “in good faith” and “protect the rights of the feeble.” This proved sufficient motivation to compel a population of Anglo-Americans to come to the aid of the Seneca. The Seneca cleverly and shrewdly drew on the ethical sensibilities of their white neighbors to press their case against the treaty.<sup>360</sup>

Like the Seneca, the Philadelphia Quakers produced a slew of documents and arguments against ratification of the Buffalo Treaty. The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee drafted a memorial that also charged the commissioners had used fraud and bribery to obtain signatures. In addition, the memorialists argued that ratification would lead the United States down a path that deviated from moral and ethical practices. The Indians had “confidence that the United States would adhere inviolably to the faith...pledged [to them].” The current efforts to have them removed were “at variance with justice and humanity.” Finally, the Quakers affirmed that the vast majority of Seneca opposed removal. “We learn on good authority that the great body of the nation

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<sup>360</sup> “Citizens of the County of Chatauque to the Honourable the Senate of the United States,” February 1838, AA44, Folder 5, #28, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

are untired in the determination neither to sell their lands, nor to remove from them.”<sup>361</sup>

The New York Yearly Meeting also sent to Washington a memorial that argued for the security of the Seneca’s title to lands. It pointed out that “these remnants of a once powerful but deeply injured race hold their lands by the Strongest conceivable tenure.”<sup>362</sup>

In addition, the New York Quakers asserted removal would subject the Seneca to intense “sufferings and deprivations.”<sup>363</sup>

In arguing against removal, the Seneca and the Quakers invoked Native cultural transformation. For instance, the Seneca noted that “the moral condition of our people has been visibly improving beyond our expectation” that “there is... no sufficient reason for the whole nation to be removed.”<sup>364</sup> They also asserted that the Seneca had “improved” by adopting family farming, Christianity, education, and the English language. The Indians cited these changes to argue that they were connected to their lands in the same type of profound ways as whites were connected to theirs. They made such arguments even before the Buffalo Treaty was signed. In carefully crafted language they declared that “we don’t want to sell out and leave our old homesteads...for a great

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<sup>361</sup> “Memorial of the Committee for the Gradual Civilization and Improvement of the Indian Natives appointed by the Yearly meeting of the religious society of Friends commonly called Quakers in Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware, and parts adjacent,” March 12, 1838, AA44, Folder 6, #51, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>362</sup> “Memorial of the General Committee of the Yearly Meeting of Friends of the States of new York and Vermont and parts adjacent, charged with the subject of promoting the Civilization and the welfare of the Indians,” February 5, 1838, AA44, Folder 5 #141, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>363</sup> “Memorial of the Committee for the Gradual Civilization and Improvement of the Indian Natives,” March 12, 1838, AA44, Folder 6, #51, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>364</sup> “Address of the Seneca to the President,” unknown date between 1838 and 1842, AA44 Folder, 5, #57, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

many reasons. That a great many of our hunters have turned into farmers long ago.”<sup>365</sup>

After the Treaty was signed, the Seneca made the same point more boldly.

We have resolved to adhere to our present locations....We have acquired knowledge of the arts of civilization and of agriculture....We have now many amongst us who have built large barns and who have good wagons and other useful implements of agriculture; We have also built school and council houses and convenient churches; We have several sawmills and a grain mill amongst us.<sup>366</sup>

The Seneca hoped to convince an Anglo audience that they had reconstructed and reinvigorated their society by erecting the socio-economic infrastructure of a modern community. The Buffalo Treaty threatened not just an “Indian” community, but a “civilized” one that was linked to the land in the same ways as Anglo communities.

Quakers invoked similar arguments. They explained that the Seneca should remain in New York because “many of them are living on well enclosed farms, stocked with horses, cattle, hogs,...and have erected and occupy substantial houses, respectably furnished and kept in decent order.”<sup>367</sup> Citing acculturation as an argument against Seneca removal came easily to the Quakers who had long regarded acculturation as the Seneca’s best opportunity for collective defense. In 1819, the Indian Committee of the New York Yearly Meeting had devised a plan to “effectually secure the protection” of Seneca “rights” by “instruct[ing] them in school learning, the useful arts and

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<sup>365</sup> “Petition of the Chiefs and Warriors of the Allegheny against Making a Treaty,” August 17, 1837, AA44, Folder 4, #140, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>366</sup> “Address of the Seneca to the President,” unknown date between 1838 and 1842, AA44 Folder, 5, #57, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>367</sup> “Memorial of the Committee for the Gradual Civilization and Improvement of the Indian Natives,” March 12, 1838, AA44, Folder 6, #51, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

agriculture.”<sup>368</sup> In 1838, their fear was that the Buffalo Treaty would disrupt the progress already made. “The remnants of these once populous tribes have, within a few years, made great progress in the arts of civilized life: and the time was looked to...when all of them would...turn their attention exclusively to agriculture & the mechanic arts. It is therefore with deep concern and regret your memorialists learn, that a part of the Six Nations...have been induced ...to remove west.”<sup>369</sup> Removal, the Quakers argued, would require the Seneca to devolve to a more “savage” and insecure state. Moreover, they argued that the Seneca were so far removed from such a state that they could in no way revert to it. “Accustomed to the habits and many of the conveniences of civilized life, and to the pursuits of agriculture, they are disqualified for returning to the precarious and exposing life of the hunter.”<sup>370</sup> Underlying this concern was the fear that cultural degeneration brought on by removal would drive the Seneca away from Christianity.

Seneca and Quakers also shared the belief that cultural change strengthened Native claims to rights and sovereignty. In an address to the President Van Buren, the Seneca explained “his red children have in latter years made rapid advances in Civilization, morality, And religion...and that it is heart rendering to think that amidst the improvements that are making among us that the individual Chiefs should dispose of the rights...of the nation.”<sup>371</sup> From their point of view, the Buffalo Treaty involved all the

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<sup>368</sup> New York Yearly Meeting Indian Committee to New York Yearly Meeting, January 1, 1819, AA41 Box 3, “Letters of the New York Yearly Meeting Indian Committee,” #56, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>369</sup> “Memorial of the General Committee of the Yearly Meeting of Friends of the States of new York and Vermont and parts adjacent, charged with the subject of promoting the Civilization and the welfare of the Indians,” February 5, 1838, AA44, Folder 5 #141, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> “Seneca to His Excellency martin Van buren President of the United States,” March 20, 1838, AA44, Folder 6, #76, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

legal and moral implications of a transgression of rights. Consequently, the battle over the Buffalo Treaty was not a simple skirmish over a nefarious agreement reached through fraud and bribery, but rather a larger struggle over whether or not the Indians would receive fair and ethical treatment. It was for this reason that the Seneca characterized their stand against the Treaty as a fight to “guard our rights.”<sup>372</sup> Similarly, the Philadelphia Quakers thundered that “their rights are invaded and their property in danger of being unjustly wrung from them.”<sup>373</sup> This claim referred to Seneca land rights, legal rights provided by previous treaties, and property rights. In addition, the Quakers argued that by virtue of their adoption of American practices the Seneca had earned the political right to claim protection from the United States. In their memorial to Congress, the Philadelphia Indian Committee explained that their plan to “civilize” the Seneca had borne fruit. There had been a “favorable change...silently and gradually wrought” among the Indians. If the Senate were to ratify the Buffalo Treaty, the United States would violate the paternal care and protection it had historically offered the Indians as they attempt to become “civilized.” “They have gone on making their improvements in the hope of being permitted to enjoy them....In the midst of the security created by their reliance...on the government...attempts have been made to effect their expulsion from the land of their fathers.” The duty of Congress was to ensure that the United States

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<sup>372</sup> “Petition of the Chiefs and Warriors of the Allegheny against Making a Treaty,” August 17, 1837, AA44, Folder 4, #140, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>373</sup> “Memorial of the Committee for the Gradual Civilization and Improvement of the Indian Natives,” March 12, 1838, AA44, Folder 6, #51, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

protect the Seneca as they continued to “improve.” If they failed in this duty, then the interested and self-serving machinations of partisans would triumph.<sup>374</sup>

The Seneca took advantage of such paternalism to oppose the Buffalo Creek Treaty. They shrewdly argued that they needed to stay in New York and remain near a large white population. Proximity to whites would permit the Indians to continue to receive guidance as they infused American practices into their society. Writing to the President, they explained “we are now surrounded on every side by the white people. We love them and suffer no inconvenience from them, but on the contrary We desire from them great and permanent assistance.” The Indians understood Anglo cultural chauvinism and hoped to use it to persuade the powers in Washington to their cause. In so doing, the Seneca inverted the logic of removal. Instead of seeking their prosperity through their separation from Anglos, they insisted that their well-being lay in continued proximity to whites. Moreover, the longstanding and positive relations the Seneca had enjoyed with their white neighbors proved that they could live together peacefully. “We believe we can continue at home and be at peace with our neighbors,” they concluded.<sup>375</sup>

Opponents of the Buffalo Creek Treaty would soon reap the benefits of their efforts. Even though Ogden Company representatives, Indian sub-agent James Stryker, and a small delegation of supportive Seneca, all descended on Washington to plead their cause, their efforts fell short.<sup>376</sup> After debating the issue, the Senate refused to ratify the

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<sup>374</sup> “Memorial of the Committee for the Gradual Civilization and Improvement of the Indian Natives,” March 12, 1838, AA44, Folder 6, #51, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>375</sup> “Address of the Seneca to the President,” unknown date between 1838 and 1842, AA44 Folder, 5, #57, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>376</sup> Subcommittee to PYMIC, April 12, 1838, AA42, #70, page 6 of the document, Legal, Land, Legislative, Records of PYMIC, p. 7, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

treaty. Testimony and evidence provided by the Seneca and the Quakers convinced the majority that fraud, deception, and intimidation had marred the treaty proceedings. According to Ambrose Sevier, senator from Arkansas and Chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee, the Senate found the treaty “so *essentially defective*,” that it could not “recommend its ratification.” Instead, on June 11, 1838, the Senate amended the treaty with a resolution that required the Indian Commissioner to resubmit the treaty to each of the six Iroquois Nations. Each Nation would then vote separately on it. An Indian Commissioner was to fully explain the treaty to each nation in “open council,” and each tribe would need to give its “free and voluntary assent.” In addition, the treaty would only bind those bands in each Iroquois nation that wanted to emigrate. Those who wished to remain on existing eastern reservations could do so.<sup>377</sup>

The Seneca-Quaker alliance that had been so vital in preventing ratification of the Buffalo Creek Treaty continued after the Senate amended it. The Quakers informed the Seneca of the Senate’s actions, and then cautioned the Indians not to act on the new treaty until they could “examine the terms offered.”<sup>378</sup> They wanted to assure themselves that the treaty would not force the Indians to remove.

In accordance with the Senate’s resolution, Commissioner Gillet on August 17, 1838 called a council to discuss the new treaty. Many Seneca chiefs did not attend the council, and the Indians asked Gillet to close it. Gillet agreed to this request and closed the council late in the day on the seventeenth. He had planned to reopen the meeting on

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<sup>377</sup> “Speech of Ambrose H. Sevier of Arkansas, in the U.S. Senate,” March 17, 1840 in Robert Smith, ed., *The Friend: A Religious and Literary Journal*,” Vol. xiii, No. 33, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>378</sup> Sam Bettle, Joseph Elkinton, Thomas Evans to James Robinson, Blacksnake, John Kennedy, and Lewis Jimerson, June 19, 1838, AA41.1, Folder 10, #86, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.



August 20, but when he returned, he found that the council house had been “burnt down.” This was more than an inauspicious sign. The destruction of the council house signaled the depth of Seneca antipathy toward removal. Gillet, however, remained undeterred and had a new house erected. He then reopened the council in late August.<sup>379</sup>

The new council lasted seven weeks, and again was the scene of intense politicking as United States commissioners engaged in repeated attempts to persuade the Seneca to adopt the treaty. And as had occurred the preceding January, the council ended in disappointment for the commissioners. According to reports, only 16 or 17 of the approximately ninety Seneca chiefs signed the amended treaty.<sup>380</sup> And they signed only after succumbing to intense pressure from the commissioners. Witnessing the commissioners’ arm-twisting tactics, a group of chiefs thought it prudent to sign a remonstrance against the treaty. Gillet turned down their request that he witness their action. Nonetheless, the sixty chiefs, along with “General [Henry] Dearborn, the Commissioner on behalf of the State of Massachusetts,” signed the remonstrance.<sup>381</sup>

The Seneca’s remonstrance was the opening salvo in a renewed political fight over the Buffalo Creek Treaty. As had occurred in 1838, those opposed to the treaty sent delegations to Washington in order to prevent its ratification. And in another repeat of the

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<sup>379</sup> “Speech of Ambrose H. Sevier of Arkansas, in the U.S. Senate,” March 17, 1840 in Smith, *The Friend*, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>380</sup> These numbers come from two sources, one written by the Seneca, and another by a white man named R.B. Heacock who lived in the Buffalo area. Heacock reported 17 chiefs had signed, while the Seneca reported 16. See “Letter from R.B. Heacock stating that deception and fraud had been used in obtaining the assent of the chiefs to the treaty with the New York Indians, as amended by the resolution of the Senate of the 11<sup>th</sup> of June, 1838,” January 23, 1839, AA44, Folder 8, #101, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College. Also see “Seneca Delegation to President Van Buren,” January 25, 1839, AA41.1, Folder 12, #103, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>381</sup> “Seneca Delegation to President Van Buren,” January 25, 1839, AA41.1, Folder 12, #103, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

events of 1838, the Seneca and Quaker allied in the fight against ratification. The members of their respective delegations were essentially the same men who had journeyed to Washington the previous year. The Seneca instructed Israel Jimerson, Maris Pierce, and Seneca White to present their papers to the President and the Quakers once again sent Bettle, Elkinton, and Evans to speak with the President and Secretary of War.<sup>382</sup>

Nor were the Quakers the only whites whom the Seneca relied upon to help their cause. This time the delegation included a new face - that of the white lawyer Charles R. Gold. Gold lived in Buffalo and had “attend[ed] our council every day of its session,” explained the Seneca. Moreover, the Indians wanted Gold along because he had “assisted in preparing the documents that we wish to have laid before the president.” Though the Seneca enlisted Gold’s help, they did not entirely trust him. In fact, they asked the Quakers to investigate him in order to “satisfy yourselves in respect to his fidelity to us.”<sup>383</sup>

The Seneca’s suspicions were not without merit, as Gold’s actions would soon reveal. In an act of calculated intrigue, Gold betrayed the Seneca. There are two versions to the story. In the more credible of the two, Gold set up a time to meet the Seneca delegation in Buffalo after he had expressed a desire to accompany them to Washington. He said he would bring a bag containing all their papers, including the remonstrance

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<sup>382</sup> For the names of the Seneca delegation see Governor Blacksnake, John Pierce, Sky, Perce, and Jacob Blacksnake to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, October 31, 1838, AA41, Box 1, #92, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College. For corroboration that the subcommittee of Bettle, Elkinton, and Evans visited Washington, see “PYMIC to the Chiefs and Warriors of the Seneca Nation,” April 24, 1839, AA41.1, Folder 12, #129, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>383</sup> Governor Blacksnake, John Pierce, Sky, Perce, and Jacob Blacksnake to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, October 31, 1838, AA41, Box 1, #92, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

against the new treaty, and documents detailing the fraud and bribery that induced chiefs to sign. When the Seneca arrived in Buffalo for the meeting, Gold was nowhere to be found. They concluded that he had absconded with their documents. In the second version, Gold boarded a stagecoach with the Seneca as they all left en route to Washington. Gold had brought the bag of papers with him. He gave it over to the Seneca as they left Buffalo. However, “about sixty miles” from the city the delegation stopped to rest. One of the Seneca delegates became suspicious, examined the bag, and found that it was empty. The Seneca concluded that “it had been exchanged for another” and that “their papers were consequently all gone.” Gold, according to this version, had surreptitiously met with “one of the pre-emption company” while the coach was stopped and exchanged bags. In either case, Gold was something of a double agent who helped execute a plan that would leave the Seneca delegation with no proof to support their charges of fraud and bribery.<sup>384</sup>

The Quakers, having been asked for assistance by the Seneca, wrote a letter to Massachusetts Governor Edward Everett asking him to send copies of the papers to the Seneca. After the end of the treaty council, General Dearborn had taken copies of the Seneca’s papers back to Massachusetts. Everett complied and sent the copies to the Seneca delegation in Washington.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> The first version of the Gold story is chronicled in Sam Bettle to Edward Everett, January 19, 1839, AA41.1, Folder 11, # 99, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College. The second version of the story is detailed in “Letter from R.B. Heacock stating that deception and fraud had been used in obtaining the assent of the chiefs to the treaty with the New York Indians, as amended by the resolution of the Senate of the 11<sup>th</sup> of June, 1838,” January 23, 1839, AA44, Folder 8, #101, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>385</sup> Sam Bettle to Edward Everett, January 19, 1839, AA41.1, Folder 11, # 99, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

On January 25<sup>th</sup> members of the delegation met with President Van Buren to express their opposition to the new treaty. They reiterated the same arguments they had made in 1838, and charged that the treaty was fraudulent because signatures had been obtained through coercion. They explained that the Commissioner had brought individual chiefs to private homes after the close of the council, using threats and bribery to coerce them to sign the treaty. They also claimed that the majority of the Seneca people were still set against removal. Finally, they argued that because the Commissioner obtained signatures through coercion, the treaty did not meet the conditions of the June 11<sup>th</sup> Senate resolution.<sup>386</sup> The delegation did not know that Van Buren had his doubts about the treaty, and that he had already sent it back to the Senate. The President wanted the Senate to investigate whether or not the new treaty fulfilled the requirements of the June 11<sup>th</sup> resolution. When the Seneca came to him, he listened, but then advised them to plead their case in Congress.<sup>387</sup>

Meanwhile, supporters of the new treaty also descended upon Washington. Commissioner Gillet, Indian subagent James Stryker, a Seneca interpreter, and a small delegation of pro-treaty chiefs went to the President to defend the new agreement.<sup>388</sup> Others like Orlando Allen, the tavern keeper at whose establishment the commissioners pressured Seneca to sign the treaty, were also in Washington.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Seneca Delegation to President Van Buren, January 25, 1839, AA41.1, Folder 12, #103, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>387</sup> John Kennedy to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, January 29, 1839, AA41, Box 3 #106, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>388</sup> Sam Bettle to Edward Everett, January 19, 1839, AA41.1, Folder 11, # 99, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>389</sup> John Kennedy to Joseph Elkinton, February 4, 1839, AA41, Box 3, #114, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

While advocates and opponents of the Treaty presented their arguments, the amended treaty was making its way through the ratification process. On January 19, 1839, Secretary of War Crawford submitted the treaty to President Van Buren. Van Buren, unconvinced that the U.S. commissioners had used only appropriate means to obtain signatures, returned the treaty to Congress on January 21<sup>st</sup> and asked that the Senate reevaluate it. On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Senate passed the buck back to the President. They drafted a new resolution that stated the President could put the treaty into effect whenever he deemed that it met the conditions set forth in the June 11<sup>th</sup> resolution.<sup>390</sup> Over the next year the treaty remained in limbo as neither the President nor the Senate took action. Finally, in March of 1840 Mississippi Senator John Henderson introduced a new resolution that stipulated that the June 11<sup>th</sup> resolution had been met and that the President could now proclaim the treaty. The Senate's subsequent vote on Henderson's resolution ended with a tie. Vice President Richard Johnson broke the stalemate by voting in support of the treaty. On April 4, 1840, the Senate ratified the amended Buffalo Creek Treaty.<sup>391</sup>

Although the Senate finally proclaimed the treaty, the political struggle continued. The President had to decide whether to use force to remove the Seneca, or to delay enforcement of the treaty. The government stalled. The treaty could not go into effect until Congress appropriated funding as it stipulated that the United States had to pay the Seneca for the Wisconsin lands before the Indians could be removed to the West. Meanwhile, Seneca opposed to emigration took advantage of this delay and for the next

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<sup>390</sup> "Speech of Ambrose H. Sevier of Arkansas, in the U.S. Senate," March 17, 1840 in Smith, *The Friend*.

<sup>391</sup> Mary Conable, "A Steady Enemy," Ph.D. diss., p. 214-6.

two years continued to make public arguments against the treaty. They also forcibly prevented surveyors from parceling out land on the Cattaraugus Reservation, and they considered bringing a lawsuit against the United States. The Quakers discouraged legal action, explaining that the Cherokee cases that reached the Supreme Court proved that lawsuits would not prevent removal. They advised the Seneca to prepare for removal, explaining that you will “not be permitted to remain” on your lands. Even if the United States did not use military force to affect emigration, the Quakers feared that the growing white populations that surrounded the reservations would eventually take Seneca lands.<sup>392</sup> Notwithstanding this doomsday scenario, the Quakers maintained efforts to stop the treaty by sending new memorials and petitions to Congress and the President.

Meanwhile pro emigration Seneca led by Nathaniel Strong allied with the Ogden Land Company and argued for the treaty’s enforcement. Strong saw removal as the Seneca’s best option for continued tribal existence. He explained that removal would ensure that the Seneca could become “equal” to whites by acquiring secure title to lands in the West. Because freehold possession was the hallmark of “civilization” and “equality,” and because secure title was impossible in New York due to the Ogden Company’s preemption claims, Strong claimed that the Indians could never become fully “civilized” if they remained in New York.<sup>393</sup>

A compromise reached in the spring of 1842 settled the dispute over the Buffalo Treaty. The Hicksite Quakers opened negotiations with the Ogden Land Company. Their goal was to save as much Seneca land as possible. The Quakers correctly assumed that

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<sup>392</sup> Undated (probably June 1840) and unsigned letter of the Philadelphia Quakers to “the Seneca Indians residing in the State of New York,” AA41.1, Folder 11, #8, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>393</sup> See Conable, “A Steady Enemy,” p. 230-232.

the Ogden Company would be in the mood to compromise. For almost two years the Company had been unsuccessful in removing the Seneca. Short on money, and under increasing pressure from antiremovalists, Congress continued to drag its feet on funding the Buffalo Treaty. The Ogden Company saw compromise as its best opportunity to achieve its goal. When negotiations began, the Company made several propositions that would have given it possession of all of the Seneca's New York lands. However, the Hicksites countered by emphatically stating that they would not accept any deal that did not keep the Cattaraugus and Allegheny reservations in Seneca hands. Ultimately, the Ogden Company capitulated and took a deal that would give them the Buffalo and Tonawanda Reservations.<sup>394</sup> The new agreement stipulated that in exchange for those sites, the Seneca would be allowed to keep the Cattaraugus and Allegheny reservations. Seneca living at Buffalo and Tonawanda could remove west, or to the Cattaraugus and Allegheny reservations. Orthodox Quakers were suspicious of the deal and feared that it might be an Ogden ploy to acquire all Seneca lands. They feared the Company might pressure the Seneca to cede their remaining reservations, and therefore advised the Indians to reject the deal and reconcile themselves to removal. The Seneca, however, chose not to pursue this course, and with the notable exception of those who lived at Tonawanda, voted for compromise. The tribe did not give the Tonawanda branch the chance to vote presumably because they knew the Tonawanda would never accept the cession of their reservation. The tribe signed the "Compromise Treaty," or the second

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<sup>394</sup> Robert Scotton to PYMIC, April 25, 1842, Indian Records, Vol. 1-10, AB 30, 1841-1850, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

Treaty of Buffalo Creek, on May 20, 1842.<sup>395</sup> Weighing in on the scandalous treatment of the Tonawanda Seneca, Maris Pierce lamely reported hope that “all [Seneca] may believe that it is the best bargain they can make now.”<sup>396</sup>

The efforts to prevent Seneca removal yielded tangible results. True, the signing of the Compromise Treaty displaced and dispersed many Indians. Some Seneca went west to what would become Kansas; some emigrated to the St. Regis Reservation in Canada, and still others moved to the Cattaraugus and Allegheny reservations. However, unlike the national antiremoval movement’s failure to protect Cherokee lands, the joint efforts of the Seneca and Quakers preserved two of the Seneca’s four reservations. This victory kept a substantial amount of land in Seneca hands, and many Seneca in New York. In 1846, the Seneca would secure yet more land through purchase. President Tyler presided over a new treaty in which the Seneca bought over a third of the Tonawanda reservation from the Ogden Company. The Ogden Company took control over the remaining Tonawanda lands.<sup>397</sup>

### **Seneca Persistence and the Expansion of American Institutions, 1842-1859**

The Seneca-Quaker alliance persisted during the 1840s and 50s. Shared belief that continued cultural adaptation would benefit the Indians underwrote this partnership. Both groups continued to believe that cultural change would serve as a defense against future

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<sup>395</sup> The Tonawanda Seneca did not gutlessly accept the new treaty. Rather, they fought it, and the majority refused to remove. Their struggle against removal is another story that I reference only briefly later in this chapter. Through a treaty agreement, the Tonawanda ended up buying about 30% of their reservation from the Ogden Company in 1856.

<sup>396</sup> Maris Pierce to Joseph Elkinton, May 31, 1842, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 30, 1841-1850, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>397</sup> For a thorough discussion of the political history of the Tonawanda struggle to keep their reservation, see Conable, “A Steady Enemy,” Chapter 9, “The Tonawanda Exception, 1842-1857,” p. 283-324.



attempts to take Seneca lands. Even though the Seneca had won important battles, the Ogden Company loomed large, and it never entirely accepted that the Seneca would hold their lands indefinitely. According to the Quakers, “if the Indians could be brought to practice more regular and persevering industry, and to adopt improved modes of agriculture...we might reasonably hope that [it] ...would secure them against future solicitations to part with their remaining pittance of land.”<sup>398</sup> However, the Seneca and Quakers harbored different understandings of the purpose of Seneca cultural change. The Seneca saw it as a means to preserve sovereignty, while the Quakers hoped it would lead the Seneca to more thoroughly adopt Christianity and American agriculture. Even though they held different ideas about the future course of the Seneca Nation, the Indians took pains to maintain their partnership with the Quakers. For example, they requested the Indian Committee to keep missionary Ebenezer Worth at the Allegheny Reservation. “We do want him to remain with us...for we have found [it] a great help to us for him to be here.”<sup>399</sup> However, even as the Seneca ensured that Quakers would continue to provide them guidance, they took decided steps to control cultural change in ways that would serve their interests and sovereignty.

For example, the Seneca managed economic change in ways that promoted the persistence of older values. In the 1840s and 50s Seneca labor patterns changed. Though some Indians had taken up farming much earlier than mid century, more did so after the removal controversy calmed. The Seneca reported that “many have been enlarging their

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<sup>398</sup> Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, April 13, 1843, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 30, 1841-1850, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>399</sup> Benjamin Williams to Joseph Elkinton, Jan 13, 1844, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 30, 1841-1850, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

farms; whilst others have been engaged in clearing off new ones.”<sup>400</sup> In 1845 the Quakers corroborated the change and reported that many more farms were being worked.<sup>401</sup>

Though this turn to agriculture derived in great part from the Seneca’s belief that it would help secure title to their lands, many Indian men resisted engaging in agricultural work as field labor was traditionally the realm of females. Many men viewed farming as an erosion of their masculinity. Unlike the work men performed as hunters, farming kept men at home in the presence of females, and removed the ability of men to bond as they worked far from women. Consequently, Seneca men engaged in other new forms of labor that allowed them to replicate the homosocial work environment that had dominated winter hunts in which women were left at home while men traveled together to secure meat.

Seneca men re-established a homosocial work environment in the timber industry. The Allegheny Reservation was particularly rich in hemlock trees. The Seneca would cut timber, build rafts, and float logs down the Allegheny River to be sold at mills. Quakers were dismayed by Seneca involvement in the lumber business. They reported that the Indians often drank aboard their rafts as they transported timber loads,<sup>402</sup> and they warned that lumbering was unsustainable since timber was a limited resource. They argued that farming provided the only renewable source of support for the Indians and advised them

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<sup>400</sup> Governor Blacksnake, Yunis Halftown, Robert Hat, Owen Blacksnake, William Patterson to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, January 3, 1844, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 30, 1841-1850, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>401</sup> Robert Scotton, Enoch Lewis, and Joel Evans, “Report of Committee to Visit the Indians on the Allegheny,” December 12, 1845, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 30, 1841-1850, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>402</sup> Ebenezer Worth to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, February 1, 1845, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 30, 1841-1850, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

to focus attention on it.<sup>403</sup> Seneca men ignored these arguments in order to engage in new labor patterns that accorded with older conceptions of masculine labor. Drinking as they worked timber enhanced the social experience of males engaged in shared work.

The Seneca also exploited new economic resources to reinvigorate trade as a central economic activity. Since the early colonial era the Haudenosaunee had used trade to maintain positive relations with Euro-Americans and to acquire desired goods. The Allegheny Seneca revived this pattern through new forms of work. They harvested the reservation's natural resources and traded them for food. Ebenezer Worth noted that the Indians had decided to "harvest sugar," by which he meant maple sap, for trade. The Seneca traded other goods as well. Worth also commented that many Indian men traded rafts to whites who used them for lumbering operations near the reservation. Worth explained that sugar and rafts were often traded for "meat, meal, and potatoes."<sup>404</sup> This trade, like previous systems of Native-Anglo trade, generated needed food stores and helped the Seneca to maintain good relations with white neighbors.

The Seneca also traded economic resources with Quaker missionaries in the hopes of developing strong relations. More specifically, they supplied labor to missionaries by hiring out their children. Children worked only for short periods of time. For example, missionaries John and Susannah Wood hired Seneca children after arriving to Allegheny, but were disappointed that these little workers soon left them. "I have tried two boys & neither has stayed much more than a week....Susan...has had one or two Indian

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<sup>403</sup> Solomon Lukens to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, January 14, 1850, AA41, Box 3, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>404</sup> Ebenezer Worth to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, April 3, 1844, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 30, 1841-1850, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

girls...but they were not contented to stay any length of time.”<sup>405</sup> The children did not stay long because their primary reason for working was not wages. Rather, the Seneca used their children as “gifts” in order to establish good relations with the missionaries. The children’s work represented an offering from the Seneca to the missionaries, and was meant to bond the Indians and Quakers in a reciprocal relationship. More deeply, it established a precedent for a system of mutual aid in which the Seneca and Quakers could call on one another for help.

If the Indians used economic resources to create relations with whites, they also exploited them to exert and reaffirm sovereignty. For example, the chiefs at Allegheny exploited the Nation’s property in order to earn money. They rented the reservation’s sawmill to “whites” and “common people.”<sup>406</sup> The Indians also rented parcels of land. In the early 1850s, they agreed to lease a pair of two acre parcels to a railroad company that had run a line through the reservation.<sup>407</sup> Seneca families also rented or leased farms to whites. The Quakers bristled at this practice because they wanted the Seneca to work the land themselves as they believed that farm labor developed “habits of industry.” In 1845 the Philadelphia Indian Committee expressly told the Seneca to stop renting land to white families,<sup>408</sup> and in 1852, missionary Solomon Lukens attended a council and made “a few

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<sup>405</sup> Solomon Lukens to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, January 14, 1850, AA41, Box 3, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>406</sup> Ebenezer Worth to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, June 22, 1846, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 30, 1841-1850, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>407</sup> John and Susanna Wood to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, no date, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 31, 1850-1861, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>408</sup> Report of the Committee to visit the Indians on the Allegheny, December 12, 1845, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 30, 1841-1850, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

remarks... on the subject of their having so many white families residing on their lands, and employing them to cultivate.”<sup>409</sup> However, by renting their farms the Seneca could participate in the larger economy, yet still exercise some control over the cultural changes wrought by new socio-economic patterns. More specifically, the Seneca could reap money from farms without actually having to become farmers themselves. This scheme shielded Seneca families from the need to adopt new practices, such as male field work, that they found undesirable.

The Seneca were willing to pursue new forms of work when they believed it would contribute to Seneca independence. For instance, many tribal leaders wanted young men to learn skilled trades. They hoped to produce a cadre of skilled laborers who could provide needed services to the Nation. The effort to develop a class of Seneca artisans began in the early 1820s when a few chiefs sent their children to live with Quakers in Philadelphia. James Robinson sent his son to a Quaker family in order that he learn the “shoe making business.”<sup>410</sup> When Quakers visited the Allegheny Seneca in 1845, the Indians asked them if they would approve of “their men learning blacksmithing, carpentry, and cobbler [sic].”<sup>411</sup> The decades-long attempt to produce skilled Seneca craftsmen evinced a calculated strategy to preserve Seneca self-sufficiency through new labor activities.

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<sup>409</sup> Solomon Lukens to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, March 2, 1852, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 31, 1850-1861, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>410</sup> Blue Eyes, James Robinson, John Pierce, and John Long to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, April 27, 1821, AA41, Box 1, #109, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>411</sup> Report of the Committee to visit the Indians on the Allegheny, December 12, 1845, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 30, 1841-1850, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

In addition to management of new cultural patterns created by novel labor practices, the Seneca took charge of changes instituted by Christianity. The Seneca assimilated Christian beliefs into indigenous spiritual systems. The most famous example is the Handsome Lake religion. Anthony Wallace has explained how the religion fused Seneca and Christian beliefs in ways that helped the Seneca explain the disruptions occasioned by relations with Euro-Americans.<sup>412</sup> Missionary Susanna Wood noted the same phenomenon. She reported that many Seneca followed the doctrine of “Beautiful Lake” and believed Jesus was the son of the Great Spirit, would return to Earth, and then “turn his back on the white man.”<sup>413</sup> This theology articulated a hope that the supernatural would intervene in the physical world and right the injustice whites had perpetrated against Indians. Rather than replicate missionary understandings of Christianity, the Seneca molded the religion to serve Native needs and to reflect indigenous experiences.

However, the Seneca also embraced Christianity for a more pragmatic reason - to reinforce their relationship with Quaker missionaries. This is evident from the pains some Indians took to ensure that their modification of Christianity would not disrupt their friendship with the Quakers. “Be guardians to my people,” wrote Solomon Lane to the Quakers, “though it is true that but very few of us are Christian.” Lane continued “many of us are pagans, and also many Christian pagans.” Lane’s classification of the Seneca into a tripartite structure of religious belief - Christian, pagan, and Christian pagan - revealed the outcome of Seneca efforts to create a new mode of spiritual belief, one that

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<sup>412</sup> See Anthony Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York, 1970).

<sup>413</sup> Susannah Wood to Rebecca, March 3, 1853 in Notebook of Susannah Wood, copied by Margaret Lightfoot, April 19, 1883, in AA41, Box 5, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

was still authentically Seneca despite the fact that it contained crucial elements of Christian doctrine. Lane hoped that this all too apparent fact would not lead the Friends to abandon the Seneca. “Our dear guardians we hope you will not withdraw from us in our infancy to perish.”<sup>414</sup> Other Seneca took another approach and simply cited intersections between Christian doctrine and Seneca beliefs to argue that the Indians and Quakers were united. For instance, Susanna Wood wrote “they believe in future rewards and punishments.” She also reported that many Seneca had told Ebenezer Worth that “they believed just as he did.” Making the point more forcibly, she explained that from the Senecas’ perspective, their shared beliefs implied that they and the Quakers were virtually the same people. “They have said,” wrote Wood, “they ought to be called the ‘Old Quaker Party.’”<sup>415</sup> Seneca use of religion to find common ground with Quakers is no surprise. For many Native peoples the exploitation of similar religious beliefs helped to establish relations between distinct groups.<sup>416</sup> In this instance, the Seneca exposed commonalities in spiritual beliefs to strengthen their relationship with Quakers.

The Indians used Christianity not only to strengthen their relations with Quakers, but also to compel them to act on the Indians’ demands. Indians coupled requests for aid with explicit references to Christian brotherhood. This was especially true when the Indians made more substantial, or expensive, requests of the Friends. For example, in 1852 Seneca on the Cattaraugus Reservation asked the Quakers to open and then manage a new reservation school. They explained that they wanted the “philadelphia Friends” to

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<sup>414</sup> Solomon Lane to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, March 30, 1849, AA41, Box 1, #156, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> See Gregory Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: the North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore, 1992).

run the school because of shared religious belief. The religious values of the Orthodox Quakers “nearly accords our religious sentiment with theirs.”<sup>417</sup>

Indigenous beliefs shaped Seneca-Quaker relations as powerfully as did Christianity. The Indians cast the Quakers as fictive kin, assigning them the role of “brother.” This placed the missionaries under obligation to conform to the expectations of Seneca practices. For example, the Seneca often called on Quakers to resolve internal disputes. The Seneca Charles O’Baill provides a case in point. He asked Quaker John Wood to go to Cornplanter’s Reservation to act as judge in a dispute over alcohol consumption.<sup>418</sup> Mediation of disputes was central to Haudenosaunee beliefs about peace, conflict resolution, and reciprocity. The Great League of Peace had decreed that a third party should adjudicate conflicts and give advice to resolve them. As a fictive “brother” O’Baill expected Wood to assume this burden.

If the Seneca pursued their interests in new economic and religious environments, they also sought them through formal education. Beginning in the early 1820s, the Quakers had found common ground with a small group of Seneca chiefs who wanted Indian children to go to school. These leaders hoped that Quakers would instruct both boys and girls in what they believed were useful trades or arts. “We still feel very desirous that we might be favoured with having a woman Friend to instruct our daughters in the several domestic duties which devolve upon females,” wrote the Seneca Blue

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<sup>417</sup> Young Chief, Joseph Snow, and Isaac Warrior to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, July 1, 1852, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 31, 1850-1861, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>418</sup> Susannah Wood to my Dear Sister, July 11, 1853, in Notebook of Susannah Wood, copied by Margaret Lightfoot, April 19, 1883, in AA41, Box 5, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.



Eyes.<sup>419</sup> The Seneca not only wanted Quakers to come and teach them, but also sent some of their children to Philadelphia to live with the Quakers and receive an education.<sup>420</sup> While the Quakers saw education as a path to “civilization” and Christianization, the Indians viewed it as a means for preparing their people to guide the nation as it increasingly contended with pressures and challenges created by an expanding United States. As the chiefs Wandongothta and Sunaweeyah declared, “Brothers since our first acquaintance with you, many that were then children have grown up to maturity on whome the concerns of the Nation must shortly devolve.”<sup>421</sup> Among other things, the Indians hoped educated children would learn enough English to negotiate with Americans. They explained “we are in much want of an interpreter that we may be able to transact our business.”<sup>422</sup> Because the Seneca had their own hopes for education, they attempted to control it. “Brothers...tell us plainly your views relative to our children, you know the length of time you have been engaged in educating them & we wish you to tell us when you think they out to take charge thereof themselves.”<sup>423</sup> Despite the benefits some Seneca saw in education, schooling during the 1820s and 30s was highly

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<sup>419</sup> Blue Eyes on behalf of the warriors at Allegany to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, November 21, 1823, AA41, Box 1, #149, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>420</sup> Joseph Elkinton to Thomas Wistar, transcribed speech of Seneca Chiefs to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, March 29, 1822, AA41, Box 2, #112, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>421</sup> Wandongothta or Chief Warrior and Sunaweeyah or Snow to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, June 28, 1824, AA41, Box 1, #151, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>422</sup> Joseph Elkinton to Thomas Wistar, transcribed speech of Seneca Chiefs to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, March 29, 1822, AA41, Box 2, #112, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>423</sup> Blue Eyes, James Robinson, John Pierce, Long John, Big John, Jacob Blacksnake, and Tunis Halftown to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, January 12, 1827, AA 41, Box 1, #168, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

controversial and led to intense political debate. Quakers did open a couple of schools, but they were poorly attended. And in 1821, the Seneca voted to close one of them.<sup>424</sup>

By the 1840s, however, Seneca desire to promote formal education was on an upswing. A group of chiefs reported that “our people are now more in favor of education than they have been in years that are past, some appearing quite anxious to have their children educated.” One reason for the increased enthusiasm was the hope that education would promote the Seneca’s social standing. The Indians could cast themselves as an enlightened and civilized nation if they incorporated formal schooling into their community. In addition, many believed that education would be economically beneficial. It would prepare individuals to take up skilled trades. Indeed, when the Cattaraugus Seneca asked the Quakers to open a school on their reservation, they explained that the Indians chose the Orthodox Quakers because their instruction “is well calculated to benefit our children” since it included “various branches of industry.”<sup>425</sup>

While more schools opened in the 1840s and 50s, attendance was still inconsistent, principally because the Seneca utilized schools for their own purposes. They had goals that did not always include a long term commitment to education. For example, many Seneca parents viewed children’s school attendance as a way to establish reciprocal relations with the missionaries. By sending their children to school, parents gave missionaries what they wanted - students to teach. In return, parents believed that Friends should be a source of aid to the Indians. It was for this reason that Susanna Wood noted

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<sup>424</sup> Blue Eyes, James Robinson, John Pierce, and John Long to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, April 27, 1821, AA41, Box 1 #109, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>425</sup> Young Chief, Joseph Snow, and Isaac Warrior to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, July 1, 1852, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 31, 1850-1861, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

that Seneca parents often came to the Quakers seeking a meal.<sup>426</sup> To the parents, the Friends were obligated to repay the parents for their willingness to send, or board, their children at school. In other instances, parents would send children to school only so long as it did not interfere with other demands. Consequently, attendance dropped precipitously at times when parents needed children to work, most commonly planting or harvesting crops. As John Wood reported, “many of the children have been detained at home assisting their parents and others in their planting,” reported John Wood.<sup>427</sup> In sum, Seneca parents incorporated schools into an indigenous world, rather than simply acquiescing to the missionaries’ hope that education would immerse Indian children into an Anglo one.

As schools became more prevalent during the 1840s and 50s, the Seneca took more control over education as Indian men and women increasingly became the primary teachers of the Seneca youth. This relegated the Friends to the role of advisor or administrator. For example, Ebenezer Worth reported that one school was “taught by Edward Pierce, a Native.” Nor was Worth insecure in Pierce’s abilities as a teacher. “I do not know that I could have been better suited in any white man I could have got.”<sup>428</sup> Women also assumed the role of teacher. In 1858, Joseph Elkinton reported that Cynthia Pierce, a relative of Edward Pierce, was the teacher of the “state school.” Elkinton

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<sup>426</sup> Susanna Wood to Sister Sally, December 7, 1852, in Notebook of Susannah Wood, copied by Margaret Lightfoot, April 19, 1883, in AA41, Box 5, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>427</sup> John Wood to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, June 10, 1853, AA41, Box 3, #29, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>428</sup> Ebenezer Worth to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, February 1, 1845, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 30, 1841-1850, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

commented “it is very pleasant to find instances of the Natives being engaged teaching their own people.”<sup>429</sup>

As with schools, the Seneca exploited another new socio-cultural institution – the written constitution – to serve their interests. More specifically, the Seneca used the constitution to preserve cultural values. In the late 1840s, a dispute arose over Seneca governance. In short, the Seneca split into two parties - one that supported a political system predicated on the power of chiefs, and one that advocated for a more democratic diffusion of power to the people, or “warriors.” The party of the “warriors” briefly gained power and instituted a new constitution. A few years later, the warrior party was ousted and a yet another new constitution drafted. The new document re-empowered the chiefs and set up a government that more closely mirrored older Seneca political systems centered on the council as the main instrument for political discussion.

The new Seneca constitution codified important Seneca values. First, the Seneca enshrined ideas about peace and the arbitration of disputes through the constitutional office of “peacemaker.” The peacemaker was a judge who mediated disputes and made rulings to resolve them. The notion of a peacemaker reached back to the Deganawida myth, in which the hero Deganawida used arbitration to put an end to incessant intra-Iroquois warfare. The myth was fundamental to the foundation of the original Iroquois League of Peace. The new Seneca constitution’s office of peacemaker reflected the long standing value the Seneca placed on non-violent resolution of disagreement. Second, the constitution perpetuated the power of women to control resources by reserving to them

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<sup>429</sup> Journal entry on October 17, 1858, Journal of Joseph Elkinton 1815-1864, AB 39, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

the right to keep their property after divorce. Women had traditionally controlled resources as Seneca society was structured on matrilineal clans, which controlled longhouses, and distributed food and other resources to clan members. Finally, the constitution affirmed Seneca sovereignty by enumerating specific powers that limited the economic activities of Anglos who entered the reservations. For instance, if whites grazed animals on the reservation, then the Seneca reserved the right to impound the animals. The constitution made other requirements of whites, such as forcing merchants to apply for a permit to sell foodstuffs, and restricting them from making “exhibitions” or attempts to sell goods on the reservation.<sup>430</sup>

If the Seneca funneled Native values through new cultural forms, the flip side was that new cultural forms infiltrated Seneca society. Anglo-American patterns of work and labor took hold, albeit in reinterpreted forms. Farms and wood framed homes dotted the reservations by mid century as many Seneca found family farming to be an important source of economic survival. In addition, many Seneca engaged in forms of labor in which they would be paid with cash. Though there were not many who worked as wage laborers, there were many who harvested sugar and lumber and sold these resources to whites. In other words, goods became commodified, and Natives worked to reap the fruits of that commodification.

As with economic practices, American social institutions also found their way into Seneca culture. Christianity took hold in a new and indigenous form through the Handsome Lake religion. A small contingent of Seneca, as Solomon Lane explained, also

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<sup>430</sup> “Laws of the Seneca Nation, January 28, 1854, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 31, 1850-1861, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

became Christian under the guidance of the Quaker and Presbyterian missionaries who lived on the reservations. The Seneca also incorporated formal education into their society. On the eve of the Civil War, the reservations contained more schools, patronized more consistently by Seneca children. The most enduring of these institutions was the boarding school at Tunesassa, which the Quakers ran well into the twentieth century.

In addition to the influx of American institutions into Seneca society, certain American practices and values started to percolate into Seneca culture. For example, many Indians who had attended school began to adopt the material culture of American civilization. Missionary Solomon Lukens reported that “there has been a decided improvement...in their manner of living, they have tables, dishes, knives & forks.”<sup>431</sup> Others assimilated notions of cleanliness and order. Again Lukens explained that the homes of some Seneca had become cleaner and more orderly. “I was agreeably surprised to see...that they had divided their cabin with a rough partition...things looked neat & clean & in comparative good order.”<sup>432</sup> Others noticed that it was the children who had had prolonged contact with Quakers, who often assimilated these values in spite of their parents’ indifference. Joseph Elkinton reported “I have frequently observed when visiting families in which there were any children that had been with Friends, they seem distressed when their parents houses are found in disorder, and go immediately at work cleaning up and setting things to rights.”<sup>433</sup> The younger generation’s relations with

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<sup>431</sup> Solomon Lukens to Thomas Evans, April 7, 1851, AA41, Box 3, # 232, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>432</sup> Solomon Lukens to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee, January 14, 1850, AA41, Box 3, #177, PYMIC Correspondence, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

<sup>433</sup> Joseph Elkinton to his son, 1853, Indian Records Vol. 1-10, AB 31, 1851-1860, Records of PYMIC, Quaker Collection, Special Collections, Haverford College.

Friends had had an effect as younger Seneca seem to have placed worth in Protestant values.

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The Seneca-Quaker alliance forged in the first decades of the nineteenth century had lasting and important ramifications. The joint fight to protect Seneca lands resulted in one of the most successful antiremoval campaigns of the Antebellum Era as two of the four Seneca reservations remained in Seneca hands. The perpetuation of the alliance throughout this period had significant social and cultural repercussions. The Seneca deftly modified or controlled the introduction of new economic, religious, educational, and legal institutions in ways that allowed them to perpetuate central values and practices of Seneca culture. More precisely, they used these new cultural expressions to create a new Seneca identity in which an authentic Seneca could be Christian, or could have received a formal education. Paradoxically, the Seneca-Quaker alliance not only bred cultural innovations that perpetuated the Seneca as a distinct people, but also more closely connected the Seneca to the United States by infusing American institutions into Seneca society. Education, yeoman farming, Christianity, and new forms of law and government, all took hold in Seneca society. The Seneca had survived the expansion of the United States by perpetuating their distinct identity within cultural institutions culled from American civilization.

### **Coda: (re)gaining the “Peaceable Kingdom?”**

The nineteenth century Quaker minister and folk painter Edward Hicks is best known for his series of “Peaceable Kingdom” paintings. These works exemplified the value of pacifism through a variety of tropes including a depiction of a 1701 treaty between William Penn and the Conestoga and Shawnee Indians of Pennsylvania. The scene conveyed the hope that Native and Euro-Americans could share the land and coexist in peace. Historian Kevin Kenny concedes that “treating Indians humanely was an essential part of Penn’s vision.”<sup>434</sup> Yet in his recent book, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, Kenny explained that any hope of peaceful Native and Euro-American coexistence began deteriorating even before Penn died. Moreover, he argued that the Paxton Boy massacre, in which a group of Pennsylvanians slaughtered the last few Conestoga Indians in December of 1763, put an end to the pacifist idealism that led Penn to envision enduring Native-Anglo amity.

I have argued that Natives used cooperation and cultural adaptation to survive the expansion of the United States even as they became engulfed by its military and political power. They charted a path that rejected the dominant Indian policies nineteenth century Anglos articulated. The antiremoval movement represented an alternative to the choices of removal or full assimilation; options which were unacceptable to Natives as they threatened to destroy indigenous cultures and communities. Natives did not bow to arrogant proclamations that sought to determine their future for them. Though Indians lost the battle to keep their lands, they won the war to maintain themselves as distinct

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<sup>434</sup> Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, p. 15.



peoples with unique cultures. What happened to Native Americans in the nineteenth century was undeniably horrific. However, the antiremoval movement shows that the story of nineteenth century Native America is not just one in which United States continental expansion turned Indians into defeated victims doomed to suffer cultural and economic poverty. Cultural adaptation, Native-Anglo collaboration, and agitation for rights – strategies forged in the antiremoval movement - arguably helped Natives mitigate some of the most egregious wrongs Indians suffered in the nineteenth century.

If the antiremoval movement sheds light on nineteenth century history, it also helps us better understand the contours of the modern United States. The movement highlights a transformative process that changed indigeneity. Various Native peoples, including the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Seneca, had experienced drastic cultural change in the period that preceded the antebellum era. The removal debate was a dire political crisis for Indians. In response to the menace of removal, cultural change took on new meaning as it became a coherent and purposeful strategy of collective defense. The added value Natives placed in selective cultural change was reinforced by the alliances they developed with sympathetic Anglos who also wanted Indians to adopt particular practices. By the post removal period, however, certain cultural changes, such as the development of formal education systems and the adoption of written constitutions, had morphed from manifestations of a strategy of collective defense to authentic elements of various Indian cultures. In other words, by the 1840s and 50s, practices such as sending children to school and living under the governance of a written constitution had become constituent parts of what it meant to be Cherokee, or Choctaw, or Seneca. They were no longer practices these groups engaged in principally to develop alliances with white allies

who could help secure Native rights, or protect Indians from coerced dispossession. This process of change is difficult to define or name – it was not quite syncretism, hybridity, acculturation, transculturation, or assimilation. More accurately, it represented a new way to be either Cherokee, or Choctaw, or Seneca.

This process of indigenous transformation reverberates into our current time. It brings into clearer focus how various Native peoples, from the nineteenth century until the present, could retain limited sovereignty and distinct ethnic identities despite a history that witnessed military defeat and the ascension of the United States to political dominion over the continent. In ways I have not yet fully explored, the transformation of the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Seneca helped them develop identities, cultures, and worldviews that allowed them to negotiate American civilization and become part of the American nation-state, while still retaining indigenous worlds.

Perhaps then in some sense we may be witnessing the gaining or regaining of something like the “peaceable kingdom,” if by the term we mean Native and non-Native coexistence. True, by many measures peace or coexistence characterized by social justice is out of reach. Many Native reservations endure high crime and poverty rates, and drug and alcohol abuse is a severe problem. Many non-Natives do not value or understand Native cultures. Others, including state governments, the United States government, and academic researchers, often fail to entirely respect Native sovereignty over lands, artifacts, grave remains, and other cultural productions. Arguments between Natives and non-Natives over a variety of issues – gambling, treaty rights, and the extent of Native sovereignty – are ongoing. And negligent or incompetent United States Indian policies perpetuate mistreatment of Native peoples. Yet, we cannot deny that in the modern

United States, Native and non-Native peoples intermix through shared political, social, and economic structures. Moreover, we can still make distinctions like “Native” and “non-Native” because various Native groups retain cultural difference, distinct ethnic identities, and limited sovereignty. People who claim an identity as Cherokee, Choctaw, or Seneca see these identities as aspects of their selves that set them apart from others. If by some measure we are seeing a peaceable kingdom it is certainly not because non-Natives are simply bringing peace to pliant Indians, as depicted in Hicks’ paintings. Rather, current relations between Natives and non-Natives have at least some roots that reach back to a history in which efforts to thwart removal reinforced a transformative process that altered indigeneity.

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