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FISHER, LINFORD D. *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 312 pp. \$34.95 (cloth).

Linford Fisher's *The Indian Great Awakening* joins a growing body of scholarship on Native American engagement with Christianity. Much of that work so far (including my own) has focused on particular individuals or communities. Fisher's is the first to take a broader, longer scope to survey the landscape of Native engagement with Christianity in southern New England (Connecticut, Rhode Island, Long Island, and western Massachusetts) through the eighteenth century (1700–1820), and it offers a welcome contribution. Fisher's aim is to understand Native encounter with Christianity "in the fullest possible context of local colonial interactions and the broader, transatlantic tugs of imperial power" (8).

The Indian Great Awakening is very much a work of history charting growth, change, and patterns of Indian engagement with Christianity, more than the shape and texture of Native religious experience, although the latter is not entirely absent. The book proceeds in a series of chapters on rainmaking, evangelizing, awakening, affiliating, separating, educating, migrating, and remaining, through which Fisher offers an impressively broad survey of the archival sources related to Native Christianity in eighteenth-century southern New England. Fisher's title is meant to shake up a view of the Great Awakening as a watershed moment in Native Christianity. Fisher persuasively argues that between King Philip's War and the Great Awakening, mission work continued at a steady pace, during which time, native peoples gained a familiarity with the varieties of Christianity. The revivals of the Great Awakening did indeed prompt a spike in church affiliation among Indian peoples, but one that was not sustained after the revivals faded and many moved instead to form Separate Indian congregations or disaffiliate entirely.

The chapters on affiliating and separating (chaps. 4 and 5) constitute the most significant contributions of Fisher's book. Most scholars of Native Christianity, and within many other fields as well, have become uncomfortable with the concept of conversion as an interpretive category signifying a dramatic and fundamental transformation—and so Fisher's opening salvo against conversion (5) feels unnecessary (see, e.g., the recent book by Henri Gooren, *Religious Conversion and Disaffiliation* [New York: Macmillan, 2010]). Nonetheless, the framework of affiliation applied to the Native Christian context is very helpful in defusing the impulse to judge and evaluate: a person might move in and out of formal or informal Christian circles, choosing different levels of affiliation, depending on many different variables. The language of religious engagement and affiliation rescues us from perpetuating the unfortunate missionary language of apostasy and backsliding and is better suited to the contours of native religious traditions, which focus not on belief but on efficacy. It is not surprising then that individuals sought religious experiences that could address the particular spiritual and social needs of the moment.

Fisher's chapter on separating (chap. 5) is also particularly helpful, demonstrating just how much can be milked from a broad range of sources, none of which in and of itself offers an especially deep look into the form or substance of Indian worship at Separate Indian Christian communities. But in the aggregate, Fisher is

able to assemble a compelling outline of core features of an emergent Separate Indian Christianity: a tradition that valued spirit-filled services, direct contact with the spiritual realm, and, in Fisher's words, "lots of robust, group singing" (132).

Rather than summarizing additional chapters, it is useful perhaps to locate Fisher's book within a larger body of scholarship. Interest in Native Christianity is relatively new—only taking off as a field in the last decade (with a few notable earlier entries). The 1960s–80s saw several broad surveys of missionary work in North America, but for the most part, these scholars (like Henry Warner Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981]) focused on the range of missionary offerings and Indian responses, which they generally placed on a continuum from resistance to accommodation. Starting in the late 1980s, with the work of figures like Kenneth Morrison (many of his essays are collected in *The Solidarity of Kin: Ethnohistory, Religious Studies, and the Algonkian-French Religious Encounter* [Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002]), scholars turned more attentively to limning the contours of Native Christian practice as distinct from missionary Christianity. The early work in the field reflected larger scholarly currents, particularly social history, community studies, and microhistorical and more recently lived religious trends. The field has continued to flourish, with much of the recent work represented in the recent volume edited by Joel Martin and Mark Nicholas (*Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010]). *The Indian Great Awakening* provides an important bird's-eye view of a field that has become increasingly populated with studies offering steeple-height views of individual communities. The signal contribution of Fisher's book is not the novelty of his interpretation but the breadth of its view: it is like zooming out from the pins on a Google map until you can see the more familiar landmarks and boundaries and see how the smaller pieces fit into the bigger picture. One wishes, however, that Fisher might have panned the focus out even a bit further to locate his region of interest within an even larger area: What are the implications for the study of Native Christianity as it emerged in Martha's Vineyard or the Middle Colonies or New France?

That is not to say that *The Indian Great Awakening* makes no interpretive claims. I would place Fisher firmly in what I have come to call the "it's complicated" school of American historiography that sees complexity where earlier revisionist historians saw clear boundaries of identity: men and women, Indian and white, native and Christian, black and white. Fisher's opening image of a bear paw and Bible page found in the grave of a Pequot girl who died in the late seventeenth century is a perfect illustration of this emerging school that revels in the complexity and ambiguity of the two seemingly oppositional objects (5–6). The image, for Fisher, serves as a challenge to what for a generation of revisionist scholars was the reigning paradigm of assimilation (or conversion) versus resistance. Although the full meaning of the burial objects remains obscure, Fisher reads them as testimony that the girl and her community identified to some unknown degree with the symbols and practices of native and Christian religious traditions (6–7). The bear paw and Bible page are thus the physical expression of a commitment to "both/and" rather than "either/or."

One lingering challenge I have for Fisher is one I face in my own work, and to which I have yet to form an adequate response. For many reasons, both historiographical and ideological I suspect, there runs through Fisher's book, as there was in mine, a desire to find in Native Christianity continuity with the pre-Christian past, as well as to identify the strategic choices that facilitated communal survival. I think now that we are at a safe distance from the last remnants of triumphalist his-

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tory, it is possible to look at what was unique and distinctive about the Christianity as embraced by native peoples, as well as what provided continuity and security.

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