



*A youthful Samson Occom (c. 1751-1756)
by Nathaniel Smibert (1743-1756)*

REV. SAMSON OCCOM: A Voice for the Native Americans.

“Indians are neither Whigs nor Tories.”
~ Samson Occom.

As an Indian minister of the Christian Gospel, the Rev. Samson Occom (1723-1792) was uniquely circumstanced and situated to provide for later historians a parallax prospect and fresh perspective on Revolutionary era America. Where better, for instance, to understand the challenge involved, and simply what it was like, speaking and writing in the 18th century idiom than from a literate Indian to whose people’s tradition they were foreign? Moreover, as a Christian minister and Indian we get the opportunity to see the times, again, from someone who in a odd way and for obvious reasons is aloof and often not quite actively part of them; not unlike the Persian, Chinese, or oriental observer used as a literary prop by 18th century writers like Montesquieu and Goldsmith. During the Revolutionary war, he was essentially neutral and empathized with both British and white Americans, as well as, of course, Indians, and never entertained grudges against a people or nationality; except, it might be said, with respect a given people’s or nationality’s own peculiar rogues and rascals. The exception to this was that as a Calvinist preacher he voiced a decided, as could be expected, aversion for the “Romish church.”

Should we question Occom’s sincerity as a Christian? Certainly, he was no Uncle Tom pandering for white favor as an ignorant person unacquainted with his writings might understandably wonder. On the other hand, it was and would have been very shrewd of him to use the faith and the calling of minister to act as a diplomat between peoples so widely separated in culture and outlook. To this extend, as well as being a sincere believer, it could be reasonably inferred he also saw in religion an opportunity to act as a bridge builder: a role sorely needed in those acutely hard times for the Native Americans.

Occom was the indirect product of the great missionary work of Massachusetts Puritan preacher John Eliott (c. 1604-1690); who evangelized among the Indians and translated their languages for the English and the English language for them; including translating the Bible for the Indians. And Occom deserves equal honors with him as someone who made the same bold and noble gesture but from the opposite direction. And Occom’s feat, by comparison, could be said to have been greater; incurring as he sometimes did opposition and prejudice from whites; including putative white Christians and some justifiably distrustful Indians

A Mohegan Indian,¹ Occom was born and later lived much of his life in Mohegan, (eastern) Connecticut, near modern Uncasville. At age nineteen, he became a pupil at Eleazar Wheelock’s school for

¹ Editor of the Occom writings, Joanna Brooks: “Although often confused with the Mohegan tribe of eastern Connecticut, the Mahican people constitute a separate and distinctive tribal nation with its own history, language, and traditions. The historical Mahican were Algonkian-descended peoples of western Massachusetts and eastern New York; their traditional territory ranged from the Housatonic River in the east to the Hudson River Valley in the west. Some Mahicans formed a settlement at Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where

Indians at Lebanon, Connecticut; which subsequently became the basis for Dartmouth College. Following four years residence there, he himself became a teacher of other Indians in, at first New London, and later East Hampton on Long Island among the Montauk Indians. To supplement his income, he occupied himself with book binding; and, in the tradition of his faith's founder, he took up carpentry; carving and making wooden implements and containers, such as spoons, stocks for guns, boxes, and barrels. In addition, he did fair amount of hunting and fishing to feed his family. In 1759, he was ordained a minister by the Presbytery of Suffolk, Mass. Then in 1766, for purposes of raising money for an Indian Charity School, he was sent, accompanying the Rev. Nathaniel Whitaker of Norwich, by Wheelock to England and Scotland; and there gave numerous sermons and which drew large crowds. According to Occum, much of the funds obtained by this trip were frankly embezzled by Wheelock, and with whom and for which reason he later had a falling out. Coming home in 1768, he resided for some years teaching and preaching in Connecticut; while occasionally visiting outlying Indian tribes or else Boston and New York (city) for the same purpose. He continued in this way during the Revolutionary War; and, as mentioned, and like the Moravians of North Carolina, he maintained the stance of a Christian neutral. In 1786, he moved to Utica, New York to live briefly with some Brotherton Indians, a relation of the Oneidas. After this, he sojourned a while with the Stockbridge Indians (the true Mahicans); finally returning to his native Mohegan; where he remained until his passing in 1792.

The more one delves into Occom's writings, the more fascinated one becomes with the implications his singular life evinces; not only in his public life, but as a husband and father. For adjusting as an Indian to white society, after all, was not the easiest of tasks. He sometimes drank, though not heavily, and one occasion got in trouble for it and was compelled to do formal penance before the clergy. He took the whites at their Christian word; saying, in effect, why not make peace with the Indians and treat them well? Tell you what, you preach gospel, I will become minister and help Indians become Christians in return. In the end up, his effort only went to show how many of the whites (though not all) were too often little better than well-meaning hypocrites. And as much as anything else, Occom was a sign of the times and prophet of what future indigenous natives could expect despite all willingness to be good and cooperate.

And he could frequently be, as even the elitist and highly demanding Timothy Dwight could admit, eloquent. His most famous writings are his short autobiography and his sermon on the execution of the Indian Moses Paul, other homilies, and his hymns. These until of late were about the most anyone saw of his compositions. Thanks, however, to the 2006 emergence of Joanna Brooks' now indispensable *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan: Leadership and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Native America*, we have at last an opportunity to appreciate him in full. The following gleanings, drawn from that volume, are only partially representative of Occom's life story and struggle. Yet they do furnish a nevertheless helpful glimpse of and introduction to what he thought and how he felt. Spellings, often wrong, have been left as transcribed from the original, but with the texts themselves only slightly altered for purposes of enhanced clarity and readability.

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Dated: 1753

The most remarkable and Strange State Situation and Appearance of Indian Tribes in this Great Continent. --

Some Times I am ready to Conclude, that they are under Great Curse from God, -- But When I come to look and view the nations of the World I Cant See that they are under Greater Curse than other nations, there are the Poor Negroes How long they have been in wretched and most Cruel Slavery

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they received Protestant missionaries; members of this community became known as Stockbridge Indians. Under pressure from white encroachment, many Stockbridgers removed to New Stockbridge, New York, in the 1770s and 1780s. In the 1820s and 1830s, New Stockbridgers moved west again to the traditional territory of the Munsee people in Shawano County, Wisconsin, and became known as Stockbridge-Munsee Indians. Today, this federally recognized tribal nation calls itself the Mohican tribe. *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan: Leadership and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Native America* (2006), pp. 444-445.

thousands and millions of em, -- and when I Come to Consider and See the Conduct of the Most Learned, Polite, and Rich Nations of the World, I find them to be the Most Tyranacal, Cruel, and inhuman oppressors of their Fellow Creatures in the World, these make all the confusions and distructions among the Nations of the Whole World, they are the Nations, that inslave the poor Negroes in Such Barbarous manner, as out do the Savage Indians in North America, and these are Calld Christian Nations You may See, Mr John Wesleys [disparaging] account of [the] Slave Trade Now lets [query] -- Who is under the Greatest curse he that [inclines] to such hardness of Heart, as to exercise the utmost Cruelty upon their Fellow Crea[ture]s or they that are thus Tormented, -- As for my part I Can not See So far, as to determine who are under the Greatest Curse of all the Nations I believe all Adamites are under a Curse As for this Life, it is as nothing, it is altogether uncertain[.]

Shall now take notice of things peculiar to the Natives of this Country. -- Indians, So Called, in this most extensive Continent, are Universally Poor, they have no Notion of Laying up much for the Future, they all live from Hand to Mouth, as the Common Saying is Chiefly by Hunting Fishing and Fowling; the Women Raise little Corn, Beans, and Pompkins, and pick Wild Fruts, and do other Drudgery; those that live among or near the White People, have Learnt, Some of them, to live a little in immitation of them, but very poor Still, they are good Serv[an]ts to themselves, they have no Oeconomy to live; wastful and imprudent, both of time & Substance, they will wory and Toile all Day to lose two Shillings & gain Six pence, they have no Patience nor Ambistion to appear Great in the World, they have no Notion of much learning, them that have had Some Learning made Little or no good Use of it many have lost all their Learning, -- they Learn no trades, if any of them have Learnt, they follow it not They have no Laws or Regulations Neither in, every on d[o]es what is right in his own Eyes, -- Yet in general they [are] kind to one another, and are not given to Lying, Cheating, and Steeling much what this way a is Trifling But they are much for Drinkg Strong Drink, Yet I Cant think that it is more Natural to them than other[s]...<sup>2</sup>

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Letter to Eleazar Wheelcock
Dated: 12 Feb. 1767, London.

It has been my Lot for a long time to have Sorrow of Heart, I have had Burden upon Burden, Trial upon Trial, Both without and within, far and Near, A General Concern is Riveted in my Heart, for my Poor Bretheren According to the Flesh, Both for their Bodies and Souls; my Relations Causes Heavyer Sorrow; Every obstruction and Discouragement to Your School, and every miss Contuct and behaviour of your Indian Scholars, Touches me to the quick; More than all these, the Consideration of my poor Family, as it were, lets my very Hearts Blood; I am ready Say, I am a Cruel Husband and Father, God has Given me a large Family, but they have no enjoyment of me, nor I them for Some Years back, and the Whole Burden and Care of a Large Family of Children lies upon my poor Wife; What adds to my Sorrowful Heart is this, that Whilist I am a Teacher to others, I have neglected my own Children, by my Perigrinations and now my Children are growing up, and are growing Wild; and the Devil has been Angry, yea he has & is Devilish Mad with me, and if he can, he will Drag all my Children into all Manner Sins and Down to Hell; But blessed be God he has provided an almighty Saviour, and all my Hope is in him, for my self and Family, -- if I was not fully Perswaded and Asure'd that this Work was of god, and I had an undoubted Call of god to Come over into this Country, I wou'd not have Come over like a fool as I did, Without any Countenance from our Board, but I am Will Still to be a fool for Christ Sake -- This Eleviate[s] my Heart amidst all my Burdens, and Balances all my Sorrows at Times, or enables me to bear my Trials, that I am in the way of my Duty, and the Lord uses me in any Shape to promote his Kingdom in the World...³

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To Robert Keen  
Dated: September 1768

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<sup>2</sup> *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan: Leadership and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Native America* (2006), edited by Joanna Brooks, pp. 58-59.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 79-80.

I was taken Sick as soon as I got aboard of Ship and was extremely Bad for four W[eeks] -- after that I grew better and amended very fast, and we had very Rough Pasage and in the Height of my Sickness, we had Violent winds, as I was told, for I know but Little of it, I was perilous for Some Days -- and at the End of 8 Weeks by ye goodness of God we arrivd at Boston, and I was Joyfully recievd by my good Friends at Boston, I Stayd but one N at Boston, on friday in the after Noon we got a shore, and Tuesday following about 5 in the after Noon I got Home and found my Poor Family in good Health, the Lord be Praisd for his Tender Mercies to us -- I wrote Some Letter as Soon as I got home but had no opportunity to Send them -- Since I've been at Home I have Very Busy, Yet I have been to Several Places of Indians and they all recive me with great affection about 5 Weeks ago onoyda [Oneida] Indians Came to see me, they manyfested great Joy at my return from England and were greatly very thankful to hear the Liberality of Christians and all receive me With gladness and tender affection, -- they are very thankful to hear the Benevolent Disposition of Christians over the Mighty Waters, by freely Contributing of their Substance towards the Instructions of the Poor Indians in North America, they Hope by this Means their poor Children's Eyes may be opened, that they may See with their own Eyes -- I had 4 Onoydas and 2 Mohawks Come to See me Some Time Last July, and were very glad to See me, they Said, they had heard of my arrival and they wanted to See me, and So they Came Down -- and they were greatly affected to hear the good Report I gave them of the People in the old Christian Countries, -- They were very urgent to have me go amongst this Summer Past, but I told them, I had been gone so Long from Home, I thought Duty to Stay at home this year, and if I liv'd to see another Spring, I woud give them a long Visit, and they went away Satisfied...

...I found my Debts remain on Long Island Just as I left them so tho' our Presbytery Promisd me, asistance, to Discharge My Debts in my absence, but nothing has been done -- and Some Small Debts, my Wife Necisarily Contracted; and What I have expended by Hiring Labour upon my little Farm, for it has been neglected in my absence; and then I have been obligd to Buy every Mouthful of food Since I came Home; and I have had a great number of Visiteres of Indians from all Quarters, and some English Friends also, -- these have took all my Money away, So that Debt I owe to Dr Wheelock remains Still against I find my Family is very Chargable & I am [unfortunately] to Say he is unprofitable, -- you have an acount of it in one of his Letters, -- The School goes on much as it has done Since we have been gone the Indians are Willing to Send their Children Still, I am Affraid the Dutch, near the Indians, and the French, are trying all they can, to Prejudice the Minds of the Indians against the School and against the English, but if it is of God he will maintain it -- The State of Religion in these parts is at a Low ebb, Yet I hope the Ld has not forsaken his People, there are Some manifest Tokens of his Love amongst them...<sup>4</sup>

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Unknown recipient.
Dated: 1768

Now I am in my own country, I may freely inform you of what I honestly and soberly think of the Bishops, Lord Bishops, and Archbishops of England. In my view, they don't look like Gospel Bishops or ministers of Christ. I can't find them in the Bible. I think they a good deal resemble the Anti-christian Popes. I find the Gospel Bishops resemble, in some good measure, their good Master; and they follow Him in the example He has left them. They discover meekness and humility; are gentle and kind unto all men -- ready to do good unto all -- they are compassionate and merciful unto the miserable, and charitable to the poor. But I did not find the Bishops of England so. Upon my word, if I never spoke the truth before, I do now. I waited on a number of Bishops, and represented to them the miserable and wretched situation of the poor Indians, who are perishing for lack of spiritual knowledge, and begged their assistance in evangelizing these poor heathen. But if you can believe me, they never gave us one single brass farthing. It seems to me that they are very indifferent whether the poor Indians go to Heaven or Hell. I can't help my thoughts; and I am apt to think they don't want the Indians to go to Heaven with them.⁵

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 81-83.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 86. [*Edit. Note.* The original being evidently lost, this letter extract previously appeared in *Annals of the American Pulpit* (1858), vol. 3, by William Buell Sprague, pp 193-194.]

To Susannah Wheatley⁶

Dated: 5 March 1771, Mohegan, Connecticut

...My being acquainted with the World in Some Measure, has made my House a Sort of an Asylum for Strangers both English and Indians, far and near, -- I Labour under Bodily Indisposition Constantly near a Year, I have not been able to do much in hand Labour, Which puts me back very much; and on these Difficulties, my unbelieving Heart brings me upon the Borders of Discouragement at times, but my Reason and better understanding tells me, this is the Time to Trust and Hope in God, and I believe God never made any Creature with a Mouth, but that he will provide for it in his own way and Time -- and when I Come to recollect what I have Seen in my Travels, and what I have Read also, I am Struck with amazement and Stand Speechless; I am Sure if God Shou'd Deal with me according to my Deserts I Shoud have nothing that is Comfortable in this World nor in that which is to Come -- How many poor Creatures have I Seen in the World as good by Nature as I am, go almost Naked in the Severest Weather, and have no where to Lay their Heads, and not one Mouthful of the meanest Bread that they Can Command, but are Oblig'd to go from House to House, and from Door to Door, With Tears Streaming Down their Dirty Cheeks begging a Crum of Bread, and when they have one mouthful given them, they know not Who Will give them the next, -- When I Come to Consider how much better God has Dealt with me, I am Astonish'd at my Self, that I have no more Sense of the Distinguishing Goodness of God to me, and to mine -- I have greatest Reason to Call upon my Soul and all that is Within me to Bless and Praise God Night and Day; and When I Come to Consider further, how many Holy Souls, I mean the Children of God have Sufferd, in Times of Persecution, all manner of Torments, and Depriv'd of every Comfort in this World, Yet how ful of Praises and thanksgivings were they -- Yea When I Come to trace the Son of the most High, from the Manger to his Cross, I am Struck Dumb, I am Confounded, I am Ashamed, I have no room to open my Mouth in a Way of Complaint, I pray God to learn me by these Small Tryals I meet with in the World to Hope and Trust in God alone, and not in the Creature I Pray God to kill me to the World, and that he woud Kill the World to me that I may be Dead to the World and the World to me...

P.S. Please to remember me to Phillis and the rest of your Servants. Pray Madam, what harm woud it be to Send Phillis to her Native Country as a Female Preacher to her kindred, you know Quaker Women are aloes d to preach, and why not others in an Extraordinary Case...

P. [P.] S. Madam I have a favour to beg of you that is, to get me a Singing Book, I think it was Printed at Salem lately price, I was told 8 my Children are much Inclined to Singing and I woud Encourage them in Time...

To the Oneida Tribe

Dated: 1775

I Rejoice to hear, that you keep to your Promise, that you will not meddle with the Family Contentions of the English but will be at peace and quietness, Peace never does any hurt, Peace is from the God of Peace and Love, and therefore be at Peace among your Selves, and with all men, and the God of P[ea]ce will Dwell with you; Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace he is the Peace Maker, if all Mankind in the World, Believd in Jesus Christ with all thier Hearts, there woud Abell no more wars they woud live as one Family in Peace -- Jesus Christ, Said to his Disciples just before he left them, Peace I leave with you my Peace I give unto you, not as the World giveth give I unto you, and again, a New Command I give unto you that ye Love one another -- Now Consider, my Beloved Brethren who is the Author of these Bloody Wars, Will God Set his People to kill one another? You will Certainly say no, Well, Who then makes all this Mischief? Methinks I hear you all Say the Devil[,] the Devil, -- So he is, he makes all the Contentions in he sows the Seeds of Discord among the Children of men and makes all Mischief in the World, -- Yet it

⁶ [Edit. Note. Boston mistress and educator of American negro poet Phillis Wheatley; which latter Occom on occasion corresponded with. When Susannah Wheatley died in 1773, Phillis, at age 20, was awarded her freedom.]

is Wright for Peaceable to Defend themselves when Wicked People fall upon them without Reason or Cause, then they can look up to Heaven to their God, and he will help them --

I will now give you a little insight, into the Nature of the English Quarrils, over the great Waters, they got to be rich I mean the Nobles and the great, and they are very Proud and they keep the rest of their Brethren under their Feet, they make Slaves of them, the great ones have got all the Land and the rest are poor Tenants -- and the People in this Country live more upon a leavel and they live happy, and the former Kings of England Use to let the People in this Country have thier Freedom and Liberty; but the present King of England wants to make them Slaves to himself, and the People in this Country don't want to be Slaves, -- and so they are Come over to kill them, and the People here are obligd to Defend themselves, they dont go over the great Lake to kill them, -- And now I think you must See who is the oppressor, and who are the oppressed and Now I think, if you must Join on one way or other you cant join the oppresser, but the oppressed, and God will help the oppressed -- But let me Conclude with one word of Advice, Use all your influence, to your Brethren So far as you have any Connections to keep them in Peace and quietness, and not to entermeddle in these Quarrils among the White People, -- The Lord Jesus Christ Says Blessed are the Peace Makers, for they Shall Called the Children of God...⁷

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To John Thornton  
Dated: 1776

...I hope these unnatural Wars amongst you, will not intirely Stagnate the Streems Which have run So long, to refresh the Souls of the poor perishing Indians, with Divine Knowledge, -- I Continue preaching as I Use to do, Constantly, thro great Necessity, I am Oblig'd to Draw again half year before Hand, -- and I hope & Pray you will Still Continue your Benevolence to me; the Indians in general every Where are Peacable and Chuse, not to medle with your own Contentions and Quarrils; but I am Extremely Sorry to See the White People on both Sides, to use their Influence with the poor Indians to get them on thier Side, I wish they woud let the poor Indians alone, What have they to do with your Quarrels, and if they Join on either side, they ought not to be Blam'd but thro Favour, there is but few, that Join on either Side, -- This Contention amongst you Amazes and Astonishes the poor Heathen in the Wild. They Say, there never was the like, or Such instance amongst all the Indians Tribes, they are ready to say, What? Brethren and Christians kill one another; this Quarrel is great, yea very great Stumbling Blocks before the Heathen, -- Thro mercy I am and been favourd with good Measure of Health this Winter past, and the rest in my Family are in Health, tho' we have had Some Sickness this Spring, I long to hear from you...<sup>8</sup>

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To John Thornton
Dated: 1 Jan. 1777, Mohegan, Conn.

...The Times are Extremely Distressing in this part of the World, these Unnatural Wars have effected and Distrest everyone, especially the Poor, I never have had Such a Burden, I have had much Sickness in my Famil lately, and every thing extremely Dear, especially Cloathing, O that I had old Cloaths from London, if London was not more than half so far as it is, I woud Come over to beg old Cloathsioo Three pounds will not purchase So much of the Necessaries of Life now, as twenty Shillings woud before these ungodly Wars took place. And the Worst of all is, these Wars have Eat out the Vitals of Religion, especially among the White People. Some White People Say themselves, that the poor Indians have more Religion than they have, the poor Indians indeed that make a Profession of Religion, maintain their Religion in Some measure, I preach amongst them as often as I used to do and they are much engaged in attending upon the Word of God, And there is one good Circumstance among the Indians in genral every where, they dont Chuse to Join neither Side in this Contention, but Chuse Strict Neutrality, and the White Americans dont want to have them join in either, the Congress have Sent out Commissioners among the

⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 111-112.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 113.

Indians, Several Times and different ways to advise them to be Easy and Quiet, not to entermeddle in the English Family Quarril My Wife's Brother went about boo miles Westward from this Place last Sepr with a number upon this Business and is just returnd, he tells me, he saw Six Sachems altogether of different Tribes, and that was the advice to them from the Commissioners, and the Sachems promised Strictly to observe the advice, and Indians themselves are agreeing among themselves in there different Tribes not to entermeddle with the English Contentions, When the White People began to Inlist Soldiers about here, Some of our Lazy Indians were very ready to Inlist, but the White People would not accept of them (Be it spoken to the praise of the White People,) but Some few woud and did list after all their rejection, Last Summer there were Some White people wanted to hire others to go in their Room, and two Indians offerd themselves; but when the Colo' who had care of em, Saw them, he turn d them back again. But the Kings officers, Some of them, I hear, have been using their Influence to engage the poor Indians on their Side; -I wish the King of Great Britain woud command all his officers in North America to let the poor miserable Indians alone; What have we to do with your Contentions?-As for Mr Kirkland; I hear he was among the Indians Some part of last Summer, but Where he is now, I can not Say. These Sad Contentions have brock up all Missionaries and School Masters among the poor Indians, -I heard there was Money Enough in the Hands of the Hon' Scotch Society and they did not know how to lay it out, I wish they woud Consider my Case; Pray most Compassionate Sir, Interceed with them for me -I wrote them last winter, but I have had no Answer, if I should write again perhaps my Letters will never reach them in these Times...⁹

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To John Bailey  
Dated: June or July 1783

...I told Doer Wheelock in our Conversations, that it look to me, in his Sending So many Missionaries and School Masters into the Wilds Just before we went over to England, was only to make a great Noise, for when we got back we had no Missionary nor one School Master in the Wilderness under him; and said to him further if I was to be in England again, I shoud not dare look any gentleman in the face, I shoud Seem to them, as if I had been telling Lies to them, When I was there before, he Said, he fully intended to go as he began In a word, that Institution is at an End with the poor Indians, they never Will or Can reap any Benefit from it, and I woud lue [???] not Desire any gentleman to promote that Institution under a notion to of benefiting the Indians, if I was not Consious to myself that I went to England out of Sincere Desire to Benefit my poor Brethren even after I am Dead & Buried, but I am Sadly disappointed, I Coud Wish, that I never went to England, And there is Such gloomy aspect upon the poor Indians, that I am under great Discouragement, So that I have no heart to ask or Call upon any People for help, for them or myself, yea I dont want to Trouble any one for myself, But it is time for me to Close, There is a great Talk of Peace now, and I hope it is so, but there is great Confusion among the White People Yet, between Royalests, Whigs, and Tories, but this is none of my Business, For Indians are neither Whigs nor Tories...<sup>10</sup>

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To John Bailey
Dated: 1784

I Conclude you receivd a Letter from me Within a Year, in Which I acknowledged the great kindness you bestowed upon me, for Which I once more return you most humble Thanks, -- In that Letter I gave a hint of the Situation of the poor Indians, and also the State of Dr Wheelocks Indian Schools -- I Shall now give you [a] More full account [of Indians], -- there is the Most Deplorable aspect and Most Glomy aspect upon the Indians in this boundless Continent Glomy aspect upon the Indians in this boundless Continent as ever was known, as for the Indians Scatted among the English, is it a gone Case with them, they have been decreasing ever Since the Europeans began to Settle this Country, and this War

⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 113-115.
¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 119-120.

has been as a besom of Distruction to Sweep them from the Face of the Earth,¹¹ there are but very few remaining among the English, and these remaining yet in the Land of the living, are very Careless, it Seems according to their appearance, are given up to hardness of Heart and to reprobate Mind everything that lookd well and promising, amongst them is now witherd and Died; Schools among the Indians are all Ceased and there is not one Missionary amongst them all that I know of, This Family Contention of the English, has been & is the most undoing war to the poor Indians that ever happen among them it has Stript them of every thing, both their Temporal and Spiritual Injoyments -- It Seems to me, at Times that there is nothing but Wo, Wo, Wo, Writen in every Turn of the Wheel of Gods Providence against us, I am afraid we are Devoted to Distruction and Misery --`and I am Discouragd and I have

As for Doctor Wheelocks Institution for the Indians, to me it is all a Sham, it is now become altogether Unprofitable to the poor Indians; in Short he has done little or no good to the Indians, With all that vast Sum of Money We Collected in England he never has educated but two through the College, one Indian and one Mallato, and there has not been any Indian there, this Some Time, as I have been lately informd; all the good that money has done is, has made the Doctors Family Very Grand in the World In Truth I was so displeas'd With last Plan of the Institution and the management of the Doc[to]r, I oppos'd him, and broke of[f] from him, presently after I got home from England, and told him he never Coud do much good to the Indians With his grand Plan -- We talkd part of two Days upon the affair, and he tried with all his might to Convince and to Convert me to his plan but I withstood him to the last, and when he Saw he Coud not turn me, then he did me this Honour, he Said these words -- Mr Occom I beg of you not to hurt the Cause if you do no good to it, for I know you are more Capable to do it more good or hurt than any man that I know of, I told him I was a Cordial Friend to the Cause but an Enemy to his plan [of] manag[emen]t, I told him further that it looks to me, in Sendg So many Missionarys and School Masters into the Wilderness Just before We Went to England was only [a] Huzza, -- to make a great Noise in the World for you have not one Missionary nor one School Master under you now in the Wilderness; the answe're he made to that was, I am unfortunate, I did intend to go on as I began, -- I said to him also, this one Comfort I have in my own Breast, that I Went to England with a Sincere Desire to profit my poor Brethren, even after I was dead and we had good Success in Collecting Money, and now if you dont make good Use of it among the Indians you will answe're for it, Some Time before the Docr died, he wrote me a Letter, in Which I found this Sentense, I hope You Will live to See Scores of your Tawney [i.e., Indian] Brethren Nourish'd by This Alma Mater, -- in answe're to it, I Wrote This Sentense -- I am Very Jealous that in Stead of your Institutions becoming Alma Mater to my Brethren, She will be too Alba¹² Mater to Suckle the Tawnies, for she is already adorn'd up too much like the Popish Virgin Mary, and therefore She Will be naturally ashamd to Suckle the Tawnies --

Mr John Wheelock is now President of that College and I believe he has but very little Regard for the poor Indians he may Speak or Write with Seeming Concern for them under a Cloak, to get some thing for himself or for the White People; for the College is become Very grand College for the White People; it is too grand for the poor Indians; if I had twenty Sons, I woud not send one there to be Educated -- in Very deed, I have nothing to do to promote that Institution...¹³

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Unknown recipient.  
Dated: 1788?

Brother John Dantuckquechen who brings these few lines, has had a Law Suit against him [two words illegible] upon Suspission of Debt, and he [knew nothing] about it, till it was over, it was John [word illegible] doings, he employd one [Shoals] to Cary on the Suit, now is agreable to the Laws of this State or any State? that a [man] may be Suid, and the Case tryd & Desided, and the man that Suid knows nothing from first to last, till the Execution Comes out against him, if this will do and Countanced, by by Law, then any man draw upon account against his Neighbour Without any Dealings with him, -- and Sue him, get

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<sup>11</sup> [Edit. Note. Secretary of War Henry Knox himself, in a letter to President Washington of 29 Dec. 1794, stated "our modes of population had been more destructive to the Indian natives than the conduct of the conquerors of Mexico and Peru."]

<sup>12</sup> [Edit. Note. A play upon words; "Alba," meaning *white* in Latin, being substituted for "Alma" ("nourishing.")]

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 121-122.



Judgment against him, -- Do you [i.e., whites] Serve one another So? if not, Why Should we be Serv'd So is there no redress [two words illegible] for the Indians, by the Rulers, if there is none, I do declare it, I had rather be amongst the most Wild and uncultivated Indians, in the Western Wilderness, -- I was so Servd last Spring just as we were Setting of for Onieda and I Couod not Stop to See further about it, I thought Sin woud be at their door, but I need Say morels there such a thing as delivering John from the Paw of Such unreasonable and Cruel Men?<sup>14</sup>

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Unknown recipient.

Dated: November 1791

I take the Liberty to write to you a few Words by Capt Hindreck, he is one of Mauhequunnuck, alias Stockbridge Tribe of Indians, he is a Chief Sachem of that Tri[be] and his Tribe is well inclin'd to the Christian Religion, and they are Diligent in their Temporal Concerns; and they have determined to go on till they Shall be able to main[tain them] Selves in their Religion, and in their Temporal Concerns if they keep on as they have begun but a little While, they will be able -- But they are not able to walk yet, they St[ill] Creep they want a little Help to lead by the Hand a little w[ay], and they Can't Swim alon[e] yet, they need to have a little help, to have their Chins held up a little While, till they can Swim alone -- God has blest you abundently with the Blessing of the gospel, and with Blessings of this World, You are very strong in the Christian Religion, and in this world you are rich in the Gospel, we are very poor, and weak, and you are Rich also in this World, and we are extreamly poor, Capt Hendrick has been amongst the [Wes]tern Indians, and lately just go Home, as he may inform you, There seems to be agreable Prospect opening amongst the Wes[tern] Tribes to Introduce Civilization & Christianity. I hope the P[rayers] of Gods People, that have been put up or ascending, [... page torn] for the Heathen, along While, by all Christians, of all [Nations?] and Denominations will Soon be heard and Answer'd [...] God's Time is the Best Time -- There have been some Pains to Civilize and Christianize the Indians, but all to little purpose -- But I think the Time must come, when they shall beg to Jesus Christ for his Inheritance and the utermost parts of the Earth his Posistion -- Capt Hendrick is Invited by Some of the Western Tribes to the Distance of 1000 Miles or near Some of his Na[?] are there already they have there about, about 30 Years -- I am Now fully Convinc'd, that the Indians must have Teach[ers] of their own Coular or Nation, -- They have [a] very great and reveted Prejudice against the White People, and they have too much good reason for it they have been imposed upon, too much, and they have been, between Contending Nations [a long] Time; - - In Times past they were between, the French and English, Now, they are between the Britains and Americans and Spaniards too, and now they are set on by the Britains and Spaniards against the Americans, and when there is any Mischief [page torn ...] any of them; then there is an out Cry against them [...] Vulgar Language is; Kill kill em, Damn em kill [...] they have been unreasonably blaimd you will know [...] The poor Indians were in a Miserable Situation before the Europians Come; and Since the Europians have Come into this Country, they are more so, except a few that have had a little Gospel Light, -- I think they are now in a Most Deplorable Condition and Situation, it Seems that Heaven and Earth, are in Combination against us, I am, Some Times, upon the Borders of Desperation and much Discouragd with my poor Brethren, I often groan, and Say with myself, before I am aware of it, O Strange, O Strange, Why are we thus and my mind very is much overwhelmed at Times, But When I Consider the Promises of God in his Book my Mind is little revivd again...

...So I permit me to Call upon you as the Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ in North America -- Come over, or Send over to our miserable Indian Macedonia and help us, for we are Dying with the Poison of Fiery Serpants, in this Wilderness, and we would have the Glorious Brazen [Serpent] to be lifted up upon the Pole of the Glorious Gospel, that [who]ever looks to him by an Ey of Faith may be saved -- we are [try]ing to keep a School to instruct our poor Children in Letters, and the Children learn beyond all expectation -- We are poorly of it for School books, and we are Scant of it for Psalm Books for the older People-They are good Singers as any People; it woud do you good to hear them once, and they are most all Singers old and Young...¹⁵

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 128.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 133-135.

Montaukett Tribe¹⁶ to the State of New York
Dated: 1785?

To the Great and Most Excellent Governor, and to all the Great Men Ruling in the State of New York in North America. --

We who are known by the Name, Mmееyautanheewuck or Montauk Indians, Humbly Send Greeting

We are very Glad and Rejoice with you that you have at last got your Freedom Liberty and Independence, from under the heavy and Gauling Yoke of Your Late King, who has tryed very hard to make you Slaves, and have kill'd great many of You, but by Your Steadiness, Boldness, and Great Courage, you have broke the Yoke and the Chain of Slavery; Now, God Bless You, and Make you very great and good forever

We Montauk Indians, have Sot Still and have not Intermedled in this Family Contention of Yours, because we had no Business with it, and we have kept our Young men quiet as we Coud, and the People on both Sides have Usd us well in general

Now, great and good Gentlemen, we humbly Intreat your Condescention and Patience to hear us a little Concerning ourselves. --

The Great and good Spirit above, Saw fit in his good pleasure, to plant our Fore-Fathers in this great Wilderness but when and how, none knows but himself, -- and he that works all things Acording to his own Mind, Saw it good to give us this great Continent & he fill'd this Indian World, with verietу, and a Prodigous Number of four footed Beasts, Fowl without number and Fish of all kinds great and Small, fill'd our Seas, Rivers, Brooks, and Ponds every where, -- And it was the Pleasure of him, Who orders all things according to his good Will, he that maketh Rich, and maketh poor, he that kills, and that maketh alive, he that raiseth up whom he will, and pulleth down whom he will; Saw fit, to keep us in Porverty, Only to live upon the Provisions he hath made already at our Hands -- Thus we livd, till it pleased the great and good Governor of the World, to Send your Fathers into these goings down of the Sun, and found us Naked and very poor Destitute of every thing, that your Fathers injoyd, only this that we had good and a Large Country to live in, and well furnished with Natural Provisions, and there was not a Letter known amongst them all in this Boundless Continent. -- But your Fore Fathers Came With all the Learning, Knowledge, and Understanding, that was Necessary for Mankind to make them Happy, and they knew the goodness of our Land, and they Soon began to Settle and Cultivate the land, Some they bought almost for nothing, and we suppose they took a great deal without Purchase. And our Fathers were very ignorant and knew not the value of Land, and they Cared nothing about it, they Imagin'd, they Shoud allways live by Hunting Fishing and Fowling, and gathering Wild Fruits -- But alas at this age of the World, we find and plainly see by Sad experience, that by our Fore Fathers Ignorance and Your Fathers great Knowledge, we are undone for this Life -- Now only See the agreeament, your Fathers and our Fathers made, We hope you wont be angry with us in telling the The [sic] agreed that we Shoud have only two Small necks of Land to plant on, and we are not allowd to Sow Wheate, and we as a Tribe are Stinted to keep only 50 Head of Cattle, and 200 Swine and three Dogs, -- Pray gentlemen take good Notice, dont this discover a profound Ignorance in our fore Fathers, indeed we Suspect, Some Times, that what little understanding they had was Drowned with hott Waters [i.e., liquor] before they made these Shameful agreements, and on the other hand, don't this Show, that the English took advantage of the Ignorance of our Fore Fathers Woud they be Willing to be Servd so by us? Were we Cababale [i.e., capable] to use them So? -- We fare now harder than our Fore Fathers -- For all our Hunting, Fowling, and Fishing is now almost gone and our Wild Fruit is gone, What little there is left the English woud ingress or take all to themselves -- and our Wood is gone and the English forbid us of geting any, where there is Some in their Claim -- and if our Hogs happen to root a little the English will make us pay Damages, and they freequently Count our Cattle and Hogs, -- Thus we are Usd by our English

¹⁶ [Edit. Note. Or "Montauk Tribe," and of East Hampton, Long Island, New York.]

Neighbours -- Pray most Noble Gentlemen Consider our Miserable Case and for God's Sake help us; For we have no where to go now, but to your Excellence for help; If we had but 150 head of Cattle and some [Sheep] and a few more Hogs we Shoud be Contented and thankful This is all we have to Say at this Time, and Shall now wait to See your Pleasure Concerning Us --¹⁷

William Thomas Sherman
1604 NW 70th St.
Seattle, Washington 98117
206-784-1132

wts@gunjones.com

<http://www.gunjones.com> and http://www.scribd.com/wsherman_1

For Lee's Legion on Face Book:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=121637007849696>

¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 150-151. [*Edit. Note.* As essentially identical petition was submitted by Occom, on behalf of the Brotherton Tribe, to the United States Congress in the same year; see pp. 149-150.]