The Indian Shaker Church: Colonialism, Continuity, and Resistance, 1882-1920

by

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ABSTRACT

The existing literature on the Indian Shaker Church emphasizes how features of colonial contact between Euro-American resettlers and Indigenous peoples in late-nineteenth-century southern Puget Sound, such as epidemic diseases, demographic changes and intense missionization, created a crisis of faith in Indigenous peoples’ belief systems. In these explanations, the emergence of the Indian Shaker Church is conceived of as a moment where Indigenous people “turned” to Christianity after having lost faith in the validity and efficacy of their own spiritual beliefs, supposedly rendered meaningless by colonial incursion and rapid cultural change. This paper argues instead that these same features of colonial contact in late-nineteenth-century southern Puget Sound, especially the presence of epidemic diseases, actually affirmed Indigenous peoples’ spiritual beliefs. It further argues that one product of this affirmation was the Indian Shaker Church. The Shakers adopted Christian-in-origin practices, concepts and elements of material culture and turned them into spiritual resources in a fight against epidemic diseases, which they believed were a spiritual problem. At the same time as these Christian-in-origin elements in the Shaker Church became spiritual resources in a fight against epidemic diseases, they also expressed longstanding Coast Salish spiritual beliefs. The way in which the Indian Shakers expressed their longstanding spiritual beliefs through the very concepts of the colonizer was an effective means of resistance to a campaign of religious persecution by American missionaries, Indian agents and lawmakers, who sought to stamp out the Shakers altogether. This paper draws attention to how the incorporation of Christian-in-origin elements into the spiritual practices of Indigenous people has consistently been made into a “conversion” moment by contemporary observers and historians of Indigenous Christianities, in which the “old” spiritual customs are replaced in favour of the new (in some degree). The ways in which the Shakers selectively adopted Christian-in-origin elements into their practice and recontextualized them as spiritual resources and expressions of Coast Salish spiritual customs calls into question the historically-rooted assumption that the presence of Christian-in-origin elements in Indigenous peoples’ spiritual practices can be read simply as evidence of a “conversion moment,” in which Indigenous spiritual customs are replaced by Christian ones.
PREFACE

This thesis is an original intellectual product of the author, E. Wright. The fieldwork reported in Chapter 2 was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H12-03522.
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Introduction

The story of the Indian Shaker Church begins with experiences of John and Mary Slocum, two middle-aged sahíwəbš (pronounced Sa-hey-wamish) Indigenous people who lived in southern Puget Sound in the late nineteenth century.¹ John and Mary lived on the shores of the Big Skookum (known today as Hammersley Inlet) near the upstart American town of Shelton, Washington. John made a living logging, which had become a very prominent economic activity in the region by this time.² By the 1890s, he had acquired enough capital from logging to hire a gang of men to build a logging skid road on land claimed by David Shelton, one of Shelton’s “founding fathers.”³ Like many Indigenous people living in Washington State in the late nineteenth century, John sought to make a living within the new capitalist economic system, in which labour and nature had become commodities to be exploited, bought and sold. His efforts at earning a living within this new economic system appear to have met with some success.⁴ However, it was not for his economic success that John would achieve notoriety.

One late fall day in 1882, John had a spiritual experience that would be the first in a series of events leading to the founding of the Indian Shaker Church.⁵ While lying ill in his house on the shores of Big Skookum John left his body, travelled to heaven and came face to face with God. He was instructed by God to tell the Indian people to stop drinking alcohol, 

¹ I have used the Lushootseed word sahíwəbš to refer to the Sahewamish Indigenous community. See
² Weekly Puget Sound Courier, May 26, 1882.
³ Mason County Journal, June 3, 1887.
⁴ When Shakers speak of John Slocum they almost invariably mention that he was well off financially. Mrs. Sammie Joseph, a Shaker from Vancouver Island told a researcher that “he was very wealthy – had lots of cattles, stock of all kinds.” Alfred George, another Shaker from southern Vancouver Island called him “well to do.” See Mrs. Sammie Joseph (Shaker), interview by Ian Currie, 1958, Interviews with Shakers, p. 58, Ian Currie Collection, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington. Alfred George, Interviews with Shakers, p.95.
⁵ What follows is the origin story of the Indian Shaker Church as members of the church tell it. The Shakers and many other people believe this story to be true, which makes it true in the world independent of whether one believes that the events took place exactly as described in an absolute material sense.
using tobacco and gambling. In addition, he was to tell the Indian people that they should believe in him if they wished to go to heaven. God allowed John to return to earth on the condition that he preach his instructions, and he wisely assented to this bargain. Surprising his relatives, who had already sent for a coffin in the nearby town of Olympia, John came back to life and immediately began preaching the instructions he had received from God. A few followers helped him erect a small building where he began preaching and making prophecies, some of which foretold the coming end of the world.

Following his spiritual experience, John Slocum failed to practice what he preached and quickly “backslid” (as Shakers say) into a life of gambling, drinking, and using tobacco. Interest in his message on the part of followers waned. Around a year after John’s first spiritual experience he once again fell ill. Old Slocum (John’s father) called in an Indian prophet.

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6 Prophetic movements and visionary experiences like those of John Slocum were not an unusual occurrence in the Pacific Northwest in the nineteenth century. In the 1840s, an Indigenous man named Skalb’xal gained a significant following in the Fraser Valley, a few hundred miles north of where John Slocum would have his first vision in 1882. Skalb’xal had a vision in which three men made him kneel, make the sign of the cross and worship God. He preached rules of moral conduct and foretold the coming of whites and their technology (see Wayne Suttles, “The Plateau Prophet Dance among the Coast Salish,” Southwest Journal of Anthropology, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Winter, 1957), 362). Another well-known Christian-influenced prophet in the region was Smolhalla of the Columbia Plateau. In the 1860s, Smolhalla prophesied that a terrible convulsion would destroy the earth in the near future. He urged his followers to live morally correct lives to prepare for the calamity, which would wipe away the whites from their country (see Leslie Spier, The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and its Derivatives: The Source of the Ghost Dance (New York: AMS Press, 1935), 40-49.). Visionary experience and prophecy that resulted from colonial contact were not unique to North America. The Indigenous prophets and visionaries Birsa Munda (1875-1900) of India and Te Kooti (1832-1893) of New Zealand are testament to the ways in which prophecy and visionary experience were global features of contact between Europeans and Indigenous people in colonial arenas (see Kumar Suresh Singh, Birsa Munda and His Movement 1874-1901: A Study of a Millenarian Movement in Chotanagpur (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) and Judith Binney, Redemption songs: a life of Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995)).

7 The content of John’s prophecies varies from account to account, with some Shakers making no mention of prophecies at all. Annie James, Mary Slocum’s sister in law claimed, “John gave many prophecies. He told of airplanes and autos when the world would be coming to an end. He said some day there would be worms in the fruit all over the country.” See Annie James, “A Record of the Early Indian Shaker Faith and Work,” n.d.; Indian Shaker Church of Washington Records; box 1; file 9; Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, Washington. Harris Teo, who became bishop of the church in 1974 verified in an interview with Dr. Robert Ruby that Annie James was Mary Slocum’s sister in law. See Harris Teo, interview by Dr. Robert Ruby, 1990, Dr Robert H. Ruby M.D. Collection, Northwest Museum of Art & Culture (Eastern Washington State Historical Society), Spokane, Washington.
doctor to work over him in a desperate attempt to save his life yet again.\(^8\) This was in spite of John and his wife Mary's wish that Indian doctors be prohibited from trying to cure him. Incensed by the presence of the Indian doctor who she believed was responsible for causing John's sickness, Mary left the house and went down by shores of the Big Skookum. Here, she began to tremble and came running back to the house. She immediately ordered the people in the room (mostly John's family) to light candles and ring bells. She made the sign of the cross all while shaking her body and dancing. John “began to bleed from his nose shooting like a faucet clear across the room” as Mary revived him to a state of full health with her trembling, singing, crossing, dancing and ringing of bells.\(^9\) For the second time in a few years, John Slocum had narrowly escaped death.\(^10\)

News of John Slocum’s second recovery spread quickly throughout southern Puget Sound.\(^11\) Many Indigenous people in the region began practicing a form of religiosity inspired by Mary and John's experiences that would become the Indian Shaker Church.\(^12\)

\(^8\) In ethnographic literature on Coast Salish Indigenous communities, the terms “Indian doctor” and “shaman” refer to religious and medicinal practitioners called dxʷdáʔab in Lushootseed, the language of John Slocum. Dxʷdáʔab in the səhiʔəwə́bə́ (Sahewamish) Indigenous community were paid medical practitioners who cured disease for a fee. The central role of the dxʷdáʔab in the emergence of the Indian Shaker Church will be elaborated on in this essay. For a brief outline of the practice of dxʷdáʔab in Coast Salish communities, see June Collins, Valley of the Spirits (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 144-145.

\(^9\) Annie James, "A Record of the Early Indian Shaker Faith and Work."

\(^10\) There are many different versions of the John and Mary Slocum story. For the purpose of introducing the church, I have tried to synthesize the common points of the story. For other versions in secondary works see Robert Ruby & John Brown, John Slocum and the Indian Shaker Church (Oklahoma City: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), pp. 7-10 and Homer Barnett, Indian Shakers: A Messianic Cult of the Pacific Northwest (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957), pp. 11-45.

\(^11\) Myron Eells, Ten Years of Missionary Work Amongst the Indians at Skokomish, Washington Territory: 1874-1884 (Boston: Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society, 1886), pp. 164-165. Eells was a Congregationalist Christian missionary at the Skokomish Indian Reservation in the late nineteenth century, located only a few miles from where the Shaker Church first emerged on Big Skookum (Hammersley Inlet). Ten Years is one of the most complete accounts of the early development of the Church written from a colonial perspective.

\(^12\) Edwin Chalcraft, who was superintendent of the Puyallup Indian School in southern Puget Sound, claims to have coined the term “Shakers” to refer to those who were inspired by Mary and John’s experiences. According to him, around 1884 he and the Congregationalist missionary Myron Eells at Skokomish consistently began using the term to describe the movement in their correspondence and discussions.
Any attempt to briefly describe the characteristics of the Indian Shaker Church can only ever be partial. This is partly due to its diverse and dynamic nature. It is also due to the ways in which the Shakers adopted Christian concepts, practices and elements of material culture into their practice and used them to express longstanding Coast Salish\textsuperscript{13} spiritual beliefs. A brief description of the Shaker Church, which must include its Christian elements by virtue of their ubiquity in Shaker practice, risks giving the perception that the Shakers simply adopted elements of Christianity, without reinterpreting them in such a way that their meanings became quite different in church practice. In order to stress how the Shakers’ adoption of Christian elements was accompanied by a re-interpretation of their meaning, I have chosen to refer to the Christian elements in Shaker practice as “Christian-in-origin” in this paper. This term allows me to discuss the ways in which the Shakers borrowed from Christianity without the risk of characterizing this borrowing as one in which the meanings of Christian elements remained stable.

The early Shaker movement emerged an amalgamation of beliefs and practices inspired by and at the same time a reflection of John and Mary’s spiritual experiences. Over time, John and Mary’s experiences would come to constitute the established origin story of

\textsuperscript{13} The term “Coast Salish” was created in the nineteenth century by anthropologists and linguists to refer to Indigenous people who lived in southwest B.C. and northwest Washington State who shared similar linguistic traits. Although no Indigenous person prior to the arrival of Europeans would have identified as “Coast Salish” it is still meaningful to talk about Coast Salish culture in a general sense since the people anthropologists and linguists defined as Coast Salish share many cultural traits, including religious and spiritual practices and beliefs. The sahiwabš (Sahe’shaw) Indigenous community to which John Slocum and Mary Thompson belonged is considered part of the southern Coast Salish cultural group. In this paper, when I employ the term Coast Salish I am referring to Indigenous communities resident in southern B.C. (including parts of Vancouver Island) and northwest Washington State defined precisely in The Handbook of North American Indians... as “Southern Coast Salish” and “Central Coast Salish.” See p. ix of the handbook for a precise geographical outline of the communities I refer to in this paper. For a discussion of the creation and usage of the term Coast Salish see Alexandra Harmon, “Coast Salish History,” in Be of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast-Salish edited by Bruce Granville Miller (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 30-54.
the church amongst Shakers. There were a few key characteristics of the faith. The Shakers adopted a strict code of behaviour that stemmed from John Slocum’s first contact with God. Practitioners were to abstain from drinking alcohol, gambling, swearing and smoking or chewing tobacco. The Shakers expressed a mistrust of Indian doctors, who were established medical and spiritual practitioners in Coast Salish communities. This mistrust originated in Mary’s conviction that the Indian doctor employed to heal John during his second bout of illness was actually working to kill him. Shakers also professed a belief in God and Jesus, and held gatherings in churches they constructed in off-reservation locations around southern Puget Sound. These gatherings would often take place on Saturdays or Sundays. They could also occur whenever a member of the community was in need of curing, a practice that was (and still is) central to Shaker church services.

It was the practice of curing in the Shaker Church that seemed most distinctly “unchristian” to American colonial authorities who observed the early church. In this paper, I refer to the practice of curing in the Shaker church as the “curing practice.”¹⁴ The curing practice was inspired by Mary’s healing of John in the origin story of the church. During the curing practice, which takes place inside the church building, a practitioner or group of practitioners simultaneously shake their bodies over people in need of curing who are seated in chairs. Other people in church sing, stamp their feet, ring bells and rotate

¹⁴ In this paper, I have chosen to use the verb “cure” as opposed to “heal” to describe the Shakers’ treatment of sick people in the curing practice. Similarly, I have chosen to discuss sick people as suffering from “diseases” rather than “illnesses.” Medical anthropologists have drawn attention to the ways in which Indigenous medical systems have historically been treated as ethnomedical systems. In this view, medical practitioners are understood as “healing illnesses.” In contrast, western medical systems have been understood as biomedical systems that “cure diseases.” I have chosen to adopt the terminology of western medicine (“curing” and “disease”) when referring to Coast Salish peoples’ medical systems in order to work against the historical placement of Indigenous forms of medical knowledge in a lower position than western medicine through their treatment as ethnomedicines. For further reading see Mark Ebert, “Toward a Better Understanding of Medical Systems and Practices: The Coast Salish Sbaltsadaq Ceremony and Biomedicine,” (master’s thesis, University of Alberta, 2001).
counter-clockwise around the people seated in the chairs and those curing them. Those performing the curing run their hands or brass bells over the sick person. At intervals, they might clap their hands, ring bells and wave candles around the person they are curing. Sometimes, they appear to be removing something from the body of the person being cured, which when removed is cast towards the church altar, consisting of a simple white table on which a large white cross, bells and lit candles rest. An early colonial witness to the Shaker curing practice at the Puyallup Indian Reservation, field matron Linda Quimby vividly and ethnocentrically described it as “shaking, weird chanting, impassioned prayers, ringing of bells, and circling round and round in rhythmic time.”

In the span of roughly 40 years from 1882, the Indian Shaker Church, as I have briefly described it, diffused from its locus on the Big Skookum throughout a large portion of northwest North America, stretching south to northern California and north to southern British Columbia. The church stretched eastward to the Cascade mountain range, although a few Shaker groups appeared east of the Cascades in Washington State. The church spread through existing inter-group kinship networks, established networks of inter-group trade and patterns of seasonal labour mobility such as hop-picking in southern Puget Sound, which brought together a diverse constellation of Indigenous groups from

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15 This description stems from the few occasions where I participated in a Shaker church gathering. I am grateful to members of the church for allowing me to participate in their gatherings. See the afterword of this essay for further details. For a similar description of the Shaker curing practice see Ian Currie, *Interviews with Shakers* (1958), 15-20. Ian Currie Collection; University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington.


throughout the Pacific Northwest to participate in seasonal piece-work. The spread of the movement was also aided directly by the Shakers’ licensing of missionaries whose goal it was to spread the faith. As the church became established and spread throughout the Pacific Northwest, practitioners faced a sustained campaign of religious persecution undertaken by American missionaries, Indian agents and lawmakers who sought to completely stamp out the nascent religion due to their perception that it masked the continuation of unacceptable forms of Indigenous spirituality.

**Indigenous Christianities and the Study of the Indian Shaker Church**

Nineteenth-century Christian missionaries’ systems of thought about religions and identity have shaped the ways in which scholars have approached and studied Indigenous spiritual traditions that have incorporated Christian-in-origin elements into their practice like the Indian Shaker Church. These are commonly referred to as “Indigenous Christianities” in scholarly works. Nineteenth century Christian missionaries believed that human spiritual experience could be neatly defined in two clearly bounded entities called “religions” conceived of as systems, which were the “harmful” and “untrue” paganism on the one hand and the “redeeming” and “true” Christianity on the other. They assigned

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20 Barnett devotes an entire chapter of his work to the persecution the early Indian Shakers faced at the hands of American colonial missionaries, Indian agents and lawmakers in southern Puget Sound. See Barnett, pp. 86-106. In Canada, an amendment to the Indian Act in 1885 banned the practice of potlatching and what colonial authorities called “Tamanawas” dances. American missionaries and Indian agents often likened the Shakers to “Tamanawas” dances, so it is possible that Canadian authorities saw the church in this same light. However, it is unclear from the historical record whether Canadian missionaries and Indian agents persecuted the Shaker Church to the same extent as their American counterparts. This would be a fruitful area of future study. For a historical treatment on the Potlatch Ban in Canada see Christopher Bracken, *The Potlatch Papers: A Colonial Case History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997).
specific practices, concepts and implements of worship to the bounded religions of “paganism” or “Christianity” (for example, bells and prayer were Christian whereas rattles and wild incantations were “pagan”) and believed that the adoption of any practice, concept or religious implement of one religion inevitably led to a diminution of other religious loyalties in an individual – that is, that “religions” and their assigned practices, concepts and religious implements were mutually exclusive of each other in an individual person.21 Epistemologically speaking, nineteenth-century Christian missionaries observed the presence or non-presence of fixed “Christian” or “pagan” markers on Indigenous bodies as a way to determine the inner religious identity of a “native.” Missionaries assigned individuals to some place along a continuum of identity between “paganism” and “Christianity” based on the extent to which they exhibited either “Christian” or “pagan” markers. Ideally, missionaries envisioned Indigenous people as progressing along this continuum until they reached a “pure” state of Christianity, thus completing the process of transformation from pagans to Christians. Missionaries linked this process of transforming Indigenous peoples from “pagans” into “Christians” to broader transformations in subjective identities. According to missionaries, by becoming Christians (at the cost of giving up their “paganism”), Indigenous people also became civilized in their modes of living as well as citizens of the nation-state (at the cost of their “barbarity” and “Indianness” respectively).22

Although missionaries who sought to transform “pagans” into “Christians” idealized a visible conversion moment where the native would suddenly renounce their pagan and wrong religion and adopt in full the traits of the true religion of Christianity, they nonetheless had to contend with the reality that often people adopted only select features of Christianity while apparently retaining some of their old and “harmful” spiritual practices. Missionaries viewed these individuals whose spiritual practice lay somewhere on a continuum between “pagan” and “Christian” as practicing “mixed” religions, and often dismissed them as disordered, confused, or expressing the of lowest common spiritual denominator in an effort to keep people moving along the continuum towards “pure” Christianity. At best, missionaries sometimes made an uneasy truce with these “mixed” religious expressions by optimistically thinking of them as positive “steps” on the road towards the adoption of a “true” form of Christianity (always fearful that what was a “step” in a process of transformation might become a permanent state of impure religion).

The persistence of the nineteenth century missionary belief that the adoption of Christianity by Indigenous peoples is inherently synonymous with a loss of subjective indigeneity has led to a lack of scholarship on Indigenous Christianities because of the ways in which this system of thought has made it unthinkable to conceive of Indigenous Christianities as authentically Indigenous. Scholars working within an ideology of “salvaging” authentic Indigenous cultures in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries paid scant attention to native Christians because they believed that the adoption of Christianity

26 Ibid., 8.
by native peoples forfeited their claim to an authentic indigeneity, thus making them unworthy of academic study.\(^{27}\) When Indigenous Christianities have not been ignored due to the perception amongst scholars that they are not authentically Indigenous, they have often been understood simplistically as cases of “acculturation”, a term invented by anthropologists in the twentieth century as a way to give scientific credibility to what Christian missionaries, Indian agents and lawmakers in Canada and the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries called “assimilation.”\(^{28}\) Scholars who viewed Christian practices amongst native people as indicative of processes of acculturation simply reproduced nineteenth century missionaries’ belief that any adoption of Christian elements on behalf of Indigenous peoples was a case of becoming less subjectively “Indian.”\(^{29}\) They also rendered it unthinkable that the adoption of Christian forms of spirituality by colonized peoples could ever constitute an act of resistance to colonial domination.\(^{30}\) Instead, Christian traits observed in Indigenous peoples’ spiritual practice were only and always indicators of subjective changes in identity towards becoming fully Christian, and by extension, civilized citizens of the nation-state.

A parallel approach to studying Indigenous Christianities has been to understand them as mixes of Indigenous and Christian spiritual traditions, called “syncretic” religions in the literature.\(^{31}\) This approach has sought to remove the idea of a “mixed” religion from


\(^{28}\) Anthropologists who studied Indigenous societies in the twentieth century in the United States believed they could scientifically quantify the degree to which Indigenous peoples had become acculturated through administering Rorschach Inkblot tests. See McNally, Ojibwe Singers, 7.

\(^{29}\) McNally, “The Practice of Native American Christianity,” 836-837.


\(^{31}\) For a recent example of the syncretic approach to studying Indigenous Christianities see Jim Kiernan “Variation on a Christian theme: the healing synthesis of Zulu Zionism,” in Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: The
its original position in missionary ideology as a temporary stage on a continuum from "paganism" to "Christianity" while at the same elevating the status of "mixed" religions to authentic expressions of spirituality, traditionally granted by missionaries to only their version of Christianity, which they deemed pure and authentic (as opposed to mixed and thus inauthentic). Thinking about Indigenous Christianities as syncretic movements is however problematic because describing a religion as "mixed" inherently reifies the idea that there actually exist "pure" forms of religion in the world, which risks re-instating the hierarchical conception of religions that nineteenth century missionaries used to justify their cultural assault on Indigenous forms of spirituality. More problematically, scholars who describe Indigenous Christianities as syncretic or mixed religions tend to downplay the critical role of colonial power differentials and the suppression of Indigenous customs by missionaries or other colonial authorities in engendering "syncretic" religions. Instead, they explain the emergence of syncretic religions as simply the inevitable result of "cultures" and "religions" interacting in frontier zones. In these explanations, the particular shape syncretic religions take results from coincidental congruencies between the different spiritual systems that come into contact. Indigenous Christianities are cast as resulting from a bland, apolitical process of cultural and religious borrowing.

In the post-colonial era, scholars of Indigenous Christianity have become more attentive to processes of domination and power and almost universally critical of official state policies of Indigenous assimilation in settler states like Canada and the United States.

Despite this new critical political stance and attentiveness to power, the lingering assumptions of missionaries have still informed scholars of Indigenous Christianity working in the post-colonial tradition by leading them to conclude in many cases that Indigenous Christianities were nonetheless evidence of the success of assimilation policies.\(^\text{34}\) Rather than describing Indigenous Christians as “acculturated”, they now critically viewed them as evidence of the “colonization of consciousness” and fixated on the role of colonial discourse in creating “internalized racism” or “cultural inferiority” complexes.\(^\text{35}\) Ironically, by uncritically employing the nineteenth century missionary assumption that outward signs on Indigenous bodies (in the case of these scholars, mostly discursive utterances by Indigenous peoples) could be read in their original fixed sense as evidence of internal transformations in identity, these scholars sometimes further performed an act of assimilation upon Indigenous Christians, in spite of their critical stance towards the process of assimilation against which they positioned themselves.

Historians and anthropologists who have studied the Indian Shaker Church have almost universally understood it as either a case of Indian acculturation or else described it as a syncretic religion. Acculturationist approaches have re-produced the notion that because the church exhibits many Christian-in-origin practices, it represents a “step away” from being Indian, thus characterizing the Indian Shaker Church as something less than authentically Indigenous. At the same time, this approach has foreclosed the possibility


\(^{35}\) The “colonization of consciousness” is a phrase deployed by John and Jean Comaroff’s in *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* to describe the process whereby colonizers impose upon the colonized a “particular way of seeing and being, to colonize their consciousness with the signs and practices, the axioms and aesthetics of an alien culture.” *Comaroff & Comaroff, Ethnography and the Historical Imagination, 1992.*
that the church is an act of cultural resistance to colonial domination.\textsuperscript{36} Meanwhile, syncretistic studies of the church, although detailing in insightful ways how Christian and Coast Salish belief systems have intermingled in the Shaker Church, have not sufficiently historicized the ways in which colonial contact between Americans and Indigenous people shaped the emergence and development of the church.\textsuperscript{37} When the effects of colonial contact have not been ignored in these explanations, they are understood as creating a crisis of faith amongst Indigenous peoples in the efficacy of their spiritual institutions. According to this explanation, intense missionization combined with the demographic and epidemiological ills of resettler\textsuperscript{38} colonialism in late nineteenth century Puget Sound undermined Indigenous peoples’ faith in the efficacy of their own spiritual practices and beliefs. The emergence of the Shaker church was thus a moment where Indigenous people “turned” towards Christianity in some measure as a replacement for their own spiritual traditions, in which they had lost faith.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} Ruby & Brown, \textit{John Slocum and the Indian Shaker Church}, 41. The authors write, “Over the years, the native elements of Shakerism diminished as the Church came under the influence of an increasingly predominant white culture.”


\textsuperscript{38} I have adopted this term from Cole Harris’ \textit{The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change} (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997). It is a more accurate term to describe the arrival of colonial peoples in North America since the continent was already “settled”, that is, inhabited by Indigenous people when people of European origin arrived. The term “settler” performs an erasure of Indigenous people from the continent of North America before the arrival of Europeans thus subtly perpetuating the obvious falsehood that there were no people in North America before the arrival of Europeans.

\textsuperscript{39} Many works on the church contain some variation of what I will call the “cultural crisis” thesis as an explanation for the emergence of the Shakers. For the most dramatic example, see Barnett, \textit{Indian Shakers}, 3-10. See also Amoss, 226; Guilmet, Boyd, Whited & Thompson, “The Legacy of Introduced Disease: The Southern Coast Salish” \textit{American Indian Culture and Research Journal} Vol. 15, no. 4 (1991), 24; Ruby & Brown, 23. A few works on the Indian Shaker Church avoid explaining its emergence as resulting from a crisis in belief about Indigenous forms of spirituality and a corresponding replacement of these beliefs with Christian ones. Alexandra Harmon briefly posits that missionary propaganda may have impacted the Shakers’ rejection
My approach in this essay is to take colonial contact seriously in understanding the emergence of the Shaker Church, which has been generally downplayed in the syncretistic literature on the church. However, by “bringing power back in”, I seek to avoid reproducing what I see as the too simple argument in the literature on the church that features of colonial contact like epidemic diseases, demographic changes and missionary propaganda about Indigenous spirituality, undermined Indigenous peoples’ faith in their own spiritual beliefs, which characterizes the emergence of the Shaker Church as a moment where Indigenous peoples “turned” to Christianity as a replacement for their spiritual beliefs which they perceived as no longer effective and relevant. This approach would risk giving too much agency to power, construing it as an always totalizing and destructive force on Indigenous cultures, as I have argued some postcolonial works on Indigenous Christianities tend to do. This argument, as it has been stated in the syncretistic literature on the Shaker Church, is an unconscious re-production of nineteenth century missionaries’ hopes that Indigenous people would indeed lose faith in their spiritual institutions when confronted with Anglo-American civilization and its superior Christian religion (not to mention the effects of colonialism).

Instead, in this paper I follow the ways in which features of colonial contact in late nineteenth century southern Puget Sound, whether in the form of epidemic diseases, demographic changes or missionary propaganda, were given meanings by Coast Salish people that directly affirmed the validity and efficacy of Indigenous spiritual beliefs. One of of Shamanism, understood not as a disbelief in their powers, but rather a belief that their powers had become pernicious. This sets her explanation apart from the “cultural crisis” thesis, which assumes that colonial impact inherently reduced Indigenous peoples’ belief in their forms of spirituality. See Alexandra Harmon, Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities around Puget Sound (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 128. Susan Neylan also emphasizes that the Shakers’ adoption of Christian-in-origin elements did not replace pre-existing Indigenous spiritual beliefs. See Neylan, Shaking up Christianity, 188-222.
the products of the ways in which colonial contact affirmed Indigenous peoples’ spiritual beliefs was the Indian Shaker Church. The Shakers adopted Christian-in-origin concepts, practices and elements of material culture into their practice and re-interpreted them to express longstanding Coast Salish spiritual beliefs that were at the same time spiritual resources that worked to both protect people from epidemic diseases (conceived of as a spiritual problem) and provide curing for those who were already sick. At the same time, the Shakers’ adoption and re-interpretation of these Christian-in-origin elements was an effective way to resist religious persecution in an environment where all forms of Indigenous spirituality and medical practice were outlawed by colonial authorities. I arrive at this interpretation through contextualizing written sources on the Shaker church such as missionary writings, Indian agents’ reports, court transcripts, demographic data and ethnographic field notes within the extant ethnographic data on Coast Salish communities.

The way in which the Shakers adopted and re-interpreted Christian-in-origin concepts, practices and material culture into their practice and used them to express longstanding Coast Salish spiritual beliefs refutes the notion that Indigenous peoples’ adoption of Christian elements in a colonial context can ever simply be read as a clear instance of assimilation, or its more established academic cousin, acculturation. In precisely the same way, the Shakers’ experience also challenges totalizing theories of power and colonialism, which hold that Indigenous peoples’ engagement with colonial concepts and practices is a “critical moment in the colonizing process.”40 This perspective shares the same underlying assumption of the older assimilationist and acculturationist perspectives: that Christian-in-origin concepts, practices and material implements

40 Comaroff & Comaroff, Ethnography and the Historical Imagination, 246.
observable in Indigenous spiritual practice can be read as outward expressions of transformations to inner Christian (in the sense the missionaries thought of it) subjectivities, respectively expressed in works on Indigenous Christianities as states of “assimilation”, “acculturation” or “colonized consciousness.” All of these approaches to studying the church are too simple because they do not take into account how radically the Shakers re-made Christian-in-origin concepts, practices and elements of material culture (even those expressly created by colonizers as tools of religious transformation) into spiritual resources that addressed pressing communal needs which were at the same time expressions of long-held Coast Salish spiritual beliefs. As James C. Scott writes, dominant discourse is “a plastic idiom or dialect that is capable of carrying an enormous variety of meanings, including those that are subversive of their use as intended by the dominant.”

In order to emphasize how the Shakers’ adoption of Christian-in-origin concepts, practices and elements of material culture was not a case of becoming less “Indian” in any way, I refer to the Shakers as an “Indigenous spiritual tradition incorporating Christian-in-origin elements” rather than a form of “Indigenous Christianity.” This latter term risks implying that the adoption of Christian-in-origin spiritual elements by the Shakers was accompanied in some degree by a loss of subjective indigeneity.

Finally, the Shakers’ engagement with the religious categories and practices of the colonizer did not automatically imply a forfeiting of their own religious categories and concepts. Rather, the Shakers expressed their longstanding spiritual beliefs through the very concepts, practices and discourses of the colonizer by giving them whole new meanings in Shaker practice. At the same time this was an effective mode of resistance in a

hostile political environment that outlawed all forms of Indigenous spirituality. The historian Michael D. McNally calls this the process of both “making do and making meaning.” – that is to say, resisting cultural assault in a politically repressive context through expressing one’s deeply held spiritual beliefs in the discursive forms of the colonizer.42

42 McNally, Ojibwe Singers, 6.
Chapter 1: Indigenous Peoples and Colonialism in Southern Puget Sound

Coast Salish Medical-Spiritual Practitioners and Conceptions of Disease

Coast Salish peoples living in southern Puget Sound where the Shaker movement emerged in the late nineteenth century believed that an essential element of becoming fully human and achieving any measure of earthly success depended upon the ability of an individual to establish and maintain a relationship with a spirit-power.\(^{43}\) These spirit-powers were animalistic in form, or sometimes part animal/part human. Each one bestowed particular talents and skills upon an individual who first contacted a spirit-power in the early part of their life. Young men and women established relationships with spirit-powers during vision quests, venturing away from established village sites to isolated locations where it was common knowledge spirit-powers dwelled. Here, they would undertake rituals of bodily purity such as abstaining from sex, fasting from food, bathing the body to make it clean and purging the body through vomiting. This was all in the aim of attracting spirit-powers to an individual. After lengthy stays in isolated locations accompanied by these rituals of bodily purity, individuals were contacted by their spirit-power which would appear to them in a vision and teach them a song and a dance. Although many people acquired their spirit-powers during vision quests, they could also be acquired through inheritance from relatives when they died. Spirit-powers could belong to two distinct classes: lay spirits and shamanistic spirits.\(^{44}\)

The majority of people in Coast Salish communities acquired lay spirit-powers, which bestowed ordinary talents and powers to individuals such as skill in war, gambling,

\(^{43}\) Jay Miller, *Lushootseed Culture and the Shamanistic Odyssey: An Anchored Radiance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 152. According to Miller, Indigenous people in southern Puget Sound deemed a person without a spirit-power as "cork floating helplessly in the water."

\(^{44}\) Collins, *Valley of the Spirits*, 190.
hunting or oratory. For example, Badger, Pheasant, Clam or Duck bestowed skill in hunting and fishing.\(^{45}\) Lay spirit powers were thought to dwell at some distance from their human counterparts during all seasons except winter. Each winter, people would renew their compact with the spirit-powers they had established relationships with by performing the song and dance they had learned from their power on their vision quest at the annual winter dances. The act of singing and dancing was the literal return of the spirit-power to the body of the person with whom it had a relationship.

A minority of people in Coast Salish communities established relationships with shamanistic spirit powers through either the practice of vision questing or inheritance from relatives. In Puget Sound Lushootseed, the language of the səhiʔwəbš (Sahewamish) Indigenous community to which John and Mary Slocum belonged, these individuals and their powers are properly referred to as dəxʷdáʔəb (pronounced duh-hw-DAH-uhb\(^{46}\)). Nineteenth century missionaries and Indian agents called those who possessed dəxʷdáʔəb “Indian Doctors” or “Temanhous men” in the local lingua franca Chinook Jargon.\(^{48}\) In the ethnographic literature on Coast Salish communities, these individuals are frequently referred to as “shamans.”\(^{49}\) Unlike lay spirit-powers, dəxʷdáʔəb were conceived of as always surrounding an individual rather than dwelling at some distance throughout most of the year. Some examples include Hawk, Eagle or Mountain Lion. The most powerful dəxʷdáʔəb

\(^{45}\) Miller, Lushootseed Culture and the Shamanic Odyssey, 58.

\(^{46}\) Coll Thrush, e-mail message to author, Dec. 17, 2012.

\(^{47}\) For the purposes of this paper, the terms dəxʷdáʔəb, Indian doctor, Temanhous man, or the Halkomelem language term Shne’em are used interchangeably, although when it has been necessary to employ the term in my argument, I have chosen the Lushootseed term dəxʷdáʔəb because this was the language of the first Shakers, whose beliefs about the powers of the dəxʷdáʔəb would be instrumental to the emergence of the church.

\(^{48}\) See Linda W. Quimby, Report of Puyallup Agency, 1899; Erna Gunther Collection; box 7, folder 4; University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington. For another example see Eells, Notebooks, 395.

\(^{49}\) For a few examples see Collins, Valley of the Spirits, 190 and Suttles, Handbook, 497.
were huge reptilian creatures with antlers that dwelled on talus slopes. Establishing a relationship to these powers bestowed upon a person the ability to cure disease, meaning that dxʷdáʔəb (in the sense of the powers themself and those who acquired them) were spiritual and medical practitioners in Coast Salish communities. For a fee, they could be hired by people to cure disease.

Coast Salish people in southern Puget Sound conceived of disease as cases of soul theft or wandering, a stolen or wandering spirit-power, or the possession of the body by alien or malevolent spirits. Dxʷdáʔəb powers gave an individual the ability to locate and restore lost or stolen souls and spirit-powers, and remove malevolent spirits from the body. This was accomplished through the practices of singing, dancing, the use of rattles and the blowing or sucking of malevolent spirits from the body. All of these practices employed dxʷdáʔəb powers to cure the sick person.

There are two important features about Coast Salish peoples’ belief in the powers of the dxʷdáʔəb that are central to understanding the emergence of the Shaker church. Firstly, although people believed that dxʷdáʔəb powers were incredibly powerful curing agents, they also believed that they could cause disease. Dxʷdáʔəb were sometimes accused of causing disease in people just so they could extract a fee from the same person by curing them. They were also sometimes thought to make people sick out of some

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50 Miller, Lushootseed Culture and the Shamanic Odyssey, 58-59.
51 Dxʷdáʔəb were often paid in money for their curing services in the period after the arrival of colonial peoples and the introduction of a full cash economy (Collins, Valley of the Spirits, 196). Coast Salish people often refer to blankets as another acceptable form of payment for dxʷdáʔəb. See Francis Bob (Shaker), interview by Ian Currie, 1958, Interviews with Shakers, pp. 193-194, Ian Currie Collection, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington.
52 Miller, Lushootseed Culture and the Shamanic Odyssey, 34-35.
minor social slight or utter capriciousness.\textsuperscript{54} Due to the possibility that they could both cure and kill, Coast Salish people held an ambivalent attitude towards dxʷdáʔəb. As Suttles writes, “Shaman’s spirits conferred on the seeker the power to diagnose and cure certain illnesses and also to cause illness and even death. Because a Shaman could do harm as well as good, he might come to be regarded with suspicion and even killed.”\textsuperscript{55} Secondly, Coast Salish people held that the powers of the dxʷdáʔəb themselves could become unruly, overpowering (as it were) their supposed possessor and working by themselves in the world, usually in a harmful fashion.\textsuperscript{56} This was especially the case for dxʷdáʔəb who had inherited their powers as opposed to acquiring them on vision quests. An Indigenous man from northern Puget Sound described the potential unruly nature of inherited dxʷdáʔəb powers by likening them to a dog: “If you’ve got a dog, you’ve got to watch it. It’ll bite. You’ve got to watch, or it’ll bite. If you let it go it’ll go all the time. If the dog’s willing to bite a person one time, he’ll bite the next. That’s the power.”\textsuperscript{57} Inherited spirit powers then, had to be watched over closely by their possessor lest they “bite” one person, which was conceived of as a gateway to further bighting (i.e. killing).

**Epidemic Diseases and Demographic Change**

The peoples Indigenous to southern Puget Sound believed that dxʷdáʔəb powers could be used to either cure or cause disease. They also believed that dxʷdáʔəb powers could become unruly independent of their possessors, especially when those powers were


\textsuperscript{56} Collins, *Valley of the Spirits*, 194.

inherited rather than established during vision quests.\textsuperscript{58} Into this context of belief entered waves of epidemic diseases resulting from direct and indirect contact with colonial peoples beginning in the eighteenth century and continuing throughout the nineteenth century. People in the southern Puget Sound area weathered six smallpox epidemics between the years 1770-1881.\textsuperscript{59} Mortality rates during these epidemics were high, somewhere between 30-74 percent, which had a devastating impact on communities.\textsuperscript{60} When American resettlers arrived permanently in southern Puget Sound beginning in 1845, they introduced whooping cough, dysentery, typhoid, typhus and measles to Indigenous populations.\textsuperscript{61} Towards the end of the nineteenth century, venereal diseases and syphilis became increasingly common in Indigenous communities.\textsuperscript{62}

The immediate years prior to the emergence of the Shaker movement in 1882 were particularly disease-ridden in southern Puget Sound. In 1877, the region suffered a smallpox epidemic.\textsuperscript{63} Again, in Nov. 1881, just one year before John Slocum’s first religious experience, smallpox struck at the Skokomish Indian Reservation, only a few miles from where the Shakers first emerged at Big Skookum. This epidemic was followed by outbreaks of scarlet fever and measles in the winter months.\textsuperscript{64} Although colonial peoples living in the area were affected by these outbreaks, Indigenous peoples were hit particularly hard.\textsuperscript{65} Historical epidemiologists estimate that between the years 1856-1885, the population of southern Coast Salish communities, out of which the Shaker Church

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item Synder, \textit{Skagit Society}, 415.
\item Guilmet, Boyd, Whited & Thompson, “The Legacy of Introduced Disease,” 11, 20.
\item Ibid., 7.
\item Ibid., 15.
\item Ibid., 17,19.
\item Ibid., 20.
\item Myron Eells, \textit{Ten Years}, 120.
\item Barnett, \textit{Indian Shakers}, 343.
\end{thebibliography}
emerged, declined from 4872 to less than 2000.\textsuperscript{66} The late nineteenth century was undoubtedly a time of great physical and social pain for people Indigenous to southern Puget Sound.

At the same time as epidemic diseases ravaged Indigenous communities in southern Puget Sound in the late nineteenth century, the resettler population of the region exploded, largely due to the construction of railways from the east.\textsuperscript{67} Whereas the hazardous overland or sea journey had always restricted the flow of resettlers from the eastern United States, they now arrived en masse in the thousands. In 1860, only roughly 5000 Americans lived around Puget Sound whereas by 1880, the number had swelled to 25,000. In another decade, that number would nearly quadruple.\textsuperscript{68}

The increasing presence of resettlers put stress not only on the ability of Indigenous people to draw material sustenance from the land, but also on their ability to draw spiritual sustenance from it. Established sites where people sought out spirit-powers were sometimes made inaccessible to Indigenous peoples within a new regime of clearly demarcated private property and trespass law. Sometimes, resettlers radically altered locations through farming or other industrial activities to the extent that Indigenous people perceived them as no longer places where spirit-powers dwelled.\textsuperscript{69} When vision quest sites lost their ability to confer spirit-powers, including dxʷdáʔəb powers, Indigenous people in southern Puget Sound compensated by acquiring spirit-powers more and more through the practice of inheritance rather than through vision questing.\textsuperscript{70} Unlike vision

\textsuperscript{66} Guilmet, Boyd, Whited & Thompson, “The Legacy of Introduced Disease,” 17.
\textsuperscript{67} Harmon, Indians in the Making, 103.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 104.
\textsuperscript{69} Coll Thrush, Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 100-101.
\textsuperscript{70} Snyder, Skagit Society, 414.
questing, inheritance did not require a particular geographical location in order to acquire spirit-powers.

Given that Coast Salish people in southern Puget Sound already knew that dxʷdáʔəb powers could cause disease, many of them interpreted the unprecedented scale of disease epidemics in the late nineteenth century, as evidence that dxʷdáʔəb powers had become entirely deadly. In other words, Coast Salish peoples of southern Puget Sound held dxʷdáʔəb responsible for epidemic diseases. This belief was augmented by the increasing inability of people to access sites where spirit-powers dwelled due to the arrival of resettlers in greater numbers, which meant that more and more people acquired dxʷdáʔəb through inheritance from relatives.71 As we have seen, Coast Salish people believed inherited spirit powers were more prone to becoming unruly and harmful than those acquired through the practice of vision questing. Thus, the increasing tendency to acquire spirit-powers through inheritance due to demographic change re-enforced the perception that dxʷdáʔəb powers had become unruly, because Coast Salish people believed inherited powers were more difficult to control.

Just one year prior to John Slocum’s second resurrection, Myron Eells, a Congregationalist Christian missionary at Skokomish, only a few miles from the Big Skookum where John and Mary would have their spiritual experiences, unknowingly captured the widespread belief amongst Indigenous people that dxʷdáʔəb powers were responsible for epidemic diseases. Eells recorded the story of Ellen Gray, an Indigenous woman who had suffered from a lengthy bout of delirium and fever, to which she eventually succumbed. Her family and friends believed she was made sick and killed by an

71 Snyder, Skagit Society, 414.
Indian doctor.\textsuperscript{72} Recording the reaction of Indigenous people at Skokomish to her death, Eells wrote “some of the older uneducated Indians with the most advanced ideas have said lately that they were ready to give up all Indian doctors, and all Tamahnous for the sick: still they would not acknowledge but that there was some spirit in the affair [the death of Ellen Gray], but they said it was a bad spirit, of which devil was ruler, and they wished to have nothing to do with it.”\textsuperscript{73}

Not only did the relations of Ellen Gray blame the Indian doctor for killing her, they also expressed a willingness to “give up” and have “nothing to do with” dxʷdáʔəb powers.\textsuperscript{74} Eells would have wanted to interpret Ellen Gray’s relations’ desire to give up and have nothing to do with dxʷdáʔəb as an expression that they were ready to cast away their old customs in favour of the true religion of Christianity. In reality, her relations were expressing their desire to escape dxʷdáʔəb powers, which they affirmed as of a “bad spirit”, thus confirming their belief that dxʷdáʔəb had become too powerful in a bad way.\textsuperscript{75} Contrary to what Eells wanted, Ellen Gray’s relations’ expressions of discontent with dxʷdáʔəb powers were affirmations in their own belief system, an expression of a general perception at the time that dxʷdáʔəb powers had become unruly killers responsible for the presence of epidemic diseases in Coast Salish communities.

A similar incident at Skokomish around the same time as the death of Ellen Gray suggests that by the 1880s, many Indigenous people in southern Puget Sound had come to believe that dxʷdáʔəb powers were unruly, dangerous and responsible for epidemic diseases. Eells recorded an instance where an Indigenous woman at Skokomish begged

\textsuperscript{72} Eells, Ten Years, 50.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 51.
him to take her “tamahnous rattles” from her. She told him that a “bad spirit” dwelt in them that would harm her friends and family. This woman, who was a practitioner of dxʷdáʔəb, must have been afraid that she had lost control of her powers, fearing that they would soon kill her and her relations by making them sick. She saw Eells possibly as the only spiritual figure powerful enough to control the unruly powers. Of course, Eells interpreted the woman’s desire to give him her rattles as an instance where one was ready to give up their beliefs in the “old religion” and convert to Christianity, which was emphatically not the case. In reality, this woman’s desire to rid of herself of the instruments of dxʷdáʔəb was an affirmation of dxʷdáʔəb powers – which many Coast Salish people now believed had become deadly.

Far from undermining Coast Salish peoples’ medical and spiritual institutions, seemingly uncontrollable disease epidemics in late nineteenth century southern Puget Sound were understood as unruly and deadly dxʷdáʔəb powers beyond the control of their possessors. Disease epidemics and an increasing resettler population (which meant the increasing destruction and inaccessibility of spirit-power sites), two ills of colonial contact, thus resulted in an affirmation of Coast Salish peoples’ spiritual and medical beliefs rather than undermining them in any way. This affirmation was expressed in the form of a spiritual problem, which was that dxʷdáʔəb powers had become entirely deadly and responsible for epidemic diseases. Some Coast Salish people in southern Puget Sound would seek a solution to this problem within their own spiritual system. This solution would be the emergence of the Shakers, in which people would acquire new forms of spirit-

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76 Eells, *Ten Years*, 50-51.
powers that could both protect people from the malicious powers of dxʷdáʔəb and replace their former role of curing disease in communities.

**Christian Missionaries’ Contribution to the Shaker Movement**

![Image of Mission Church at Skokomish Indian Reservation](image)

Figure 1: An undated photograph of the original Mission Church at Skokomish Indian Reservation, where the reverend Myron Eells held services for Indigenous people in Chinook Jargon (the local *lingua franca* of the Pacific Northwest) from 1874 to 1907. Edward S. Meany Collection, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington.

Colonial officials who came into contact with Coast Salish people in southern Puget Sound in the 1870s and 1880s helped create the belief among many Indigenous people that the powers of the dxʷdáʔəb were responsible for disease epidemics. They also introduced Indigenous people to the spiritual figures of God and Jesus, which would eventually be
adopted by the first Shakers as spiritual resources in their fight against dxʷdáʔeb. A key part of the increased drive to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the American polity in the 1870s and 1880s was the outright suppression of Indigenous spiritual and medical practices by missionaries, Indian agents and lawmakers. Particularly galling to them were the practices of the “Indian doctor”, (i.e. the dxʷdáʔeb) which many of them referred to in their writings as the “Tamanous man.” The dxʷdáʔeb, missionaries and Indian agents argued, prevented the transformation of Indian peoples into thrifty, economically industrious and hard-working Americans. As an encumbrance to assimilating the Indians, they had to be eradicated. To this end, in 1871 the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Washington Territory banned the practice of “Indian doctoring.” In 1883, this ban was given further legal weight by the establishment of Courts of Indian Offenses on reservations by the U.S. federal Congress. Under regulation six of the rules promulgated to govern these courts, “Indian doctoring” became a crime punishable by jail time.

When the Congregationalist Christian missionary Myron Eells arrived at the Skokomish Indian Reservation in 1874, geographically the closest reservation to the place where the Shakers first emerged, he sought to complement this legal campaign of religious persecution by telling Indigenous people that the practices of “Indian doctors” were harmful to their health rather than helpful to it. Eells believed that the practices of the

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77 The immediate years following the end of the American Civil War were marked by a renewed drive to remove Indigenous people to reservations where they would be instructed in how to become good Christians, learn how to farm and generally transition into citizens of the U.S. in every respect. This renewed drive to assimilate Indigenous people into the American polity is referred to as the Grant Peace Policy, after the president who instigated this policy direction in the 1870s. See Harmon, Indians in the Making, 107.

78 Linda W. Quimby, Report of Puyallup Agency, 1899, Erna Gunther Collection; Box 7; folder 4; University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington.

79 Charles Buchanan, Annual Report of Tulalip Agency 1914: Section 1 – Law and Order, p. 25; Erna Gunther Collection; Box 7 folder 4; University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington.

80 Eells, Ten Years, 44.

81 Ruby & Brown, 27.

82 Ibid., 20.
doctors could “kill all the good effects of medicine” by which he meant medical treatment by white physicians.\textsuperscript{83} He counselled Indigenous people to cease visiting them and instead seek medical treatment from white doctors. In one such case, an Indigenous man Eells knew personally named Chehalis Jack became sick and consulted an Indian doctor. Eells urged Jack to give up his visits to the doctor, since to him and a few other whites around Skokomish it was evident that he was being “frightened to death” by his practices.\textsuperscript{84} At other times, Eells tried to convince Indigenous people that the practices of the Indian doctor were inefficacious or simply foolish although there is no evidence that any Indigenous person ever believed these claims.\textsuperscript{85}

At the same time as Eells sought to convince Indigenous people at Skokomish that Indian doctors were harmful to their health, he also emphasized the powerful nature of Jesus and God, all in an effort to convert Indigenous people to Christianity. One of the ways in which he emphasized God and Jesus’ power was though the practice of hymn singing. Nineteenth century protestant missionaires believed that hymns were one of the best tools to stir Indigenous minds into accepting Christianity and the habits of civilized and morally “upstanding” lives. Drawing on contemporary educational theory, which held that hymn singing to children was an effective tool of pedagogy, missionaires composed hymns intended to inculcate Christian beliefs and “civilized” habits amongst Indigenous people (whom many believed had child-like mental states).\textsuperscript{86} Eells composed a spate of hymns in

\textsuperscript{83} Eells, \textit{Ten Years}, 118-119.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 46.
\textsuperscript{85} Myron recorded Chehalis Jack’s response to his claim that Indian doctors were inefficacious. Jack exclaimed, “Tamhanous is true! Tamhanous is true. You have told us it is not, but now I have experienced it, and it keeps me sick.” Eells, \textit{Ten years}, 46.
\textsuperscript{86} Mcnally, \textit{Ojibwe Singers}, 38-40.
the Chinook Jargon, one of which entitled “Christ’s power” stressed Jesus’ powerful attributes, including his ability to conquer “death.”

1. Always Jesus is very strong,
   So His paper (the Bible) says, --
   Truly so, --
   So His paper says.
2. Jesus conquered the water.
3. Jesus conquered the wind.
4. Jesus conquered the wickedness.
5. Jesus conquered the Devil.

Other hymns similar to this one extolled the omniscience and power of God, and emphasized Jesus’ power to do good in the world.

Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, many Indigenous people living at the Skokomish reservation and its environs came to know largely through the efforts of Myron Eells, that “Bostons” (as Indigenous people called Americans around the Sound in this period) believed Indian doctors harmed those who went to them looking for cures from disease, although why Bostons believed this to be true was never elaborated upon. In addition, they became acquainted with the figures of Jesus and God, whom the Bostons claimed were incredibly powerful and “Good” spiritual beings. Some people came into contact with these beliefs through their attendance of Myron Eells’ church services at Skokomish. Others would have first encountered them when Myron Eells visited logging camps surrounding

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88 Ibid., 4-5, 30-34.
the reservation in 1875 (recall that John Slocum was a logger). Still others would have heard about these beliefs through word of mouth. A few early members of the soon to emerge Shaker movement had even been in direct contact with Eells in the 1870s and 1880s. John Slocum resided at the Skokomish reservation when Eells first arrived there in 1874, apparently staying for three years after his arrival before decamping to the Big Skookum to take up logging. Another early Shaker, Billy Clams was present on the Skokomish reservation for some time. Both Slocum and Clams attended Eells’ sermons, where they were exposed to his belief that the Indian doctors were harmful and would have learned about the powerful nature of Jesus and God through the practice of hymn singing.

When Indigenous people around southern Puget Sound came into contact with Eells’ and other missionaries’ claims that Indian doctors were harming people rather than helping them, this was of course not radically out of step with their beliefs about the potential harmful nature of dxʷdáʔəb powers. Nor did it contradict the already established belief by this time that unprecedented disease epidemics were the result of unruly dxʷdáʔəb powers turned deadly, augmented by the increasing prevalence of inherited dxʷdáʔəb powers (as opposed to those earned on a vision quest). Vague pronouncements by missionaries and Indian agents about the harmful nature of Indian doctors as practitioners (vague precisely because they were created not as a genuine explanation for disease but rather a simple piece of propaganda in the effort to delegitimize Indigenous institutions and promote conversion to Christianity) only served to confirm longstanding

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89 Eells, Notebooks, 472.
90 Ibid., 433.
91 Eells, Ten Years, 165.
Coast Salish beliefs about the ability of dxʷdáʔəb *powers* to become unruly. Ironically, the missionary and Indian agents’ strategy to delegitimize and undermine dxʷdáʔəb by portraying them as harmful to peoples’ health only contributed to an existing belief that their *powers* had indeed become harmful, affirming Coast Salish medical and spiritual institutions and their explanations for disease rather than undermining them in any way. At the same time, many people around Skokomish who came into contact with Eells, including some of the first Shakers, came to understand that Jesus and God were powerful and unambiguously “good” spiritual beings.
Chapter 2: Continuity and Resistance

The Adoption and Re-interpretation of Christian-in-origin Elements in the Indian Shaker Church

The first Shakers were those Indigenous people around Skokomish who were convinced that the powers of the dxʷdáʔəb had turned deadly and were responsible for unprecedented levels of disease and death in communities. They were also acquainted with the spiritual figures of the Bostons, Jesus and God. The first Shakers sought to escape the deadly powers of the dxʷdáʔəb by adopting the powerful figures of Jesus and God into their practice as spiritual resources. Beyond the purview of missionaries and Indian agents, they transformed Jesus and God into spirit-powers that could provide protection from dxʷdáʔəb powers while also curing diseases inflicted by unruly dxʷdáʔəb. The emergence of the Shaker movement thus constituted a spiritual solution to the untenable situation of unruly dxʷdáʔəb powers, held responsible for epidemic diseases ravaging communities.

The John and Mary Slocum story, which is the origin story of the Indian Shaker church, expresses in literary form the Shakers’ belief that the powers of the Indian doctor had become responsible for epidemic diseases. In every variation of the story, the Indian doctor is blamed for making John sick during his second bout of illness. One early version, told by Mary Slocum’s sister in law Annie James who was present when Mary cured John, held that both of John’s bouts of sickness were caused by the malicious powers of Indian doctors. In her retelling of the story, James cast Slocum as a “very kind man

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92 There are numerous different versions of the John and Mary Slocum story. Most Shakers have some familiarity with the story. For a few examples see Ian Currie, Interviews with Shakers, (1958), pp. 37,58,95,144.
93 Annie James, “A Record of the Early Indian Shaker Faith and Work.”
who made his living by logging willing to help the poor, used no angry words, loved all alike.”

John’s first sickness resulted unambiguously from malicious dxʷdáʔəb powers:

He took sick and they took him to an Indian doctor, and they were still doctoring him when he died. He died during the night with a broken neck from the power and poison used by the Indian doctor.

A year later, when John once again fell ill on the shores of Big Skookum, he begged his wife just before losing consciousness not to let anyone take him to the Indian doctor out of fear that he would be killed. The way in which John Slocum’s near fatal illnesses in the origin story of the church are unambiguously a result of the Indian doctor’s malicious powers expresses the first Shakers’ belief that epidemic diseases were caused by the powers of dxʷdáʔəb.

In insightful testimonies given to anthropologist Ian Currie in the 1950s, a group of first-generation Shakers confirmed their belief that unruly dxʷdáʔəb powers were responsible for epidemic disease in the late nineteenth century. These Shakers from southern Vancouver Island or the Vancouver mainland used the Halkomelem term Shne’em to refer to dxʷdáʔəb. Elwood Modest, former Shaker minister at Cowichan stated that “We had too many of them [Shne’em] – they chewed up too many lives, even right here in the

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94 Annie James, “A Record of the Early Indian Shaker Faith and Work.”
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 In 1958, Ian Currie, a graduate student working for UBC professor of Anthropology Wayne Suttles spent two months conducting extensive interviews with members of the Indian Shaker Church at Musqueam (located just south of the UBC Vancouver campus on the north arm of the Fraser River) and different locations at southern Vancouver Island. The journal he created from this fieldwork (which has already been cited extensively in this paper) entitled Interviews with Shakers contains extensive interviews about the origins of the church and its belief system. Currie recorded interviewees’ responses either in direct quotations or in paraphrased form using a notepad. These notes were later typewritten and collated into an unpublished manuscript. It is important to consider how colonial power dynamics refracted interviewees’ responses in the journals. Interviewees at times express hesitancy to talk to Currie due to bad experiences that resulted from talking to whites in the past. Nonetheless, the pattern in the document is one in which greater trust is established each time Currie visits the Shakers and the interviews become more revealing. It is thus reasonable to say that the interviews contained in the document provide a fairly accurate characterization of the origins and beliefs of the church.
Cowichan Valley. We have none now. That is why the Shakers were formed, to protect people from this.”  

98 Modest alludes to a time prior to the emergence of the Church when Shne’em powers became too numerous and blames them for taking away too many lives in this period. Another Shaker informant, Andrew Michel expressed a similar sentiment: “Shne’ems used to be against everybody – though they have the power of healing, they could hurt too.”  

99 Like Modest, Michel alluded to a time before the Shakers when Shne’ems were “against everybody” and implies that they caused great suffering in this period.  

100 Yet another informant, Alfred Jones spoke about the time at which the Church emerged as one in which Shne’em were “a great menace to Shakers – they [the early Shakers] devoted all their time to preventing Shne’em power from doing them harm.”  

101 These Shakers spoke of a period before the church in which dxʷdáʔəb (Shne’em) powers were responsible for much death in communities. Because being killed by a dxʷdáʔəb in Coast Salish society is literally the process of dying from a disease, these informants’ allusions to a time before the Shakers when the dxʷdáʔəb killed many people expresses a period of epidemic diseases. The attempted murder of John Slocum by malicious dxʷdáʔəb powers in the origin story of the church expressed this belief in an allegorical fashion.

Because the first Shakers believed that the powers of the dxʷdáʔəb had become killers in the form of epidemic diseases, they sought out the power of God and Jesus to protect themselves from dxʷdáʔəb. This was accomplished by re-interpreting God and Jesus as spirit-powers, called henceforth the “Shaker power” (which is how Shakers refer to

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98 Elwood Modest, interview by Ian Currie, 1958, *Interviews with Shakers*, p. 120, Ian Currie Collection, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington.  


100 Ibid.  

the power). God and Jesus are used interchangeably in the church, probably a reflection of the missionaries’ preaching of the unity of God and Jesus as part of the Christian doctrine of the holy trinity.\textsuperscript{102} The Shakers believed the unruly $\text{dxw}'\text{dáʔəb}$ powers made people sick by either possessing their bodies, stealing their souls or stealing their spirit-powers. As it will be recalled, these were the three ways Coast Salish people conceived of disease. In cases where $\text{dxw}'\text{dáʔəb}$ powers attacked bodies, trying to make them sick, the Shakers used the Shaker power to capture and destroy $\text{dxw}'\text{dáʔəb}$ powers that possessed peoples’ bodies. The Shaker power gave practitioners the ability to see $\text{dxw}'\text{dáʔəb}$ powers both inside and outside of peoples’ bodies. It also gave them the ability to restore lost souls or spirit-powers that had been stolen by $\text{dxw}'\text{dáʔəb}$. Each Shaker who had received the Shaker power was believed to have a particular “gift.” The gifts of the Shaker power were giving shake, ringing bells, dancing, singing, carrying a candle, preaching, recovering a soul, and being gifted at healing. In the curing practice, the Shakers worked together as a community by employing each of their particular gifts towards the common goal of curing a sick person.\textsuperscript{103} Given missionaries’ (like Eells) constant messaging about the powerful nature and ultimate Goodness of God and Jesus, it is no surprise that the first Shakers came to reinterpret God and Jesus as powerful spiritual resources that could meet the pressing need of combatting disease in communities in the form of the Shaker power and its distinct gifts for curing. Disease conceived of as a spiritual problem required a spiritual solution,


\textsuperscript{103} This section has been informed by my conversations with the current bishop of the Indian Shaker Church, Leon Strom. One other gift of the Shaker power not directly related to the curing practice was prophecy, which most likely stemmed from John Slocum’s prophesying in the early days. Leon Strom, conversation with author, April 4, 2013.
which was fortuitously presented to the Shakers by colonial people who claimed to know of incredibly powerful and supremely good spiritual figures.

The new Shaker spirit power was qualitatively different than dxʷdáʔəb power in a few key respects. Firstly, it could only be used for curing whereas dxʷdáʔəb power could either cure or kill. Secondly, it was employed communally to cure sick people, whereas the dxʷdáʔəb worked alone. Shakers believed that when they employed their power communally through each of their “gifts”, it was much stronger than dxʷdáʔəb power. Thirdly, the Shakers never charged a fee for curing whereas dxʷdáʔəb always charged regardless of whether the cure was successful or not. Finally, unlike dxʷdáʔəb the Shakers never held on to spirits they removed from sick bodies. Rather, as one Shaker said, they “throw what they get from the sick away, they use only God’s power.”

The particular characteristics the Shakers assigned to the Shaker power reflected the pressing needs of people in southern Puget Sound in the late nineteenth century. In a context of raging epidemic diseases, a power that could only be used to cure rather than cure or inflict disease made perfect sense. From a purely pragmatic perspective, it also made sense to remove any fees associated with curing and transform the practice into one that was communally based. In a context of epidemic diseases, the fees dxʷdáʔəb charged must have become burdensome. Replacing these individual paid practitioners with a voluntary form of labour distributed throughout the community was a rational response to an increased

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105 Modest Interviews with Shakers, 121.
106 Sam Tom, interview by Ian Currie, 1958, Interviews with Shakers, p. 78, Ian Currie Collection, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington.
107 Modest, Interviews with Shakers, 131.
need for curing due to epidemic diseases. Although individuals now gave their labour for free, the burden for curing was shared throughout the community.

The first person to acquire the Shaker power was Mary Slocum when she healed John during his second illness. In Annie James’ version of the story, John was forcibly removed from Mary and taken to the Indian doctor for “curing.” Crying, because she knew that the powers of the dxʷdəʔəb were killing John, she left the house and went down to the shores of the Big Skookum (Hamersley Inlet). Here, in a secluded spot she contacted the Shaker power in a way that Coast Salish people acquired spirit-powers during vision quests. She made contact with Jesus above. Her body began to shake all over and she was carried back to John. She told all present that “she had received a power that was a medicine to heal all the sick if they would believe all in all to Jesus.”

She shook over John and healed him with the power of Jesus. Mary’s curing of John, which would inspire the Shaker curing practice, was the moment at which some Coast Salish people first conceived of Jesus as a spirit-power capable of curing people of disease as well as destroying malicious dxʷdəʔəb powers.

Jesus and God were not the only Christian-in-origin religious concepts that the Shakers adopted and re-interpreted into their practice as spiritual resources. Missionaries like Eells had told people in his sermons at Skokomish to abstain from alcohol, tobacco and gambling in order to become civilized and morally upstanding Christian Americans. The Shakers re-interpreted this admonition as an affirmation of their existing belief that bodily purity was a condition of contacting spirit-powers. They linked abstinence from alcohol,

108 Annie James, “A Record of the Early Indian Shaker Faith and Work.”
109 Myron Eells, “Habit, an address,” 1869; Myron Eells Collection; box 3, folder 30; Whitman College and Northwest Archives, Walla Walla, Washington.
tobacco and gambling to the ability to contact and receive the Shaker power. As was the case with the missionaries’ messaging about the harmful nature of Indian doctors, a message meant to transform the Indians into “civilized” Americans backfired into an affirmation of existing cultural practices. In this case, the Shakers translated exhortations by missionaries to live like upstanding Christians by abstaining from drinking, smoking and gambling into an affirmation of the importance of bodily purity to acquiring spirit-power. Vernon Dan expressed the Shakers’ understanding of why people should abstain from drinking, smoking and gambling: “God does not want us to smoke or drink or gamble or even race, and if we abstain from them, we’re given the power of god to help us in our lives.”

The Shakers’ belief that it was necessary to abstain from drinking, smoking or gambling had everything to do with the ability to acquire the Shaker power and nothing to do with a desire to convert to the mores of “civilized” American life. A Christian-in-origin missionary message was perceived as a spiritual resource, and re-interpreted in such a way that it reinforced extant cultural practices.

When Shakers failed to abstain from alcohol, tobacco or gambling, thus becoming impure and incapable of getting the Shaker power, their fellow members called them backsliders. To missionaries, who employed this term in their work, “backsliding” was the process whereby an Indigenous person reverted to their old pagan and untrue religion, thus moving in reverse (backwards) on the progressive continuum from paganism to Christianity (again, synonymous with the continuums of barbarity/civilization and Indian/citizen). Backsliding described the opposite of the process of subjectively

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transforming Indians into Christians, which missionaries sought to engender in Indigenous peoples. As such, a “backslider” was a derogatory epithet used by missionaries to describe a native person incapable of progressing towards “true Christianity.”

The Shakers removed all of the teleological and derogatory connotations of this missionary-created term and remade it into a simple descriptive term for a member of the church who had drunk alcohol, thus rendering him/her self incapable of contacting the Shaker power. Shakers who “backslid” were not viewed by other Shakers as more “barbaric” or “pagan”: nor were they disparaged or stigmatized for their behaviour. Rather, they had simply failed to abstain from alcohol, and had thus lost the ability to contact the Shaker power. People who backslid were always welcome back to church. Upon returning, they often vomited when they made contact with the Shaker power, since it repulsed the presence of cigarette smoke and alcohol in peoples’ bodies.

The presence of this originally derogatory epithet in Shaker practice could easily be misread as a case of the internalization of missionaries’ negative messaging about Indigenous spirituality in the Shaker Church – a term which Shakers employed to other and distinguish themselves from Indigenous people who still practiced solely Indigenous forms of spirituality. This othering, one might argue, could have been in the aim of gaining favour with colonial missionaries and Indian agents, who would have viewed those employing the term “backsliding” as “good Indians” for their apparent internalization of the colonizers’

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112 Beatrice Black, Interviewed for the Washington Women’s Heritage Project, 1991; Beatrice Pullen Black Papers; acc. # 3416-001-40; University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington. Speaking of a friend’s inability to abstain from alcohol, Black told the interviewer that “she went out drinking, you know and backslid and then they talk her into come back.” From this interview, it is apparent that for Black, backsliding meant nothing more than a failure to abstain from alcohol whereas for missionaries the term carried broader connotations of reversion to previous modes of Indian religion, customs and identity.

values. However, this reading would assume that the original meaning of the verb "to backslide" as the missionaries employed it remained stable in the church, which was emphatically not the case. Within the church, a term created by missionaries to connote an implacable state of savagery became a simple descriptive term for someone who did not abstain from alcohol, and thus could not acquire the Shaker power.

If abstaining from drinking, smoking or gambling were ways in which the body could be made ready to acquire the spirit power of God and Jesus, it was through “prayer” that individuals could both acquire the Shaker power and employ it in curing others. Once again, a Christian-in origin religious concept and practice was re-interpreted to mean something quite different in the context of Shaker practice. Mrs. Sammy Joseph described how fellow Shakers instructed her to get the Shaker power: “They told me that if I were going to stand for Christ, then I must stand up on the floor, close my eyes, hold one hand aloft, and pray.” However, the form this “praying” took was not what missionaries like Eells had in mind when they told people around Skokomish to pray to God. Sammy Joseph’s experience is a case in point: “I stood there with my eyes closed and my arm upraised and I could see the power coming down on me, just like a fog, and when it touched my fingers it felt prickly, like a shock of electricity. Then I began to feel as if I were floating and began to jump and dance around the room. I got a song and sang it and felt wonderful afterwards.” Once again, a practice (prayer) that missionaries had urged Indigenous people to undertake in an effort at conversion had been adopted into Shaker practice, and re-interpreted in a way that made it a conduit for the continuance of longstanding spiritual customs and a spiritual resource in a fight against epidemic diseases. “Prayer” as the

114 Joseph, Interviews with Shakers, 59.
115 Ibid., 42.
Shakers conceived of it simply came to express the practice of contacting God and Jesus reconceptualized as spirit-powers, in the same way people contacted spirit-powers during vision quests. Equally, “prayer” came to be a catch-all term for the practices of curing Shakers employed in church.

In addition to adopting and re-interpreting the meanings of Christian-in-origin concepts and practices, the Shakers also introduced Christian elements of material culture such as crosses, candles and bells into their curing ceremonies. The Shakers discarded the original Christian meanings of these symbols and transformed them into objects of power capable of aiding people in curing the sick as well as capable of destroying any malicious dxʷdáʔəb powers removed from sick bodies. Mrs. Sammy Joseph believed that the Shakers could “take the power of Jesus from the candles, and from the bells too and put it on people. When that’s done, you can feel it. It’s warm.”¹¹⁶ David Charley expressed the same power granting beliefs about the cross when praying (“praying” understood in Shaker terms as trying to receive the Shaker power): “the more you pray in front of the cross, the more power you get.”¹¹⁷ Captured dxʷdáʔəb powers from peoples’ bodies, Shakers believed, could be destroyed by throwing them towards the cross or burning them over the flame of a candle.¹¹⁸

The first Shakers’ adoption and re-interpretation of Christian-in-origin concepts, practices and elements of material culture such as God and Jesus, prayer, backsliding and bells crosses and candles was not at the expense of Indigenous belief systems, concepts or practices. Rather, these adoptions were simply ways in which the Shakers acquired new

¹¹⁶ Joseph, Interviews with Shakers, 44.
¹¹⁷ Charley, Interviews with Shakers, 209.
¹¹⁸ Dan, Interviews with Shakers, 23.
spiritual resources and transformed their meanings to fit the pressing need of combating malicious dxʷdáʔəb powers. The notion that observable Christian-in-origin elements in Shaker practice can be read as evidence of a conversion to true Christianity, or at least a step in a process of conversion in which a new set of spiritual beliefs is adopted at the expense of prior beliefs was created by nineteenth century Christian missionaries. It was in missionaries’ interest to promote the idea that the adoption of some Christian-in-origin religious practices by native people meant an abandonment of their ”old ways”, since their profession depended on the ability to demonstrate the successful transformation of “natives” into “Christians”. Without the very concept of conversion, in which it is inherent that people do truly give up their old beliefs in favour of the new, missionaries would not be able to garner support from donors, let alone find meaning and fulfillment in their work of saving souls. Far from a “conversion moment”, the emergence of the Shakers was simply one where people added Jesus and God to their existing repertoire of spirit-powers and adopted other Christian-in-origin concepts, practices and elements of material culture to aid them in employing those new powers. The addition of God and Jesus did not replace any other pre-existing spirit-powers, even though it sought to counter the malicious dxʷdáʔəb powers.119

The ways in which the Shakers added God and Jesus into their existing spirit-power repertoire was not without historical precedent in Coast Salish communities. As Jay Miller has argued, spirit-powers existed in infinite variety in Coast Salish communities, and innovation on existing forms of spirit powers or the introduction of entirely new ones was

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119 Shakers frequently express that being a member of the church did not prevent one from attending the winter dances, where people renewed their relationship with spirit-powers. This indicates that the emergence of God and Jesus as the Shaker power did not replace established spirit-powers but rather, complemented them. See Interviews with Shakers, 26, 63.
not unprecedented.\textsuperscript{120} Emblematic of this openness was the experience of one Coast Salish man living near the present day town of Abbotsford in the nineteenth century. This man acquired a train locomotive as his spirit power.\textsuperscript{121} Moreover, although most spirit-powers in Coast Salish communities were animalistic in form, there were a few prior to the emergence of the Shakers that were thought of as entirely human.\textsuperscript{122} Thus, the emergence of wholly human in form spirit-powers in the form of God and Jesus was not without precedent in Coast Salish communities.

In sum, when the Shakers adopted Jesus and God into their existing repertoire of spirit-powers, “prayed” to “God” and “Jesus” or “backsld”, and employed bells, crosses and candles in their services, they were working within a longstanding tradition of spiritual openness in Coast Salish communities, in which the spiritual figures, concepts, practices and implements of others were frequently incorporated into existing spiritual practices.\textsuperscript{123} At the same time as this tradition encouraged the adoption of new spirit powers, concepts, practices and implements, it also left room to reinterpret and remake what was adopted to respond to local needs. In other words, there was a degree of fluidity in meanings in Coast Salish communities’ spirituality that would have unnerved nineteenth century colonial missionaries, who abhorred any deviation from the fixed meanings they assigned to religious practices, concepts and objects. Thwarting the efforts of the missionaries to convert them, the Shakers picked and chose the religious concepts that they found useful and re-worked them beyond the purview of colonial authorities into spiritual resources.

\textsuperscript{120} Miller, \textit{Lushootseed Culture and the Shamanic Odyssey}, 57; Susan Neylan has also made this point. See Neylan, “Shaking up Christianity,” 221.
\textsuperscript{121} Miller, \textit{Lushootseed Culture and the Shamanic Odyssey}, 65.
\textsuperscript{122} Collins, \textit{Valley of the Spirits}, 146.
\textsuperscript{123} Neylan, “Shaking up Christianity,” 221.
that responded to the pressing need to combat malicious dxʷdáʔəb powers. It was the way in which the Shakers retained the discursive forms of these practices while at the same time radically altering their meanings in the context of church practice that would allow them to effectively resist religious persecution, while at the same time creating conduits through which they could practice their longstanding spiritual beliefs. In other words, the Shakers' openness to adopting and re-interpreting Christian-in-origin concepts and practices provided a means both to resist religious persecution and a way in which they could maintain cultural integrity and continuity through the expression of longstanding spiritual beliefs in the discursive forms of the colonizer.

**Colonial Persecution and the Double Entendre of Shaker Resistance**

Colonial peoples who observed the emergence of the Shakers in late nineteenth century southern Puget Sound thought about the church in a binary fashion. To them, the Shakers were either a genuine adoption of Christian elements by Indigenous peoples; a “step” towards becoming authentically Christian, or they were simply perpetuating “barbarous” Indigenous customs under a thin and false veil of Christianity. Those in the former camp believed the church should have the right to exist because of its potential to transform “uncivilized Indians” into Christian Americans whereas those in the latter believed it should be suppressed. The majority of missionaries, Indian agents and lawmakers who came into contact with the church around the time of its emergence believed the nascent religion was just the continuation of the old practice of Indian doctoring in the guise of Christianity.

Edwin Eells, the Indian agent at Skokomish during the 1880s, epitomized this colonial opinion of the early Shakers. Observing the emergence of the movement from
Skokomish in 1882, he told his missionary brother Myron that the Christian elements of the Shaker ceremony (such as the use of bells and crosses) were “merely like a thin spreading of butter over something else.”\(^{124}\) This something else, according to Eells, was the practice of Indian doctoring, which he charged and convicted the entire leadership of the church with in 1883.\(^{125}\) Charles Buchanan, Indian agent at Tulalip echoed Eells’ opinion of the church in explicit terms. In a report to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington he wrote that the Shakers were “virtually the old, native tamanamus [dxʷdá?eb] practices which are forbidden by law or regulation and which are therefore perforce conducted under the thinly-veiled guise of quasi Christianity or quasi-Christian religious ceremonial.”\(^{126}\) He vehemently defamed the Shakers in his annual reports: “on the surface they assume an appearance of crude Christianity in order to cover up their real beliefs and practices, which latter are at heart unprogressive, barbarous, and antagonistic.”\(^{127}\) According to Eells, Buchanan, and other missionaries and Indian agents around southern Puget Sound, the Shakers were consciously employing the practices and symbols of Christianity as a way to disguise their continuation of Indian doctoring. To them, the religion was merely a few crosses and bells adorning the “barbaric” practice of Indian doctoring. From 1882-1920, missionaries and Indian agents charged many Shakers in southern Puget Sound with the continuation of Indian doctoring and had them hauled before courts of Indian offenses on reservations where they were sentenced to hard labour or jail time.\(^{128}\)

\(^{124}\) Eells, *Ten Years*, 181.


\(^{126}\) Charles Buchanan, *Annual Report of Tulalip Agency 1914: Section 1 – Law and Order*, Erna Gunther Collection; box 7; folder 4; University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington.


The Shaker movement emerged into a political context marked by a stark power differential between Indigenous people and colonial Americans in southern Puget Sound. By the late nineteenth century, Indian agents and missionaries enjoyed increasing control over Indigenous peoples, as was manifest in their ability to arrest, accuse and persecute the Shakers for their belief that they masked the continuation of Indian doctoring. As Tisa Wegner has shown, nineteenth century American missionaries and Indian agents active on reserves saw little contradiction between denying Indigenous people religious freedom and federal constitutional guarantees of religious liberty.  

In fact, they wrongly believed Indigenous people could never experience religious liberty if they remained “oppressed” by the weight of their spiritual customs. Colonial Americans, due to their power to shape Indigenous lives through the legal system backed up by the force of the state, set the terms of acceptable religious practice in late nineteenth century southern Puget Sound. According to them, the only legitimate and thus legal form of human religiosity was an “authentic Christianity” which was quite simply Christianity as practiced by colonial peoples. If the Shakers were to survive as a movement, it would be necessary to convince colonial peoples that they were indeed a form of “authentic Christianity” or at least authentic enough to be allowed to practice their religion freely. As I have already outlined, the Shakers had entered into a colonial economy of debate about the church in which their adoption of Christian-in-origin elements could only ever be perceived as either a thin and false veneer of Christianity concealing Indigenous customs, or a genuine adoption of Christianity as a step towards becoming “authentically Christian.” The Shakers right to

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exist would turn on whether they could convince enough colonial people that they were an “authentically Christian” church.

When individual members of the Shaker church faced colonial audiences that accused them of using Christian symbols consciously as smokescreens to cover “barbaric” practices, they responded to these charges by simply telling the truth: the Shakers believed in God and Jesus. They prayed, abstained from drinking alcohol, refrained from gambling and the use of tobacco, and used bells, crosses and candles in church services. For Shakers, each of these beliefs, practices and elements of material culture had acquired new meanings in church practice, which differed greatly from their originally signified meanings in Christian missionary and Indian agent discourse. They had been adopted and re-interpreted into spiritual resources and conduits of cultural continuity as part of a tradition of spiritual openness and fluidity in Coast Salish communities. However, colonial peoples interpreted the Shakers’ defense of themselves from charges that they perpetuated Indian doctoring as a claim to an “authentic” form of Christianity as the colonizer defined it. For colonial peoples, the Shakers’ claim that they believed in Jesus and God was understood as a claim to a belief in Jesus and God in the same form as the missionaries had taught the Indians. Colonial peoples understood the Shakers’ profession of prayer in church as the Shakers claiming to have internalized the proper Christian practice of prayer, again, as the colonizer defined it. And colonial peoples interpreted the practice of abstinence from alcohol, gambling and tobacco amongst church members as the Shakers making a claim that they were a force for transforming Indians into American citizens through the inculcation of correct moral habits.
Regardless of whether colonial peoples were convinced of these claims, they nonetheless could not conceive that the Shakers’ response to accusations that their religion was a thin and false veil was anything else than a claim that they were “authentic Christians” as the colonizers defined it. In this way, the Shakers resisted colonial persecution in a series of double entendres: they publicly expressed their genuine beliefs which they had arrived at through the tradition of spiritual openness, adoption and re-interpretation, which were at once interpreted by colonial peoples who persecuted the Shakers as claims to an “authentic” Christianity as they defined it. The way in which colonial peoples understood the Shakers as laying a claim to being “authentically Christian” as they defined it was never a part of Shaker belief or practice, although church members would have defined themselves as authentic Christians in their own way. However, the perception on behalf of key members of colonial society that the Shakers’ Christian-in-origin elements meant that they were a sufficiently “authentic” Christian church as opposed to a false veil obscuring the continuance of Indigenous spirituality was instrumental to securing the Shakers’ right to exist legally.

Court transcripts of Shakers put on trail for the supposed continuation of “Indian doctoring” in a Christian guise from the early twentieth century show how individual Shakers defended themselves by claiming emphatically that they did not practice Indian doctoring. In the same breath, these Shakers stressed their belief in “God” and characterized the curing practices in the church as instances of “prayer.” A courtroom setting renders power relations highly visible since the presence of a judge with the ability to impose bodily harm for the “wrong” types of answers is easily imagined. In 1902, Johnny Steve (a Shaker) and a few of his friends and family members were accused by
Indian agent Charles Buchanan of “dancing the same as the old Indian Custom tamanwace” and brought before the Indian Court of Offenses at Tulalip.\textsuperscript{130} One witness claimed that the defendants’ use of bells in the Shaker ceremonies was a mere replacement for the sticks used in the old practice of Indian doctoring.\textsuperscript{131} Yet another witness claimed that Steve and his co-religionists never made the sign of the cross in their ceremonies, which the court would have been wont to interpret as evidence that these Shakers were not “authentic Christians.”\textsuperscript{132} In short, these Shakers were accused of the continuation of Indian doctoring, made all the more egregious by the fact that they had attempted to use Christian practices to cover it up.

In response, Steve and his co-defendants denied that they practiced the rites of the Indian doctor. Steve stated emphatically, “I follow the Shaker religion, I kneel and pray for any person sick whenever I am asked I do not tamanwace.”\textsuperscript{133} His co-defendants also expressed a belief in “God”, rejected the notion that their practices were those of the Indian doctor, and explained the Shaker curing practice as an instance of strong “prayer” to “God”, which at times induced bodily trembling.\textsuperscript{134} Unconvinced by their defense, the court ruled that Steve and his co-defendants were guilty of the continuance of Indian doctoring and sentenced them to ten days of hard labour or a ten-dollar fine.\textsuperscript{135} Even in cases like this when colonial authorities were not convinced in the genuineness of the Shakers’ adoption of Christian elements, they never conceived of the possibility that the meanings of “God” or “prayer” had radically altered in Shaker practice. They could only ever conceive of the

\textsuperscript{130} Transcript of Johnny Steves et. al vs. United States Court of Indian Offenses at Tulalip (1902), Erna Gunther Collection; box 7; folder 1; University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
Shakers in terms of a binary – Christian-in-origin practices that the Shakers’ expressed to a colonial audience were construed by colonial peoples as evidence that the movement was either a genuine step towards “authentic Christianity” and by extension civilization or evidence that the Shakers were an insidious ruse meant to perpetuate the continuance of Indian doctoring. The trial of Johnny Steve left room for only one of these two opinions about the Shaker Church. Of course, the church was neither.

Like Johnny Steve and his co-defendants at Tulalip, the early church leadership also denied charges that the Shaker curing practice was a continuation of Indian doctoring and explained the curing practice as an instance of “prayer.” With the help of James Wickersham, a Tacoma attorney who had his own motivations for aiding the Shakers, the leadership provided written testimony about the nature of their religion in an aim to secure the right to worship free of interference from missionaries and Indian agents. In a transcript of testimony from the early church leaders co-created by James Wickersham in 1893, Mud Bay Sam a close associated of John Slocum and the first bishop of the Church, drew a clear distinction between the dxw’dáʔəb and the Shakers: “There is lots of difference between this power and old Indian doctoring. This is not old power.” John Slocum characterized the curing practice as follows: “When people are sick, we pray to god to cure

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136 Judge James Wickersham aided the Shakers obtain the right to practice their religion freely. Because Indigenous people who had received reservation lands in allotment under the Dawes Act of 1887 were legally citizens of the United States, Wickersham argued that they had a right to practice their religion without hindrance. His other interest in proving that Indians were legally citizens of the United States was less altruistic. Legally defined as citizens, Indigenous people could sell their lands that had been allotted to them by the government. Wickersham was heavily invested in a process of Indian land divesture and speculation. For more information see George Pierre Castille, “The Indian Connection: Judge James Wickersham and the Indian Shakers,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Oct., 1990), 122-129.

137 John Slocum, Mud Bay Louie and Mud Bay Sam, “The words of John Slocum, Mud Bay Louie and Mud Bay Sam Submitted in a Report by the Attorney Hired by the Shaker People, James Wickersham, Dated June 25,1893 at Tacoma, Washington,” 1893; Indian Shaker Church of Washington Records; box 5; folder 10; Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, Washington.
us. We pray that he take the evil away and leave the good.” In this testimony, John Slocum and Mud Bay Sam told people that the Shakers “prayed” and believed in “God”. Moreover, they did not use “old power.” These claims were entirely true, but in a way that those who persecuted the church could not and never would understand.

When Mud Bay Sam and John Slocum claimed that the Shakers did not use “old power” colonial peoples interpreted this statement as a claim that the Shakers had abandoned their belief in Indian doctoring in favour of a belief in God as missionaries had described him. When John Slocum and Mud Bay Sam claimed Shakers “prayed”, colonial peoples took this as a claim to having internalized Christian practice. In short, colonial peoples misconstrued Mud Bay Sam and John Slocum’s words as an attempt to claim that the Shakers were a form of “authentic Christianity” as the colonizer defined it. Actually, John Slocum and Mud Bay Sam were expressing that the Shakers had rejected dxʷdáʔəb powers not because they did not believe in them anymore, but because they continued to believe in them as much or more than ever and held them responsible for epidemic diseases. They believed in “God” as a spirit-power that could protect them from dxʷdáʔəb and combat epidemic diseases, and it was through the practice of “prayer” that individuals could both contact God as a spirit-power as well as perform curing in the curing practice. The Shakers thus directly affirmed Indigenous modes of spirituality to a colonial audience in a context where this very affirmation would seem to be misplaced. This affirmation was however not misplaced in a context where colonial peoples, who determined whether the Shakers had the right to exist, could only ever understand the Christian-in-origin elements present in the Shaker Church, which now expressed Indigenous spiritual customs, as the

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138 John Slocum, Mud Bay Louie and Mud Bay Sam, “The words of John Slocum,” 1893.
Shakers attempt to claim that they were an “authentic Christianity.” Thus, for the Shakers, affirming their continuance of Indigenous spiritual beliefs directly to a colonial audience ironically became a strategy of resistance to a persecutory campaign intended to wipe out the very beliefs they were directly affirming. The Shakers both expressed their integral spiritual selves to authorities who persecuted them while at the same time meeting those authorities’ expectations that they be an “authentic” form of Christianity.

In 1910, the Shaker church leadership codified its practices and doctrines in the by-laws and articles of incorporation of the church, which were written in an effort to secure legal standing as a religious group in Washington State. Like the testimonies of Johnny Steve and his co-defendants, Mud Bay Sam, Mud Bay Louis and John Slocum, these documents expressed the Shakers’ faith in “Jesus” and “God”, stressed that the curing ceremony was an instance of “prayer”, and banned alcohol and gambling amongst church members.139 The Shakers’ claim to abstinence from alcohol among all their other claims was that which colonial peoples were most willing to believe was a genuine commitment to becoming “authentically Christian” and civilized Americans.

Sarah Ober, a Christian missionary who lived at Neah Bay with the Makah in the early twentieth century was one of the strongest colonial voices calling for the legal protection of the Shakers to practice their religion without restriction due to their ability to promote temperance (abstinence from alcohol). In a 1910 article published in The Overland Monthly (a missionary journal created to solicit donations), she appealed to her readers’ sense of humanity claiming that the effect of the Shaker Church was that “drunken,

degraded, diseased and immoral Indians are utterly changed, regenerated, and in some tribes saved from extinction."\(^\text{140}\) In her view, the Shakers’ ability to promote temperance was the only way Washington’s Indians could attain civilization and thus avoid extinction. Enlightened colonial peoples, in her view, "should assist these helpless wards of our nation to become citizens (my emphasis) that are an honour, not a detriment” through supporting the work of the Indian Shaker Church.\(^\text{141}\) Patronizing, racist and constituting a sovereign claim over Indian bodies themselves (through claiming Indigenous people as part of the American nation), her words nonetheless show that she had interpreted the Shakers’ practice of abstaining from alcohol (which Shakers believed was a practice key to acquiring the spirit-power of God and Jesus, and thus an affirmation of Indigenous spirituality) as in fact a desire to cast off their old spiritual ways and transform themselves into Christian American citizens.

Sarah Ober was tireless throughout her career in defending the Shakers’ right to worship. Yet she never did so on the grounds of religious freedom but rather based on her belief that the Shakers were a civilizing and americanizing force. “Wherever Shakerism has gone”, she wrote in a letter to an unidentified recipient, “drunkenness, gambling and other kindred vices disappeared and their places are taken by Christian virtues and better citizenship.”\(^\text{142}\) For Ober, the Shakers’ belief in the necessity to abstain from alcohol could only ever be evidence that they were trying to transform themselves from degraded Indians into Christian American citizens. To crush the movement politically was to her to


\(^{141}\) Ibid., 594.

\(^{142}\) Sarah Ober to unknown recipient, n.d. Erna Gunther Collection; box 7; folder 1; University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington.
destroy an effective homegrown agent of assimilation. Of course, the Shakers abstained from alcohol for reasons entirely of their own which had nothing to do with “transforming” themselves into Americans and everything to do with acquiring the power of God and Jesus conceived of as spirit-powers. Nonetheless, Ober’s support was critical to establishing the perception that the Shakers were a legitimate and thus legally permissible form of Christianity. Her advocacy on behalf of the Shakers led to a much broader nation-wide publicity campaign that highlighted the Shakers’ ability to promote temperance amongst the Indians. A 1910 nation-wide newspaper report entitled ‘Indian Workers for Temperance: The New Faith That Came From the Vision of Old John Slocum’ stressed that the Shakers were “working quietly but steadily...doing more to stamp out intemperance in the northwest than any other factor.”

By 1910, the Shakers had legally incorporated as a church in Washington State. Incorporation gave the movement the status of a legitimate Christian church, which brought a measure of legal protection to practitioners, although de facto persecution on behalf of missionaries and Indian agents who continued to believe that the church disguised the perpetuation of Indian doctoring would persist well into the 1920s. The way in which a few key members of colonial society, including the missionary Sarah Ober and the lawyer James Wickersham, had understood the Shakers’ defense in response to...

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144 Judge James Wickersham was still writing letters to federal Bureau of Indian Affairs officials in the 1920s complaining of Indian agents and missionaries who restricted the Shakers’ religious practice. See James Wickersham to Honorable Cate Sells, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Jan. 28, 1920, Melville Jacobs Papers; box 112; folder 16; University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington. In the 1950s, the National Council of Churches visited the White Swan Shaker Church in Washington State. The purpose of the visit was to determine whether the Indian Shaker Church was an authentic Christian church. Representatives of the council were astonished at Shakers’ ability to recite biblical passages without ever having read them. This incident shows how colonial peoples still applied tests of authenticity to the Shaker Church well into the 20th century when the Shakers had secured the right to worship free of interference. Leon Strom, conversation with author, April 4, 2013.
charges that they were perpetuating Indigenous customs to mean that they were “authentically Christian” was essential in securing legal status at this time, since only authentic forms of Christianity as the colonizer defined them were entitled to legal protections of religious freedom.\textsuperscript{145} However, as has been shown, the Shakers never claimed to be “authentic Christians”, colonial peoples only interpreted their claims in this fashion. Instead, in persecutory courtroom settings or in written testimonies the Shakers simply told the truth about their religion, which colonial peoples interpreted as a claim to “authentic Christianity.” Ironically enough, this turned out to be the best strategy of resistance, allowing for the privilege to represent one’s true belief (or self if you like) in a persecutory public setting while at the same time resisting an attempt to quash the very beliefs one was professing, all because colonial peoples misinterpreted Christian-in-origin practices, concepts and material culture in the Shaker movement as a claim to an “authentic Christianity.”

\textsuperscript{145} For a comprehensive account of how the Shakers incorporated see Barnett, \textit{Indian Shakers}, 109-113.
Conclusion

The Indian Shaker Church was a spiritual innovation in Coast Salish communities that responded to the perception that dxʷdáʔəb powers were responsible for waves of epidemic diseases occurring in the 1880s in southern Puget Sound. This perception, which was an already established possibility within Coast Salish beliefs about the powers of dxʷdáʔəb, was re-enforced by missionary rhetoric that dxʷdáʔəb as practitioners were harmful to peoples’ health, which was intended to undermine Indigenous peoples’ belief in “Indian doctors” (dxʷdáʔəb) rather than affirm it. The loss of former spirit-power granting sites to resettlers also contributed to the perception that dxʷdáʔəb powers had become unruly, because they were increasingly inherited from generation to generation. Coast Salish people believed that inherited spirit powers had greater potential to become unruly and harmful independent of their possessors. Given the spiritual problem that dxʷdáʔəb were responsible for epidemic diseases and a tradition of spiritual borrowing in Coast Salish communities, the Shakers adopted Christian-in-origin religious concepts, practices and elements of material culture into their practice and re-made them into spiritual resources that could aid in combating the malicious powers of dxʷdáʔəb which were epidemic diseases. At the same time, these Christian-in-origin concepts were re-interpreted to express longstanding Coast Salish spiritual beliefs. Critically, the linguistic forms of these Christian-in-origin elements in the Shaker Church remained entirely the same, even as their meanings were radically altered in church practice.

The Shaker movement emerged into a context of political suppression against all forms of Indigenous spirituality by colonial missionaries, Indian agents and lawmakers, who persecuted them for supposedly continuing Indian doctoring in a Christian guise. In
this suppressive political context, the Shakers’ adoption and reinterpretation of some Christian-in-origin practices, concepts and elements of material culture as spiritual and medical resources within a longstanding tradition of spiritual openness, was an effective strategy of resistance to a campaign of suppression, intended to eliminate the Shaker movement. Because nineteenth century colonial peoples in southern Puget Sound believed that outward signs of Christianity (which they assigned fixed meanings) could only ever be indicative of a claim to an authentic embrace of Christianity as they understood it or an inauthentic adoption of Christian elements to cover up the perpetuation of Indigenous spirituality, the possibility arose that members of colonial society would rule that the Shakers’ adoption of Christian elements in their practice was indeed a genuine case of “authentic” Christianity. Shakers who faced persecutory courtroom settings or less formal colonial audiences ironically told the truth directly to their persecutors about their practice (thus affirming Indigenous modes of spirituality), which colonial audiences interpreted as a claim to “authentic” Christianity. Certain missionaries and a few members of the colonial state were particularly convinced that the Shakers’ claim to promoting abstinence from alcohol ensured that they were “Christian enough” to be granted the status of an “authentic” Christian religion. The fact that the meanings of Christian-in-origin concepts, practices and material culture had been radically altered within Shaker practice to express longstanding Coast Salish spiritual beliefs went unnoticed to colonial people at the time, which made the very concepts and implements of the colonizer effective tools of resistance in the context of a campaign intended to wipe out the Shaker Church entirely.
As James C. Scott has argued, "For anything less than completely revolutionary ends, the terrain of dominant discourse is the only plausible arena of struggle."\textsuperscript{146} Walking on the terrain of dominant discourse, for many persecuted groups, means to adopt the concepts and idioms of the persecutor in a strategic effort at engaging them on their own terms in an effort to gain a set of rights and privileges that should be granted to them as a matter of course. Often times, this strategic adoption of the idioms and concepts of the colonizer leads to a broader transformation in the powerless themselves: in effect, an initial strategic engagement leads the powerless to become like their persecutors. The mask has a tendency to become the face.\textsuperscript{147} The way in which the Shakers engaged colonial categories and discourses, while at the same time maintaining the ability to express their integral spiritual selves through these very categories (unbeknownst to colonizers) shows how walking on the terrain of dominant discourse (as Scott puts it) does not always involve a trade-off between maintaining longstanding modes of cultural expression and re-making oneself in the image of the powerful. Indeed, the way in which the Shakers assigned wholly new meanings to colonial categories and discourses which they adopted and re-made hints at the ways in which power misreads its own resistance as becoming like it, by interpreting the presence of its concepts and discourses amongst the powerless as expressive of their original meanings.

\textsuperscript{146} Scott, \textit{Domination and the Arts of Resistance}, 103.
\textsuperscript{147} Franz Fanon, \textit{Black Skin, White Masks} (New York: Grove Press, 2008).
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Afterword: My Involvement with the Indian Shaker Church Community

While researching and writing this thesis, I was fortunate to establish a relationship with a few members of the Indian Shaker Church in North Vancouver and Washington State. I first got in touch with practicing Shakers through Donna Gerdts, a linguist working on Halkomelem at Simon Fraser University. She introduced me to Eugene and Wendy Harry from the Shaker Church in North Vancouver. Donna showed a lot of enthusiasm for my earlier research on Chinook Jargon and my work on the Indian Shaker Church when I first met her in the spring of 2012. She was a great aid in connecting me to the community of Shakers in North Vancouver. She also kindly facilitated my visit to Duncan, B.C. in the summer of 2012, where she was conducting fieldwork for her own research. She took time out of her own busy schedule to show myself and her graduate student Kevin Batscher important sites around Duncan, including the Butter Church at Cowichan Bay and the Shaker cemetery just west of town.

I first attended a Shaker Church service in the summer of 2012 in North Vancouver. At the time, the experience was quite incredible because I had never witnessed or participated in a spiritual gathering of any sort prior to this. The service went from around 7pm to midnight. At the end of the service, the Shakers kindly invited me to share a few sandwiches and refreshments with the group. At this point, I met Eugene Harry, the head elder of the church and his wife Wendy for the first time. They expressed their happiness at having newcomers to the church and were eager to collaborate in any research I would be doing. After finishing the snack around 1am, Allen (who had opened the service) very generously drove me home across the Lion’s Gate to Vancouver. That night, I had some very insightful and vivid dreams.

Over the next year, I returned to the Shaker Church in North Vancouver on two different occasions, where I got to know a few other people and once again participated in their services. Although the Shakers always made it clear through their body language and words that they welcomed newcomers into the church, I always checked explicitly with Eugene if it was alright for me to come before attending. The ways in which Shakers have been persecuted by colonial peoples for their beliefs (which I have discussed in this paper) made me very cautious in my relationship with church members. I wanted to make sure that my presence at church did not interfere with their practice or cause any unneeded stress. There were quite a few elderly people who attended church. Many of them have probably experienced persecution first hand, or heard the history of persecution directly from their relatives or relations.

I first got in contact with the Bishop of the Indian Shaker Church, Leon Strom through Wendy Harry of North Vancouver. This was in the winter of 2013. Leon was a great help
reviewing several drafts of this thesis and providing essential input about the nature of Shaker power. I met with him and his wife Harriot in April 2013. At our meeting, Leon told me that the Shakers had just completed a commemoration at Church Point on Hammersly Inlet where Mary Slocum first received the Shaker Power. Prior to our meeting, I had posted him a copy of Annie James’ retelling of the John and Mary Slocum stories. At the commemoration, he and other Shakers had read aloud Annie James’ recounting of the John and Mary Slocum story. Leon told me that this version of the story was very authentic to Shaker belief. I was incredibly pleased and grateful that Leon and Harriot took the time to meet me and discuss my project. Without their input and blessing, I fear the project could never have been completed.

Coming from a predominately non-religious background, it has been intellectually challenging to write about a spiritual topic. I frequently gravitate towards analyses of power, politics, material interest and ideology. Writing about a spiritual subject was certainly a step in another direction, although my discussion of how colonial propaganda impacted the development of the church perhaps reflects these proclivities. I doubt, however, that I am the only one who finds it challenging to write about spiritual subjects. As Lushootseed elders say, “religion and spirits can never be fully understood because every time you try to come close to them, they wiggle away from your mind like a snake.” Many times during the writing of this thesis, I felt as though that snake had slipped my grasp. All that can be said is a heartfelt thank you to all those Shakers who through their generosity and receptiveness allowed me to join in their services and engage them in discussions. Thanks to them, I have been fortunate to learn a few things about their church and community.