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978-0-521-84280-8 - Faith and Boundaries: Colonists, Christianity, and Community among the Wampanoag Indians of Martha's Vineyard, 1600–1871

David J. Silverman

Excerpt

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## Introduction

### Epenow's Lessons

Epenow's pulse must have quickened when he caught the first scent of pine forest drifting eastward from a land still out of view but foremost on his mind. Just days later the vessel carrying him from England approached the Maine shoreline and then plied southward past Massachusetts Bay into waters that crashed against the sand dune frame of his Wampanoag people's territory. The power of the moment would have unleashed pent up heartache and fury in a weaker man, but mastering his emotions had brought Epenow this far and he was not about to abandon the course. Patiently, he endured the long last stage of his journey around Cape Cod and the treacherous Nantucket shoals, and finally toward the island of Noepe, his home. It had been three years since a fateful day in 1611 when Captain Edward Harlow abducted Epenow from the New England coast and carried him across the ocean into an adventure bordering on the surreal. Once in London, Epenow's captors shuttled him from place to place exhibiting him as "a wonder" before gawking crowds, a humiliation suffered by dozens and perhaps hundreds of other kidnapped Indians during the previous century.<sup>1</sup> For Epenow, however, the city was on show with its throngs of people and livestock jamming the streets, the abject poor begging at the heels of their ornately clad "betters," and a whirling commerce in goods from nearly every corner of the globe, all in the shadow of mighty architecture sponsored by England's church and state. The spectacle of wealth and poverty, power and population, was unlike anything Epenow had ever known in the Wampanoags' village world. Yet there was hardly enough

<sup>1</sup> Alden T. Vaughan, "Sir Walter Raleigh's Indian Interpreters, 1584–1618," *WMQ* 59 (2002), 341–76; Harald E. L. Prins, "To the Land of the Mistigoches: American Indians Traveling to Europe in the Age of Exploration," *AICRJ* 17 (1993), 175–95; Olive P. Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984), 203–32; Carolyn Thomas Foreman, *Indians Abroad, 1493–1938* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943).

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time to get his bearings, for when audiences tired of gazing at a bona fide “savage,” he was transferred some 200 miles westward to the port town of Plymouth and the custody of Sir Ferdinando Gorges, a prime mover in England’s first colonization efforts and a collector of informative Indians.<sup>2</sup>

However disoriented Epenow might have become during the unfolding of these events, eventually he regained his footing and transformed himself from a puppet to puppet master. Somehow he gained a rudimentary command of the English language, perhaps enough to free his words from the strained translations and editorial comments of another captive Indian, a Wabenaki from Maine named Assacomoit, and certainly enough to learn something of his captors’ strange behavior. The Englishmen’s greatest motivation turned out to be so foreign yet simple that one imagines Epenow shaking his head and laughing in disbelief when he uncovered it. One also can picture the smile crossing Gorges’ face as Epenow began to spin tall tales about Noepe’s gold mines and offered to lead an expedition to them. The Wampanoag’s stories attracted enough investors to outfit a 1614 voyage under the command of Nicholas Hobson. In a change of fortune nearly as incredible as his captivity, Epenow was heading home.<sup>3</sup>

Onboard, both the crew and their Indian passenger were excited by the promise of future rewards, but nervous that either party could destroy the other’s plans. Consequently, when the ship anchored off Noepe, which the English called Martha’s Vineyard, Hobson placed Epenow under close watch and clothed him in long garments, “fitly to be laid hold on, if occasion should require.” Wampanoags canoeing out to investigate were equally suspicious, since violence had marred all their recent encounters with Europeans. Yet the astonishing reappearance of Epenow eased their caution and drew them to shipside. Reveling in the sound of his mother tongue, Epenow told his people to come back in the morning to trade, or so Hobson thought. Accordingly, the next day a flotilla of canoes approached the craft, and once they were within bowshot, Epenow threw off his guards, leapt into the water, and swam to safety while his tribesmen pinned down the sailors with a barrage of arrows. “[The Indians] carried him away in despite [despite] of all the Musquetteers aboard,”

<sup>2</sup> Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620–1675*, 3d ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 1–10; David B. Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 412–13; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500–1643* (New York: Oxford, 1982), 95.

<sup>3</sup> Philip L. Barbour, ed., *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith (1580–1631), in Three Volumes* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1986), 1:433, 2:403; James Phinney Baxter, ed., *Sir Ferdinando Gorges and His Province of Maine*, 3 vols. (Boston: The Prince Society, 1890), 1:209–11, 2:21–23. Prins, “To the Land of the Mistigoches,” 185–6, tells the fascinating story of the Wabenaki captive, Assacomoit.

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a stunned Gorges was told.<sup>4</sup> The English had sailed to Martha's Vineyard blinded by the prospective shine of gold. Instead, "they lost [Epenow]; and not knowing what to do, returned againe to England with nothing."<sup>5</sup>

Epenow exhibited his flair for dramatic reappearance again in 1619. That year Captain Thomas Dermer coasted southern New England at the request of a passenger named Squanto, another Wampanoag who had fallen into Gorges' possession after Thomas Hunt snatched him and twenty-six other Natives from the mainland in 1614.<sup>6</sup> While mooring at Martha's Vineyard, the crew was shocked to be greeted by none other than Epenow, who in "indifferent good English" recounted his earlier captivity with Gorges, Dermer's very sponsor, "laughed at his own escape, and reported the story of it." To the sailors' relief, he offered no sign of lingering hostility, but rather played the gracious host and even encouraged Dermer to return to the island on his way back north from Virginia, the captain's destination. Like Gorges chasing gold, Dermer took the bait, unaware that Wampanoags yearned for revenge against his nation for the repeated crimes of men like Harlow and Hunt.<sup>7</sup> The captain stopped again at the Vineyard and "going ashore amongst the Indians to trade, as he used to do, was betrayed and assaulted by them, and all his men slain, but one that kept the boat."<sup>8</sup> Gorges believed, "a war has now begun between the inhabitants of those parts and us."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Baxter, ed., *Sir Ferdinando Gorges*, 2:25.

<sup>5</sup> Barbour, ed., *Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, 2:403. For another full account of Epenow's story, see Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytas Posthumus, or, Purchas His Pilgrimes: Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Land Travells by Englishmen and Others*, 20 vols. (Glasgow, 1907), 19:272–5.

<sup>6</sup> Neal Salisbury, "Squanto: Last of the Patuxets," in David G. Sweet and Gary B. Nash, eds., *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 228–46.

<sup>7</sup> Accounts of these clashes are found in Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements*, 385–416; James Axtell, "At the Water's Edge: Trading in the Sixteenth Century," in his *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 144–81; Axtell, "The Exploration of Norumbega: Native Perspectives," in his *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 75–96; Prins, "To the Land of the Mistigoches"; and David J. Silverman, "Conditions for Coexistence, Climates for Collapse: The Challenges of Indian Life on Martha's Vineyard, 1524–1871" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2000), 10–11, 17–22.

<sup>8</sup> Dermer's story can be traced in George Parker Winship, ed., *Sailor's Narratives of Voyages along the New England Coast, 1524–1624* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1905), 251–7 ("indifferent good English" at 255); Barbour, ed., *Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, 2:441; William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 82–3 ("going ashore . . ."); Baxter, ed., *Sir Ferdinando Gorges*, 2:29 ("laughed . . ."). Gorges' account of these events should be read with care because he wrote it forty years after the fact and seems to have suffered from a clouded memory about certain details. See Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 265–6, n. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, 16. See also Dwight B. Heath, ed., *Mourt's Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth* (1622; Bedford, Mass.: Applewood Books, 1963), 52; Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 83; Purchas, *Hakluytas Posthumus*, 19:279.

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FIGURE 1. The Wampanoags' Early Contacts with Europeans. The Wampanoags had steady contact with European explorers during the early seventeenth century. Usually they met in the context of trade, as depicted in Theodore de Bry's drawing of Bartholomew Gosnold's 1602 visit to Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands. However, almost invariably these sessions degenerated into violence, as in a drawing of Samuel de Champlain's 1606 clash with Wampanoags at Monomoy on Cape Cod, and involved Europeans carrying Indians away into captivity. This pattern led the Vineyard Wampanoags to avoid English colonists until the 1640s, twenty years after the founding of Plymouth colony.

Island Wampanoags retained their belligerent reputation for years to come. In 1622, they were implicated in a regional Indian conspiracy to cut off the young Plymouth colony, and even after they signed a treaty of friendship, the settlers still considered them "mortal enemies to all other English."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, 82–8; Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: W. W. Norton for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1975), 186–7; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 129; John Pory to the Earl of Southampton, January 13, 1622/23, in James, ed., *Three Visitors to Early Plymouth* (quote). See also John H. Humins, "Squanto and Massasoit: A Struggle for Power," *NEQ* 60 (1987), 54–70.

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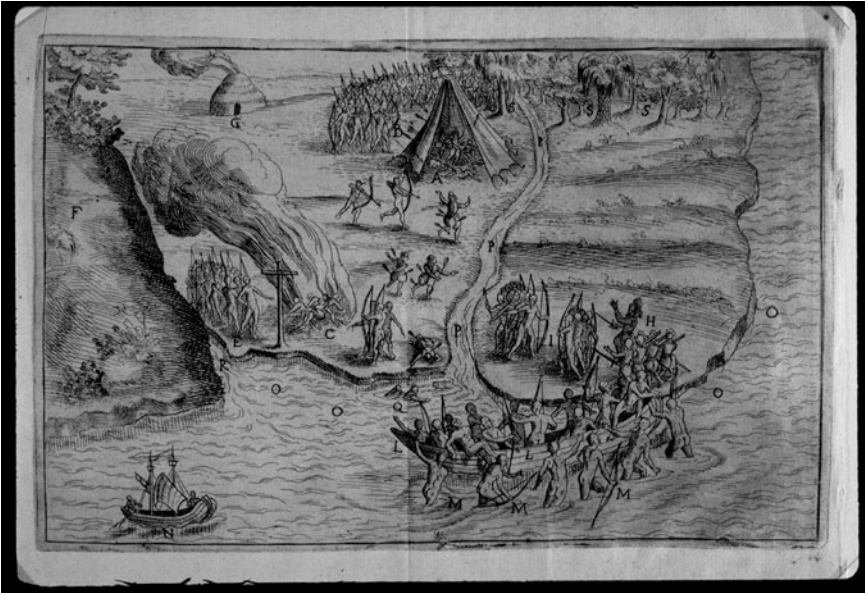


FIGURE I (continued)

Emmanuel Altham wrote in 1623 that since Dermer's murder at the Vineyard, "no English hath been there," although he intended to try "well armed."<sup>11</sup> When Thomas Lechford returned to England in 1641 after three years in Boston, he remembered "an Island called Martins Vineyard, uninhabited by any English, but Indians, which are very savage."<sup>12</sup> Lechford's contemporary, John Josselyn, heard that Vineyard Wampanoags once "seized upon a boat that put into a By-Cove, kill'd the men and eat them in a short time before they were discovered."<sup>13</sup> Fact or fiction, the point was clear: Englishmen were not welcome on Epenow's island.

Yet the early 1640s called for a new strategy. Epenow had disappeared from the historical stage, and although he left little record of his political career, undoubtedly his people's hostile isolationism had been influenced by him. But the island's saltwater moat struggled to contain the forces raging outside. Between 1616 and 1618 and then again in 1633, European epidemics tore into New England, dropping the Native population along the mainland coast and the Connecticut River Valley by some seventy-five percent or

<sup>11</sup> Emmanuel Altham to Sir Edward Altham (1623), in James, ed., *Three Visitors to Early Plymouth*, 27.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Lechford, *Plain Dealing, or Newes from New-England* (London, 1642), *MHSC* 3d ser., 3 (1833), 100.

<sup>13</sup> John Josselyn, "The Second Voyage," in Paul J. Lindholdt, ed., *John Josselyn, Colonial Traveler: A Critical Edition of "Two Voyages to New-England"* (1674; Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1988), 91.



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more, but apparently sparing the Vineyard.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, English numbers grew exponentially from a few hundred settlers in 1629 to over 15,000 a decade later, driven by streams of immigration to the Massachusetts Bay Colony.<sup>15</sup> If these trends were not enough to shift the balance of power to the English, the Pequot War of 1636–1637 certainly was. Even Indians hardened to forest warfare were shocked by the colonists' torching of a Pequot village and slaughter of hundreds of innocents who tried to escape the flames. Captain John Mason's order to his troops, "we must burn them," reverberated throughout Indian country.<sup>16</sup>

As colonist William Hubbard wrote, the Pequot War "struck such a terror into all the Indians in those parts (some of whom had been ill affected to the English before) that they sought our friendship and rendered themselves to be under our protection."<sup>17</sup> Wampanoag sachems on Cape Cod who had

<sup>14</sup> On the first outbreak, see Timothy Bratton, "The Identity of the New England Indian Epidemic of 1616–1619," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 62 (1988), 351–83; S. F. Cook, "The Significance of Disease in the Extinction of the New England Indians," *Human Biology* 45 (1973), 485–508; Dean Snow and Kim M. Lanphear, "European Contact and Indian Depopulation in the Northeast: The Timing of the First Epidemics," *Ethnohistory* 35 (1988), 15–33; Catherine C. Carlson, George L. Armelagos, and Ann Magennis, "Impact of Disease on the Precontact and Early Historic Populations of New England and the Maritimes," in John W. Verano and Douglas H. Ubelaker, eds., *Disease and Demography in the Americas* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 141–52; and Brenda J. Baker, "Pilgrim's Progress and Praying Indians: The Biocultural Consequences of Contact in Southern New England," in Clark Spencer Larsen and Geroge R. Milner, eds., *In the Wake of Contact: Biological Responses to Conquest* (New York: Wiley-Liss, Inc., 1994), 35–44. On the second, see John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630–1649*, eds. Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Laeititia Yeandle (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 101, 105–6, 108–10; Edward Johnson, *Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence, 1628–1651*, J. Franklin Jameson ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 79–80; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 190–92; and William A. Starna, "The Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," in Hauptman and Wherry, eds., *The Pequots in Southern New England*, 46.

<sup>15</sup> Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *New England's Generation: The Great Migration and the Formation of Society and Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> The authoritative account of these events is Arthur A. Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996). See also Vaughan, "Pequots and Puritans: The Causes of the War of 1637," in his *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 277–321; and the recent debate over the English massacre of Pequots: Ronald Dale Karr, "Why Should You Be So Furious?: The Violence of the Pequot War," *JAH* 85 (1998), 876–909; Adam J. Hirsch, "The Collision of Military Cultures in Seventeenth-Century New England," *JAH* 47 (1988), 1187–212; Steven T. Katz, "The Pequot War Reconsidered," *NEQ* 64 (1991), 206–24; Michael Freeman, "Puritans and Pequots: The Question of Genocide," *NEQ* 68 (1995), 278; Katz, "Pequots and the Question of Genocide: A Reply to Michael Freeman," *NEQ* 68 (1995), 641–9.

<sup>17</sup> William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Indian Wars in New England, From the first Planting thereof in the Year 1607 to the Year 1677* (1677; Boston, 1775), 39. See also John Strong, *The Algonquian Peoples of Long Island from Earliest Times to 1700* (Interlaken, N.Y.: Empire State Books, 1997), 156–8.

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previously rebuffed the English suddenly began to welcome them as neighbors, leading to the establishment of the towns of Sandwich (settled by the English in 1638), Yarmouth (1638), and Barnstable (1639).<sup>18</sup> As the colonists' newfound allies, these Indians could breathe easy even when Boston threatened in August of 1642 to "strike some terrour into the Indians" because of a rumor that "the Indians all over the country had combined themselves to cut off all the English."<sup>19</sup> But island Wampanoags shuddered at these words, since the English had long suspected them. They needed to make a peaceful gesture and fast. Just then, within months, if not weeks, of Boston's warning, a proverbial *deus ex machina* appeared in the form of a colonist named Thomas Mayhew, who had recently bought the previously worthless English title to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, and now wanted "to obtain the Indian right."<sup>20</sup> Tawanquatuck, sachem of the east-end territory, Nunnepog, took this opportunity to distance his people from the supposed conspiracy and sold Mayhew land for a settlement, believing that this concession was the price of peace.

Tawanquatuck's people were so opposed to this bargain that he was forced to divide his jurisdiction and grant the dissidents independence. However, even the Wampanoags' long and troubled history with the English could not have prepared them for the vast tumult about to enter their lives – epidemic diseases, a new religion, land loss, and political upheaval, followed by debt peonage, exogamous marriage, racial castigation, and much more. Mayhew's colonists were quite unlike the roughneck crews that the Wampanoags had confronted during Epenow's time, but they came with an agenda far more threatening, if also more subtle: they were not interested in seizing the Indians, but they did intend to subjugate them to English authority and religion; they had no plans to force the Indians into slavery, but they did want them as servants; they would not ship the Indians to distant lands, but they did encroach upon the Natives' very lands. And what was more, the colonists intended to stay, not to strike quick and sail off. Remarkably, the two parties never came to blows, but English good fortune was bought at the Wampanoags' expense, leading to the gradual disintegration of several Native communities over the course of two centuries and more.

Yet not all of them, and this book aims to explain why. Recent scholarship contends that during the opening years of colonization, and on the edges of empire where the fur trade thrived and Europeans were scarce, Natives

<sup>18</sup> Winthrop, *Journal of John Winthrop*, 245, 252, 299; Frederick Freeman, *The History of Cape Cod: The Annals of Barnstable County and Its Several towns, Including the District of Mashpee*, 2 vols. (1858; Yarmouth Port, Mass: Parnassus Imprints, 1965), 1:chap. 8; H. Roger King, *Cape Cod and Plymouth Colony* (Landham, Md.: University Press of America, 1994), 44–5, 53.

<sup>19</sup> Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, 157; Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 260–1 (quote).

<sup>20</sup> Charles Edward Banks, *The History of Martha's Vineyard, Dukes County, Massachusetts*, 3 vols. (Boston: George H. Dean, 1911), 1:84.

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and newcomers were linked by economic interdependence, growing political ties, and in some cases, earnest missionary activity, producing exchanges of material culture, ritual behavior, and, to a lesser extent, even beliefs.<sup>21</sup> This was the case even in New England, long held to be a bastion of uncompromising colonial expansion, between the Pequot War of 1636–1637 and King Philip's War of 1675–1676. This interpretive emphasis on cooperation and negotiation, rather than just on exploitation and brutality, brilliantly modifies the long-standing view of an unbridgeable cultural gap between peoples that automatically degenerated into bloodshed. Nevertheless, in one case study after another, Indian–European communion implodes, often in a murderous orgy, usually within decades of inception – a track record that is especially grim for English regions. In this sense, the new scholarship has reinforced the narrative of inevitable warfare and Indian dispossession even though it has successfully complicated and delayed its trajectory. The history of Martha's Vineyard, where the two peoples managed to live in close proximity for hundreds of years without slaughtering one another, demands explanation in this context.

Along similar lines, current scholarship offers few positive assessments of Indian attempts to use Christianity to negotiate colonial systems over the long term. Historians of New England agree that Indians who gathered into the region's "praying towns," or Christian reserves, during the

<sup>21</sup> On New England, see Salisbury, "Social Relationships on a Moving Frontier: Natives and Settlers in Southern New England, 1638–1675," *MNE* 33 (1987), 89–98; Robert James Naeher, "Dialogue in the Wilderness: John Eliot and the Indians' Exploration of Puritanism as a Source of Meaning, Comfort, and Ethnic Survival," *NEQ* 62 (1989), 346–68; Harold W. Van Lonkhuyzen, "A Reappraisal of the Praying Indians: Acculturation, Conversion, and Identity at Natick, Massachusetts, 1646–1730," *NEQ* 63 (1990), 396–428; Richard Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); James D. Drake, *King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675–1676* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).

Among many works on other colonial regions, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Daniel H. Usner Jr., *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1992); Axtell, *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Peter C. Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity: Economic Culture along the Upper Susquehanna, 1700–1800* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); Colin G. Calloway, *Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Andrew R. L. Cayton and Fredrika Teute, eds., *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750–1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1998); Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700–1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2003).



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mid-seventeenth century were trying to cloister portions of their land from insatiable Massachusetts, and that this strategy worked, although only for a time.<sup>22</sup> The “praying Indians’” status as Christians enabled most of them to sustain a fragile peace with the English during King Philip’s War and to emerge from the conflict with some territory intact. Yet the war and subsequent frontier conflicts permanently heightened the colonists’ suspicion and hatred of all Indians, Christian or not, which, combined with their lust for Indian resources, sapped their enthusiasm for missionary work and encouraged them to violate the Indians’ land and jurisdiction at every turn. The praying Indians could hardly muster a defense, supposedly because acculturation had weakened their social institutions and sense of collective identity, and the empty promises of Christianity demoralized them. Thus, throughout the eighteenth century, Englishmen steadily chipped away at praying town boundaries, exploited the Indians economically, and eventually drove most of the Natives west or into the company of the wandering poor. Given this telling, it would appear that Christianity failed New England’s Indians just as it failed the Indians of so many other times and places throughout the colonial saga: Hurons who hosted Jesuit missionaries during the 1630s and 40s to secure French military assistance and trade advantages, only to become so hopelessly factionalized by Christianity that they disintegrated under Iroquois attack; Florida Indians who became easy targets for European diseases and South Carolina’s slave raids by gathering into Christian settlements after the Spanish promised their leadership military and material support; Moravian Delawares in the Ohio mission town of Gnadenhutzen, who, having embraced Christianity as a means of revitalizing their communities after rampant land loss and despondency, were mercilessly bludgeoned to death by frontier settlers, their fellow Christians, toward the end of the Revolution.<sup>23</sup> Counterexamples exist among the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and

<sup>22</sup> Elise M. Brenner, “To Pray or to be Prey: That is the Question: Strategies for Cultural Autonomy of Massachusetts Praying Town Indians,” *Ethnohistory* 27 (1980), 135–52; James P. Ronda, “Generations of Faith: The Christian Indians of Martha’s Vineyard,” *WMQ* 38 (1981), 369–94; Axtell, “Were Indian Conversion Bona Fide?” in *After Columbus*, 100–24; Naeher, “Dialogue in the Wilderness”; Van Lonkhuyzen, “A Reappraisal of the Praying Indians”; Daniel Mandell, “‘To Live More Like my Christian English Neighbors’: Natick Indians in the Eighteenth Century,” *WMQ* 48 (1991), 552–79; Mandell, *Behind the Frontier: Indians in Eighteenth-Century Eastern Massachusetts* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996); Dane Morrison, *A Praying People: Massachusetts Acculturation and the Failure of the Puritan Mission, 1600–1690* (New York: Peter Land, 1995); Jean M. O’Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650–1790* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Cogley, *John Eliot’s Mission to the Indians*.

<sup>23</sup> On the Hurons, see Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660*, 2d ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1985); Denys Delâge, *Bitter Feast: Amerindians and Europeans in Northeastern North America, 1600–1664*, Jane Brierley, trans. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1993). On Florida, see Jerald T. Milanich, *Laboring in the Fields of the Lord: Spanish Missions and Southeastern*

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the various tribes of the Saint Lawrence River Valley, who used Catholicism to secure permanent safe havens, but histories of the Southwest are more likely to emphasize how missions sparked the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, while those of Canada tend to sublimate Christianity to imperial politics, trade, and war.<sup>24</sup> Students of the period are left with the overwhelming impression that adopting Christianity could, at best, only postpone the Indians' dispossession, not halt it.

The Indians' Christianity appears no stronger than their defenses in most studies. Generally, historians portray Indian Christianity as a diplomatic cloak under which to maintain traditional beliefs and customs, or a minor syncretic addition to a fundamentally unchanged Indian religion.<sup>25</sup> Some add that the cultural and linguistic barriers between peoples were so high that it was nearly impossible for Indians to gain a solid command of Christian doctrine, especially the heady Calvinism of New England Puritans, even for those few who pursued it. If one also accepts that the mission was an essential component of colonial expansion, and that it was at best a short-lived and imperfect means to come to grips with colonial society for Natives barely knowledgeable about the faith's basic tenets, it is no wonder that Christian Indians tended to fare so badly.

*Indians* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999); David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Amy Turner Bushnell, "Ruling 'the Republic of Indians' in Seventeenth-Century Florida," in Peter Wood, Gregory A. Waselkov, and M. Thomas Hatley, eds., *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 134–50; Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670–1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). On Moravian Indians and Gnadenhütten, see Merritt, *At the Crossroads*; White, *Middle Ground*, 389–90; Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745–1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 83–9.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture); Colin G. Calloway, *The Western Abenakis of Vermont, 1600–1800: War, Migration, and the Survival of an Indian People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990); Ramón Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sex, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Weber, *Spanish Frontier*; Andrew L. Knaut, *The Pueblo Revolt of 1680: Conquest and Resistance in Seventeenth-Century New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> For skeptics of the quality of Christianity among southern New England Indians, see Salisbury, "Red Puritans: The 'Praying Indians' of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot," *WMQ* 31 (1974), 29–31; O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees*, 54–5, 57; Jennings, "Goals and Functions of Puritan Missions"; Elise M. Brenner, "Strategies for Autonomy: An Analysis of Ethnic Mobilization in Seventeenth Century Southern New England" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 1984), 115; and Kenneth M. Morrison, "'That Art of Coyning Christians': John Eliot and the Praying Indians of Massachusetts," *Ethnohistory* 21 (1974), 77–92. For a rare dissenting position, see Axtell, "Were Indian Conversions Bona Fide?"