



Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-75

Tolly Bradford

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The spread of Christianity is often presented as a story of conquest, of powerful European missionaries waging a cultural assault on hapless indigenous victims. Yet the presence of indigenous men among missionary ranks in the nineteenth century complicates these narratives. What compelled these individuals to embrace Christianity? How did they reconcile being both Christian and indigenous in an age of empire?

Tolly Bradford finds answers to these questions in the lives and legacies of Henry Budd, a Cree missionary from western Canada, and Tiyo Soga, a Xhosa missionary from southern Africa. Inspired by both faith and family, these men found in Christianity a way to construct a modern conception of indigeneity, one informed by their ties to Britain and rooted in land and language, rather than religion and lifestyle. Although they shared a new sense of "nativeness," the men followed different paths. Whereas Budd sought to create a modern Cree village to cope with the upheavals of the 1860s and 1870s, Soga tried to foster among his people a politicized, and Christianized, sense of African nationalism.

In telling this story, Bradford portrays indigenous missionaries not as victims of colonialism but as people who made conscious, difficult choices about their spirituality, identity, and relationship with the British colonial world.

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