



THE  
**AMERICAN  
INDIAN**

A STANDING INDICTMENT  
AGAINST CHRISTIANITY  
AND STATISM IN AMERICA

**R. J. RUSHDOONY**



VALLECITO, CALIFORNIA

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# FOREWORD

BY REBECCA RUSHDOONY ROUSE

Reading my father's book, *The American Indian*, brought back a host of memories and the realization that my Pollyanna-like childhood memories were far from the reality of life at Owyhee, Nevada. Perhaps because my father spent his youth among the Armenian minority in several communities and had faced discrimination, he could more easily identify with such groups as the Chinese he worked with in San Francisco during his university days and the Shoshone and Paiute Indians of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation, also known as the Western Shoshone Reservation. As he did with everything, he read as much as he could about the Indians to educate himself on their history and culture and how best to help and teach while he was serving there. As with many subjects he studied, he found that much of what experts wrote differed from what the Indians on the reservation had to say. Although this book is about his experiences over half a century ago, many of the myths and issues he confronted are still with us today.

Owyhee is on the remote northern border of Nevada about a hundred miles from Mountain Home, Idaho, and a similar distance from Elko to the south. Owyhee is nestled in barren rolling hills. There was deep snow in winter, which sometimes required my father to use snowshoes and the upstairs window to get out of the house. In summer, there were swarms of mosquitoes and nets had to be draped over the long clotheslines so we children could play outside. The late springs after the snow melted were beautiful, skies were a clear blue, and cattle and an occasional mountain lion could be seen roaming along the amber or green hilltops across the road from the manse.

The manse sat between the mission and the school building and was at one end of the main road, which ran along a ditch. On the other side of the road were a gas and grocery store, a drug store, and the Owyhee hospital. There were few other businesses or buildings along the main road. Life was not easy on the reservation, poverty was a constant problem, and it was far removed from the typical American community of its time.

My father received his B.A. degree (English) in 1938 and his M.A. (Education) in 1940, both from the University of California at Berkeley. In 1944, he finished his Master of Divinity at Pacific School of Religion (also in Berkeley) and was ordained by the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. That same year, he moved to the Western Shoshone Mission at Owyhee, the only town, if it could be called that, on the Duck Valley Reservation, where he remained until early 1953.

This was a time of both change and growth for my father. Far removed from the University of Berkeley and the modernist seminary he attended, it was during his time in Owyhee that his conviction developed that the whole Bible and Biblical law were the foundation of the Christian faith and that the Bible held the answer for every area of life. This came both from observing the disparity between those with and without faith in a broken culture as well as his studies. While working on the reservation he read voraciously and was introduced to the works of Cornelius Van Til which had a major impact on the rest of his life, his writings, and the refining and growth of his faith.

My father kept a series of work journals that listed briefly the day's events and what he accomplished on a given day. His days were full, often lasting well into the night. The number of tasks he accomplished, the frequent trips to Elko and Mountain City on bad roads, the number of people he helped, visited, or transported to various destinations, the volume of letters he wrote, and the large number of funerals he presided over stand out in his journal. Each day's notation included the books he read, often multiple books in single day, both fiction and non-fiction and by a wide variety of authors. Snowstorms, which often

left my father housebound, could result in a lengthy list of volumes read and still it would come after a long list of chores and time spent with us children in the confines of the old manse.

My father's work at the mission entailed much more than pastoring the church itself. It included working with the local school board, attending school board meetings and actually processing the school bills, including payroll. It meant organizing community events, visiting local households, dealing with the often frustrating Bureau of Indian Affairs agents, and getting bids for, as well as overseeing and working on, mission building projects. He frequently interceded for those who had gone afoul of the law, which usually meant a trip into Elko, and was involved in search parties for those who went astray in snowstorms. He raised animals for our meat, a goat for milk, chickens, and a garden for fresh produce or fruit. He took church boys out to help cut wood for those who needed it and also on camping and fishing trips. More than once, I remember my father delivering wood for heating and donating venison for those in need of food. He often took multiple trips in a week to Elko, Mountain City, Rio Tinto (a near-by copper mining town where I was born) and even to Boise, Idaho. Mission barrels came several times a year containing clothing which he distributed to needy families. Some of the barrels came full of toys that were distributed at the annual Christmas program held next door at the school.

My father's journals show that he had many speaking engagements added to his work load. Between the fifth and fourteenth of November, 1947, for instance, he traveled through snow to speak at sixteen different meetings in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, and then conducted Sunday services the morning after his return to Owyhee, yet he still managed to read nine books. To this schedule, he added raising his growing brood of children (five by the time he left the reservation). Even his occasional fishing trips had the dual purpose of stocking the pantry. The fish were salted and added to the dried venison stored for use throughout the year. Time was not

something my father wasted.

My memories of Owyhee are centered around my father and mission life. They are of a childhood among caring neighbors, constant visitors, and the warmth and generosity expressed by so many of the Indian families, including the Premo, Thomas, and Manning families who worked alongside my father. They included Jenny Owyhee, who was well over a hundred years old and remembered her tribe being marched to the reservation, and her daughter, Judy Jack, who married a much younger man who was very ill so that she could care for him. Judy Jack often sat under the tree in our front yard smoking a pipe and telling us Shoshone stories about wolves, coyotes, and mountain lions. Josephine Crum came frequently to help out in the manse. There were Indian boys, Monty and Chris, who lived across the road and up the hill and who were daily playmates, church picnics on old Army blankets in the churchyard or the manse lawn, and Indian families who came to the mission in a buckboard or in winter by sleigh.

My memories include the deep concern and love my father had for the members of the mission and the people who lived in Owyhee. Raised a farm boy, his attitude was down-to-earth and practical. My father's mission and the goal of his work at Owyhee was very much the same as his later work at Chalcedon and the message of his numerous books; it was and continues to be the changing of lives, of communities, and our world by transforming hearts through Jesus Christ and His law-word.

Ordinarily, my father's works have been published as he wrote them, so as not to misconstrue any of his thoughts. This work, however, obviously represented a "rough" manuscript. Necessary editing was done by Lee Duigon and David Tulis, with all changes approved by my brother, Mark Rushdoony. The chapters were written over a period of several years ending in the early 1990s. As a result, a few examples and stories were repeated. Some of these could be edited for length or deleted without any loss of meaning. One chapter was so truncated it

was deleted as a chapter, but its remaining content was easily merged into other chapters so my father's narrative could be faithfully preserved. Extreme care was taken not to alter the intent of the author.



# INTRODUCTION

[*Editor's note:* What follows is a transcription of a recorded talk given by the author in Santa Cruz, California. It is believed to date from either the late 1950s or early 1960s. It therefore predates the writing of the chapters in this volume, but was included as a valuable overview of the author's later written observations. It was edited for length and conformation to standards of written form. In addition, three paragraphs from a deleted chapter which further described the Ghost Dance were included.  
~ Mark R. Rushdoony]

The American Indian is one of the most neglected persons in the world as far as missionary effort is concerned, but he is one of the most important in terms of the missionary challenge to the church.

The American Indian is a standing indictment against the Christianity of this nation. Our Great Commission commands us to carry the gospel to all peoples. If we have so signally failed among the American Indians that, in the last sixty years, instead of winning more Indians to Christ, we have only half as many Christians as we had in 1890, it means that our witness and our example are very sorry ones. It is in a sense much easier to convert people to Christ who are halfway around the world from us because they see only our representatives—our missionaries—and do not see us. But the American Indian, tragically, sees not only the missionary but American Christianity itself, and his reaction to American Christianity is most negative.

Who is the American Indian and what is he like today? Some of you have perhaps seen him as you took a trip across the United States. As you stopped at some Western railroad town near an Indian reservation, you no doubt saw some Indians lounging around the railroad station, or near the local

hotel and bars. In many instances, they may have seemed to be no more than a group of winos. If such was your impression, you were probably right. A large percentage of them are alcoholics. Then, if you have been on an Indian reservation and seen how they live, you have probably been quite upset by the things you saw.

It is not unusual to find them living in the most abject circumstances—circumstances under which disease thrives, TB and venereal diseases in particular. I have seen Indians live, ten or fourteen of them together, in a little log cabin with a dirt floor that is perhaps no bigger than eight or ten feet by twelve feet. You can easily imagine how miserable it is to live under such conditions. Perhaps they have just one bed and nothing but bedrolls for the rest of the family.

People who see these things very often say that the government ought to do something for the Indians. The answer to that is that the government has already done too much, far too much, and that we, the Christians of America, have done far too little.

To understand how all this came to be, let's look at the history of the American Indian. It would be easy to paint a tragic story of the mistreatment of the American Indian, and it would be easy to do it with historical data. It would be very easy to go back into our Presbyterian historical society's records and find stories of how Indians were deliberately inoculated with small-pox which killed them because they had no resistance to it, or were deliberately and systematically debauched so that they might be eliminated and their land taken over by the white man. But I think such stories would paint an unfair picture.

I think a much more honest and realistic picture has been given by one of the old Indians on the Owyhee Reservation in Nevada, where I served for eight and a half years (1944–1953). He said, "We hear a lot of the people on the outside making a great to-do about the mistreatment of the Indians, and a lot of our own people are ready to tell such stories. But when you look at it honestly, this is the story.

“The white man wanted what we had, our land, but he didn’t want us. We wanted what the white man had—his improvements, his guns, his modern conveniences—but we didn’t want him. And so we fought, each wanting what the other had but not wanting the other and trying to eliminate him; and we lost. That’s the story.”

Now that’s a candid, realistic Indian account of the situation. Of course, it neglects one factor—that the white man in this situation was ostensibly a Christian.

The conflict was a long, hard, and bitter one. The Indian fought from the beginning, and because he fought so strenuously for his freedom, there were many who said that the only thing that could be done with the Indian was to exterminate him—wipe him out.

They could not subject him to slavery. Very early on, the Spaniards had tried. But it was impossible to enslave the North American Indian. He absolutely refused. If Indians were taken captive and enslaved, they either died or they fought and escaped. To this very day, the Indians have a strong prejudice against Negroes. They say, “The Negro became a slave. You can’t say much for people who become slaves. You either die or you fight for freedom. We fought for freedom, and we were beaten, but we were never made slaves.” Of course, that was the reason for the long, bitter struggle.

The Indian refused to give up. Outnumbered tremendously, he fought against the white man who had superior equipment and, time and again, defeated him. By and large, the only way the Indians could be beaten was by superior equipment and overwhelming numbers.

The greatest military strategist the North American continent has ever produced was Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce Indians. Chief Joseph’s maneuvers in the Indian Wars are a classic of military brilliance. He took a handful of warriors, a tremendous number of women both young and old, children, and all the paraphernalia of an Indian camp, and defeated the U. S. Army again and again. It was not until he was near the Ca-

nadian border and believed he and his people were safe, perhaps even across the border, that the U. S. Army under General Oliver O. Howard overtook him while he was completely unprepared for an attack and decimated his band.

Indians are still close to these events. I have talked to old Indians, (some of them now Presbyterian elders), who were young boys, aged nine to eleven at the time of Chief Joseph's War, who saw the American cavalry tear into the Indian camp and wipe out a sizeable portion of the people. The Battle of Wounded Knee, which ended the Sioux uprising under the medicine man, Sitting Bull, took place only in 1890. It was in 1911 that the last "Indian trouble" in Nevada, led by Shoshone Mike with his band of Shoshone Indians, was finally put down with the extermination of his group.

That's very recent history. Although some of the bitterest fighting was waged in the last half of the nineteenth century, it was the fighting of desperation; after 1869, the Indian knew he was defeated. Many of the Indian uprisings came later, but in 1869 the Indian knew his day was finished.

What happened in 1869? In that year, the transcontinental railroad was completed. In Utah the dignitaries gathered together for that great occasion when the last spike was driven and the first train spanned the continent. The Indians who watched from the mountains saw that great iron monster hurtling across the plains, over the mountains, and through the canyons, and knew that, for them, the end had come. As long as the white man marched across the country on horseback, in covered wagons, or as isolated stragglers, he could be met and defeated. But when he crossed the country in his great iron monster, that was something final, transcending anything the Indian knew—something that declared the white man was here to stay. Not only was he here to stay, but he was binding the continent to himself with the ties of iron.

A very significant movement in the history of the American Indian, one born of this defeat and pessimism, also began in 1869: the Ghost Dance. The Ghost Dance began in Nevada.

From Nevada it spread throughout the western states, eastward across the Mississippi and into Canada, and, to a certain extent, into Mexico. The old Indians dreamed dreams and the young men saw visions as the Ghost Dance prophets went from tribe to tribe carrying the news.

They told stories of how God's son came into the world and the white men killed him, and they said that God's son told the people he would come back again: "He's going to come back! We've seen visions. He's going to come back, and he is going to take all the white men and punish them for their wickedness, and a great wind is going to sweep the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific and it's going to pick up all the white men and deposit them in the Pacific Ocean. After they have been swept off the continent, the buffalo and the antelope and the elk will come back again, the grass will be knee-deep on the thousand hills of America, and the Indian will live as he once lived. The dead will come back from their graves and rejoin the Indians of today, and there will be a great, a glorious life."

Other accounts of the Ghost Dance movement confuse Montezuma and Jesus. Montezuma, the great Indian emperor in Mexico, and Jesus Christ were both slain by the white men. Having heard vague stories about both, some Indians merged the two figures.

And so they danced the Ghost Dance, believing that when they fulfilled all the conditions and the spirits were pleased, the great hour would come. They danced, but in pessimism gave it up. But then fresh prophets would come from Nevada, carrying the news of certain conditions they had newly dreamed about; and saying that if the people only met these conditions, deliverance would come. This time it would come for sure. So again they would dance, night after night, day after day, until they dropped from exhaustion. And again the pessimism and the cynicism would set in.

Several anthropologists wrote about the Ghost Dance and its believers. These studies are accurate and yet very faulty, because scholars did not talk to the Indian dissenters. I met a few

Sioux Indians who told me that Sitting Bull was not a chief and that he was a coward. Indians connected with the U. S. Army shot him because they hated him, and they resented the fact that he had led so many Sioux into the Ghost Dance cult.

There was no such killing among the Paiutes and Shoshones but there was a great deal of jeering and mockery directed at the dancers. Even in my day, a few older people were sometimes put down by being reminded that they had been Ghost Dancers.

The Indian is too often identified with a variety of practices and events which interest anthropologists. The Ghost Dance did and does interest them and rightfully so. Certainly I was very much interested in it! But I soon realized that this was one reason why most Indians quietly disliked the various scholars who studied their culture. The scholars studied the Ghost Dance people, but not their Indian critics.

The Ghost Dance continued, sweeping through the West, rising and subsiding, until the last flicker of it passed away in 1932 with the death in Nevada of Jack Wilson, the leader or prophet of the Ghost Dance movement. With that came a deep hopelessness, utter defeat, abject pessimism—and also the rise of Peyotism, a religious narcotic cult.

Peyote is *worshipped*. It is called “the father and the son and the holy spirit” in some groups; in others it is given pagan names, and in others a mixture of Christian and pagan terminology. Practitioners *worship* that narcotic. It is protected by the Indian Service [Bureau of Indian Affairs] and legalized by the United States because it is used, they say, by a religious group. They worship it and it dulls their intelligence, destroys their moral fiber, and increasingly has laid waste the Indian peoples of America. The deaths which can be attributed to peyote are beyond description. There are no statistics because government doctors are afraid to attribute any death to peyote since the government protects it. Actually, the number of deaths is enormous while the moral decadence, degeneration, and degradation that accompany the use of peyote is extensive.

Some of the old Indians tried to make a stand against peyote. When I first went to the reservation, I recall vividly an incident at a funeral service. About an hour before I was to conduct the service, the funeral feast was still going on, with perhaps a hundred people gathered to partake of it, and we were standing around the campfire outside the cabin as the food was being served. An old Shoshone began to speak to the young men, many of whom were adherents of the peyote cult, saying, "Let us go back to the old ways, the good old ways. Worship the wolf. He is the true god. Don't pay any attention to the white man and his religion: they don't believe in it. Look at the government people, look at the white men you see when you go to town, and see how many of them believe in Christianity. Leave the new ways and go back to the old ways. Worship the wolf."

It was futile. The old Indian ways were dead. They had little appeal. And the kind of religion that you and I try to give them also had very little appeal. As far as they were concerned, both were dead: the wolf and the religion of Jesus Christ.

What had happened to the Indians? Let's look back, first of all, to the old Indian character. Today the Indian is a defeated man, a man lacking in character, an alcoholic, sexually very unstable and highly immoral. But the Indian of a hundred years ago, the Indian of 200 or 300 years ago, was a very different person.

The Plains Indian, for example, who inhabited most of the West except for the Southwest and some of the coast, could be characterized by a term so common in this country in the 1920s and early 1930s: "rugged individualist." That was the life of the Plains Indian. His entire training was geared for the single purpose of preparing him to meet life and survive. To be a man was to be someone capable of withstanding all kinds of suffering, surviving under the most adverse circumstances, standing up to almost any condition and meeting it alone or as part of a group.

The children were trained, usually by their grandparents,

by stories told around the campfire. The grandparents would tell their grandchildren, "Listen to me because you are going to live by these stories." They would tell them stories of hunting and fishing and battle and survival. So small children would often survive under the most extraordinary circumstances.

Circumstances, for instance, like this: an Indian camp was attacked. The parents immediately engaged in battle, the women taking cover with some of the family's useful possessions or else being seized or taken. What would happen to the children?

The children knew instinctively what to do. Perhaps there was a badger hole nearby. They'd crawl into that hole, pull leaves and rubble over the top of it, and stay there until darkness fell. Not until it was dark, when they could hear no noise or activity in the area, did they come out.

I remember one such story of a boy of less than school age, (in terms of our culture), who crawled into a place of refuge and stayed there all day after his band was attacked. When he came out at night, his band had been wiped out and his father was barely alive. "Son," the father said, "we'll try to go a little ways." They did try but then had to rest because the man was obviously failing. As they lay down to rest, the father said, "Son, after a while, when you wake up, feel me. If I'm cold, don't cry, don't stay by me, don't bother with me—keep moving. When you hear sounds of an Indian camp, don't go into it. Go to the side from which the wind is blowing, lest the dogs smell you and come after you, and there wait until it's dark. Then creep close and listen, and if you hear our language being spoken, then go into the camp. But if not, keep moving."

That boy, in early winter when the nights were down to zero and sometimes lower, kept moving for more than two weeks until he found a band of his own people and joined it. How many of our children could survive under those circumstances? They would have been dead within a day. But that Indian child survived; thus were the Indian children reared and trained.

To be a man among the Sioux, you had to dance the Sun Dance. To dance the Sun Dance meant you had to subject yourself to a tremendous ritual of torture. You could not marry or be a warrior unless you danced the Sun Dance.

There was a pole, like a Maypole, with leather thongs hanging from it. The candidates for manhood came near, and the warriors pried up the muscles on the youths' backs, slipped the thongs under them, and cinched the thongs up tight so that the young men would be on their toes for three days and three nights. They were to dance around the pole without wincing once, singing happy songs about the privilege of manhood. If one collapsed—which meant he'd ripped open the muscles on his back—he would have to wait until the next year before he could apply again for manhood. It was a fearful ordeal, but every Sioux Indian in the old days danced the Sun Dance before he was a man.

There are similar stories among the Shoshones. One of the things that I was interested in when I first went to the reservation was to hear stories of scalping from a member of my own session. I don't think there are many Presbyterian ministers in the United States who had a member of his session tell them about scalping and demonstrate the art—without the realistic items, but enough to give a good description of the technique of scalping.

"We Shoshones," he said, "were very humane in our scalping. We didn't always kill the person. We scalped him because, if we weren't too angry with him, we turned him loose." He told me of a blacksmith up in the Bruno River country who was one of the last white men to be scalped and was always grateful and friendly to the Indians afterwards. He had expected to be killed, but since he lost nothing more than his scalp, he was quite congenial afterward, and the Indians frequently visited him in later years.

The technique, as he described it, is significant. Among young Shoshones, if two men were competing for the chieftainship and they wanted to bet, one against the other, on who

was the better runner, better hunter, or better shot with the bow and arrow, they would bet their scalps. The loser of the contest would have to let the winner scalp him. In so doing, he could demonstrate his own manhood and actually win a victory in the whole situation if he could keep the girls in stitches while being scalped. He would sit on a rock, and the other man would take a tight thong and tie it around his head, run a short knife around it, put his kneecap down on it, and yank and lift the whole thing. Of course, no hair or skin would ever grow there again.

If, while this was being done, instead of wincing or crying, the young man could keep the watching girls amused, then he emerged the winner by demonstrating his ability to be a man. This capacity to take punishment and endure suffering is trained into the young Indian from early childhood. As a result, Indians to this day are much quieter people than whites, their children much quieter under any and every circumstance than white children. It's very rare for an Indian woman to express any pain or to cry out in childbirth no matter how difficult the labor. Indeed, it's very rare to hear from any Indian in a serious accident any acknowledgement of pain.

A classic instance of that involved a couple of young men whom we used to have occasionally in our church. One of them, Roy, was an especially good friend of mine. Roy and the other young man, Hooper, used to fight whenever they met, and Roy usually took a beating. Every Saturday night, when they got drunk, something would draw the two of them together for a terrific fight—and when I say “fight,” it was a rough affair.

In one of the last fights they had, Roy was so badly beaten that his jaw had to be wired, and it took several months to heal. So, when he was up and around again, he pretended he was drunk one Saturday night and went to the mining camp. When Hooper jumped him, Roy was ready for it and worked him over quite thoroughly with a knife. Dr. Hyde, who was our doctor at the time and was staying at a mining camp, told me how Hooper walked two miles from the scene of the knifing, with a

couple of friends, and said on arrival, "Hey, Doc, can you sew me up?"

He was carrying his intestines in his hands. A single perforation in the intestines is almost invariably fatal, Dr. Hyde told me. In this case, there were two. More than that, Hooper required more than 950 stitches before being driven sixteen miles to the reservation Indian hospital, where his patching up could be concluded. During the entire time, Dr. Hyde told me, there was not a wince or a whimper from the man. In a month, Hooper was up and about—and drunk again.

You can see that the old Indian character was a rugged one. They were trained to meet life and survive. They were hard, disciplined warriors. Their character was, of course, savage but it had integrity. They were honest men, trustworthy, and self-reliant. But they were in the way.

When the Indian was defeated, the white man didn't want any part of him. People didn't want Indians roaming across the new ranches, farms, towns, and cities, hunting in their old ways. So the federal government set up the reservation system, wherein the Indians were given a piece of land upon which they were ordered to stay.

The Indian was not used to farming. In fact, for him, farming was women's work. Even chiefs who were partial to farming, and tried to lead their people into the new way of life, when they were about to be caught with a shovel or farm implement in hand, they hid it immediately. They were ashamed: it was like a man being caught wearing an apron. Farming was women's work. Hunting, fishing, and fighting were a man's work.

By and large, in those days, the government didn't try to teach Indians anything. For many years, the system was simply this: put the Indians on a reservation; tell them that if they leave, the army will go after them; and while they are on the reservation, tell them to report to the government office every Saturday or every other Saturday for a ration of goods, clothing, and necessities of life. Of course, that meant that the Indi-

an didn't have to work. He had his living handed to him. After a few years of government handouts, the Indian character was completely destroyed.

Take any hundred people from any city in the United States, place them on a reservation, and tell them, "Now you don't have to work for the next twenty, thirty, forty or fifty years. All you have to do is report to the government agent and receive your rations, and that's all. What you do with your time is your own." You will wreck their character.

The Indian forgot how to hunt and fish; he forgot how to do anything except to sit and vegetate. The result was the total destruction of the Indian character. Instead of the self-reliant, independent person he had always been, the Indian became a person without character, without any integrity, shiftless, insecure, alcoholic, and diseased.

In 1887, the government instituted its first definite policy—to Americanize the Indians. The theory behind the General Allotment Act was that you should try to make Americans out of the Indians and prepare them for their rightful place in American life. It was a good theory, technically, but false in execution. The method by which they sought to Americanize the Indian was to go into the reservation, set up government boarding schools, and tell the Indians, "Your children must be surrendered to the government. They shall be placed in these boarding schools here or moved elsewhere to another location; and if you refuse, the army will come after you." So the Indian home was broken.

You can never destroy the home life of any people and have anything left. Wherever you are, you always have to begin with this basic unit, the family. This policy destroyed the home. The children indeed were educated, taken through boarding schools through the eighth grade and sometimes beyond; then they returned home as strangers to their families, insecure, unloved, ready the minute they were turned loose to find some kind of security in the bottle.

This system totally debauched the Indians. The sad part

of it is that the churches cooperated in it for many years because they were included in the boarding school program with compulsory Christian training. But that kind of training did not give the Indians Christianity. You cannot force Christianity on any people, and when you destroy the character of a people you cannot at the same time give them faith. The end result was that the Indian was destroyed even further.

The second policy came in 1933 and was worse yet.

The New Deal under Roosevelt, Secretary of Interior Harold L. Ickes, and John Collier instituted the policy of Indianizing the Indians. All this stemmed from the dream of one man, Collier, the President's Commissioner of Indian Affairs. In the 1920s, on his way to a vacation in Mexico, Collier stopped in Arizona and New Mexico and saw some of the Indians there, the Hopi and the Zuni, perform their dances. It gave him a powerful vision of what life should be like in America. And he said, "The reason for all the tension and frustration in modern life is that we have lost our contact with life as it should be lived. The thing to do is to take the Indian and Indianize him again, recreate the old Indian life, and make that a pattern for the rebuilding of America."

He believed in a communistic order such as he found among the Hopi and the Zuni—not a Marxist communism but a primitive communism such as he saw among those particular tribes. It is not the usual pattern among Indian tribes but it does exist in one or two tribes in the Southwest. This was Collier's vision. He set out to make it the pattern for all Indians throughout the United States. Having done that, he hoped to make collectivism the pattern for all American life.

He pushed his program vigorously. The Indians protested but to no avail. It usually resulted in the favoring of incompetents throughout the United States. The result of this policy was to increase the debauchery of the Indian character. It led to the rise of such movements as the Pan American Indian Group, a communist front. It furthered the peyote movement because John Collier strongly favored it. It led to nothing but tragedy.

The third policy came with Eisenhower. Its goal was to break up the reservations and rehabilitate the Indians by furthering their general participation in American life by helping them move into cities. The weakness of this policy is that it also assumes that the future of the Indian depends on a government program. Government cannot create character, although it had destroyed it. It can no more create character in the Indians by acts of administration than it can create character in the American people by acts of Congress.

Since the Indian problem is basically one of faith and character, it is basically a problem for the Christian church. Where do we stand? I have already pointed out that we have half as many Christian Indians as we had in the 1890s. Worse, the Indians have no use for our faith.

Why? Because their feeling is that when you send them a missionary, when you try to teach them Christianity, it's just another case of hand-me-downs from the white man.

They feel that you don't believe in Christianity, and that's why they see so little of it among you. The government doesn't believe in it, and there's nothing Christian about the government. Look what is taught in the government schools—evolution. The Bible has no place in the schools. The schools don't believe in it.

Go to the churches. You hear the preachers preaching the same kind of thing that's taught in the schools. Go to the Bible-believing churches. How many of them care about you, the Indian? How many of them are interested in you? They don't believe: they are just giving you the hand-me-downs.

The Indians' attitude is that Christianity is dead and there is no reason for them to take over something that is dead and cast off by Americans. They feel that whites are hypocrites, professing Christianity but not believing in it.

Indians have some reason to believe that. When they go to a city and visit a church, by and large they do not care for noisy churches, the Indians being a very quiet people. If they come to a Presbyterian church, how welcomed are they? Most whites

feel, “Well, people like that are ignorant, they’re backward. Let them go to one of the other churches where there are people of a lower class. Put them among people where they can feel more at home, and they’ll fit in better in those churches.”

At almost any church they go to, they will be outsiders. That’s just the plain fact. And they know it; they’ve tried it. They are strangers in any church they go to. Even if they are met with a glad hand by a handful of people in the church, it means nothing to them. The Indians may know that they are weak in certain character traits espoused in these churches, but they also expect to see some of the practical application of those traits that have, in fact, characterized Indian life.

Suppose an Indian couple dies, leaving children. Is there any problem? None at all. Those children can find a home almost anywhere on the reservation. They can walk into any home and be welcomed. They can pick their home. No one will turn them down. If there are a handful of children, say five or six, and those children decide to walk into your home, if you’re an Indian, you wouldn’t say a word. You would take them in.

Many a time I visited one of our elders and found his house full of people. I would ask the wife, “Who is that? Some relative?” She would reply, “No, I’ve never seen him before. He just came here from the other side of the state and had no place to stay, and so he came here.” I would then ask, “Well, are you going to put him up, or what?” She would answer, “Yes, he’s going to get a job here with the road crew at the government agency, so maybe he’ll be here a year or two.”

No problem. Someone wanted a place to stay, and someone took them in. I saw the same woman, a year before I left, with small children. Some Indians from quite some distance away had been killed in an accident. They had several small children, and now this couple in their seventies had taken those children in. Why? When the now-dead parents used to visit the reservation, they got into the habit of staying with this couple, so that was the place for the children to come. Now this

elderly couple was starting all over again with children, one of them still in diapers. No problem at all. It was simply the human thing to do.

You can find reasons for this in the Indian background. You can say that perhaps it's not real kindness but one of those survival tactics left over from the early days. But whatever reason you give for it, it is there. It's a common humanity, and even if you find a selfish motive for it, it nevertheless exists. By comparison, your life and mine, here in the city, is a very cruel, un-Christian kind of life. It has no significance to the Indians; there is nothing to recommend it to them. You might talk about Christianity as the religion that reveals God's love to man, but the Indians will think you are a hypocrite. They don't see any love in Christians.

I recall one incident, from our early days at the reservation, in which a carload of migrants with a number of small children were passing through. They were obviously people of low character. In fact, they'd stolen a tire at a filling station on their way. They were making a shortcut through the reservation and realized too late what rough country it was. They had no money, nor anywhere to stay. The night was bitterly cold.

They parked in front of our place. There was only one thing to do or else our work on the reservation would be ended and we would have to move out. We took them in, and they filled the living room and every other room in the house, laid down their bedding and stretched out.

If we had allowed them to spend the night outside, we couldn't have commended our faith to the Indians because we would have been lacking in the common humanity that they took for granted. They don't see much common humanity in us, and therefore think that we don't believe our own religion. And when they see the whole picture—that Christianity isn't taught in the schools and, in fact, is disbelieved; that the fundamentals of the faith are denied from many pulpits; and that those who profess to believe are lacking in common humanity—they conclude, "It's a hand-me-down; it's a dead thing;

why bother with it?" The church's failure with the Indians is a standing indictment of our Christian faith.

One more story before I conclude, although I could go on at great length.

I recall the Christmas of 1945 when one of the young Indians, Roy, who had been involved in the knifing incident—(who'd done the knifing, in fact)—had me to his house for dinner. As we sat around the table in the evening, the meal was being prepared by his two sisters. He spent a great deal of time telling me about his experiences in the armed services, and he knew the insides of a good many jails across the country. He told me about fights and brawls he'd gotten into here, there, and everywhere, and he enjoyed telling about them. He was doing quite a bit of bragging.

As the evening progressed, he grew somewhat serious. As we looked out of the window and saw the kerosene lamps being lit in one cabin after another across the valley, he pointed to them and said, "Look at those people of mine. They're no good. They're like me, just no account. All they're fit for is a reservation where someone puts a fence around them and takes care of them. That's it. They're not fit for anything else."

"But," he went on, "I've been across the country two or three times now in the last few years, and I've learned something: the white man isn't much better. He has reservation fever now. He wants someone to put a fence around the whole North American continent and take care of him. He wants the government to give him a handout and to look after him just like Uncle Sam looks after us. And he's going to get it. If some outfit doesn't come in and do it for him, some foreign country, and turn the whole of the United States into a reservation, he'll do it to himself. You wait and see. 'Cause he's got reservation fever."

He was right, absolutely right.

The basic problem today in the American Indian missions is our problem, too. Are we going to live our faith? What we do to the American Indian today and tomorrow depends on what

we ourselves do. This will mark the extent to which we believe our faith, the extent to which we are willing to be Christians when it means putting ourselves out and being uncomfortable, making sacrifices of our personal privacy, our personal liberty, or our personal convenience for the sake of Jesus Christ.

We have forgotten what Christian hospitality means. The Indian recognizes this lack, and so the American Indian today constitutes a standing indictment against American Christianity. What are we going to do for the American Indian? How are we going to meet our responsibility to Jesus Christ?



## ONE

# EDUCATION

Late in the summer of 1944, I concluded my service with the San Francisco Chinese Presbyterian Church in Chinatown, where I had put in several years as a youth worker. I then began work on the Western Shoshone Reservation in Owyhee, Nevada, on the Idaho border. Half of the reservation was in Idaho. I served at Owyhee until January 1953. Some have suggested I record some of my experiences there since much information concerning the American Indian is being lost.

Owyhee is a hundred miles north of Elko, and the same distance south of Mountain Home, Idaho. The reservation is roughly twenty-two miles by twenty-four miles. It is surrounded by high mountains to the east and south, and the floor of the valley is 5,400 feet in altitude. Known as Duck Valley, it is a network of sloughs, ponds, and streams feeding through the Owyhee River. The maximum consecutive frost-free days in the summer are usually around ninety, but I saw as few as forty-five. Except for one year, the snows began on Labor Day weekend. Before my time, there was once a heavy snowfall on the Fourth of July.

Because of all the water in the valley, mosquitoes were so thick that it was impossible to mow the lawn at the manse except in a breeze. Otherwise, you would breathe in mosquitoes. Fish and game were plentiful, and the deer so abundant that what the Indian Christians gave us provided us with most of our meat almost all year long.

When the Indians were placed on the reservation, rations of food and clothing were provided and they soon forgot how to hunt. It was years later that the second missionary, in the late teens and early 1920s, showed them how to hunt. Rev. Emil Schwab was the great missionary at Owyhee.

My arrival sparked a curious response. Because of my omnivorous interests, I found the Indian past very interesting. As a foreigner myself in background (as a descendant of Armenian refugees), I found the variety of American cultures intensely enlightening. This met with a ready response from the Indians. My foreignness helped me to win their acceptance.

The two tribes at Owyhee were and are the Paiute and the Shoshone, related peoples but culturally very different. They could understand each other's speech, but not each other's ways. The Paiutes were very tribal. Whatever their leaders determined became law for all; dissent ended when the leaders came to a conclusion. The tribe refused to allow the Idaho Power Company to electrify the reservation after World War II until one elderly Shoshone agreed to it. The Paiutes had agreed, but this one man among the Shoshones was a hold-out. For the individualistic Shoshones, unanimity was necessary. Weeks went by with many meetings, the power company officials traveling from Boise, Idaho, about 144 miles distant, to try to persuade old Jimmy Bell to agree to electrification. He finally did. For the Shoshones, this was the right way. For the Paiutes, it was stupid.

When the Civil War began in 1861, the Paiutes asked the Shoshones to unite with them to destroy white power. They argued the matter at a meeting at the Reese River. Even Nevada's territorial governor attended the meeting, arguing against war. The Shoshones, usually favorable to the white man, finally decided for peace.

In 1944, the grandchildren of the older Indians, some of whom could remember the coming of the white man, were totally disinterested in the old ways. The very elderly had no one to listen to them. Then I appeared, and long into the night

they told me of the old days and old ways—how to scalp, how to survive, how to find edible plants, and much, much more.

They showed a special hostility to anthropologists. The Indians laughed at how easily the anthropologists accepted lies. Mostly they disliked talking to them and only did so because the U.S. Indian Service and its officials urged them to.

The Indians' unwillingness to talk arose from the fact that the anthropologist had an agenda. He asked his questions in terms of what interested him. Had he first allowed the elderly Indians to talk at will and then asked questions, the results would have been better.

From my perspective, there was another problem with the anthropologists. Their framework of reference was evolution. They viewed Indian culture in terms of a myth, not in terms of taking an interest in a people whom God created and who needed Jesus Christ to attain their true potential. The anthropologist's impersonal approach bred an instinctive hostility. The Indian is a person, not a scientific specimen. The anthropologist's laboratory approach irritated the Indians. As a result, even when they gave correct answers to the scientist's questions, the meaning and flavor of their lives was missed. To the Indians those questions sounded artifact-oriented, not concerned with people.

The older generation of Indians had seen a different kind of life. They believed that many of the answers provided by the old ways were still valid.

To cite one example, old Jenny Owyhee often gave me "practical" advice. She came to the reservation about the same time I did. Many years earlier, she had worked for the Grant Riddle family. Grant Riddle died at the age of eighty before my arrival, but had related to others that Jenny worked for his family when he was born, and at that time already had grown-up children. His estimates would put her age at close to 120 years.

Jenny told me that her first four babies were girls. At the birth of the fourth, her husband broke the power of the spirits by grabbing the new-born girl baby and braining her

on a rock. Jenny's next child was a boy. She was a kind and thoughtful woman. For her, the killing of the girl was a sad necessity in order to ensure a boy—for a boy meant survival in the wilderness.

The old men believed strongly that theirs had been the best kind of education—by their grandparents. They thought today's Indians had gone astray and were worthless because the old pattern of education was broken. That was when I first heard the story of the little boy who survived alone in the wilderness after his parents were killed by enemies until he could find another camp of his own people.

For these old men, that was education. It meant passing on the wisdom of the past and present to the future. These men saw the white man's world as full of marvels. The radio was of great interest to them and the white man's guns and knives were wonderful. But for them the life-link was gone. Their grandchildren were not linked to them but to the white man, and foolishly so.

Those old men respected book-learning. Some of them had gone to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in its earliest days, and they knew "Pop" Warner, later Stanford's famous football coach. (One young Indian was named Warner.) Some of the elders were better readers than their children and grandchildren. They respected my own interest in books. Family life in their childhood had been hard and bleak, dominated by the necessity for survival. One or two of them recognized that the freedom of the new life meant that one could do as he pleased, not as the family or the band dictated. They were not sure that such freedom was good.

Some of their stories were about antelope hunting, such as how a knowledge of the way antelope run can enable one to kill many with only a bow and arrows. The Indian hunted when he needed food. He caught and dried fish in the spring runs when he could be sure of catching great numbers. He was not a sportsman, but a survivalist. It was rare for one of them (in those days, at any rate) to enjoy hunting or fishing for its own sake.

One reason for the catastrophe which struck Indian tribes was that now, with the coming of the white man, there were alternative forms of education. In the West, at least, Indians normally traveled in small bands; the whole tribe was not together. They survived by living in small bands seeking food. There were no alternative lifestyles confronting children, youth, or adults. The pattern of life was set but not simple. Food-gathering was complex and difficult.

The white man's arrival complicated education. It introduced an alternate lifestyle with many material advantages, including liquor. The Indians had not spanked children. In a society where life meant a necessary dependence on others in the band, the choice was not one of lifestyles but of life or death. The child grew up doing what he was supposed to do; the difference was whether or not he did it better than most.

One of the most devastating effects of the white man's influence was that Indian children no longer grew into a set mold. Previously, the Indian could be brutal or not; he could be kindly or vicious; but in any case, he was an Indian who belonged to a band and lived the life of a band member. Now other patterns, alien to the life of the band, were being introduced. Children were no longer, of necessity, bound to their parents and the band. At an early age, they could work for the white men and be free of their people.

The saddest fact of my own experience with the Indians was the indifference of the children to their parents. The children were never chastised. The parents loved and indulged them. Frustrating the child seemed to them a white man's cruelty. A child of five could demand inclusion in the play of older children, and get it; this soon ended the game in nonsense. There was no frustration for a child anywhere. I do not remember hearing an Indian baby cry. At the first sign of discontent, the baby was put to the breast by the mother.

Never to face frustration is no preparation for life. Not surprisingly, by the age of ten, alcoholism was commonplace; by thirteen or fourteen, fornication, too. Self-denial was an alien

idea, and an inability to accept frustration was commonplace. In recent years this reservation has had the highest suicide rate in the United States, a fact closely related to the nurture of children there.

The older men, who themselves often had problems with alcoholism, called drunkenness and alcoholism “the whiskey religion.” I had never heard the term before. It was used by these older Indians very seriously, but some of the younger men used it as a joke. What the older men meant by it, they explained, was that what Christians looked for in Christ, Indians often found in a bottle. For them it was peace, an answer to problems, empowerment, escape, and more. There was another factor, too, as they saw it. Whiskey changed a man, like Jesus did, but in another direction. A bottle of whiskey was for them a religious solution.

Some compared it to the peyote cult. Peyote, a “cactus button” as some called it, was called the Holy Spirit by some groups. Through this drug they transcended everyday life, had visions in brilliant colors, and communed with the spirits.

Before the white man came, Indians used certain plants religiously to cultivate trance-like experiences and visions. These then gave way to the more efficacious peyote and to whiskey. Peyote was used in cult practices, of course, and liquor was not, but the parallel between the results of drugs in the old days and whiskey nowadays was strong enough for them to call drinking “the whiskey religion.”

Religion for the Indians was a pragmatic concern. Their old beliefs were in spirits. The wolf and the coyote were greatly admired for their hunting prowess and were thus important in Indian religion. But what Indians wanted most from religion was healing. Hence Pentacostalism and other healing churches appealed to them until the healing failed and they abandoned such churches. Radio healing preachers were the only kind they listened to. Before I ever heard of Oral Roberts (who began his career in those years) from any Christian publication, I heard about him from Indians. Roberts was close to the

Indians in his religious perspective.

Perhaps it would be worthwhile to explore the religious premises of alcoholism in other cultures. The Indian's description of it as the "whiskey religion" has at times been of help to me in dealing with non-Indian alcoholics.

Lest it be falsely assumed that these elderly, story-telling Indians simply longed for "the good old days," I had better relate a revealing episode.

One cold day, with snow on the ground, some of these old Indians stood in front of Read's, one of the two trading places on the reservation. A man who had been indoctrinated into the new Indianism, (later the Indian Rights Movement), began to talk about the injustices of the white man and the land stolen from the Indians. The older men erupted into laughter, scorn, and abusive language.

I asked one of them what he had said in his Shoshone language, and he answered, "I told him that I grew up with his grandfather. I remember that man shivering in his moccasins and breechcloth on a cold day because he was a poor hunter. 'You have two pairs of pants on to keep warm,' I said, 'and the white man's shoes and the white man's automobile to drive in. If you are fool enough to want what your grandfather had, don't count me in. I'm an Indian, not a jackass.'"

Those older Indians were hard-headed and unsentimental. That was when one old man, laughing, told me the meaning of the conflict between whites and Indians: "We wanted everything the white man had, but we didn't want him. The white man wanted what we had, but didn't want us. We lost."

The white man, by now, had become a sentimentalist, and so too had the younger Indians. But the older Indians I knew were all realists; and they also had a sense of humor.



## TWO

# MEDICINE MEN

**H**aving read a book about medicine men, I asked some of the older men about them. There were several practicing medicine men on the reservation, or so someone in the Indian Service hospital had told me. The comment amused these men. From their perspective, there were no medicine men on the reservation—only fakers.

Thomas Premo (Premeaux originally) and George Prentice had a background and family training as Indian medical practitioners. I knew Tom, an elder in the church, especially well. He could give an Indian identification for every plant I ever saw there. If it had any medical uses, he could cite them. He knew about a rare one or two with hallucinatory properties. These latter he never discussed in front of other Indians or children.

True medicine men, it was said, had given way to the white man's doctor because he knew more than the Indian practitioner. This surprised me, but I soon came to know the hard-headed realism of most of the older men. They had no loyalty to the old ways per se. The white man's gun was far superior to the bow and arrow. Why not his medicine also?

Many of the older men regarded with contempt the romanticism about the Indian past shared by many whites as well as by younger and radical Indians. They did not identify their Indian-ness in terms of artifacts, and it annoyed them when others did. Commissioner Collier was regarded with disgust

by many Indians because he wanted to Indianize the Indians. The older men believed that Collier was a fool who would lead young Indians astray.

At one reservation in the Southwest, as I recall, an old Indian told Collier that they were ready to go back to the old ways when the white man returned to the spinning wheel and the covered wagon. They saw nothing exclusive about the benefits of the white man's civilization; these were advantages available and beneficial to all. No one could have been more unsentimental about the Indian past than these men. In one notable exception, the Paiute leader, Padicap, (son of Chief Padicap), idealized the past, but others held his claims as a ploy in demands for more land for the Paiutes. So the Shoshones alleged, and some Paiutes admitted.

In brief, these old men liked modern conveniences and advances, including modern medicine. They spoke respectfully of the old-time medicine man's knowledge. They knew that the agency doctors were often inferior to the doctors outside of the reservation (although the nurses were usually quite good). All the same, they recognized and appreciated the advantages of modern medical practice, of nurses, and hospitals. A stay in a hospital was a treat; their respect for surgery was great. People who despised such things were fools, and the old men were annoyed that anyone might suspect them of such foolishness.

What then of the so-called medicine men practicing at the time? Most were peyote leaders. Peyote was administered as a holy, healing medicine. It tended to paralyze the digestive tract, or at least deaden it to pain, I was told. The patient usually felt no pain and assumed that he was being healed.

If the patient grew weak, and death seemed certain, the peyote healer would become indignant at any questioning by the patient or his family. A quarrel would ensue, and the healer would say angrily, "Take him to the white man's hospital and see if they can do any better!" The patient would be taken to the hospital and soon would die, confirming the healer's prediction!

The hospital staff dreaded the coming of peyote-drugged patients. They could usually identify them by their distended stomachs, in which undigested food piled up because peyote hinders digestion. They could not refuse such patients, but they knew that most would die in their rooms and give the hospital a bad reputation.

There was another kind of practitioner. How deep his roots were in Indian history, I do not know. Discussion of these men was avoided unless no one else was present. These medicine men, if they could be called such (and Tom Premo and George Prentice simply shook their heads at the idea), I would call occultist. They had strange powers I cannot explain. One of them, A. C., could pick up a rattlesnake, chant to it, hang it around his neck and not be bitten.

A. C. could do things that baffled any normal or "scientific" explanation. What I do know is that A. C.'s powers were of no advantage to him. His eyes never seemed to focus on anyone to whom he spoke. He could not function too well and never looked normal. His wife and children also had a strangeness about them. Like other Indians, he lived in a one-room log cabin with a dirt floor, but his was a life more abject than that of almost all others.

My conclusion was this: demonic forces are more able to manifest themselves where the power of Christ is either new or absent. The earthly ministry of our Lord quite obviously precipitated demonic activities unprecedented in previous Biblical history. In the 1920s and 1930s, missionaries who had entered new areas in Asia and Africa talked at times of strange and demonic manifestations. Some who were physicians simply shook their heads in amazement at their bizarre experiences.

As Christianity waned in the U. S. after World War II, there was a revival of occultism and evil manifestations of the kingdom of darkness.

Some things I witnessed or heard of on the reservation were not amenable to any natural cause. Reality was obviously far broader than my knowledge or experience. What I did

know was that these strange powers emphatically did no good to those who used them. People such as A. C. (and there were several, but I knew him best and he was not hostile to me because I helped his children) had unusual powers—and they themselves were the primary victims of their practices.

I stayed away from such men. Tom Premo quietly told me that they were not good people to know or to offend. Men such as A. C. were “Indian” in a fanatical way: they sought to blot out the world of the white man. I have often wondered if that is not an aspect of the demonization of our own culture. When men turn their backs on Christian civilization, see only the evil in it, and try to abstract Biblical faith and morals from themselves and the world, are they not courting the demonic?

A. C.’s world had no room in it for anything good. The heirs of the old-time medicine men respected the old practice and so were very favorable to the white man’s medical practice. Owyhee’s occult practitioners had no connection with the old-time medicine men. Tom Premo said in effect that the occultists had no history in medicine, yet they pretended to the deepest roots in the care of health. But their roots drew from a well alien and dangerous to man’s creaturely condition.



## THREE

# FUNERALS

Funerals are interesting because they are so conservative and even reactionary in their meaning to people. A couple planning to marry may have bizarre ideas as to how the nuptials should be conducted. One can persuade them to conform to the church's norm or else seek another pastor. In funerals, however, the family usually follows established patterns. Burials are sometimes in a family plot several states away, in what was once a home area. And people often do not think about a funeral until a death occurs in the family.

I was summoned at every death on the reservation, Christian or non-Christian, Paiute or Shoshone, peyote or non-peyote users. The older Indians felt that Christians have more to say about death and the afterlife than anyone else—certainly more than their own sages.

Cemeteries are Christian inventions, as they saw it. In earlier years, the Paiutes and Shoshones buried their dead near their campsite, wherever that might be. If hunger, a battle, or an epidemic killed off a number of people at once, they were all buried at that site. It was not regarded as holy ground, as some claim, but evil ground because they feared the spirits of the dead.

For these Indians, the dead resented the fuller life of the living. As spirits they had only a half-life, and they turned envious of their own family members and could harm them. Thorny branches of wild rose bushes were immediately laid

over the body at the moment of death, to prevent the man's spirit from crawling out of the body to cause trouble. The Christians laughed at the custom and saw it as revelatory of the hold of the past on some families only marginally under Christian influence.

On some reservations, I was told, a house would be burned if someone died in it. Under Roosevelt, this caused the Federal Housing Administration much trouble, because a house built with a federal loan would go up in smoke and payments would cease.

At Owyhee, as death approached, some families protected their cabin by moving a dying person into a tent pitched outside. This would be done even in zero-degree weather with snow on the ground. There was no cruelty in this; the dying person would be kept well bundled and the tent warmed.

There would be a dinner for all who came to the funeral. Usually a cow was butchered. The meat was prepared outside the house and served there to the many that came. There was a stylized mourning, a wailing beside the body. The older people, especially the women, were very good wailers. I do not say that critically. Each death, especially that of an elderly person, meant for them the passing of a familiar way of life.

Women were both the most conservative as well as the most liberal members of the community. In a way that few men did, they resented the passing of the old order, and felt most helpless as the old certainties declined. On the other hand, the young women reveled in sexual freedom. There were penalties for adultery in the old days, such as cutting off a woman's nose. I knew one such woman—she was not a pretty sight. It was a major penalty that discouraged lovers. But the husband had to see his wife in that condition from then on.

In those days, it was rare for an older woman to be an alcoholic. Many older men were and the young men and women more so. Older women were disciplined workers, the mainstay of most non-Christian families. The passing of the old ways distressed them.

They were also concerned about others. Jenny Owyhee's daughter Judy (herself an elderly woman), a Christian with a superb zest for life and a rich sense of humor, married while I was there a young man between eighteen to twenty-five years old. He was tubercular and had a very limited life span ahead. He gave Judy a husband in his person, and she gave him a wife who cared for him tenderly, kept him happy, and provided a robust atmosphere which was remarkable. Indians did not share in the American conventions regarding the marriage of an old woman to a young man.

Funerals brought the past to mind. At times, an old Indian would speak about the past. Not long after my arrival on the reservation, at a funeral dinner, one old Indian, a gracious and handsome man, summoned all present—speaking in Shoshone—to return to the wolf cult. The wolf, he said, was their true father. Even the white man's science, he went on, and the white man's schools, taught that men were descended from animals. To him their evolutionary dogma was a vindication of the ancient Indian faith. He saw the degeneration setting into the white man's culture, as exemplified by the personnel of the U. S. Indian Service, and he wanted a return to some kind of animism.

Such an emphasis was mainly a dying echo of the past.

I conducted all the funerals because the people wanted me to. A sermon, however brief, was the central part of the service for them. Most services were held at the graveside. I only recall one in which an Elko mortuary was used. The family prepared the body. Friends dug the grave. Friends, after the service, shoveled dirt onto the coffin and filled the excavation. I always lent a hand with the spadework. For one thing, in the winter it was a way of keeping warm. It was also appreciated by all present.

All the cemeteries at Owyhee are the work of Christians, and the older men knew and appreciated this fact. They recognized that Christianity had a compelling word on the meaning of life and death. Instead of a fear of the dead, it required a

respect. In those days, this Christian perspective was not taken for granted.

Once in a while, a man would visit isolated places in Idaho and northern Nevada to show old movies, a source of meager Depression income. Usually these were old cowboy and Indian films. The young Indians in the audience would whoop enthusiastically as the Indians charged a wagon train and then groan as the wagon train's defenders drove off the horsemen.

On a few occasions, a comedy would be shown which would include a ghost and maybe a frightened black man. What was impressive to the audience was that the hero did not fear the ghost and that a ghost story was something comical to the white man. Little things like this were very telling to the Indians, and important for them in seeing the difference between the Indian world and the Christian world.

At every turn they saw the differences. One telling fact, to them, was the indifference of virtually all Indian Service personnel to Christianity. To them it meant that Washington, D.C., and all it represented, was alien to Christianity. Since they associated Christianity with the white man, it meant to them that the white leadership treated Christianity with disrespect.

This was difficult for them to understand. For them, a people and their religion were inseparable. The attitude of the Indian Service told them of the white man's abandonment of Christianity.

Then why was I there? What was the white man trying to do? The Indians were familiar, in earlier years, with cast-off clothing being passed on by white families to the Indians. Were the whites also passing on their cast-off religion?

John Paradise, a Shoshone, subscribed to the Elko, Nevada daily paper. He enjoyed reading, and he was familiar with several periodicals. I spent the better part of a day trying to explain to him that Christianity was not the white man's religion—that some white men were atheists, agnostics, or members of various non-Christian religious groups. Christianity, I told him, was not an ethnic faith, but represented a separate

realm, a Kingdom of universal scope.

The world and the United States, I told him, will be judged by Christ the King, whose realm is under none and over all. Finally, he grasped the point and was amazed. In his earlier understanding, everything came out of the natural order. But now he had heard something new and amazing. For the first time, he understood the thrust of Biblical faith as an interruption of nature. To him that was an amazing and nearly inconceivable thing. His view of the natural order included concepts that a scientist would have found untenable. All the same, John Paradise and the scientist would have agreed on the ultimacy of the natural order.

Many of the older Indians talked of the parallels to Genesis in their myths. The flood and Noah were, in particular, important to them, and they explained many things in terms of a universal flood. At the same time, the flood and other events were all seen as aspects of the natural order. The world was full of supra-normal things but, for them, empty of the God of Scripture. They were as ready to avoid Christ and the supernatural as was Charles Darwin.



## FOUR

# POWER

One aspect of Indian life has remained on my mind nearly fifty years after I began my work at Owyhee. I was reminded of it again in reading Patrick Marnham's *So Far From God* by the observation:

The Indians originally venerated Cortes as a god. They respected strength, they were ruled by very powerful gods, and a man who could overthrow those would be acknowledged.<sup>1</sup>

The Paiute and Shoshone Indians had a like respect for power. This attitude may have changed since my departure, but I question whether it has—although Christian Indians did not share it.

An old man told me of an incident which had occurred when he was a boy, not too many years after the Civil War. His father was with the Army. Among the Army scouts was a young Apache, about fifteen years old. One night while eating dinner, some of the soldiers teased him about his youth. The young Apache left the campfire in quiet anger. He reappeared at breakfast the next morning, carrying the heads of two of the Indians whom the unit had been pursuing, which he tossed into the circle of men without a word. He was never teased again.

Because of their respect for power, the Indians had an ambivalent view of the white man. His power, numbers, and sci-

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1. Patrick Marnham, *So Far From God: A Journey to Central America* (New York, NY: Viking, Elizabeth Sifton Books, 1985), 93.

entific achievements were very much appreciated. The Indian might not like the white man but he respected him. Pragmatic realism was very much a part of these Indians' thinking.

Owing to this respect for power, there was a corresponding disrespect for powerlessness. The clearest expression of this was in their attitude towards blacks. In those years, blacks were not numerous in the West, and they were uncommon in small towns and rural areas.

As an example of the Indians' attitude, I can cite their abuse of a black man who worked at the Rio Tinto copper mine. The miner felt close to the Indians as a fellow minority people. The Indian miners played along with this. The black miner asked for an invitation to the reservation during duck-hunting time, and the Indians agreed. When he arrived, all eagerness and happy friendliness, he was told to sneak towards the pond on all fours, through the brush, to avoid frightening the ducks. The Indians well knew that the area was full of rattlesnakes. The black man crept quietly toward the pond until he came almost face-to-face with a rattlesnake. Providentially, he jumped up and back so rapidly that he was not bitten. The Indians doubled up with laughter. The black man quickly understood the situation, got in his automobile, and left. He soon came to realize that no Indian would regard him as an equal, whereas some white men would and most white men would be reasonably fair to him.

This duck pond episode was often retold by the Indians with a great deal of laughter. To them, blacks were inferior and their feelings did not count. One Indian said, we fought against the white man, and we lost. But the blacks never fought. He saw whites as superior, and the Indian as a close second. The black man had not fought (to his knowledge) and so did not count.

In some areas, blacks intermarried with Indians. I am of the opinion that this usually occurred where blacks fought back against enslavement and escaped. Such defiance would have earned them the Indians' respect. The Indian attitude was not in terms of race or color but of warrior standards. The

tribes I knew had seen whites and Chinese join them in previous generations. (The Chinese were men who escaped from railroad construction gangs.) What mattered was a man's exhibition of the traits of the fighter and the hunter.

This veneration of power was very notable to me, especially because I saw the same characteristic become very prominent in the white American culture by the 1960s. One aspect of it was the rise of "groupies," girls who eagerly submitted sexually to power figures in the popular culture. Popular musicians, athletes, film and television stars have since then been pursued with intensity by women, young and not so young, who feel it is an honor to be used sexually by them. Frankly, nothing I ever saw among the Indians matched in intensity this power-worship that became so prevalent in the United States.

If the omnipotent and all-gracious God of Scripture is not worshipped, men will pursue their adoration of power in other ways. The groupie is one among many such forms of submission to power.

While I was among these Indians, their use of peyote in some limited circles was condemned by other Indians as well as by most whites. One of the illusions created by peyote was a release from human limitations into a blissful euphoria. It gives illusions of power. Non-peyote Indians regarded the users as "low-class" Indians in those days and despised them. They resented the fact that some university scholars treated the peyote people as "true" or good Indians. They point out that the use of peyote is modern and came into the country from Mexico.

They were, on the whole, accurate in seeing the peyote-users as "low-class" Indians. While there were a few exceptions, all too many of the peyote people were the misfits of the tribes. Peyote gave them the illusion of having power and wisdom.

It is not an accident, I believe, that, as groupies have become common in white America, so too has drug addiction. Again, it is part of the quest for association with power, and drugs provided the necessary illusion.

God's being is more than simply power. He is justice, love,

grace, law, and far more. The Christian's worship of God is not the bare adoration of power but the worship of the supreme, ultimate, and absolute Person: God. As a result, there is no warping of the believer's life by undue emphasis on one particular trait as against the whole Person.

White American culture has far outstripped that of the Indians in its worship of power, with deadly results.



## FIVE

# REALISM

One of the most common errors with regard to Indians has been the assumption that their thinking had certain premises common to modern man—i.e., ideas of humanitarianism and of man or mankind as a unit. Indians had names usually for other tribes but they called themselves “the people.” Many groups had only a minimal regard even for *the tribe*. They wandered as small bands gathering food, moving from place to place in search of edible items, and numbered sometimes fifteen or twenty people. For an entire tribe of a few hundred or more to move as a unit would have exhausted the hunting, fishing, and food-gathering possibilities in any area.

The older Indians I knew, Paiute and Shoshone, had neither interest in nor love of man in general. Survival was basic, and the need to endure harsh circumstances made men unsentimental and non-idealistic.

The modern perspective warps judgment. Men will speak of their concern for and love of mankind but despise their neighbor, their employer, their employee, or sometimes their husband or their wife. Their professed love of mankind is a humanistic religious faith; their day-by-day living makes it obvious that they dislike or even hate many people. It is easier to love mankind in general than to love a person who causes us serious problems. I once encountered a churchwoman who said that she immediately distrusted any new pastor who spoke about his love for the flock! She knew how many hypocrites and sinners

there are in any congregation, and she thought anyone who spoke of loving the flock instead of loving the Lord is either a hypocrite or a fool.

While younger Indians, and especially Indian rabble-rousers who knew how to appeal to sentimental whites, might talk about mankind, such thinking was alien to the elderly Indians. This non-sentimental and localized vision often gave a hard and healthy edge to their thinking.

The three elders of the Western Shoshone Mission were Guy Manning (Shoshone), Tom Premo (Shoshone), and Louis Dave (Paiute), men of superior intelligence. Guy Manning remains in my memory as one of the finest men I have known. One man, a Presbyterian missions officer who met with our session, told me a few years later that ours was the finest church session he had ever met with, and virtually all his associations had been with white urban churches. It was the Indians' hard realism, linked to a strong Christian faith, which had impressed him.

I can best illustrate this by citing one of my very first meetings with them. I asked about the religious character of the Indians on the reservation, about 900 people. A few, they said, adhere to the old belief in the wolf spirit, and most have some of the old superstitions and practices; but the essential faith of all, save themselves and the other Christians, was in *the whiskey religion*. I laughed when they said that. They laughed, too; but then they told me earnestly that it was also very true and *why* it was true. A man's religion is what he relies on in trouble, and also in a time of happiness, for healing and relief. Religion is what a man cannot live without. That is what whiskey is to most Indians—and, they added, to some white men also.

Paul Tillich very aptly described religion as *ultimate concern*. In a variation of this idea, these elders defined religion as *ultimate need*, as what a man in the crises as well as in the joys of life must have to live.

I learned that the term *whiskey religion* was common among many of the older men, including the alcoholics. It was a pow-

erful recognition of the importance of liquor and illustrative of their realism. Such clarity of thought was lacking among the younger generations whose minds had been blurred by statist education.

I was greatly impressed by the thinking behind the term *whiskey religion*. On a few occasions I have used the term with various audiences but the level of comprehension has not been high. Apart from being a clever expression, its implications don't easily register. Most people, and many churches, have their counterpart to *whiskey religion*—something that, whatever their formal professions of faith, whether humanism or Christianity, represents that thing without which they cannot live.

Much could be said about the Indians that would show them in a bad light yet only be somewhat accurate. Alcoholism has been prevalent, adultery commonplace, and so on. The various Indian tribes represent broken cultures. The hold their old culture has is real but its vitality is gone. More than any tribal heritage, whiskey religion commands them.

The hard realism of the phrase "whiskey religion" is very important to me. The older Indians have been romanticized, but they were not a romantic people.

Louis Dave, for example, classically Indian in appearance, could describe the old life vividly from personal experience. As a boy he had been a member of one of the still-independent Paiute bands. He could tell me of his use of a bow and arrow, where he had camped and hunted, and so on. Shortly after World War II, I believe it was, he became a commissioner or elder delegate to the Presbyterian General Assembly in the East. He chose to fly there rather than to take a train, and his ascent above the clouds was a very great delight to him. Other older Indians, Christian and non-Christian, listened to his accounts of the journey with equal delight. Flying was one of the triumphs of the white man. A few Indians had been on flight crews in World War II and done well. Without ceasing to be Indians, they had become part of the wider world.

There was one old Paiute whose late father, Chief Padi-

cap, had led Paiute resistance in southwestern Oregon. The son spoke no English. Young Indian rights advocates, of whom there were very few at Owyhee, and others, called this old man "Chief Padicap," which other old Paiute men resented. Padicap had gone to Washington, D.C., to testify, before a congressional panel, through a translator, clothed in Plains Indian garb. As such he was a very dramatic figure, with his intense eyes and passionate Paiute oratory.

Padicap's senior contemporaries regarded him as a pathetic tool and a man not altogether in his right mind. (Padicap talked to me as a potential ally because of my dark hair, eyes and complexion, and my foreign-ness.) The other old Indians often concluded their slurs about Padicap's mentality with the statement, "He doesn't understand much English." I thought, at first, this was a case of stating the obvious until it was explained to me. Entrance into the real world of the twentieth century required knowing English. Otherwise, intellectually, a man was still going around shivering in moccasins and a loincloth. This was for them a common image for stupidity in an Indian of this day.

They felt a kindly pity for old Padicap. None of these men was other than content with being an Indian, but they disliked the idea that being an Indian meant being a fool. The men whom they ridiculed as foolish were the younger men who were using Padicap. After all, they spoke English—so what was their excuse for being fools?

The realism of the older Indians was a notable quality. Both whites and Indians need it today.



## SIX

# WORK

In Christianized cultures, a man's calling is to work and to provide for his family. According to Francis X. Murphy, the earliest Christian documents stressed "the sacredness of work over the evil of idleness."<sup>1</sup> In Ephesians 4:28, Paul declares:

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

James Moffatt rendered it thus:

Let the thief steal no more; rather let him work and put his hands to an honest task, so as to have something to contribute to the needy.<sup>1</sup>

Paul tells us, *first*, ungodly work usually has ungodly motives. It is governed by the spirit of theft by both employer and worker. It is often ruled by a desire to avoid work. The antithesis is between work and theft; normally, gain is possible only by one or the other. Gain by gifts or by inheritance, or like means, is not commonplace; men must look to work (unless they choose theft) for their sustenance. *Second*, Paul stresses the religious requirement of *honest* work; slovenly and lazy work are forms of theft. *Third*, Paul requires that work be governed by more than a desire for self-support or family support, commendable as these are. There is also an obligation in Christ to

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1. Francis X. Murphy, "Social Thought," in Everett Ferguson, editor, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1990), 856.

give to the needy.

It is important to stress this text because, on the mission field among backward peoples, the work ethic is lacking, whether among the Indian tribes of the Americas or the Papuans. In some cultures, work is the duty of women and slaves.

This does not mean that Indian men were parasites living off their women. In earlier days, the men had their responsibilities; they were warriors, hunters, and fishermen. Among some tribes, war was uncommon; none had much to steal, and their meager life did not invite attack. The arrival of horses with the Spanish made fighting easier. Among Western tribes, those connected with buffalo-hunting were the more warlike.

Most Western tribes did no farming. In virtually all tribes, men despised manual labor. The horse was an important part of knightly pride and power in feudal Europe. Among American Indians it served the same purpose. It was common in my day for an Indian to have forty to fifty horses. Very few of these were broken to harness or saddle, but they were important as a form of wealth and a source of pride.

Late one night, while I was taking some young Indians home from a church meeting, a number of horses bolted across the road, and before I could stop, I ran into a young stallion and broke its leg. The Indian owner wanted no compensation. It was not a horse he had trained for use; he did not know how many more he had. Had I been a stranger, he might have accepted a few dollars. Knowing me, he did not. He was rich in horses and would not miss the one he had to kill because of its broken leg.

It was a beautiful sight to see Indian boys of five or six ride as though they were a part of the horse. While a few Indians became reasonably good in rodeos and the annual Indian rodeo at Owyhee was very much relished, the Indian riders were different. Normally, in a rodeo, the white American rider is successful because mastery over the horse is important to him. The Indian may be, at times, as hard on a young horse as any white American, or harder, but his attitude toward his horse is different (or was in those days). The young Indian would

usually be very young, but breaking a horse to saddle was like entrance to manhood, and his horse, gentled by his training, was a source of pride and status.

Indians made good cowboys but, in most tribes, poor sheepherders. A cowboy feels lordly and looks down at the cattle. A sheepherder lives with the sheep, bottle feeds orphaned lambs, and doctors ailing or hurt sheep. Few cowhands prosper and become ranchers themselves. Sheepherders usually save their money and buy their own ranches. The Indians I knew were aware of the fact that the Navajo are sheep men, and this amazed them. One elderly man once said to me of the Navajo, "They must be some other kind of people."

The Indians, if not spoiled by alcoholism, were good cattlemen. They were very poor farmers. Farming seemed to them to be women's work. In my day, the only Indians who had family gardens and a family orchard were Christians. Guy Manning kept bees, which amazed other Indians.

Cattle work had a natural appeal to the Indians. In the old days, the Paiutes and the Shoshones traveled widely, hunting and fishing in small family bands. The bands would come together only occasionally. The spring branding roundup brought them all together out in the hills and was thus a time of great celebration as well as work. To a lesser degree, the fall sale-time cattle roundup was also a tribal occasion.

Every Fourth of July there was a tribal encampment of the non-Christians lasting from a week to two weeks. The families came together in a great circle of tents for dancing, gambling, drinking, and not a few less reputable activities. Some families were usually unwilling to decamp, and the tribal council sometimes had to send the Indian police officer to order them to do so.

Indian girls and women were usually very good workers. A woman's life schooled her for working. Men, however, could be good workers where they were under authority, but on their own were less successful, unless Christian.

But the men did respect work. The Indians of my day were

in a few instances trained at Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, which was founded in 1879, just two years after the reservation was created. The institution, of which baseball great Jim Thorpe was an alumnus, was one of the boarding schools to which Indian boys were forcibly sent. If a father hid his boy to avoid losing him to the school, he was publicly chained in irons near the Agency office until the boy was surrendered. Older Indians showed me the place where their fathers had been chained. The church elder Thomas Premo was a Carlisle man. In time, to be a Carlisle student began to have a little distinction. In time also, although the older Indians never forgot the harshness of chains, they also began to respect what the boys learned at Carlisle.

Thanks to their pragmatism, the Indians, especially the Shoshones, were quick to pick up the white man's standards. The white man for them meant a world of victory, high skills, and tools. For the same reason they despised the black man as a loser. Very quickly, practices which the white man would view unfavorably were either discarded or suppressed from public attention. I learned once of an instance of sexual practice not mentioned in anthropological reports. In earlier days, it existed sometimes, neither approved nor disapproved. Suppressing any reference to it and making no mention of the single case that I knew of (except among the Christian men) did not mean any fear of criticism by whites. Neither did it mean any emulation of the white man. Rather, it was the association of certain standards with a certain level of civilization.

Curiously, in those days, the older Indians assumed that all white men were Christians, even though almost none of the whites they knew attended church. It was assumed that being a white American meant being a Christian, and it was difficult to shake that belief.

On the other hand, they recognized the differences among white Americans in many spheres. I was routinely told (sometimes with crude humor) that Indian Agency whites were the white men of lower intelligence and less inclined to work.

Why, then, did Indians fail to understand that being a white man did not make a man a Christian? The reason for this inability to separate the two was that the older generation saw faith and culture as inseparable. They well knew how many of them had white blood, in some cases because of illegitimate children born to Indian girls, but also because some white men joined the Indian tribes and married one or more Indian girls. They then became Indian as far as the tribe was concerned. Such men took part readily in all Indian practices; they were now Indians.

Christians among Indians were still regarded, in my day, as having abandoned Indianhood. That they looked like Indians and spoke Paiute or Shoshone did not alter the fact of separation.

I was reminded of the fact that, in the early church, Christians were called by their enemies "the Christian race," and Christians spoke so of themselves. Our present perspective is racial: a man is Caucasian, Negroid, or Amerind, regardless of the faith he professes, and we have as our fundamental criterion his color. This has not always been so. A man's faith has at times determined his "race,"—Christian, Indian, or whatever else. On the reservation, I once heard said of a busy Indian who was future-oriented: "He works like a white man."

I believe these older Indians were right in seeing religion and culture as closely related. Our failure now to make the connection is leading to disaster.



## SEVEN

# THE RENEGADE

Two days ago, in a Modesto, California, bookstore, I saw a paperback edition of a novel entitled *Shoshone Mike*. Earlier, in the 1980s, I saw a “biography” of Shoshone Mike and, over the years, several magazine articles or references to him.

It was during World War II that I first read about Shoshone Mike. His death in 1911, together with a small band of followers, was described in articles and books as the last battle in the Indian wars. Shoshone Mike was depicted as an Indian freedom fighter battling for the old Indian way of life. Since Shoshone Mike was from Owyhee, I was immediately interested in him.

I asked some of the elderly Shoshone Indians about him. Their reactions were amusement, disgust, and anger. They resented that he was called a Shoshone, for he was a *renegade*. Life for the Indians was not categorized by the same terms that mark white American life and Indian life nowadays. For instance, when the Shoshones required unanimity from all men before going to war or to allow the Idaho Power Company to bring electricity to the reservation, the reason externally seemed like extreme democracy. But it was rather a belief in tribal solidarity.

One old Shoshone Indian (not a Christian) had great difficulty understanding white (*tybo*) culture. For him, solidarity created the expectation that all white men should be Christian. Indians who converted to Christianity were non-Indians who continued to live among Indians. The perspective was not racial but tribal. People from other tribes, in the past, had been

adopted, as had whites, and simply became members of the tribe. The idea of diversity within a nation was alien to this old Indian. Typical of American Indians, the Shoshones had no name for themselves: they were *the people*. If you broke with them, you ceased to be one of *the people*.

For this old Shoshone, as for others, the name Shoshone Mike was highly objectionable. He was a renegade and therefore not a Shoshone. The old man also expressed contempt for the idea that Mike was a freedom fighter. Freedom, he said, is a *tybo* idea. For an Indian, the choice was life in the tribe—or life elsewhere.

The kindest term I heard for Shoshone Mike came from a Christian Shoshone: the man, he said, was a real coyote. Others described him as a thief, a liar, a man who wanted to live off others, a horse thief, and a cattle thief. He was completely untrustworthy. If he told you the sun was shining, you looked up to make sure he wasn't lying.

The only reason no Indian killed him was fear of punishment for murder—in those days, death at the hands of a *tybo* court. Shoshone Mike and his small group—about fifteen men, women, and children—left the reservation to rustle cattle and steal from white ranchers. They apparently killed people in the process, and were finally all killed by an angry posse.

It was not a late battle in the Indian wars; it was simply a case of an outlaw being killed. But Shoshone Mike gets a hero's treatment from white writers. Why?

A few of the Indians raised annoyed and insistent questions. Why do the white men make heroes out of the bad Indians? Why do they like only the Indians who fought against them? What about us Shoshones who were mostly peaceful?

The old Shoshones were proud of their record as a peaceful tribe where the white man was concerned. Conflicts were few. Their reason for compliance was simple: common sense. They were as capable of fighting as any other tribe. In fact, one Southern Shoshone group, the Comanche, proved themselves to be very successful warriors.

One very old Shoshone smiled as he explained why his tribe was peaceable. "We saw that the white man had guns and wheels," he said, "and we didn't. We knew that he had too great an edge over us."

This was another reason why they detested Shoshone Mike. He had no common sense. Stealing Indians' cows was one thing; when that became difficult, he turned to stealing from white ranchers. He seemed to believe that he could escape the consequences of his acts.

During the 1960s, the young men and women who joined the hippy world were called "drop-outs." This is an excellent term, and it well described what they were: people who had abandoned the prevailing culture and society. They were renegades.

Similarly Shoshone Mike and his band were drop-outs from Shoshone life. Another word applied to him: outlaw. It is hard for us to appreciate the meaning of the terms *renegade*, one who leaves a faith and culture—an apostate; and *outlaw*, one who is outside the law. Criminal "rights" have now placed the American criminal more firmly within the protection of the law than his victims, so that the word "outlaw" has an ancient and fictional meaning for many.

Let us return to the question, why do the white men make heroes out of bad Indians? Why do they like only the Indians who fought against them?

Otto Scott observed that, as long as the Indian was a threat to white Americans, the white man was ready to report on every Indian misdeed. But when the Indian was no longer a menace, he became the object of sentimentality.

This glamorization suggests some very grim problems in white American culture. If the white American does not know the truth about himself, he will not know it about others. If he believes in the natural goodness of all men, after Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he will sentimentalize all his relationships. It is easy to project evil onto his ancestors or to some other group today and to see himself as the good man because his ideas are

informed by liberal myths. He calls Shoshone Mike a freedom fighter because he sees himself in the forefront of the battle for freedom. He cannot understand Indian culture because he is ignorant of his own.

The old Shoshones mildly rebuked me for believing what I had read about Shoshone Mike. They were right.



## EIGHT

# ALCOHOLISM AND PERMISSIVENESS

**I**n my first chapter I referred to Indian education in the days before the coming of the white man. The rigors of Indian life meant that, over the generations, those unable to survive were weeded out. The hardiness of the older Indians was remarkable, and also their level of intelligence was high.

Indian problems were created by the lack of discipline and chastisement of the children. The tribal pattern remained unchallenged, generation after generation. Among the Intermountain tribes, those between the Rockies and the Sierra Nevada, the essential group was the band of fifteen to twenty people. There was no competing “lifestyle” for Indian children, no inducement other than the family pattern. Children were not spanked or subjected to any discipline other than the disciplines of survival, food-gathering, and (at times) battle. As these children early gained superb skills, I was regularly amazed at the abilities of boys in craft and survival.

I remember once when two young boys, about eight and ten years old, went deer hunting. When they had not yet returned after 9 P.M., I voiced my concern, but their grandparents laughed at me. The boys had left at dawn, on horseback, with a third horse to carry the meat. It was their first hunting trip alone. I drove to the foot of the mountain area where they had gone, hoping to see them before going to bed.

It was close to 10 P.M. when I heard them coming. They got their deer early, skinned it, cut up the meat after cooling it in a stream, and only then started for home. They were amazed that I was worried about them. How could they get lost? If they only dropped the reins, the horses would head for home! A great deal of common sense marked these people.

Their weakness was will power in the face of temptation. Because the child was indulged when hungry or whenever the child demanded something, the child did not cry. He or she had nothing to cry about. Denying or spanking a child, as white Americans did, struck the Indians as heartless. Christian Indians who chastised their children angered their non-Christian relatives.

In brief, the child was never frustrated. In Christian civilization, the basic pattern of child-rearing has required frustrating the child's self-will and teaching conformity to godly standards and society. The premise for this has been the fall of man. The child is therefore born a sinner, seeking his self-will and desiring gratification. Child training seeks to Christianize and civilize the baby so that it might grow into godly adulthood. The new-born baby is both helpless and anarchistic by nature; the parents lovingly train the child into godly habits.

Because the Indian child's rearing was permissive, the Indian child was not used to the frustrations normal to a Christian child's upbringing. The Christian child learns early that there is a pattern to society that requires obedience, conformity, and respect.

Lacking this disciplined and purposive training, the Indian child finds life full of frustrations. Overwhelmed, he turns early to liquor and native drugs. As a result, he is unable to develop his often remarkable abilities. Having had a permissive upbringing, he finds life's frustrations overwhelming. He has not learned how to say no to himself or to others.

To illustrate: A truly beautiful young Indian woman, after a dance and a few drinks, was persuaded to submit to sexual intercourse. Before this, she had been chaste. The young man then urged her to accommodate his friends—fifteen or more

of them. She did, unhappily, and went on a drinking binge lasting many days.

This young woman was legally an Indian. In reality she was more than a little white. I perhaps looked more Indian than she did. Her features and complexion would have identified her in any city as probably an Anglo-Saxon. Her problem was not "Indian blood."

Indian alcoholism has its roots in two facts. *First*, the permissive character of Indian child-rearing gives the young a proneness to drinking as an escape from life's frustrations. *Second*, certain races have apparently a genetic inability to assimilate alcoholic beverages, whereas others have no such problems. Others who have difficulties with liquor are Northern European peoples.

After the end of World War II, and especially after 1953 when I returned to California and white society, I saw the rise of permissive child-rearing, and I knew then that white American youth would have serious problems with drinking and drugs. Since then, of course, both liquor and drugs, plus permissive sexuality, have proliferated. Having been reared permissively, Americans cannot take frustration. Life, however, is constantly full of frustrations. These can be met with a flight into liquor, sex, and drugs or they can be seen as means whereby we learn and grow.

Since my years at Owyhee, the reservation has gained the unhappy distinction of having the highest suicide rate in the United States. There is, of course, and has been for years, a high rate of suicide among certain tribes. Like the Oriental cultures which stress "face," so too many Indians represent *face cultures*. This trait predisposes them to suicide. However, a major factor in the late twentieth century is the inability to cope. At the same time, suicide has increased greatly among white American youth. In part, this is a by-product of "death education" in the state schools. Even more, I suspect, it is due to young Americans' inability to accept frustration and to grow because of it.

At one time the major reason for alcoholism had other sources. Among white Americans prior to 1950, a false perfectionism was often a cause even of suicide. Many people wanted their lives to conform to rigid expectations. If their jobs, families, or anything else failed to meet their severe requirements, they fell apart. I recall one beautiful young woman, married to a successful man and the mother of two young girls, who required everything around her to resemble a store's show window or an art exhibit. Every room in her spacious house seemed ready for a photographer to chronicle her gracious living.

When the girls came home from school and her husband from his office, she hovered over them to pick up and put away the newspaper, schoolbooks, and toys. The husband added a recreation room to the house as a place for casual living. The wife at once took charge of the room to make it also a picture-perfect place! Disagreement with her rigid and regimented government of the house and the family caused her headaches, as probably would have Christianity.

There is a relationship between permissiveness and false perfectionism. In both cases, people want the world on their terms. One intelligent but alcoholic young Indian man rejected, without any hesitation, all external standards and requirements in two words: "Why anything?"

As a broken culture, Indian life was without the presuppositions which are normally basic to life. Many Indians were far better practicing existentialists than Jean-Paul Sartre. "Why anything?" sums up the problem of many Indians, as well as the general white American culture.



## NINE

# THE MYTHICAL INDIAN

Preconceived ideas commonly interfere with our ability to see the world and people as they are. Our preconceptions have religious roots: they express our essential faith.

The idea of the noble savage has deep roots. Its origin is in pagan antiquity. Many thinkers believed in an original golden age. Civilization had arisen since that time, but at its best it could not approximate either the original innocence or the natural fertility and virtue of the world around man. This view has a very real resemblance to the Biblical account of the Garden of Eden; it is the divergence between the two which is critical. In Scripture, it is man's sin which creates the world of evils in humanity and nature; it is man's will to be his own god and the source of all law and knowledge (Gen. 3:5). In classical thought, no such doctrine as man's desire to supplant God is to be found. Rather, the gods are jealous of man's powers, as with Prometheus. Horace believed in a golden land somewhere which would still manifest the golden age of fertility and happiness.

When Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote about what came to be known as the noble savage, his thinking gained immediate acceptance because his premises were endemic in non-Christian circles. In fact, generations before Rousseau, such a belief had an extensive influence on Spanish imperial policy. Philip Wayne Powell, in *Mexico's Miguel Caldera, the Taming of America's First Frontier, 1548–1597* (1977), and *Tree of Hate* (1971, 1985),

documented this influence very tellingly. The facts of Indian life, including cannibalism in some areas, could not shake the European idealists. Aphra Behn had some experience in the “New World” in the seventeenth century, but her belief in the noble savage remained firm in *Oroonoko* (1688).

The mind of the noble savage was seen as a pure mind, one which, without the “corruption” of Christianity, had attained to a “true” knowledge of “natural religion.” Now natural religion was a construction of the imagination of Enlightenment thinkers. It has never existed in any culture. Supposedly, the noble savage had a pure and natural worship of the “Great Spirit,” a vague substitution for the Christian God. American Indians supposedly represented this natural religion. Because the Indians courteously and agreeably did not contradict strange questions but rather expressed a vague assent, scholars assumed that this was proof of the Enlightenment’s doctrines. In time, Indians learned that acceptance of certain ideas commended them to those Europeans, so they began to adopt them.

The belief in the noble savage living in a state of nature is not only unrealistic, but is also a static idea. It assumes an unchanging and ideal natural culture in which the Indian had always existed. The goal of history was held to be a similarly static condition. Such ideas found focus in Marx’s community ideal, the Great Society of John Dewey, and others.

But Indian cultures had not been static. For one thing, the horse had dramatically altered Indian life. The first horses were probably those seized by Indians after the disasters of Cabeza de Vaca’s (c.1490–c.1557) expedition. The horse created shock waves from ocean to ocean. As some tribes gained horses before others, they were able to shatter the power of those tribes and drive them out of their usual nomadic migrations.

Christian civilization has had twenty centuries of history and expansion. All those centuries have been times of change, sometimes great expansion, and often new directions on the premises of the faith. In the 400 years of Indian life known to Europeans first-hand, the changes have been many also.

The reaction of Europeans to that statement is usually, "Of course, Christian whites had a shattering effect on the American Indian." True enough—but before the coming of the Europeans, various Indian peoples had shattering effects on one another, sometimes less, sometimes greater, than the impact of Europeans. Nothing Europeans have done has equaled, for example, the devastation wrought by the Mayas and later the Aztecs. We must not forget that Cortez could not have succeeded without the help of the non-Aztec peoples. They vastly preferred the Spanish to the Aztecs. This pattern was repeated all over the Americas.

This is not all. The various Indian tribes had far less resistance to innovation than do modern Americans. They saw pragmatically what other peoples had and were eager to have it too. They were not chained to particular beliefs or practices.

I had known that Indian children, in earlier days, had been taken from their parents and sent to boarding schools. All the same, I was shocked when one or two of the older men showed me the place near the Agency office where their fathers had been shackled in irons until their sons, put into hiding, were surrendered. The men both appreciated my dismay and were a bit amused by it. I was offended by the violation of family life. They told me that they had gone to Carlisle, in Pennsylvania and a long way from Nevada, intensely lonely; but, in time, they found it an exciting new world of experiences and saw things they had never dreamed existed.

One interesting urban sight, spotted on a trip out of Carlisle (perhaps for an athletic game; I do not recall), was an Italian with a monkey and a hurdy-gurdy (or hand organ). Not only was it for them an unusual sight, but the Italian, dark of complexion, seemed almost like an Indian of some other tribe. As a result, Italians were of a real, if minor, interest to these older men. In answer to their questions, I said that I had not seen a man with a hurdy-gurdy since the 1920s. These men were curious about Italians in the United States and their progress. An Italian was no longer identified by a hurdy-gurdy and

a monkey; so why then should an Indian be identified by what he was a generation or a hundred years ago?

Some young Indians had already become enamored of playing the role of a white man's version of the Indian. It had an obvious appeal to white liberals and romantics and was a good means of getting attention and approval. An Indian delegation to Washington, D.C., and Congress often had an older and semi-senile man dressed as an Indian chief as part of the charade.

These old Indians despised the game. They deeply resented any identification of Indians with artifacts out of the past. They relished it when I told them of pagan German and British tribes and their practices. Of particular delight was my account of how the British tribes, when Rome invaded the island, fought naked with their bodies painted. Maybe, one of the Indians said, we should refuse to hear any Indian Services official unless he first strips and proves that his ass is painted blue!

Those old Indians are gone. Both whites and Indians now play the silly game of identifying people with artifacts from the past. It is an absurdity neither seems ready to surrender.



## TEN

# THE “AMERICAN” INDIAN

**Y***ankee Magazine* in January 1991, carried an article by James Dodson on Indians titled “Nobody’s Laughing at Chief Homer Now.” It is about the efforts of a “Chief Homer St. Francis, chief of the sovereign nation of the Abenakis.” He lays claim to Vermont and more in the name of the Abenakis (or Missisquoi); their lands, according to Homer, were taken illegally in the colonial era. Two court decisions have aided his claims.

Courts and judges today are very prone to favor “minority rights,” sometimes to a ridiculous degree. Apparently no one raised the issue that the United States did not preempt Abenaki lands; the English did. Of course, in the War of American Independence, the Americans then preempted English lands. If the Abenaki claim is tenable, it should be lodged against the English, who could then file against the Americans. The Abenakis, a particularly brutal people, no doubt seized the lands from earlier inhabitants!

But this is not all. “Chief” Homer St. Francis with his English name looks no more Indian than most Americans walking the streets. He and his people are similar to most Americans of mixed blood. Anthropologist John Greenway has observed,

Never in the entire history of the inevitable displacement of hunting tribes by advanced agriculturalists in the forty thousand generations of mankind has a native people been treated with more consideration, decency, and kindness than the American Indians. The Mongoloids in displacing the first comers to Asia, the Negroes in displacing the aborigines in Africa,

and every other group following the biological law of the Competitive Exclusion Principle thought like the Polynesian chief who once observed to a white officer, "I don't understand you English. You come here and take our land and then you spend the rest of your lives trying to make up for it. When my people came to these islands, we just killed the inhabitants and that was the end of it."<sup>1</sup>

Millions of Americans walking the streets of our cities and working our farms have Indian blood. A very high percentage of all "white Americans" have Indian ancestors, and a very high percentage of all Indians on reservations have non-Indian ancestors. We do our history an injustice if we fail to take note of this fact. In recent years it has become a sign of intellectual status to speak contemptuously of "the melting pot." It is, however, a reality. In my own family, all of whom came from Armenia and Russia from 1915 to 1925, there are now intermarriages with the following peoples: German, Dutch, Scottish, English, Hispanic, and more.

The older Shoshone Indians, who remembered the old days well, regarded with amusement and disgust the champions of Indianization. Ironically, these men, who had been forcibly (in some instances) sent to Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, came back with some status because of their learning and skills. Parents who had resisted surrendering their sons became proud of them. These boys grew up to be men who read weekly news magazines and daily papers. They knew that life as a hunting people was very meager. Elder Louis Dave, who as a boy hunted with a bow and arrow as his band roamed over a considerable distance, relished modern life. He knew how poor life and fare are when one must depend on one's hunting, fighting, and food-gathering.

The myth of the golden age of the Indian past is a myth born of Rousseau. The zeal for the Indian past has been learned by Indians from white Americans.

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1. John Greenway, *The American Tradition: A Gallery of Rogues* (New York, NY: Mason/Charter, 1977), 61.

The American tourist hungers for a glimpse of Rousseau's world of primitive innocence and happy, carefree living. There is little interest in an Indian who is a successful cattleman or a university professor, but much interest in an Indian dance. Such dances usually involve fanciful recreations of Indian dress.

The title "chief" is an English and American invention. At first, Indian leaders, often so named by the English without tribal knowledge, were called "kings." Later they were demoted to "chiefs." Apt learners, the Indians readily picked up on the cues given to them. They were adept at such things, as well as selling and reselling the same lands to white men. It is a myth to believe they were innocent and exploited. The white men were similarly looking after their own advantage.

I was not only told that "chief" was an English term but also that the only comparable term that could be used in either Paiute or Shoshone had reference to a man who headed a war party. Our idea of a chief implies a presiding, governing officer. No such thing existed among most tribes. Many tribes, as hunting and food-gathering peoples, moved about in small family bands. Only occasionally did a large number of bands come together. It is easier to understand Indian life if we think of families; a tribe is an extended family. In our families, there are no officials; instead, there are parents and children. In a wandering band of fifteen to perhaps even fifty Indians, there would be several fathers. Hunting, fishing, and food-gathering would determine their movements, rather than a general order issued by one man.

The Indians were an intelligent people whose learning was directed towards hunting, fishing, and food-gathering. Their knowledge of plants was extensive. Thanks to their intelligence, they had no problem in recognizing that the white man had skills, knowledge, and tools that they needed and wanted.

The white man was not an "invader" in our modern sense. Any Indian from another tribe, or any other tribe's bands, tres-

passing on their hunting lands, was an invader; but invasion was a way of life and often a form of survival. True, the white man looked different and lived in a very different way, but the older Paiutes and Shoshones regarded the Southwest Indians as very peculiar and did not see them as "Indians." In fact, they learned from the white man that they were "Indians." They had no common term for the various peoples of North America. The distinction between "whites" and "Indians" was a learned one. Each tribe saw itself as "the people": others had particular names, but not they. An alien could be killed or he could be adopted and become one of "the people."

In terms of this, one can perhaps say of the Abenakis today that they represent a minimum of history and a great deal of fiction, a product of American ideas and myths. When we speak of *American* Indians, we are more accurate than we realize. Like us, they are an American product.



The mission members. RJR is third from the left in the back row.



The Owyhee mission and manse.



A Bible study group. RJR is in the front row just behind a little girl.

Pastor and mission  
elders, Guy Manning,  
Louis Dave, RJR,  
Tom Premo





Owyhee main street, on the left is the drug store and combination service station/grocery, on the right is the manse and mission.

Manse and Mission



Manse with some mission members leaving services in a buck board.

The Manning family.  
They were active  
in the mission and  
community life.





Church picnic. RJR with back to crowd preaching.



Indian Funeral. RJR in light jacket.

Indian  
Funeral





The woman is Josephine Roa who helped in the manse.



RJR holding daughter Sharon Rose. Daughter Rebecca is in front.



Mrs. James (standing) with her sister and baby in front of her home.



A deer caught in a steep snow bank outside Owyhee.



Road leading to Owyhee with a steep snow bank on one side.



An Indian home in winter.



Sleigh used for transportation in the winter.



Fourth of July celebration. It was the only time during the year the Indian's were allowed to participate in their traditional dances including the Sun Dance.



An Indian home.

Indians using a covered wagon for transportation.





## ELEVEN

# SELF-IMAGE

The popular image of a people changes from time to time in its history. For example, the Germans prior to Bismarck were regarded as a light-hearted and happy people, much given to beer and dancing. At the same time, the French for some generations, from well before Louis XIV through Napoleon, were seen as a grim and militaristic people. This image changed under Louis Napoleon Bonaparte: "Gay Paree" and the romantic Frenchman now began to dominate popular thinking.

But this is not all. A people's self-image alters with time. How we as individuals see ourselves changes from childhood to old age. So too does a national self-image change. All this was also true of the American Indians. The different tribes had very different views about themselves *and* about one another.

In the late 1940s, I met a Midwestern Indian who assumed that I was an Indian and confided how Nevada Indians were low class. Traveling by automobile through Nevada, he had seen drunken Indians on the streets and viewed them with contempt.

Indians' self-image has varied over the generations. Something totally lacking in the older Indians was becoming more extensive.

Too many Indians have come to see themselves, with self-pity, as *victims*. In this they manifest very clearly that they are moderns and Americans, because modern man and our very

richly privileged Americans as well see themselves as victims. The university student is prone to this vice no less than the black slum dwellers. Hispanics are absorbing this doctrine, as are feminists and homosexuals. Jews, Latin Americans, Canadians, Africans, Asiatics, various European peoples, and Pacific Islanders are learning this new faith: they are victims!

All individuals and groups seek, in one way or another, to answer the questions: what am I, who am I, and what explains my being and existence? The sound answer to these questions is to identify ourselves, above all else, religiously: I am a child of God by His sovereign grace. Then, I am a member of a family. Finally, I have a specific calling or vocation under God.

Failure to answer this, first of all, in terms of God in Christ means an inability to give ourselves a viable identification and place. The Indian tribes have, in many cases, not yet become Christians more than marginally. The result is a rootlessness which aggravates the fact that theirs is a broken culture. Attempts to revive it are pathetic and futile. This leaves the Indians seriously bereft.

The same is increasingly true of white Americans. Their European origins are now increasingly remote and alien to them, and their rejection of Christianity and Christendom means a separation from their own past. All attempts then to re-establish roots are exotic and superficial.

It would be absurd to require or to urge those of English ancestry to dress in the style of 1620 or 1700 or to require Scots in the United States to wear kilts. It is no less absurd to expect Indians to return to the ways of their past.

Such expectations have truly harmed the Indian. If the Indian is a museum piece, he is not a functioning member of society. We can preserve a virgin redwood forest here and there to give people today and in years to come a view of the American past. We do not have the right to do this to the Indian tribes or to treat them as though their only place in our world is as a bit of tourism color.

We do Indians no good to prettify their history *a la* Rous-

seau. It is an injustice. It is also an injustice to view them en masse rather than individually, in terms of their abilities and performances. We do this because we have an established image of what an Indian is.

The Indian sees white men with a similar lens. A very likeable and intelligent Indian, John Paradise (not a Christian) spent some time in my home trying to understand the *tybo*—the white man. He subscribed to a news magazine and a daily paper, and he enjoyed reading. To him, the *tybos* were a single entity. How was it, then, he wondered, that I acted one way, and the Indian Agency men another, and the town dwellers in Nevada and Idaho yet another? How could they, as Christians, behave as they did? John knew the Bible. Was there some other book which provided a rationale for their behavior?

Throughout our discussions and until the end of his visit, he assumed that all *tybos* were a homogenized unit. He assumed that Christianity was the common religion of all because they were all born into *tybo* life.

Are all Shoshones the same, I asked him? Are all Paiutes identical? It was with difficulty that he finally grasped the fact that Christianity is not a racial faith but an international one. He found this a startling idea, and thanked me earnestly for explaining it. I told him also that an early name for Christians was “the third race.”

I picked up this theme as I spoke to various Indian groups. I cited the spread of Christianity into various places, including Africa. There was a curious reaction to this. Some, out of respect for me, told me it is a mistake to convert Negroes. To do so would discredit Christianity to Indians because Negroes were, in their eyes, “unworthy” of inclusion! This gave me an opportunity to stress the meaning of God’s grace to all peoples. I cited the savagery, human sacrifice, and other evils which had once marked Northern European peoples, and I went on to show the advances which Christianity produced.

The older generations had received some Christian instruction at school. As a result, they had a sense of history

their grandchildren lacked. To a surprising degree, they had absorbed Old Testament history into their own way of thinking, and they regarded Genesis 1–11 as university history with echoes of it in their legends. I did not know any of the older Indians who did not believe in the Genesis account in some fashion.

These older people usually had a robust sense of humor. They laughed readily and relished a good story. The Armenian stories of Nazar Eddin [Nasreddin], the stupid Turk—a very wise Turk in the Turkish version—they listened to with delight.

I do not mean that all their talk or humor was innocent! Much was simply lewd. But self-pity was lacking, and the notion of being victims was absent from virtually all.

I am told that, in recent years, Owyhee has had a very high suicide rate. Self-pity is closely associated with suicide. White American youth also has had a very high suicide rate and for the same reason. If we see ourselves as victims, self-pity will overwhelm us.



## TWELVE

# THE OLD INDIAN LIFE

Before I considered going to an Indian reservation, I had been interested in American Indians. I had read a number of studies, and my mind was well-stocked with the kind of knowledge most anthropologists supply. Moreover, in my student years, the great name at the University of California at Berkeley was Alfred Louis Kroeber, some of whose work (I believe among the Crow tribe) went back to the turn of the century.

I thus assumed that I had some knowledge of the Shoshones and Paiutes because my readings had included some studies of their life and culture. I found very quickly that anthropologists in general were held in disrespect by the Indians, including some of those who worked with them. A notable exception was Dr. Sven Liljeblad, a Swedish anthropologist who was for a time associated with the University of Idaho. Years later, I learned that a good friend and supporter of Chalcedon, Ezra Hawkes, had as a university regent helped to further Dr. Liljeblad's excellent linguistic studies.

There was soon no question in my mind as to the intellectual caliber of the Indians. The harsh life they had lived meant death to the weak and the stupid. There were a few families of limited intelligence, and many with a high order of intelligence. We must remember, too, that, over the generations, *most Indians* have merged into the "white" American population, giving millions of Americans "Indian blood."

The elderly men, and a few women, who told me of the old days resented both all idealization of Indian life as it had been and all denigration of Indians. These older Indians despised both whites and younger Indians imbued with romantic ideas about their past because they knew what the old life was like. A scholar's questions about what their life was like, what was its meaning, what was the character of its culture, reflected to them the abstract realm of the white man's university. I was told very bluntly the sum of Indian life: "Staying alive." With primitive weapons, food-gathering and hunting were hard. The threat of starvation was common. The coming of the white man's horse was a great help. The white man's knife was highly prized, too, and so on.

On every continent, some peoples have found that "staying alive" is their major occupation. Only as early technology developed did men have a way to expand their horizons beyond survival. In what is now the United States, most tribes found survival to be their central concern. Thus, to isolate and investigate the minutia of Indian culture, such as their myths or artifacts, without giving attention to their urgent struggle to survive will give us a warped knowledge and a distorted history.

These elderly Indians' knowledge of what could be eaten, and where to find it, was very good. But such knowledge cannot supply quantity, nor success in hunting with very primitive weapons.

I recall a long conversation with a naval officer. As part of specialized training for some particular kind of campaign, he was landed on an island with almost no knowledge of it or whether it was inhabited or not and expected to map the island in his mind. He had to be able to avoid detection and to feed himself. He had no more than, perhaps, a pocket knife. It was survival training, but it was also intelligence training. He had been taught what kinds of foods or meats would require more energy to catch than they would supply. He had to keep track of the days he was there—a month, I think—and then be picked up without detection. The island was a small one in the

Caribbean, not the South Pacific as he expected. His total “culture” while on the island had one focus—staying alive—and he found himself eating things he would ordinarily have regarded as repulsive.

This man had the advantage of a rigorous training course in survival. He had the background of centuries of Western culture and technology in his mind. Although he began without a comparable experience in his past, he had a family and academic and military training which gave him centuries of knowledge to draw upon. As I spoke with him, we saw the parallel to Indian life and also saw that he had enjoyed an advantage.

Indian life had been about *staying alive*. No one who creates a myth about the Indian past can understand or do justice to the Indian. The Britons encountered by Roman soldiers were on the tribal level comparable to the American Indians. They had not advanced. Unlike the Indians, this was not because they were placed on reservations, their past romanticized, and their children schooled in self-pity. They faced invasions, one after another, mass murders and rapes unlike anything that occurred in the Americas. After hard centuries, out of this turmoil emerged England and then Great Britain, creating what until now has probably been the world’s greatest civilization.

The romantics want the Indians to retire from history and return to a mythical past. The American Indians are a people with great potential, but the romanticists are trying to turn them into a museum piece.

There is a remarkable observation in Proverbs 12:10: “the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” I believe with all my heart that it is cruelty to the Indians to hold that the mainstream of American life is not the place for them. To say that the Indian needs to be Indianized means that he should be cut off from our civilization.

Shortly after World War II, on a trip east, I was discussing changes on the reservation. The old Indian wagons were giving way to automobiles; electricity and radios were coming in. My comments were met with expressions of romantic regret.

The Indians should stay with their horses and wagons! But the horse and wagon came from white Americans I said; they were “borrowed” and adopted technology. Why make the Indians stop there?

Such objections make no sense to romantics. They see the world as a museum in which certain people, places, animals, and natural phenomena are to be frozen into a permanently sterile and unchanging state, with themselves possibly as the curators.

Woodrow Wilson regretted the invention of the cheap automobile: the Ford Model T. It would, he thought, put the worker on a level with his “superiors”—intellectuals like Wilson. A similar attitude is applied to the American Indian. It is a romantic elitism, and it is evil.

The sad fact is that too many Indians have bought the myth.

In my years among the Paiutes and Shoshones, many old men told me interesting stories of hardships and survivals. They were sad that their sons and grandsons had no interest in their experiences. They were more interested in comic books or, if concerned with Indian affairs, ready to listen to traveling agitators who told tales of an Indian Eden destroyed by the white man.

No Indian Eden existed. The white man did at times treat Indians harshly and dishonestly, but not always so. Certainly, the Indian tribes were anything but chivalrous knights in their treatment of one another. It is time for some honesty.



## THIRTEEN

# ENVY

I take no pleasure in citing the following fact. It comes from the work of a man born in 1845 and familiar with the early days of American California:

The Digger Indians in the Sacramento Valley were a very filthy lot. They would eat anything, even spoiled meat. The way they caught grasshoppers and ate them would turn the stomach of anyone. When grasshoppers were plentiful they would dig a hole about six feet deep and then they would all get a brush and form a large circle and drive the hoppers towards the hole, and when they were all in, one of the Indians would jump in with his bare feet and go to stomping and it would be a mush mess. The Indians would then eat them raw and they would sack them up, and take them to camp for winter use, mixing them with acorn flour, which was made by pounding acorns in a stone mortar. The soup was boiled in water-tight baskets by putting hot rocks in the baskets, and it is surprising how soon they would have the water boiling.<sup>1</sup>

Similar accounts could be made of other tribes and, in fact, of the pre-Christian inhabitants of Europe and other continents. Such accounts are not popular with most people.

Having said this, I must add that I always felt that the Indians I knew had a very high order of intelligence. Some had no curiosity about anything outside their routine life, but others had a great deal of interest in ideas and in life among other

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1. Sim Moak, *The Last of the Mill Creeks and Early Life in Northern California* (Chico, CA, n.p., 1923), 12.

peoples. Since I went to the Indian reservation with three to four years' missionary experience as a youth worker in San Francisco's Chinatown, there were many Indians who were interested in things relating to the Chinese. When the trans-continental railroad was built, some Chinese "coolies" fled the work gangs and joined the Indians. The Indians told me this, but only one admitted to Chinese ancestry. White ancestry was readily acknowledged.

To survive in a wilderness with the Indians' limited weapons and tools was very difficult. Starvation was a common problem. As a result, the Indians ate whatever they could get. Some tribes practiced cannibalism.

All the same, they were very intelligent people, except where inbreeding exacted its toll. In a sense, Darwinism had its social implication among Indians: the fittest survived, and weaklings died.

Why then were they on such a low level culturally? Of course, culture is religion externalized, but we must here be more specific. All over the world, envy has taken a fearful toll. Our current politics is destroying our civilization by institutionalizing envy.

The Indian could not advance very far because envy was so important in his life. Like so many other people, he resented the fellow tribesman who excelled. A man who was the target of envy could be driven to suicide. Up to a point, excellence in battle or in hunting was respected, but to excel in accumulating possessions was not.

Both Indians and white apologists told me that Indian communalism made them indifferent to the idea of property ownership. If an Indian made this claim, another Indian said it was because he was a thief. There was indeed disrespect for private property because of envy and resentment of the superiority of others.

Among a number of tribes in the Intermountain area and the Southeast, there were Mexican men who had settled among the Indians, often for love of an Indian girl. These men usually

rose very quickly, excelling as sheepmen, cattlemen, shopkeepers or farmers. Indians saw a kinship between themselves and Mexicans, and resented the Mexican as someone who should be a part of the tribe and yet insisted on being materially better.

The Christian Indians were resented because they clearly excelled. *First* of all, they had, in effect, become white men by becoming Christian. Indians tended to see religion as a racial fact, and they viewed conversion as defection from the tribe.

*Second*, the life of the Christian Indian changed dramatically in every sphere, in morality, economics, and more. It is a common belief that race determines character, so that men are judged as whites, blacks, Indians, or Asians. The early church, made up of Jews, Greeks, Romans and others, called itself "the third race." As against the old divisions, i.e., Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, Roman and non-Roman, Christians saw themselves as the third race inclusive of all converts. They saw themselves as a *race* because they were Christ's new humanity replacing the old humanity born of Adam. There is no mistaking the difference Christ has made among Indians. The Christian Indians left one way of life for another.

*Third*, however much the Indian convert loved his tribe and heritage, he was closer to Christ and the church in his allegiance than to the tribe. In some respects the Christian Indian more appreciated the good in his tribal past and was more aware of its history. The non-Christians were past-oriented, whereas conversion plus a knowledge of the Bible gave the Christian Indian a richer past orientation—namely an historical perspective. He saw history as having a beginning and an end, but no such progression existed for the non-Christian. Even the few who had some college education could not attain a vision beyond a belief in victimhood, the value of native artifacts, or some other similarly limited view.

*Fourth*, the perspective of the Christian Indian has encouraged, since the colonial era, a steady number of Indians to leave their tribes, now self-consciously alien to them, and to merge with the white population. Most Americans with a long

history on the continent have some Indian blood (a process that is continuing). Most American Indians have voluntarily disappeared into the white population. Those left on the reservation reject the competitive life off the reservation, although some remain out of love for their place and people.

*Fifth*, racial commingling has accentuated the evil of envy. An "Indian" whose Indian blood is very limited demands all kinds of reparations for the ostensible wrongs done to his ancestors by the white man. Since a large number of today's Americans are, like me, of immigrant stock, my parents arriving in late 1915 and had no part in any of the real or imagined evils done to Indians generations ago.

I recall Indian stories of tribal warfare and the extermination of great numbers of an enemy tribe to seize its members' things and take over its hunting grounds. One very old Indian told me the stories related by his grandfather of the new power gained by the possession of horses. As each tribe gained mounts, it was able to overwhelm and shatter its enemies. The coming of the horse radically altered the internal life of tribes as well as their warfare, and horse stealing became a way of survival. Given the premise of modern Indian lawsuits, members of some barely survived tribes could argue, theoretically, that their near-destruction by steed-mounted rivals is ground for claims against the U. S. government for genocide reparations.

This problem, however, is simply a minor part of a vastly greater one, the politicization and institutionalization of envy in modern American life. Without a moral and religious change inspired by Christianity, there is nothing to prevent white America from descending to a level lower than that of the Digger Indians and their pit of grasshoppers.



## FOURTEEN

# THE MISTREATMENT OF INDIANS

One of the first things I saw on arriving at the Indian reservation was the persistent abuse of the Indians at the nearby mining town, twelve miles away. Both when it was legal or illegal, Indians went there to buy whiskey. The Indians are one of several racial groups with a great susceptibility to alcoholism. In most cases it did not take much liquor to make them thoroughly drunk.

In that condition they were easily robbed of their money. Indian girls and women were also raped, being in no state to resist or even to know what was happening. More than a few told me of their ugly experiences.

I was, in fact, called to testify before a grand jury and later at a trial. Some white men involved in the construction of a new school building on the reservation also testified before the grand jury. At the trial, those men failed to appear. A foreman denied any knowledge of the matter. There had been many payoffs, I was told, to ensure acquittal. The jury of twelve white men, “good and true,” who could truthfully claim a lack of evidence, naturally returned a “not guilty” verdict.

Even now, it angers me to recall such incidents. The exploitation of Indians in areas adjacent to the reservations is a very real and grim fact.

At the same time, an honest accounting must record the

sins on both sides. Some Indians were lawless. They stole from shopkeepers whose backs were turned.

I recall a white man, in the mining camp on business, proudly showing off a new car, one of the very first ones available after the end of World War II. I told him to lock his car, and he laughed at my Christian insistence on the depravity of fallen man. It was a very cold night, and while the car owner was in the bar, a very drunk and sick Indian crawled into the car and vomited all over the driver's seat.

What followed is revealing of human nature. The Indian, having slept for a time, got out of the car and ran off in the dark, unidentified. I had just finished a pastoral visit nearby and arrived on the scene as the owner was profanely viewing his polluted new car. The sight of me and the fact that my warning had been a sensible one, only enraged him further! Given his profanities, you would have thought I was the guilty person! Such is human nature. Man is a fallen creature, whatever his race or color. Without the grace of God, he is evil and even dangerous.

In time, I came to realize that the Indians were victimized because their way of life made them victims. They could see that the Christian Indians prospered and were not victimized, but they preferred to follow their own fallen ways and to complain about exploitation.

To illustrate, one of the Indian elders of our church, Guy Manning, was a Shoshone. He was part-white and perhaps part-Chinese, blond and blue-eyed, a remarkable Christian, and a man with a good sense of humor. Besides his cattle, he had an apple orchard and kept bees and sold honey. He also had a family garden.

The war took his sons into various branches of the service, and he had his cattle and hay meadows, and those of his sons, to care for. He was arthritic and could not mount a horse without help. When he irrigated the hayfields, a young granddaughter accompanied him, to run for help in case he stumbled and fell (because he could not get up without help).

One Sunday afternoon, he took the family for a picnic at Lamb's Creek reservoir. After eating, he stretched out to nap, his hat over his eyes, while the children fished. Suddenly, he was awaked by his granddaughter screaming, "Grandpa, Grandpa, there's a rattlesnake on you!" He looked under the brim of his hat to see a very large rattler crawling over him. Instantly and instinctively, he jumped up and landed some feet away. As he flew through the air, the rattler turned and struck at him, its fangs clinging to Guy's coat for a moment before it fell off.

Guy stood there in shock, amazed at his prodigious leap—"better than I ever did when I was young," he told me. He decided that if a scare could produce that much energy, he could muster it for his daily work—and *he did*. He went back to his old vigor and activities.

Now Guy Manning was one of the Indians periodically voted onto the tribal council, made council chairman, and relied on, with other Christians, to clean up the reservation. Fairly soon, drunkenness would be abated, order restored, and the Indian court made to function ably. But sinners—whites or Indians—for all of their complaining, can only stand law and order for so long. As a result, non-Christians would be voted back onto the council, the situation would deteriorate until it became intolerable, and then the Christians would again be voted in—albeit briefly.

Not only was Guy never in trouble or exploited, but he was a better manager of his affairs than were often well-paid white officials of the Indian Service, who were supplied with residences and vehicles.

White officials would try to "protect" the Indians by controlling their cattle receipts. I recall a top agency official pressuring Guy to allow him to keep his cattle check and pay the Mannings' bills. Guy refused, but the official still refused to turn over the check. Finally, Guy said, plainly and bluntly, "I know you. Every weekend you spend your time at the Mountain City hotel bar, getting drunk. Why should I turn over my affairs to a man like you?" The official never forgave him.

In another instance, Guy exposed the misuse of tribal and other funds by a superintendent, a fanatical Catholic who was determined to save the Indians from the Protestant mission with misappropriated funds. Guy's documented charges hit the media from coast to coast. An Indian Service investigation whitewashed the superintendent but transferred him, knowing his guilt and the tribe's anger.

Guy Manning was not one to be victimized because he was a free man in Christ.

To cite one more example, a girl, Josephine Roa, half-Shoshone and half-Hispanic, was highly intelligent, thoroughly godly, and a beautiful person. She was one of three sisters, all Christians. Josephine was a grace-filled woman. In any community or group, she would have stood out, as did Leah Manning and others in our church. It was a joy to know Josephine. She could always be counted on to be helpful. She studied at the Cook Christian Training School in Phoenix and she married a Nez Perce, Carl Dickson, who became a pastor. They moved to Oklahoma where Carl served in ministry. I can only think of Josephine with respect and affection.

While we live in the world, and the best of us experience evil things, a persistent pattern of exploitation implies moral failure.

The question is not one of racial inferiority; that is a humanistic myth. Christian faith and morality are necessary to progress against sin and exploitation. We are told, in 1 John 5:4, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

I reminded Indian groups that when missionaries from the Near East and the Mediterranean world first moved into northern and Western Europe, they despaired at times that the barbarians they met could ever be made into a godly and law-abiding people. In Christ, however, in time they became the bulwark of Western and Christian culture—even as now, without Christ, they are returning to barbarism.



## FIFTEEN

# THE INVENTED INDIAN

Most people know, (or did a generation or two ago), that the peoples of the Americas were called *Indians* because Columbus thought he had reached India. At one time no American native considered himself an Indian: he was an Abinaki, a Cherokee, an Iroquois, an Aztec, Maya, Paiute, Shoshone, or some other kind of person. These peoples did not call themselves *tribes*. Like the term *Indian*, the word *tribe* was alien to them; it came from the Bible.

At present, the “American Indian” makes much of that term and uses it to promote special rights and privileges; but the term is part of the modern humanistic remaking of a people to fit into a worldview which idealizes “primitive peoples” and sees them as representing the best in human history.

As noted, the term *Indian* properly referred to the people of India. A few Paiutes and Shoshones who had visited cities where Indians from India lived were either amused or offended at the thought of being likened to them. The East Indians, themselves a diverse people, are the antithesis of the American “Indians,” and the thought of being lumped under the same name was sometimes offensive to American Indians, as it may have been to East Indians as well.

The gratuitous assumption that all of the peoples of the Americas can be lumped under a common name is an unwarranted one and, in earlier years, gave some offense. It was comparable to calling a Frenchman or a Spaniard a German simply

because a common continent and “whiteness” marked them. The Indians identified themselves in my days as Shoshone, Paiute, Pima, and so on, although amongst themselves, each saw themselves as *the people*.

This is not a trivial point. American natives did not share a common culture nor were their lives static. The rise of the Aztecs shattered the lives of the other peoples of Mexico, and Cortez was their deliverer from Aztec human sacrifice and cannibalism. Those “tribes” which first acquired horses devastated those who were without that advantage. The Paiutes with horses were able to go from what is now Nevada to the Great Plains to hunt buffalo, dry the meat, and then return home. These trips, as Louis Dave told me, were dangerous and difficult. Other Indians could cause serious problems. Though the hunt was for stragglers in the herds, usually old or pregnant buffalo cows, the buffalo themselves were dangerous.

Some peoples were friendlier to whites than to other Indian groups, for the simple reason that they did not identify with anyone racially but in terms of whatever advantage they might gain in dealing with them. Racial identifications were invented by the white man. In the earlier days, intermarriage was not seen as demeaning to the white man.

There is another fact of some importance. The white American of my boyhood was a very different person than the American of today. The change in the national character from 1922 to 1992 is a dramatic one. White Americans have remade themselves into another kind of people.

The same is true of the Indian. In my day it was still white Christian America that was the norm. The Paiute or Shoshone might sometimes react against that norm, but he still recognized it as dominant. Since then, statist education has dramatically altered and remade white and black Americans and Indians as well. The humanistic view of the “primitive Indian” and the ideas of Rousseau have reshaped the Indian image of himself and his past.

Consequently, all groups in America are guilty of mythi-

cal thinking about themselves and about one another. I mentioned earlier the sadness of the older Indians at their grandchildren's radical disinterest in the Paiute and Shoshone pasts. It was not because the elders idealized their past but simply a desire that their lives and struggles be known and understood. The children, however, preferred the popular American culture and whatever the state schools taught them about themselves.

Few white Americans know their great-grandparents' names or where they lived. The same was true of the Paiute and Shoshone children: where and how their great-grandparents lived was of no interest to them. The school basketball game was far more important. Like their white counterparts, they were implicit existentialists: only the moment was real.

This practical existentialism is basic to the fact that American Indians, like their white counterparts, live in a world of myths about themselves. The realities of their past are of no concern to them because the myths are more in tune with the existential moment.

Since I had read all that I could find in the University of California at Berkeley library stacks on Paiutes and Shoshones, I found that I knew more about these people than their younger generation did. Still, I could not interest the young in their past. The popular culture of the American scene, liquor, and sex were of more concern to them. These are the same concerns that mark white American youth, and this should not surprise us.

"Whites" and "Indians" have shared a country and a common history for a few hundred years, although much less in the American West. However often isolated from one another physically, the cultural influences have been similar. Some children from strong Christian families have been able to resist the existentialist currents of the twentieth century, but all still live in a common culture and world, and the effect on all has been destructive.

Because only the moment is real for existentialism, it has

given us a fictional world, an invented past, an invented American “white” man, and an invented “Indian.” As a result, people know little about either theirs or the Indian’s past.



## SIXTEEN

# INDIANS AND ANTHROPOLOGISTS

There are some anthropologists whose writings are intelligent and accurate up to a point. But there is a serious problem in anthropological studies (and in science generally) which leads to a serious perversion of reality.

I am not talking just about the works of people like Margaret Mead, exposed as a fraud by Freeman but still treated as an “authority.” There is also John Nance’s *The Gentle Tasaday, a Stone Age People in the Philippine Rain Forest*, with a foreword by Charles A. Lindbergh (1975), which many claimed on a variety of grounds to be a hoax, but which was republished in 1988. Again and again, “scientists” have been determined to “discover” the natural good man, untainted by Christianity. The American Indians have been a frequent candidate for this sort of revisionism.

First of all, the approach to the many so-called “primitive” peoples is anti-historical. Can we treat the English of today or those of the Venerable Bede’s day the same as the naked, blue-painted warriors the Romans encountered? The idea is absurd. The same is true of the American Indians: a static notion is absurd. The coming of the white man created a ripple effect from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Even more, the arrival and capture of Spanish horses revolutionized American Indian life. Those in the West who got horses first immediately became

“advanced.” The horse was more responsible for changes in Indian life than anything else.

*Second*, American Indian life was not static and unchanging. There was no commitment to a mythical “primitive” lifestyle that bound them to the past. Tribes learned quickly from each other, and from the French, English, Spanish, and Americans. They were not stupid like white nativists; they were ready to improve their lives. They had less commitment to the past than did the white men. The Shoshone and Paiute life I knew in the 1940s and early 1950s was not the life they lived in 1900, nor are they the same now (1992). A fixed idea of Indian life and culture is absurd.

*Third*, apart from a dedication to their faith in primitivism and environmentalism, many scholars in this area, as in others, strive to be *value-free*, meaning really anti-Christian. Consider this statement by Jon Manchip White:

Polyandry, the system whereby a woman was the wife of more than one man, is not attested in North America, though Eskimo tribesmen were in the habit of offering their wives for the sexual pleasure of the guests, and the Shoshonean women were permitted by certain tribes to have sexual intercourse with other members of the tribe while their husbands were away hunting.<sup>1</sup>

This is not a lie, but neither is it the truth. No Shoshone man wanted to share his wife (or daughter) with any other man. I knew one Shoshone woman whose nose had been cut off by her husband for adultery. This was an ancient punishment, although not always used. White’s statement is false because it is “scientific,” i.e., value-free, and therefore a distortion and a lie. In a band of Indians, a small group of families, a leader could order some men to hunt while others protected the camp. As the strong man, the leader could take another man’s wife, knowing that the husband was in no position to challenge his authority or position. The husband’s “consent”

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1. Jon Manchip White, *Everyday Life of the North American Indian* (New York, NY: Dorset Press, 1979), 101.

was pragmatic and life-preserving, nothing more. Any move for revenge would have led to anarchy and mass killings.

Similarly, when white men first appeared on the scene, their technological superiority was at once apparent. Various choices were open to the Indians. They could kill the stranger or strangers and take everything. Usually, however, before first encountering a white man, most Indians had heard of them and their numbers, their killing power, and their very valuable goods. More than a few tribes, in fact most, found it wiser to accommodate the white man. More than a few of the leaders of Indian uprisings were regarded by many of their peoples as foolhardy and suicidal. Curiously, these are the men Americans often honor, sometimes calling them *chiefs* when they were not.

When the white man came to an encampment where the Indians were determined to be friendly, the Indians stressed trade and peace. Peace could mean access to Indian women. Venereal diseases often passed both ways, from whites to Indians and from Indians to whites. A great deal of the sexual availability of the Indian women rested on the simple fact that it was part of an effort to keep potentially dangerous visitors happy and to extract gifts from them.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition reported that some tribesmen gave their wives to elderly warriors and hunters on a temporary basis or to a powerful stranger in the hope that the abilities of the man could be transferred to the woman thereby.<sup>2</sup>

It is questionable whether men have ever offered their women to other men unless they expected to get something in return. My point is that White's statement, while accurate, is value-free and hence false. It gives a warped picture of Indian life.

During the Depression of the 1930s, when I was a student, I knew more than one graduate student who prospered by making his wife available to a key faculty member. With some

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2. James P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, [1984] 1988), 107.

homosexual professors, the student “got ahead” by making himself available. I had a passing acquaintance with a couple who both held easy federal jobs, she under her maiden name because married women were less likely to be employed. The “boss,” head of a minor office with four or five men under him, was very soon adulterously involved with the young woman. She would leave work an hour early at the boss’s request, and he would follow soon afterward to join her in her apartment before he went home. Both husband and wife put up with it because jobs were scarce, but it soon ended their marriage.

This job blackmail, if described in the professor’s value-free language as typical of American life in the 1930s, would be factually correct while being an outrageous lie. I am not saying that American moral standards in the 1930s and American Indian standards *circa* 1800 are comparable. Rather, we must insist that neither can be discussed value-free.

When men gave their wives to others, the purpose was pragmatic. It was either self-protection or it was to gain something from the other man. On the reservation, if the adultery took place without permission—and this was common—the husband became angry and vented his anger on his wife. Adultery was common, and it was considered wrong no matter how prone all were to it.

Indians grew to be skeptical of scholars and found them frustrating. Say we were to meet a university researcher doing a “definitive” study of the U.S. Constitutional Convention in terms of the use of snuff, liquor, and tobacco by the delegates, giving a detailed analysis of utensils and dress. We would consider this man with disdain. His book would tell us nothing valuable about either the Constitution or its architects.

One woman, Jessie Little—very superior and gracious but, regrettably, involved in the peyote cult—was an “informant” to an anthropologist before my time on the reservation. He found her resistant to some of his questions. She told me that he was not at all interested in what she had to say, but interested only in answers to his “stupid” questions. He had come

with an agenda, with a preconceived framework about the reality of Paiute life, and he wanted to concentrate on that.

Too full of themselves and lacking empathy, anthropologists too often assumed that the older Indians could not distinguish between myth and history. They imposed Darwinian presuppositions upon their subjects. They asked their set questions and left. With some rare exceptions, the academicians hated Christians and missionaries. They were bigots who believed themselves the only wise and enlightened ones.

Indians are not stupid. Whatever their faults, they lack neither feelings nor intelligence. To be treated like flora and fauna to be studied was, for many of them, offensive, and, for some, a source of pain.

I have mentioned the Indian's readiness to change. He very quickly picked up the vague public Christianity of Americans and, as far as possible, conformed his life to it. He has just as quickly picked up the modern culture of television, rock and roll, and more, to his own hurt. The revolution in Indian life since World War II has been dramatic.

The cult of primitivism and Indianization has spread rapidly. We now have a younger generation of Indians and agitators whose model of Indians derives from American liberal mythology. These new Indians have become actors, playing an expected part and accepting as true a vast realm of white American mythology about the Indian past.

This vision of the Indian past is a static one, as is the vision of our white American primitivists and environmentalists. They are interested in more than just turning back the clock. They call for a return to a timeless fairyland which has existed only in their imaginations. A vision based on a candid realism moves history forward; one based on mythology surrenders and destroys it.



## SEVENTEEN

# THE FALLACY OF PRIMITIVISM

Our thinking about various peoples too often begins with an illusion. We divide them into “primitive” and “civilized” peoples, with some gradations between them. *The actual difference is moral and religious.*

Darwinism has seriously warped our views of people on one of the Marquesas Islands, studied by Dr. and Mrs. Robert C. Suggs, who published their report in 1962. The change in the islanders’ sexual morality from their first contact with Europeans to the present is very slight. By keeping outsiders from knowledge of their language, the people are able to maintain their culture with ease. The children of these islanders are trained and used in a number of violent and abusive practices, which are nearly universally considered serious criminal offences in other cultures, including those that have repudiated any obligation to a specifically Christian ethic.

The French priests were unable to change the lives of their parishioners, who begin their moral dereliction from early childhood. The priests Suggs met paid a grim price for their years of hard work. Suggs cited the case of one priest “reduced to babbling idiocy by thirty-eight years’ toil among his unrepentant, resentful flock.”<sup>1</sup>

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1. Robert C. Suggs, *The Hidden Worlds of Polynesia* (New York, NY: Mentor Books, [1962] 1965), 119, see also 104–119.

Is this a racial problem? The people of the island are descendants not only of Marquesan Polynesians but of Annamese, American Negroes, Chinese, and assorted European peoples. Their genetic history is a “good” one. Their condition is one arising from a moral and religious choice.

In Biblical law, marriage with unbelievers is forbidden as treason to the covenant (Deut. 7:3, Ex. 34:12–16). Marriage with a believer from an evil and debased people was possible, but the descendants of such a union could not “enter into the congregation,” i.e., become officers or leaders unto the third or even the tenth generation, depending on the moral and religious background of the convert’s culture. An example of such a marriage is Ruth and Boaz. Ruth was honored and respected, but it was only with David that the exclusion ended insofar as authority was concerned.

The problem was not racial; it was moral and religious. The Indians were not “primitive” peoples. They were morally and religiously decadent, and the same can be said for all the European and other advanced peoples at one stage or another in their history. Certainly, the culture of Western man is moving downhill towards the Polynesian level described by Suggs.

It must be added that the moral differences between the various Indian peoples were very real. Some men were like Chief Washakie of the Shoshones, an early convert at an Episcopal mission and a remarkably superior man. Dr. Carlos Montezuma of the Yavapai-Apache served early in the twentieth century at the Western Shoshone Reservation as a medical doctor. The Rev. Sherman Coolidge, a Northern Arapahoe and an Episcopal rector, was a very able and effective pastor. There were differences among the tribes and among the peoples in a tribe.

It is not an accident of history that existentialism arose in the twentieth century and so powerfully influenced Western history. With its emphasis on the moment, not faith and history, existentialism feeds the urge to become “primitive” and pleasure-oriented. While existentialism, as a philosophy, is now

less prominent, as a state of mind it is becoming omnipresent.

Existentialism is a normal state among so-called "primitive" peoples. What has no meaning in terms of the moment is not remembered. While on the Western Shoshone Reservation, I had an Indian girl come in weekly to help with the housework, such things as ironing and, briefly, babysitting. When I returned briefly three years later, I saw her near a store and greeted her. She had no recollection of me whatsoever. I found this kind of episode commonplace. If a relative of an Indian family visited from Fort Hall, the children, three months later, would not remember the incident because it was of no importance to them.

This was not true of members of the older generation, who were a part of a culture in which *memory of a practical sort meant life*. The protective atmosphere of reservation life made an existentialist life possible. Since my time, the reservation has become a center of casual suicide. For the roving bands of Indians prior to the reservation, life had been tenuous, death was always close. They could not afford the casualness of reservation Indians.

Indian life has not been static. Many of the American Indians have seen the rise and decline of Christian faith and of advance and retreat in terms of growth beyond their earlier ways of living.

The older generation I knew relished telling stories of their past, but they resented the attempts of the white man to bind them to that past. They had seen dramatic changes in the lives of white men, from oxcarts to airplanes, and they saw no reason why Indians should be chained to the Indian past. Such an approach was to treat them as zoo specimens, and the Indian reservation as an anthropologist's sanctuary and laboratory.

To a few of the younger men, this was appealing. It gave them an opportunity to exploit the white man's folly. By the time I left, some of the Native American movements were beginning to make inroads. Their effect was to place a roadblock

in the way of development and growth among Indians.

If, tomorrow, a conquering power were to require that all white Americans return to the lifestyles and conditions of their ancestors of two centuries ago, they would rightfully consider it a form of oppression. It is no less oppressive when applied to the Indian.



## EIGHTEEN

# THE COYOTE

Much has been written about the Western Indian and his views about the coyote. Stories about the coyote as a *trickster* are many, and have been collected by anthropologists. The stories are accurately recorded, and it is true that there is much in them about the cleverness of the coyote and the tricks he played.

All the same, the emphasis is, I believe, rather faulty. There is no question that the coyote is clever. He has not only survived and increased but has spread all over the continental United States. He exists now in greater numbers than ever before, whereas his cousin, the wolf, has not so flourished.

A very remarkable and superior Indian woman, Annie Prior, lived not too far away from me. An aged person, but still attractive and commanding in appearance, she told me that coyotes would kill and eat her chickens on her doorstep. If she tried to drive them off, they would move a few yards away and continue their meal. Only the sight of a gun *and* the knowledge that this person could use it would make a coyote disappear.

Shortly after arriving at Owyhee, I saw an attempt made to control the coyotes, which had become very numerous and bold. The means devised to kill off the coyotes was clever. Men wearing rubber gloves prepared poisoned meat that was loaded onto an airplane and dropped all over the reservation in isolated places. Just as no human hand had touched the meat, no human tracks led to its landing spot on the ground. It was a

clever plan. There were dead coyotes everywhere. But this trick never worked again, and the coyotes were soon as thick as ever.

The older Indians' reaction to this was one of both delight and concern. They were concerned because the coyotes would sometimes kill old calving cows and their young. They were delighted because once again the coyote had tricked men—this time the clever white man who had believed that a solution to the coyote problem had been found.

Now we come to the coyote's meaning to these older Indians. The coyote was clearly both a troublesome predator and a source of delight. The reason for this was that the coyote is a remarkable *survivor* in the face of everything.

In the 1960s and 1970s I found that the coyote had invaded Los Angeles. He could be found around the University of California at Los Angeles, in the Westwood area. The coyote would feast on the cats and dogs in the neighborhood as well as mice and rats. His boldness was startling.

Winters were times of hunger for men and animals. By late winter, many deer, elk, and other animals, including some predators, were very hungry. The cold and snow took their toll and the burning away of fat in the struggle to survive weakened one and all—except the coyote. The coyote was sleek and fat. He fed on mice and pack-rats and also on the weaker large animals as they became unable to withstand predators. Only once did I ever see a mangy and skinny coyote, and that was a very old one. Normally, the coyotes are in excellent condition.

Indian life in the old days was a continuing struggle for survival. A constant supply of food was urgently needed and not readily come by. Hunting and food-gathering took up most of the people's time, and their winters were grim ones.

The coyote flourishes in the winter precisely because other animals grow weaker. It is his opportunity to kill more easily and to live well. His various devices in hunting game that was normally too big or strong for him was thus a delight to the Indian. The coyote had mastered the art of survival. The stories told about him as a trickster simply celebrate the coyote as a survivor.

Once the old Indian life was gone, the stories endured but the coyote's survival skills no longer won the same appreciation. I can recall the appreciation with which older Indians described the winter hunting ways of coyotes. They relished the animal's skill, and the Indians, as long-time survivors, easily identified with the coyote.

Among the Indians of Nevada and California, the coyote was in a way a primeval god, the animal out of which mankind developed. On the other hand, some Navajos held that evil men became coyotes when they died. The coyote was said by some to be the giver of fire to men; others saw the coyote as man's creator; still others viewed him as an appealing devil, an enemy of the creator. The depictions of the coyote vary, but they have in common the fact that he is a trickster and survivor.

This brings us to a problem where the modern Indian is concerned. The older Indians I knew, some of whom could recall pre-reservation years, appreciated the ability to survive. But what does the coyote mean to our present day Native Americans of the West?

The answer is, clearly, *nothing*. Survival in the sense of eating and staying alive is no longer a problem. The reservation is a welfare state and a sad one. The security of reservation life has beggared all Native Americans, and yet they demand more of it.

A Shoshone soldier in World War II in the South Pacific *relished* the island battles. They took him back to the tales told by his grandfather. He did exceptionally well by "thinking like a coyote," and his ability to survive and triumph was remarkable. He admitted that he enjoyed the war because he was outstanding as a soldier. *He was a survivor*. This is what the coyote once meant to the Indians.



## NINETEEN

# LOVED IN ABSENTIA

One of the weaknesses, as well as strengths, of the American character is its fondness for the underdog, the defeated, the distressed. The readiness of the United States to be generous to a defeated enemy, however foolishly at times, is proverbial. In its worst form, this characteristic becomes a self-hatred and a sentimental and sick exaltation of any loser and, in its better forms, a readiness to live in peace and with generosity towards a defeated rival.

Perhaps nowhere has this characteristic been more in evidence than with respect to the American Indian. Of course, from the very beginning, the Indian was approached with a variety of misapprehensions. His very name, "Indian," represents the original belief that the New World was a part of India and the natives were, therefore, Indians. Others soon saw him as "the noble savage," unfallen, original man, uncorrupted by civilization. It was believed that he was far in advance of civilization by his pristine purity, by his very primitivism.

Others believed the Indians were the supposedly lost ten tribes of Israel. Columbus was perhaps partly in search of a new homeland for persecuted Jews, of which he was perhaps one. With Columbus as governor or viceroy of the new lands, it would be a good place to which to migrate away from persecution. It seems certain that Columbus assumed there were Jews in India in his day, and our scant historical knowledge seems to confirm that this was the case. Columbus took with him Luis de

Torres, a Hebrew-speaking interpreter who underwent baptism before Columbus sailed in order to be eligible for the expedition. Columbus clearly hoped to encounter Hebrew-speaking people either in Indian or in adjacent regions.

Columbus repeatedly cited two texts from his favorite book of the Bible, Isaiah: "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them" (Isa. 60:9) and, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth" (Isa. 65:17). His postmillennial hope was tied to a belief in the restoration of Israel.

Although a royal decree barred Jews from the New World, a number settled in Spanish and Dutch possessions very early, many of them convinced that the Indians were a related people. Some scholars hold that Bishop de Las Casas, the great friend and champion of the Indians, was a Jew, a member of a family of Conversos or converted Jews. More than a few Spaniards believed that the Peruvians were of Jewish origin, and there are suggestions and evidence of Phoenician and Jewish influences in the American past. These ideas concerning Indians were later utilized by Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism.

Again, of late we have seen fantastic ideas of the size of the Indian population by Wilbur R. Jacobs, writing in the January 1974 issue of *William and Mary Quarterly*. Earlier estimates of about 300,000 Indians in North America, exclusive of Mexico, were raised later to about a million. But Jacobs finds "new evidence that indicated between fifty and one hundred million Indians in possession of the New World on the day that it was 'discovered.'" This would have made North America more densely populated than Europe.

His evidence is based on estimates of the population of agricultural peoples of Mexico and the Caribbean and projecting a like population onto the rest of the hemisphere. The fallacy here is in assuming that civilized people and primitive people increase in population at the same rate. The North American Indians lived very meagerly, mostly from hunting

and some with a limited and primitive gardening. Conversation with Indians who lived prior to the coming of the white man to the West reveal that a band of half a dozen families required a hunting area of about a hundred miles to survive in the Intermountain region. Before the coming of the horse, survival was even more difficult. As the bands increased, they divided; and they killed off rival bands, sometimes of their own tribe, to survive.

Some of the tribes, like the Western Pima, were peaceful. Others, like the Eastern Iroquois, were very warlike. The Iroquois and their ways are an instructive study of the problem faced by the early settlers.

The Iroquois was used to battle and enjoyed it. He wanted the white man's tools, guns, knives, blankets, liquor, and appliances. He liked proximity to the white settlement: because of the cleared land and planted fields, game thrived the most there, and hunting was best where the white man lived. The white man wanted the Indian lands. He wanted Indian trade, because furs meant wealth. The city traders were pro-Indian. The frontiersman who suffered from Indian depredations was anti-Indian.

The Indian, then and now, is hated in proximity and loved in absentia. His often backward ways are disliked by his neighbors, but his primitivism makes him romantic from a distance.

The Indian was culturally different. He was polygamous, at times a cannibal, given in some cases to human sacrifice, delighting in torture (sometimes regarded as a compliment to a worthy enemy), and culturally on a "primitive" level. He could also be very generous at times and kind, resourceful as an ally or a friend, and much more ready to change than is normally acknowledged. The great numbers of Indians who supposedly have been exterminated in actuality simply integrated and merged into American society, as the anthropologist John Greenway has pointed out. The surviving Indians of today are in some cases the reactionaries, those who refused to integrate.

The white man and the Indian were alike unprepared for

each other. Each bewildered the other, and each was greatly interested in the other because each obviously had certain advantages or abilities which could be used. The conflict of white and Indian has been documented at great length and with considerable emotionalism. Too seldom is the extensive cooperation and very great integration cited. The amount of Indian blood in the American population is very great, and it is there because religiously and culturally Indian and white did unite to an extensive degree.

Finally, the American Indian was himself, in the remote past, an immigrant to the Americas from Asia and the South Pacific, perhaps, and in some cases perhaps from Europe and North Africa. Various groups of Indians regularly warred to displace one another, including earlier arrivals. The Paiutes of Nevada, for example, told stories of warring against an earlier pygmy people to possess their territories. Archeology has confirmed the existence at one time in Nevada of a pygmy people.

Author's Note: Since the Iroquois are so prominent in colonial history, especially in the New York area, the following two footnotes highlight books of interest:

Allan W. Eckert, *Wilderness Empire* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1969)

Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970)



## TWENTY

# IMPROVING THE MORALS OF THE PAST

**T**he imaginary Indian of many Americans' thinking is an environmentalist, a natural philosopher, and a worshipper of the "Great Spirit." All of this is nonsense. I remember, in the 1940s, seeing some younger Indians spouting these ideas cruelly mocked as fools by their elders. But well before that time, more than a few people were "writing down" the tales of elderly Indians and making them sound like superb environmentalists and gentle souls.

Many white champions of the Indian will speak in detail of the white man's sins against the Indians—that is, the crimes of his ancestors. People who are prone to confessing the sins of their forebears rather than their own are consummate Pharisees and hypocrites.

Too much is written of the Indian-white wars. They were not as prevalent as is commonly assumed. Far more common was warfare among tribes, and the white man's help was frequently sought by one side or another.

The United States government is also commonly damned for its treatment of the Indians and a long trail of broken treaties recounted. Washington normally wanted to keep the treaties it made. Its problem was that tens of thousands of white men, adventurous trappers, lawless miners, and others paid no attention to the treaties and the voting public would demand

action against, not for, the Indians. In many cases, Washington's morality was better than that of the media and the vocal citizenry. In the battles that followed, too often Indian tribes lined up with Washington's military forces against a hated tribe.

Most of the Indians merged into the white population. For an Indian girl, a white man was a "good catch," a "rich" husband, and a better life. In California, where the Gold Rush created a shortage of women, Indian girls rapidly became the mothers of the future Californian aristocracy.

Those Indians who did not merge with the general population but remained on the reservation were often of mixed blood. I was darker than some of the Indians on my reservation, and I was mistaken as having mixed heritage. There were Indians with American, French, English, Chinese, and other strains in them.

There was no lack of brutality, in peace and in war, by whites and Indians against one another; but there were also, from the beginning, acts of kindness, help, and friendships. But these are ignored because the concern of many is with the oppression of the Indians. Once, when I cited an instance of the helpfulness of some Indians to whites, my remarks were dismissed and I was told that such Indians were fools and renegades.

Too many people want a cheap virtue by condemning the sins of men of the past or of their own ancestors. I recall in Bristol, England, in 1987, meeting a young man who paraded his sensitive soul and conscience by damning an ancestor who had been a slave trader; he had no personal sins to confess, apparently. This kind of mental exercise has become very commonplace, a mark of moral degeneracy. Men have enough sin to confess and enough to do to mend their own ways without going into the past. No age advances by "improving" the morals of past and long-dead men, but only by mending its own ways.

The Indian has been badly used by many so-called friends, who advance an agenda by falsifying history. Such people are no friends to the Indians.

The Chinese and the Japanese have suffered as much as the Indians in America, and perhaps more, without sparking a similar cultic interest. Blacks have had a public concern similar to that focused on the Indians as they are a fashion in advocacy.

We should remember that many settlers—"nesters"—were very badly treated also. The West was a harsh place, even when peaceful, and before that, the eastern frontier had been a grim place. People forget that, in many areas of the West, good roads did not exist until after World War II. I recall vividly the tales told of the hard and killing winter of 1886–1887, when great herds of cattle were lost. But many winters before and after were severe.

The United States has had a problem: its diverse population. Historically, community has meant a common language and nationality *and proximity*, so that people twenty-five miles away can be treated as foreigners and distrusted. But in the U. S. all kinds of nationalities and races have been thrown together.

My family, Armenian immigrants, settled in 1916 in a small California farming area. I recall incidents of nighttime vandalism and broken windows and of aggression against me at school. There were also acts of kindness from churches and many neighbors. Such stories have never been one-sided for any group. Today, our family includes, by marriage, several nationalities. It is false history to give only a negative view of America's treatment of minorities.

Man is a sinner. There is no perfection in this life. We do ourselves and others no good by stressing victimhood.

Many good families have trouble living together in peace. Is it any wonder that they resent or dislike peoples who are alien to them? Men are not sinless. Conflicts are commonplace, but it does not help our future to accentuate evils and conflicts instead of working for peace and goodwill. There is no virtue in confessing our ancestors' sins when we are so wanting in grace and mercy day by day. We have become a coarse people, wanting in many areas but adept at confessing sins committed by our ancestors and by other peoples.



## APPENDIX

# THE WELFARE STATE ON THE RESERVATION

[*Editor's Note:* What follows may be my father's first published article from when he was perhaps as young as thirty-three. From textual references, it was written sometime between early 1950 and late 1952 while he still served on the reservation. The publication in which it appeared is not known. The manuscript is a carbon copy at the head of which was typed, in parenthesis, "R. J. Rushdoony, Western Shoshone Mission, Owyhee, Nevada." He related to me the circumstances of its publication. He was advised that he ought not to give the impression that his views on Indian policy represented the position of the Presbyterian Church's mission board, so he published under the pseudonym "Monty Ray". This name must have been added later by the editors, as it does not appear on the existent copy. His third person quotation of "missionary R. J. Rushdoony," then, represents the young minister's tongue-in-cheek signature of the article. ~ *Mark R. Rushdoony*]

If any Indians heard Dean Russell's speech at Billings, Montana, last January, they were probably disturbed by the comparison he drew between Indian and Negro history.

Freedom for Negro slaves, he said, was sincerely believed by many slaveholders to be a heartless step. They argued that the "dumb, ignorant slaves' would starve to death unless their welfare was guaranteed by their masters." But the slaves were set

free, Russell pointed out, homeless, jobless, without education, old, crippled and sick, children and adults, without exception or any guarantee of help. Yet in less than half a century, "they are about as self-supporting and responsible as other American citizens" and have demonstrated their ability to deal with the problems that remain.

The once proud American Indians, who repeatedly demonstrated their ability to compete economically with white rivals and who militarily made the U.S. Army look ridiculous time and again for a century, is today "less self-supporting and more dependent on government aid," requiring 12,000 federal employees to care for them, remaining as wards of a government, and people that have no innate superiority to them.

To an Indian, no other comparison could have been more painful. Through the years, he has comforted himself in defeat by the frequent reminder that, unlike the Negro, he refused to submit to slavery to the white man, preferring death. Although this ignores the obvious fact that the Negro submitted only to rebel repeatedly and bitterly and, triumphing in defeat, transmuted his experience into some of the world's finest songs, it is true that the Indian refused to become the white man's slave. Indians had previously enslaved one another, prisoners of war and of raiding parties being bought and sold as a steady source of cheap labor; but Indian slavery, being more subject to the fortunes of war, amenable to ransom, and, at times, advancement in the new tribe, lacked either the permanency or the rigors of the white man's order. The Spanish conquerors soon found that many Indians chose suicide, practiced infanticide, mothers killing their sons rather than seeing them enslaved, even abstaining from sex so as to end their bloodline and its sufferings. In the Indies as well as North America, men soon turned to other sources for slave labor: the Indian simply would not do. Long before Patrick Henry, the Indian had declared, "Give me liberty or give me death," and he had not hesitated repeatedly to accept death when it remained his only choice.

Yet today, after more than a century of reservation life,

the Indian Service justifies its existence by asserting that the Indian is unfit for the rigors of a free, competitive life and more and more money is needed to care for him—and, in fact, to prevent his actual starvation in some cases. If this annual assertion of the Indian Service is true, then the real Century of Dishonor is not the hundred years of conquest, massacre, and robbery—for the Indian survived that with a bloody dignity and honor—but the Century of Welfare Economy on the Reservation, which has turned a proud, independent people into incompetents who must be wards of the government; for no other word than incompetency can adequately summarize the Indian Service's assertion regarding Indians and its justification for its continuing protective care of them.

It would be wrong, of course, to assume that the Indian Service is made up of conniving men whose one purpose is to defraud or use the Indians. In the early days, there were serious cases of theft and abuse but for many years the Indian Service has been no different in its make-up than any other branch of government service. It has its rascals, its professional career men whose only thought is their own advancement rather than the Indian's, and its share of sincere and hard-working men. Its fundamental fault is its belief that the hope of the Indian is not the Indian himself but what the government can do for him and with him; its tragedy is that so many Indians have come to believe it too. This policy reflects an obvious belief that the Indian was and is inferior to the white man and needs to be protected, either temporarily or permanently, from competition with him.

This has, moreover, been the underlying assumption of many self-appointed friends of the Indians: the Indians need government help because they cannot care for themselves except on a primitive level which is now impossible. In 1887, J. B. Harrison, as a representative of the Indian Rights Association, wrote, in a publication of that body:

No Indian that I have seen has any idea of civilization, or of the responsibilities and perils which it involves ... The Indians

as a race are, of course, far inferior to white men in intellectual capability ... I see no reason to expect that our Indians will ever contribute anything vital or distinctive to our national character or life. That is not necessary or important. What is really to be desired for them is that they shall be so instructed, educated, and guided that they shall, as soon as may be practicable, be able to support themselves.

Harrison, who more than once championed the Indian cause in cases of abuse, believed that their hope lay in government aid and the reservation system. "Neither education or religion, nor both together, can effect this change, or save the Indian without it. It belongs to the province of Government," he claimed, under the plan of wardship and training. Harrison, while believing that the government alone could accomplish this change from tribal to modern life, was aware of the dangers and saw that the Indian Service seemed to require its own perpetuation, and that reservation life produced a parasitic Indian. He was aware also, and respectful of, the counterclaim of missionaries that only Christianity could give the Indians the moral stamina and social impetus that would make successful competition possible.

More recent exponents of the Indian Service program have been less frank. It would be difficult, in fact, to convince many of them, including Mr. Ickes and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, that, in espousing the reservation program of enforced security and welfare economy, they are asserting that the road to freedom is through the lack of it, and the claim made incessantly for the necessity of government care for Indians is an assertion of their incompetency and inferiority. The same "liberals" who demand an end to Negro segregation insist at the same time that the government-ruled Indian segregation is a cause for liberals to champion.

Has the Indian been incompetent in his dealings with white men? Has it been a history of unbroken exploitation of the inferior race by the superior?

Fantastic incidents can be cited of the exploitation and

robbing of Indians from early days to the present. To secure Indian lands, especially oil lands, Indians were sometimes even kidnapped and murdered, but more often, through simple fraud, divested of their property. Whiskey was freely used to obtain signatures as well as to exterminate Indians. Presbyterian missionary records cite the case of one man who, finding whiskey too slow a means to kill off the Indians he hated and found to be obstructing his ambitious plans, procured the shirt of a man who had been suffering from smallpox, took it home, and placed it on the roadside where an Indian would be sure to pick it up, thereby laying low a tribe.

On the other hand, whites were at times defrauded by Indians who sold land belonging to another tribe, necessitating repurchases. And at the present, contrary to popular impression, many traders are skinned by Indian customers who know that they have the on-the-reservation trader at a disadvantage and are not hesitant about using it. The many tales of Indian oppression can be paralleled by a similar mistreatment of many immigrant groups, especially Orientals on the Pacific Coast, and matched fully by the history of the American Negro, whose origin was no less "primitive." Yet all those groups, learning from unhappy experiences, made rapid strides to self-sufficiency and competitive equality. The Indian, protected at each point, with the advent of the reservation system, soon lost his competitive ability.

The oppression of Indians has a long history and is a disgraceful part of the American record, but even here the culpability of the white settlers has been sometimes overdrawn. When trouble arose, it was generally created by the worst elements on both sides and all were drawn into it.

From the beginning, Indian leaders mainly tried to be friendly and reminded their people of the vastness of the country and the opportunity possible for all to live together. From the very beginning, the colonists had a friendly and missionary purpose, contrary to the popular jibe that they first fell on their knees and then fell on the Indians. The famous mission-

ary, John Eliot, who was neither alone in his work nor the first, soon had fifteen towns of “praying Indians” of demonstrable character, living very much the same pattern of Christian and economic existence as their English neighbors. Indians and white alike served on the jury that tried the Indian murderers of Wussausmon in the event that preceded King Philip’s War.

Then, as in the case of future conflicts, both good whites and especially good Indians, who were frequently wiped out, suffered in the war that followed. The troubles generally began with little things: settlers’ cattle straying into Indian cornfields, Indians “invading” settled country to exercise ancient hunting rights, unscrupulous frontiersmen and traders using whiskey to gain their ends, Indian hot-heads violating treaties, whites responding to Indian scalping, torture, and mutilation with self-righteous savagery, until the hard-won peace earlier established by the reputable men on both sides was again engulfed in blood. This was the pattern of conflict. Later, the government entered the picture by abusing treaties. To this was added abuse by law, once the Indian was vanquished.

Resentment and bitterness lingered among many Indians, providing a fertile source of support for unscrupulous would-be Indian leaders and for white men, as well, who milked and still milk the Indians by posing as their champions as they play on the ancient grievances. Despite this, the Indian leaders themselves were uniformly ready to bury the hatchet. They were astute and practical men and saw no point in harping on the tales of wrongs and horror when the logical solution was peaceful union with the invader.

Christian Indians demonstrated the profound character of their faith by an active forgiveness which Christian whites did not always match. The beautiful words cut into the foundation stone of the Bacone College Chapel, words which understate the horror of the Delaware story, are a monument to this faith:

We have been broken up and moved six times. We have been despoiled of our property. We thought when we moved across

the Missouri River and had paid for our homes in Kansas we were safe, but in a few years the white man wanted our country. We had good farms, built comfortable homes and big barns. We had schools for our children and churches where we listened to the same gospel the white man listens to. The white man came into our country from Missouri and drove our cattle and horses away, and if our people followed them, they were killed. We try to forget these things, but we would not forget that the white man brought us the blessed gospel of Christ, the Christian's hope. This more than pays for all we have suffered. Charles Journeyeake, Chief of the Delawares. April, 1886.

Journeyeake's words point up a fact consistently ignored in our time: the manifest competitive ability of the pre-reservation Indian. In some instances, foreign observers deemed the Indians greatly superior to their white neighbor.

The California Indian is as good an illustration of this competitive ability as any because, while reputed to be the "lowest" tribes of all, he maintained himself competitively under especially difficult circumstances. As S. F. Cook has shown in his study of *The Conflict Between the California Indian and White Civilization*, the Indian manifested his ability both in resistance and in adaptation. The Indian leader Estanislao proved to be more than a match for the Spanish forces, while the Rancheria Indians quickly became part of the new order without losing their identity.

The Anglo-American invasion of California after the discovery of gold followed a pattern of elimination of Indians, either through extermination or, later, isolation on reservations. The Indian now had to compete against overwhelming numerical odds. In the early years of mining, he competed successfully with the Anglo-American miner, only to be driven from the field, as were the Chinese also. Indian children were enslaved for labor, women for sexual purposes, and men killed as trespassing animals. The Indian culture and society were destroyed, and the Indians' only hope of existence became competitive free labor, where they readily established themselves as agricultural workers, as stock tenders on ranches, longshore-

men, dockhands, trappers, and in every field of unskilled labor, very much after the manner of most immigrant groups, showing the same capacity for advancement.

Before the 1850s were over, the brutal conditions of the early mining years gave way, and other groups, such as the Chinese, became the underdogs of California. The mistreated Okies of the Depression years were only another of a long line of "aliens" to California who were exploited and abused by residents of that state.

The creation of reservations channeled the development of Indian life into a direction different from that of the later groups and fostered dependency on the government rather than a continuing competition with Anglo-American California. As Cook has stated, "[I]f the aboriginal population found by experience making the whites give food was more conducive to ultimate survival than taking it from them by theft or physical force, then that population had worked out the best possible adaptation to the existing environment. Viewed in this light, the 'slothful,' 'sinful' behavior of the California Indian becomes another of the not too numerous evidences that the Indian was able to compete adaptively with the white race." Early resistance by the Indians trying to re-establish their own society soon gave way to an acceptance of the easier life.

The reservation, then, was the order to which the Indian quickly adapted himself. The Negro, compelled to work out his own salvation, adapted himself to the rigors of competitive life by establishing himself first as a good unskilled laborer and then increasingly as a skilled or professional man able to meet any challenge and defend his own rights. The Indian, compelled in the beginning to enter the reservation, meanwhile has increasingly lost his competitive ability in his isolation.

More than that, he cannot compete with his fellow Indian beyond a very limited extent; his land-holding is limited, the right of purchase of a failing Indian's land generally impossible, and the operation of the normal competitive cause and effect generally nullified by federal security provisions. Added

to this is the stultifying handicap that a sizeable segment of the government and public opinion prefers him as a blanket Indian, and pays more attention to him thus, and yields more approval to a now meaningless Indian dance or to a ceremony wherein a politician or a movie star is made an honorary Indian with a war bonnet than to his solid accomplishments in agriculture or education. Not a few missionaries and progressive Indian Service employees have been charged with "spoiling" the Indian by destroying old superstitions and instituting modern conveniences. The Indian must be maintained a primitive man to satisfy the extensive neurotic rejection of the problems of modern life by modern Americans.

The policy of former Indian Commissioner John Collier has been decisive in recent years. Indian culture must be preserved, Collier has maintained, because "they had what the world has lost ... [and] ... must have again lest it die ... that golden age ... Could we make it our own, there would be an eternally inexhaustible earth and a forever lasting peace." The old eighteenth century utopianism regarding natural man and natural religion has its full flower in Collier and his followers, and more than that, an equation of peace and security with tribalism and collectivism. Man's *only* hope is a return to this primitive worldview: "So the Indian record is the bearer of one great message to the world. Through his society, and only through his society, man experiences greatness."

Here the pattern of the New Deal Indian experiment is clear. The older reservation policy aimed at assimilation into competitive American life, although acting on the fallacy that the road to competitive equality lay through protection and the elimination of competition.

With Collier, a re-creation of Indian society was attempted. Indian society had been collective and communal in some instances, but many tribes not only had private ownership but an even more highly developed sense of property than contemporary man. Most tribes emphasized self-reliance, independence, and leadership in their customs and rituals. Collier,

however, tried to force the communalism of certain Southwest tribes on all Indians of the United States. It was blandly assumed that private or family ownership of land had never existed in Indian culture and that all holdings were tribal; as far as possible, tribes were accordingly reorganized. The complaint of the Plains Indian that "they're trying to make Navajos out of us," while unfair to the Navajos, had a sharp edge of truth.

More than that, this new Indian policy was designed not merely as a pattern for Indian life but as the guidepost for America. The old policy had been to Americanize the Indian. Collier believed in Indianizing the American. Only through the Indian's society, he felt, was there any hope for America. Not by the free market and laissez-faire economy of capitalism, he declared in 1947 (since his departure from the Indian Service and in his *The Indians of the Americas*), but by the true democracy and security and power of Indian culture for ourselves and the world, we would have true democracy and "the realized heaven on earth."

Collier does not fall into some of his adherents' error of rejecting modern devices. In the early years of his tenure, there was some effort to revive ancient arts and crafts as a means of recreating the older and simpler culture, but Collier readily saw that except for a very few tribes, that way of life was ended. The main drive of his policy, which included often extensive modernization of reservation life, was to recreate the mental outlook and the social order which he regarded as "Indian" and to revive Indian religion. A modernized primitivism, fully in line with modern research, but with a social communalism and, for religion, a sophisticated animism, seems to be his American dream.

Although commendable technical advance was made during Collier's tenure, welfare government was more deeply rooted into the reservation system. The effect of this, Senator Hugh Butler has charged, has been to make the Indian increasingly dependent on the government and "during the past fifteen years fewer Indians have escaped from the Indian

Bureau into citizenship than have done so during any period of like length during the past hundred years.”

The fault, however, cannot be charged entirely to the Indian Service, since Congress has consistently approved its appropriations and, therewith, its policies. The superintendent of any reservation has his hands tied by administration policy, Congress, terms of antiquated treaties, and by Indian apathy. Nevertheless, a sizeable share of blame must rest with the Indian Service, which increasingly reveals in appalling nakedness its central aim of self-perpetuation. It would be instructive to analyze Indian Services expenditures for maintenance of the Service and its personnel (apart from salaries) as against actual money spent on reservation development.

That the Office of Indian Affairs is primarily concerned with its self-perpetuation seems inescapable in view of recent developments. As a result of the Republican congressional victory of a few years ago, an economy move was launched and the Indian Service was asked to analyze its work and results. Accordingly, the Indian Service, in February 1947, reported to Congress through William Zimmerman Jr., Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Indian Affairs. The report, prepared by the Indian Service itself after long tribal discussions, regional meetings, and administrative analysis, declared that the cost of the Service could be reduced and the number of Indians entitled to its benefits curtailed.

Zimmerman reported that Indian tribes had been divided into three groups. The first group listed ten tribes, about 60,000 Indians, ready for immediate release from all control and wardship. The second listed nineteen groups ready to function with a very limited amount of Federal supervision or none at all within ten years. The third group included tribes deemed unready for freedom for a period longer than ten years. Here, ostensibly, based on joint Indian and Indian Service planning, was a true picture of reservation development.

But this congressional economy move perished with the returns of the 1948 presidential election, and the Indian

Service then began reciting another story, heavily emphasizing poor and needy Indians, starving Navajo babies, and untouched Indians who desperately needed the helping hand of the Indian Service. In October, 1949, Senator Hugh Butler called attention to the fact that the Indian Service was now asking for millions of dollars for the "rehabilitation" of some of the very tribes which two years ago were supposedly ready for freedom. More than that, as Senator George Malone observed, some of its planning included the revival of a long defunct reservation and provisions designed to perpetuate the Indian Service's existence to the end of the century.

Government plans for the release of Indians have, moreover, a habit of requiring more funds and more services than already exist and, like Russia's Five Year Plans, seem to lead only into further planning instead of freedom.

The important question then remains: are the Indians ready for freedom? The answer in most cases, unfortunately, is an obvious "no." The withdrawal of freedom through the reservation system is no more the preparation for freedom than totalitarianism is the stepping stone to a republic.

No more telling example of this can be cited than the story of a Nevada reservation which recently attracted extensive attention in the Western press. The reservation, with a far better than average rating, is bordered by a small mining town of 140 men, women, and children, plus five bars and a package store, the business volume of some of these establishments being, according to a liquor salesman, equal to that of the state's major hotel bars. The County Grand Jury charged that a systematic depredation of Indian money and property through the use of liquor was in process and also returned an indictment alleging that the Indians had been subjected to false fines by the constable.

The Indian Service's extension agent gave a careful statistical report showing that 150 of the 200 Indian families were being pauperized; cattle, horse bridles, saddles, watches, and personal property were being steadily removed at incredibly low estimates in payment for liquor. Three deaths due to liquor

were reported in the month preceding the report. It would seem that to release these Indians today would mean that local bartenders would soon possess most of the reservation.

Here, apparently, is strong evidence of Indian incompetence and the need for federal protection. Yet no such conclusion should be drawn without examining the remaining fifty families, of which twenty showed marked progress. In two of those families, both husband and wife are college trained; but in the majority, schooling is at a minimum and some cannot read or write, so that education is not the criterion. No intellectual superiority is involved; some of the most brilliant men are alcoholics. There is a high incidence of church training or membership among these families, which establishes Christian faith as a major factor, and in each case personal initiative and character has been the decisive element. The Indian Service cannot claim the responsibility for the progress of these families, who actually rely least of all on the government.

The government has a responsibility, however, for the 150 families who are most dependent on it. The Indian Service loans are highly touted as demonstrating the Indian's reliability as a credit risk, and the figures seem to bear out this contention. But the actual facts belie it. The loan, made where a private concern would generally not regard the risk as feasible, and with neither Indian nor agency officials using a banker's criterion, is often paid simply because the government handles the Indian's funds and deducts the payment; or, if the Indian handles his money, he knows that the one debt he must respect in order to survive is the government loan. One Indian, for example, who lost most of his stock to bootleggers during a recent winter, secured a loan in the spring, had the extension agent purchase cattle with it, turned the new stock onto the reservation range where, without any work on his part during the summer other than the usual haying, they fattened up sufficiently during the summer to return him a tidy profit in the fall.

The security and lack of competitive consequences thus made this Indian—who, while working off the reservation for

some years, maintained his competitive equality and sobriety—a ready victim of the bootleggers. His land, home, and basic security were guaranteed, so he could live and act with some freedom from the cause and effect which doomed any white man who attempted to do likewise. The effect on character is obvious. Even reservation federal jobs are protected from white competition in many cases, ensuring a low caliber of work because Indians know that no one else can be hired. In civil service positions, an Indian is generally accorded a preference and, if he is a veteran as well, the competitive element is further reduced. To this situation, the majority of Indians have adapted themselves with well known results.

As missionary R. J. Rushdoony observed recently, “The results would be no better for the best hundred or thousand persons selected from any society, after a generation or so of the same kind of ‘welfare’ and ‘security’ government.”

If the Indians are not ready for freedom, and more federal protection will not prepare them for it, what is the solution?

The first step would be to open up each reservation internally to Indian competition, giving Indians title to land and the right to sell to other Indians. The Indian Service should have no right to handle these land sales because in areas of allotment it has refused to sell, instead following a policy of control and repeated division of proceeds from use among an ever-increasing number of heirs until an impossible situation results. Many competent Indians today are restricted to a few acres and limited progress while their indolent neighbors are assured of protection in their incompetency. Once competitive ability has been established on the reservation level, the Indian will be able to compete with the rest of the nation.

Where tribal choice or treaties do not permit such private ownership of land, the tribe, by the withdrawal of government help, must be prepared as a group to compete economically with white society. There do exist such communities in the nation today, such as Truchas, of New Mexico, where a Spanish land grant to the community has legal recognition in American law.

To do this necessitates overhauling Indian Service policy. At present, the government is ready to do the most for those who do the least for themselves. A healthy exception to this is the Soil Conservation Unit of the Indian Service, which refuses to do anything except to give expert advice and only when requested. An Indian gets personal guidance only when he signs a contract agreeing to do the necessary work. Where tribal land is involved, the Unit will do nothing unless the tribe agrees to provide at least fifty percent of the expense involved.

Unfortunately, despite the valiant attempts of many officials, most government practice runs contrary to this. No service—health, education, irrigation, or roads—should be granted to any reservation without at least a nominal tax to give the Indian a share of the burden. Some taxes do exist in many areas, an excellent development for which the service deserves commendation, but a basic policy is necessary requiring it in every department in terms of a steady plan of development. These taxes should not be paid out of “Indian funds” appropriated by Congress, but from the private incomes of the persons involved. Any plan of release should have a strict and limited time span. The best cure for any kind of slavery, after all, is nothing more or less than freedom.

Finally, any complaining Indian should be firmly told, “Your old song that the white man stole the land from you is out of date. We are giving it back to you with more privileges, more opportunity, and more freedom than your ancestors enjoyed. But in order to hold any of these, you will have to work and compete for them even as your forefathers did before they ever saw us. Our best payment of our debt to you is not the money that some of you hanker for, but the full freedom of American citizenship; nothing will give you more returns. We are offering you the status of a man.”

In no other way can the ancient wrongs be righted, and we have no right to withhold from the Indian that for which silent millions of the world hunger.



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## The Author

**Rousas John Rushdoony** (1916-2001) was a well-known American scholar, writer, and author of over thirty books. He held B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of California and received his theological training at the Pacific School of Religion. An ordained minister, he worked as a missionary among Paiute and Shoshone Indians as well as a pastor to two California churches. He founded the Chalcedon Foundation, an educational organization devoted to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctively Christian scholarship to the world at large. His writing in the *Chalcedon Report* and his numerous books spawned a generation of believers active in reconstructing the world to the glory of Jesus Christ. Until his death, he resided in Vallecito, California, where he engaged in research, lecturing, and assisting others in developing programs to put the Christian Faith into action.

## **The Ministry of Chalcedon**

CHALCEDON (kal-SEE-don) is a Christian educational organization devoted exclusively to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctively Christian scholarship to the world at large. It makes available a variety of services and programs, all geared to the needs of interested ministers, scholars, and laymen who understand the propositions that Jesus Christ speaks to the mind as well as the heart, and that His claims extend beyond the narrow confines of the various institutional churches. We exist in order to support the efforts of all orthodox denominations and churches. Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), which produced the crucial Christological definition: "Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man...." This formula directly challenges every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, school, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative: Christ alone can announce that, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Historically, the Chalcedonian creed is therefore the foundation of Western liberty, for it sets limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the One who is the source of true human freedom (Galatians 5:1). The Chalcedon Foundation publishes books under its own name and that of Ross House Books. It produces a magazine, *Faith for All of Life*, and a newsletter, *The Chalcedon Report*, both bimonthly. All gifts to Chalcedon are tax deductible. For complimentary trial subscriptions, or information on other book titles, please contact:

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