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Samson Occom and the Christian Indians of New England. By W. DeLoss Love. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000. \$49.95 cloth; \$17.95 paper.

The Syracuse University Press is to be commended for producing an inexpensive paperback edition of W. DeLoss Love's long out-of-print work, *Samson Occom and the Christian Indians of New England*. Love's book is the only full-length biography of this important Mohegan leader.

First published in 1899, Love's book is both more and less than its title suggests. Essentially a study of the Brothertown Indians, who ultimately ended up in Wisconsin, Love argued that they, "alone of all the scattered nations, which our forefathers were wont to term 'the lost tribes of Israel,' can trace their ancestry back to the days of the founders of this Republic." Influenced by "the saintly John Eliot," the Brothertown Indians were also "the descendants of Wheelock's Indian Charity School" and, most importantly, "the spiritual children of Samson Occom" (p. 323).

Love traced the history of Puritan attempts to spread Christianity throughout New England, Occom's developing relationship with Eleazar Wheelock and other Anglo-American promoters of Indian missions, his conversion to Christianity, and his subsequent career as Indian preacher and community leader. From New England to Oneida, Stockbridge, and later Wisconsin, Love chronicled Occom's efforts to establish a viable Christian Indian community. Love, at times in the most uncritical fashion, described the challenges Occom faced in ministering to his Indian neighbors and avoiding the many pitfalls offered by a surrounding white population, often unsympathetic to Indians, Christian or not. The extensive excerpts from Occom's own writings amply document the many obstacles facing the leader of a Christian Indian congregation.

Yet Love, his readers must remember, never questioned the fundamental assumptions of the American Indian policy of his time, and believed firmly that carrying the light and truth of the gospel to Native peoples was part of God's manifest design. Occom was considered an admirable Indian because he played along. Love's writing fully reflected the ethnocentrism that characterized the writing of his generation. Indian agency consistently is diminished in Love's story; Indians react, or are acted upon, while the motivation for their actions are seldom explored in any detail. Occom's conversion to Christianity during the Great Awakening, for instance, is attributed solely to the ministerial work of Eleazar Wheelock. Love never explored the possibility that Occom and other Native peoples had reasons of their own for converting. Although Love tells us what Occom did, he seldom conveys to us how Occom felt, and why he did what he did. Love thus avoided entirely the tangled questions of identity raised by Occom's career.

Despite these problems, this is a valuable volume that will strengthen the collection of any library that chooses to purchase it. The fine introduction written by Margaret Connell Szasz will help readers cut their way through Love's biases and give them a good sense of the context in which he wrote. The insights Connell Szasz contributes from her own work on Occom nicely supplement Love's century-old findings. Furthermore, Love, despite the many shortcomings

of his work, included in his text copious excerpts from the writings of Oocom and his contemporaries. These documents, not easily accessible outside New England, are of tremendous value to readers interested in the history of Christian Indians in the northeast. Love's work, clearly a product of its time, was nonetheless thoroughly researched, and many students of Native American history will benefit by having this old, but important, work close at hand.

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Spirit Wars: Native North American Religions in the Age of Nation Building.

By Ronald Niezen. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. 256 pages. \$45.00 cloth; \$17.95 paper.

Usually, general surveys of American Indian religious traditions turn out to be elaborate descriptions of rituals, beliefs, and practices set in a timeless, unchanging past. Ruth Underhill's *Red Man's Religion* (1965) and Ake Hultkrantz's *The Religions of the American Indians* (1967) are two of the most famous examples of such scholarship. *Spirit Wars*, on the other hand, represents a newer scholarly trend that radically departs from this static model in favor of an approach that addresses how social and historical events affect and change religious traditions. Written by Ronald Niezen, a research scholar from the History Department at the University of Winnipeg who has done most of his field research among the Cree and Anishinaabe communities of Canada, *Spirit Wars* focuses on the impact that colonization has had—and continues to have—on the religious practices of the Native peoples of North America.

The central thesis of *Spirit Wars* argues that the cultural genocide experienced by Native North Americans is directly responsible for the “self-destruction of native communities through addiction, violence, and suicide” (p. 3). In other words, according to Niezen, the origin of many problems plaguing American Indian nations may be found in the extreme disruption of their spiritual practices at the hands of colonial powers. In an effort to provide data to support this argument, Niezen analyzes how different colonial forces negatively impacted Native religions in particular, and the quality of Native life in general. Beginning with the earliest contacts, *Spirit Wars* follows the dynamic interaction between Native religions and colonization up to the present. In this way, Niezen effectively demonstrates that the process of cultural colonization does not belong to the past, but continues to today.

For the sake of simplicity, *Spirit Wars* is organized around seven major topics: the role of epidemics; missionary efforts and conquest during the early contact period; the experience of boarding schools' the conflict between Native and Euro-American medical practices; the political and legal repression of Indian religions; the abuse perpetrated by museums, collectors, and early ethnologists; and the recent controversy surrounding the appropriation of Indian spiritual practices by the New Age movement. The book is also supplemented by six short essays by authors who provide additional information on specific case studies.