ALASKAN "COMITY PLAN" AND ITS CONTINUED EFFECTS ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

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> If there is no friendship with them [the poor/Indigenous peoples] and no sharing of the life of the poor, then there is no authentic commitment to liberation, because love exists only among equals.
>
> —Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*

ABSTRACT

The history of Indigenous boarding schools in the United States, wherein children were sent to be assimilated to Eurocentric standards, has become more widely known throughout North America over the last decade through the testimony of Indigenous elders and research efforts. It is a history that Indigenous peoples know all too well. A history that built lasting structures that have affected our peoples through the present day, and yet a history that many have forgotten, including the ecumenical bodies that originally installed the structures of assimilation and genocide. Nevertheless, behind every dominant figure's forgotten past is a once celebrated dark history. For, as will be seen, the origins of ecumenism itself finds its roots in Eurocentric colonialism. This work investigates the history of these assimilative boarding schools within Alaska, the central topic of the long-lost narrative of the "Comity Plan," and its impact upon Indigenous peoples throughout the world.

INTRODUCTION

In 1895, Henry M. Field published the historically crucial yet imperialistic work *Our Western Archipelago*, which detailed some of the earliest descriptions of Alaska's geography and the boarding school system. While these were crucial in understanding the overall colonial intents for the territory, the most memorable piece was a three-page description of a meeting in 1880 between various denominational leaders who meant to divide Alaska among themselves, later identified in other writings as the "Comity Plan."[1] Field wrote:

> here a peculiar beauty was given to the early missions in the way that different denominations entered the field and worked together. This harmony was not a happy accident, but the result of forethought, and of a purpose so high that it lifted them all about sectarian pride and ambition… *This was the policy of Sheldon Jackson*, in which he found a strong supporter in Dr. Henry Kendall, the secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions, who invited the Methodists and the Baptists and the Episcopalians, represented by their secretaries… it was a small affair in outward appearance—only three secretaries and Sheldon Jackson—just enough to sit round a table; but this company, meeting in an upper room, was sufficient to inaugurate a policy of peace, that if adopted on a larger scale, would work for the benefit of all Christendom. And now I see these four heads bending over the little table, on which Sheldon Jackson has spread out a map of Alaska.… Here was an ideal distribution of the missionary force, in which there was no sacrifice of principle, but an overflow of Christian love, which seemed to come as a baptism from on high. (Field 1895:145–147; emphasis added)

Though Field was not present at this meeting, his secondary narrative of the event has long been the sole source used to attempt to understand the extent of ecclesial assimilative involvement within Alaska—a source that did not even give a year for its occurrence. As a result, our understanding of the Indigenous boarding school system and the Western Church's involvement within Alaska has been desperately insufficient and weighed down with ecclesial rhetoric due to a lack of primary source material, a truth desperately needed but conveniently forgotten.[2]

Recently, however, primary resources have been uncovered that detail the infamous meeting's motives and ideologies, which became a framework for future imperialism, an ecumenical virus that spread throughout the world and ultimately affected much of the world's Indigenous populations for the sake of resource extraction. This paper is the first to uncover and investigate the true history of this infamous meeting with primary source material.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to describe this meeting within its historical context and to emphasize the structures of violence that affect Indigenous peoples to this day. This will be done by describing the ecclesial history that gave birth to this colonial framework, the Comity Plan meeting and the ideologies that drove it, and the lasting structural effects that are felt today. As this work is meant to be an overview of the Comity Plan, it will not discuss missions and boarding schools relative to their history among particular Alaska Native communities.

CHURCH, STATE, AND CONQUEST: A TROUBLING INCEPTION

When investigating colonialism within North and South America, it is important to understand the intersections between the various entities and the ideologies in which they were grounded. In terms of ideologies such as Eurocentrism and forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples, the "United States is the inheritor of the munificent crimes of not only London (Great Britain) but Madrid (Spain), too" (Horne 2017:8). It is therefore important to investigate the Western Church's colonial history concerning its land claims to understand the history of the Comity Plan within the context of Alaska and its Indigenous peoples.[3] This paper's use of the "Western Church" is refering to ecclesial institutions that are classically Latin and originate from Western Europe. This does not include any Eastern Orthodox institution, or the various denominations which originate from said institutions.

THE DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY: *INTER CAETERA*, *TERRA NULLIUS*, AND *TABULA RASA*

The partnership between Church and State for the colonization of North and South America is a centuries-old marriage dating back to 1493, developing directly after Christopher Columbus's expedition in 1492. This union began with Pope Alexander VI's *Inter Caetera*, which, through the Roman Catholic Church, "divided the Americas between the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns on the condition that they assume the obligation of converting the Indigenous people . . . to Christianity" (Marthaler 2003:273). Though Spain and Portugal were the two main beneficiaries of this papal bull (a sort of executive order), other Western European states would also understand the authority of their land claims in the Americas under this document, leading to an ecclesial law still recognized by the United States.[4] It should be recognized that *Inter Caetera* (1493)—also known as the Doctrine of Discovery—was released two decades before the Protestant Reformation (1517). While the Doctrine of Discovery is specifically a Catholic doctrine, as this work touches on later, aspects of it were eventually adopted by Protestants. It should also be mentioned that, due to its Latin nature, *Inter Caetera* was not formally recognized by the Eastern Orthodoxy because of the Great Schism of 1054, a "symbol of lasting divergence between the Catholic and Orthodox churches" (Whalen 2007:2).

This papal bull was informed by two Roman concepts: *terra nullius* and *tabula rasa*. In this context, *terra nullius* meant that "if lands were not occupied by any person or nation, even if they were occupied but they were not being used in a manner that Euro-American legal systems approved, then the lands were considered empty, vacant, and available for Discovery claims. . . . [L]ands that were actually owned, occupied and being used by Indigenous Nations [were also thought to be impacted by] *terra nullius*" (Miller 2019:40). If Indigenous peoples did not fit this salvific criterion at contact, *terra nullius* was put into effect and the lands inhabited were declared empty. This doctrine encouraged the Eurocentric attitude concerning Indigenous belief systems and religions "that everything had to be destroyed," and therefore the people were to be made *tabula rasa*, or a blank slate, which was to be replaced with Christianity (Marthaler 2003:692). *Terra nullius* and *tabula rasa* became essential themes within the European colonial machine, as in one document they ceded ownership of the land to these

European states for the purpose of resource extraction while dehumanizing Indigenous peoples and placing the responsibility of "conversion" (later interpretated as education) on the various colonial European empires.[5] Essentially, "European national leaders relied on these papal bulls to embed the Doctrine of Discovery within international law and rationalize their respective behaviours to confiscate lands (for extraction of resources) and annihilate those that stood in the way (physically or through assimilation)" (McBroom 2018:33).

This detailed understanding of the Doctrine of Discovery is important, for through *Inter Caetera,* land claims, resource extraction, personhood of Indigenous peoples, and forced conversion/education/assimilation were woven together almost as tightly as the responsibility of both Church and State in creating the system. In the United States, the Doctrine of Discovery was recognized in the landmark 1823 *Johnson v. M'Intosh* ruling, which found that "no other government or person may acquire legal title to aboriginal lands unless the United States conveys the title" while also stating that "the aboriginal occupants are powerless to convey legal title to their lands to any other entity except the United States" (Case 1984:49). This gave ownership of the land to the federal government under the original conditions as the inheritors, which included the stipulation of conversion/education, cementing the relationship between church and state. Ultimately, the effects of the relationship between church and state in these colonization projects are still felt today, an echo that continues to reverberate but never dies. *Inter Caetera* became the colonial framework for all other agreements, by either church or state or both. The connection between resource extraction and forced assimilation would become more important in future agreements, as these two concepts become essential in understanding the colonial framework of the residential/boarding schools laid out in the Comity Plan.

UNITED STATES AND FORCED ASSIMILATION

As the prominently Protestant United States was established well after 1492, there was a need to establish itself within the confines of the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Discovery with a reformational lens to advance the acquisition of land and the forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples. While *Inter Caetera*'s framework was adopted by early Protestants (many times on their own terms), the sixteenth to twentieth centuries were a time of distrust between the Roman Catholic papacy and American Protestant institutions. Even though these sorts of ideologies existed, the inheritance of the Doctrine of Discovery's legacy from Roman Catholicism to American Protestantism reveals Western Europe's commitment to colonization and imperialism.

From their arrival in North America, Protestant colonists widely viewed themselves as inheritors of the land in the face of what they understood as evil.[6] This can be seen in the Puritan John Winthrop's sermon, *A Model of Christian Charity*:

> For we must consider that we shall be as a "city upon a hill." The eyes of all people are upon us, so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword through the world; we shall open the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God and all professors for God's sake; we shall shame the faces of many of God's worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us till we be consumed out of the good land whither we are going. And to shut up this discourse with that exhortation of Moses, that faithful servant of the Lord, in his last farewell to Israel (Deut. 30): Beloved, "there is now set before us life and good, death and evil, in that we are commanded this day to love the Lord our God," and to love one another, "to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His ordinance, and His laws," and the articles of our Covenant with Him "that we may live and be multiplied, and that the Lord our God may bless us in the land whither we go to possess it." (Winthrop 1630:171–174)

Winthrop exemplifies the colonists' work against an unspecified "enemy," a rhetorical tool that he placed upon the backdrop of Moses leading the ancient Israelites of the Hebrew Bible into the "Promised Land."[7] Through this theological backdrop, Winthrop reveals an all-too-familiar belief that not only is North America rightfully owned by Western Europeans (specifically, their brand of Protestantism) but, through their work, it is to become this "city on a hill" through the profession of faith and example. This belief of exceptionalism begins to sound much like the claims made in *Inter Caetera*.[8] The unspoken element of this sermon that is alluded to in his use of Deuteronomy 30, however, raises a key question: if these colonists are a typological "New Israel" being led into the Promised Land, who are the "New Canaanites" to be conquered?

While Winthrop left this open-ended, others, such as Rev. Cotton Mather, were more explicit. In *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Mather (2009:25*n*22) asserts that "his [God's] divine providence hath irradiated an Indian Wildernefs."[9] From the beginning, Mather sets up Protestant America's role on the continent as the light being shined in an unkempt "Indian Wilderness," objectifying the Native individual to appease the goal of conquest. Interestingly, Mather places this objectified image of "Indian Wilderness" alongside the "Praying Indian," revealing only two options for the Indigenous populations: the Native who associates with the land to be conquered, or the Native who identifies with a Eurocentric Christ.[10] These two categories would become a driving factor in the various forms of forced assimilation.

While these ideas were prominent throughout the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, land agreements among the various Protestant denominations did not arise until early in the nineteenth century when, in 1801, the reformational Congregational denomination and the Presbyterians forged the Plan of Union.[11] With this plan, the Presbyterian and Orthodox Congregationalist churches agreed to a more flexible structure, allowing ministers to serve within each other's church as both churches led the way for westward expansion.[12] This reformational "union" led to the creation of the American Home Missionary Society in 1826, a combination of various reformational denominations focused on mission work whose actions were considered to be of "Christian Comity" (American Home Missionary Society 1873:88).

It should be noted here that "comity" has a common definition as an atmosphere of social harmony and a legal definition as the deference from one court to another. In the context of this ecclesial history, we should understand that "comity" is a catchall term for collaborative efforts between various denominations to advance a common imperial goal. While the mention of "comity" is typically the point of interest for historians seeking to understand the roots of colonization in Alaska, it is through mission work that the earliest ecumenical work in the United States is found, cementing the connection between ecumenicism and colonialism. Though these strictly reformational denominations worked together for a time, the larger Presbyterian Church parted ways during the Old School–New School Controversy, creating the Presbyterian Boards of Foreign and Home Missions, the Old School Presbyterians being led by Charles Hodge of Princeton Theological Seminary in 1837.

While the phrase "Christian Comity" was used by the Congregationalists, it is an entirely different framework than what would be used later in Alaska. Through the Plan of Union, the Congregationalists were mainly interested in creating a "pulpit supply" system to ensure a church would never be without a minister. This plan fell in line with the more legal definition of "comity" as being more concerned with jurisdiction of ecclesial worship between private denominations, a "courtesy owed to another sovereign (or private entity) rather than an obligation under domestic law" (Paul 2008:26–27). Essentially, Congregationalists aimed to ensure that they had personnel available, and it proved resourceful to allow ministers to operate churches across both Congregational and Presbyterian denominations. The Plan of Union/Christian Comity provided a solution to a problem that had prevented expansion, a solution that could only occur if both ecclesial groups held similar reformational backgrounds due to Protestant infighting caused by the diversity of beliefs held.

However, no such "pulpit supply" system was widely implemented in Alaska, and—as will be revealed later—the Jacksonian Comity Plan made great efforts to keep the various denominations separate in their own regions, which prevented intermingling. Thus, in Alaska this agreement was understood less as a courtesy between denominations than an obligation that mirrored the twentieth-century legal definition of "comity" (Paul 2008:28). Though both agreements use the word "comity," their definitions differ, as will be discussed later in this work. Another difference between these two concepts of "comity" is that the Congregationalist's framework was New School, while Jackson was of the more Old School persuasion. This conflict can usually be broken down to understanding the Old School (Hodge) as being engrossed in conservative Calvinistic/predestinationalism (leading to somewhat of a nationalistic Christianity), and the New School (Congregationalists) being open to revivalism.[13] While we will go into the Old School system of belief in more depth later, the New School's more revivalist leanings tended to center their relationship with Indigenous peoples around a more imperialistic interpretation of the "Great Commission" found in Matthew 28:16–20, which says, "Go make disciples of every nation . . . and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." This perception is best represented in the publication *Life and Light for Women*, which quotes the "Great Commission" while marking (with dark brown shading) many Indigenous peoples throughout the world as "heathen" (Woman's Board

of Missions 1873:173–174) (Fig. 1). This interpretation of the "Great Commission" took certain imperialistic liberties, forsaking a purely spiritual and individualistic call for one that differentiates groups with Western European origin, against all others. The map's differentiation between nations and the call to "teach" are important, as not only do they link nationality with salvation, but the translation of the Gospel of Matthew highlights the way in which conversion was to take place.

While the reformational and revivalist (Old and New Schools) were just two perspectives within American Protestant attitudes toward Indigenous peoples, almost every denomination adopted one of these missiological persuasions depending on their level of reformational leanings. While it would be impossible in this small space to explore every denomination's specific theological understanding of Indigenous peoples, it is important to recognize how these various groups adopted elements of either persuasion.

Outside of the distinct theological missiologies that developed out of the Old School–New School debate, Figure 2 reveals how the Congregationalist understanding of "comity" was divorced ideologically in their involvement within the Alaska context: the last and arguably most important distinction between the two understandings of "comity" was that the Union was interested in mainly ecclesial matters. This was in turn very different from the system created within Alaska, a system that cemented the relationship between American Christianity and colonialism.

THE PRESBYTERIAN/JACKSONIAN FRAMEWORK

The Presbyterian ideology that eventually formed the ecclesial response toward the forced assimilation of Indigenous children came from Charles Hodge, Sheldon Jackson's professor and mentor at Princeton Theological Seminary. This can be seen in his co-creation of "Princeton Theology," which "expressed an understanding of human nature and potential that had great significance in forming missionary responses to Indians," emphasized "rigid exclusivity with obvious implications for those who had not yet heard its message" through a "fusion of their own brand of Protestantism and an ideologized American lifestyle," and expressed "the absolute superiority of their national civilization" (Coleman 2007:33–36). The starting point in understanding the Presbyterian role in evangelism was its role and relation to the expansion of Western civilization, a position that was only worsened by Hodge's borderline hyper-Calvinistic tendencies in seeing the total depravity of those not a part of this Western civilization.[14]

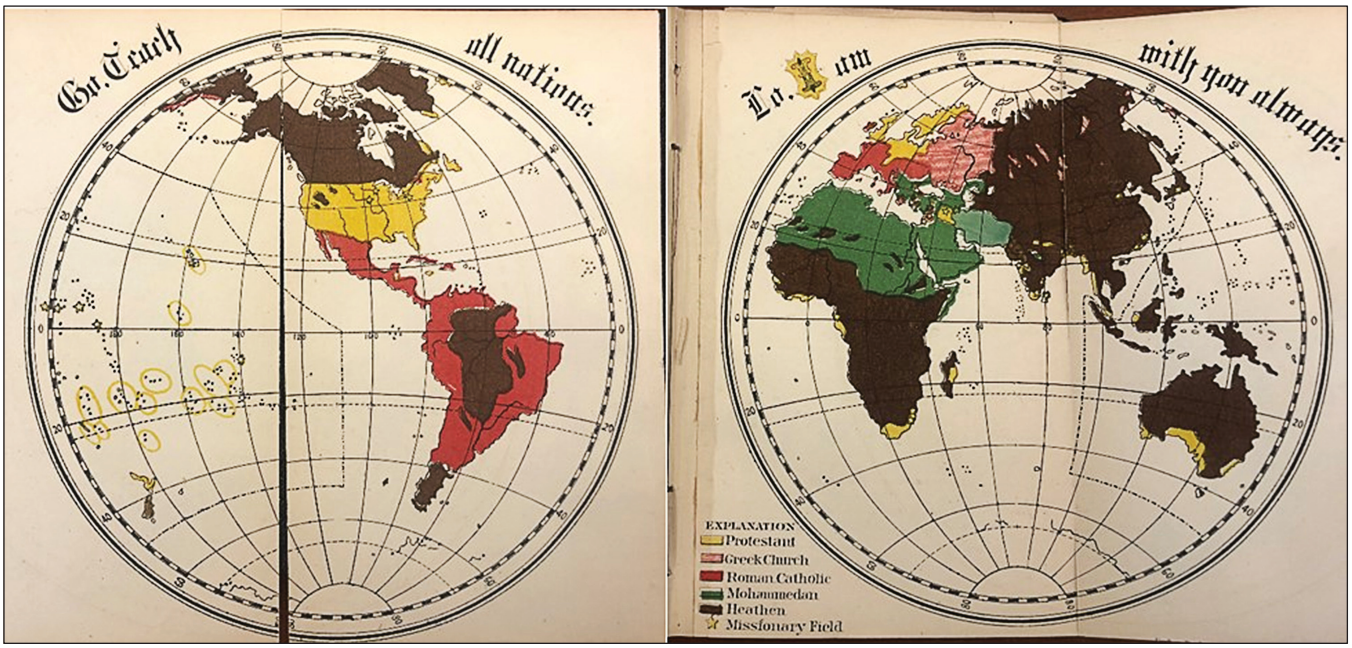

Figure 1. Map highlighting "heathen" populations using the "Great Commission" (Matthew 28) to rationalize forced assimilation. From **Life and Light for Women***, created by the American Board Commissioners of Foreign Missions (Women's Board of Missions 1873:173–174). Courtesy of Princeton Theological Seminary.*

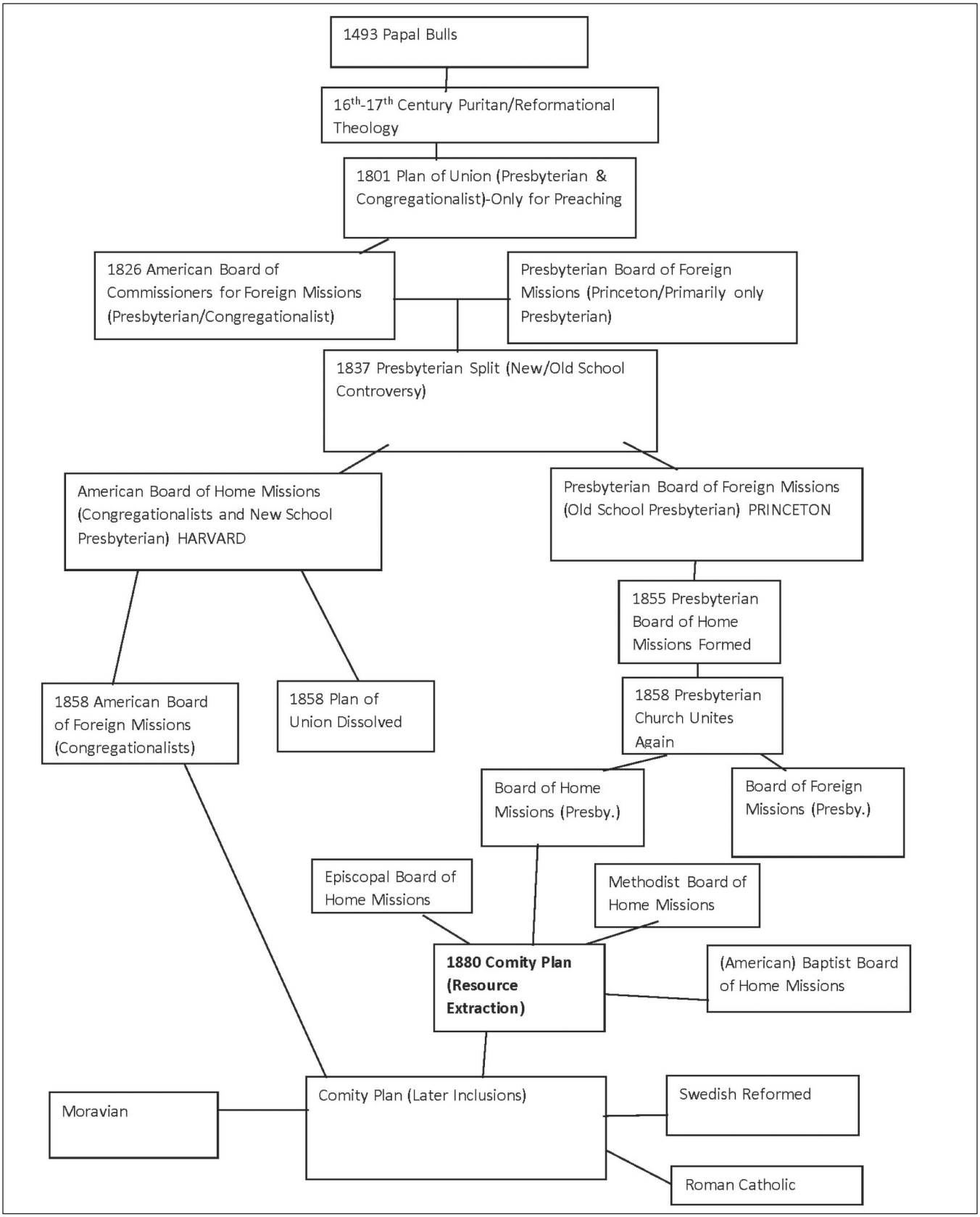

Figure 2. From **Inter Caetera** *to Comity Plan.*

This theology emphasized a faith conveniently intertwined in the superiority of Western civilization and insisted "upon the utter depravity and helplessness of unconverted man, [and] his desperate need for faith" (Coleman 2007:35). While countless assumptions can be made by this general understanding of Hodge's theology, what is important for our purposes is to recognize not only the dehumanization of the Indigenous recipient but that the main goal of missionization was the expansion of Western civilization, even at the expense of what Mather earlier understood as the "Praying Indian." Regardless of the "spiritual status" of the Indigenous individual, anything that threatened the imperialism of Western civilization was in opposition to Jackson/Hodge's ecclesial mission. This was the first time these theological views had been systematized through Princeton Theology, but they existed in some form well before Charles Hodge put pen to paper. Although this theological framework derived from explicitly Old School Presbyterianism, Michael Coleman, in *Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes Toward American Indians 1837–1893,* describes that the "stripped down missionary version of Princeton Theology, essentially a theology of man's depravity and justification through faith alone, was obviously a moderate-enough form of nineteenth century American Calvinism," making it much more widespread, rather than a sectarian view (Coleman 2007:37).

While this widespread form of American theology might seem to be a response to Manifest Destiny, by which the United States was called to "the fulfilment of our *manifest destiny* to overspread the continent allotted by providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions" (J. Pratt 1927:798; emphasis added), it seems as though it was this theological ideology that instead paved the way for the wider belief in Manifest Destiny to take root. This can be seen in not only the dates that both these ideologies came about but also the language used in the earliest iterations of the phrase. According to Julius W. Pratt (1927:798), the phrase originated in an 1845 article by John L. O'Sullivan, published in the *Democratic Review*, where the quote above first named and defined "Manifest Destiny." This date is not only later than the work of Princeton Theology, but, from the word "providence" being used in the defining of the ideology, Manifest Destiny itself points to a theological origin that is more reformational than revivalist in nature. "Providence" is a theological term used alongside other terms touched on earlier such as "election," defined by Hodge as "His [God's] most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions . . . but also that His control is suited to the nature of the creatures over which it is exercised" (Hodge 1988:213–216). Therefore, Hodge defines "providence" as God's divine power, which guides and preserves human destiny, based upon their elected purpose. In this case, Hodge's interpretation of providence puts the elect (the United States) and its colonizing work above all other entities through the will of the Divine.

As Princeton Theology was the most influential theology of the time and it predated the original definition of Manifest Destiny, it can be argued that this ideology's roots can be found in the works of Hodge. In fact, it could even be further argued that Manifest Destiny is the American Protestant interpretation of the Catholic originating Doctrine of Discovery.

EIGHTEENTH- AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY SCIENTIFIC RACISM

Though the focus until now has been on investigating the ecclesial beliefs concerning the status of Indigenous peoples, leading to the creation of the assimilative boarding schools, this work was not done in isolation. While the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment have shared origins, the use of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century science alongside religious ideology to legitimize Western worldviews is seen throughout boarding school history.

For instance, the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century "gave rise to various innovative strains of thought about race, nationhood, language and ethnicity," together creating a belief that Western European peoples had a level of superiority over all other races, a notion "from which the doctrines of Aryan racialism would eventually evolve" (Kidd 2006:80). This new "science of anthropology . . . was based upon the attempt to determine man's exact place in nature through observation, measurements, and comparisons between groups of men and animals . . . which [was] supposed to express itself in a tangible, physical way, which could be measured and observed [through] both phrenology and physiognomy" (Mosse 2020:3–4). Overall, these forms of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century anthropology set out not only to understand humanity's place in nature but to determine which human race was superior using pseudoscience, labeling those deemed inferior and "considered to be of non-European racial and cultural origins" as either primitive or "savage" (Kidd 2006:80).[15] This scientific racism mirrored the rise of

Hodge's understanding of national election, which shared a belief of superiority over other peoples with the social scientific beliefs of the time. While these rationalizations came from different spheres, they shared the same conclusion concerning the status of Indigenous peoples to the point where terms such as "primitive," "pagan," or "savage" were used interchangeably amongst ecclesial leaders of the era (Jackson 1878–1893:8).

Hodge, though controversial in this realm for his critique of Darwinism, was the inheritor of the Calvinist tradition's "profound confidence in the harmony of religion and science" (Wells 1988:158), if it did not contradict his interpretation of scripture. While neither of these distinct ideologies from ecclesial or scientific circles are as openly accepted today, both trains of thought look to be less an interpretation of their disciplines than an interpretation of the status of the United States and other groups originating from Western Europe.

As a result, missionaries often saw their assimilative work to be in conjunction with the work of ethnologists and anthropologists. This intersection of religion and social science can be seen later in Jackson's own work, such as his creation of the Alaskan Natural History of Ethnology, a group meant to study the "primate" nature of Alaska Natives and "reduce the Thlinget language to writing" (Jackson 1898:1619), and the phrenological measurement of Native children's heads (Jackson ca. 1850–1890). This relationship was not limited to Reformation or Protestant circles, as Father Julius Jette of the Roman Catholic Church, who established various assimilative schools throughout the Interior of Alaska, also worked with the infamous anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička on various projects (Renner 2005:300).

Ultimately this Princeton Theological mission framework, in conjunction with social science, gave rise to the works and persuasion of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions and Home Missions. Both organizations show Sheldon Jackson as a member after his tenure under the tutelage of Hodge.

THE IDEOLOGY OF SHELDON JACKSON

Sheldon Jackson was not only a product of his environment but, through his actions during the boarding school era, expanded what "Western civilization first" meant in the face of Princeton Theology's belief in the total depravity of Indigenous peoples. Before his tenure in Alaska, Jackson served as superintendent for the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions for most of the western half of the United States (Jackson 1855–1909:117). It was during this time that Jackson's commitment to colonial endeavors and his use of Hodge's theological model is most clearly revealed.[16] This is best witnessed in Jackson's work in Sweetwater Mine, Wyoming, where conflict with the Sioux of Wind River was common.[17] Jackson considered the territory of Wyoming to be "rich with resources" and the "richest of the cluster of territories," and his solution to the mine's inability to extract resources was to "lay the foundations of our church" through the erection of Presbyterian churches and missions (Jackson 1868–1878:2). It is here that we see most clearly Jackson's early use of assimilative schools as a tactic for the extraction of resources.[18] In other writings where Jackson discusses his view of Indigenous peoples—referenced as "The Indian Problem"—he states:

> At the council-board of Home Missions Plans are formulated to make self respecting useful Christian citizens out of the Indians. For over a century the government has wrestled with the Indian question-fought bloody wars, maintained expensive military posts and expended millions of dollars, but no great success has followed except where Christian missions have introduced the gospel and Christian schools have brought about the desired results. (Jackson 1906–1907:111)

The framework of assimilative education described by Jackson synthesizes the ideologies of *Inter Caetera* in terms of land possession and Cotton Mather's "Praying Indian" dichotomy through the lens of Princeton Theology. Through Mather's ideological groundwork in understanding the personhood of Indigenous peoples based upon salvific status, and Jackson's own educational background enlightening his definition of that status on the election of the United States as God's chosen nation, Jackson's framework of the basis of personhood is based on both national and religious distinctions. This creates a theological framework of missions that benefits from the stipulations put into place by the Doctrine of Discovery concerning land ownership, but from a Protestant lens.

While this is shocking, we see the early "praying Indian/heathen" dichotomy at play when Jackson suggests that if this missionization is not successful, "Fort Russell is nearby, with barracks for 1200 men" (Jackson 1906–1907:111). In other words, Jackson suggests that if his form of assimilation for the sake of resource extraction is not successful, then a violent military approach is the

other way to access these resources. As a result, we get a glimpse into Jackson's understanding of the role of assimilative education, which was a means to an end for furthering Western civilization and resource extraction. This assimilative missionization was never intended to uplift the Wind River Sioux people: instead, it was a way around those whom ecclesial figures like Jackson would never see as people, but only as a problem. Coleman (2007:34) points out that missionaries who were products of Hodge's theology held to "an empirical method for formulating their theological system," meaning that nothing done was without being systematized.[19]

If Sheldon Jackson was a product of his environment where there was a push toward systemization of missions and furthering Western civilization, how does this link to the resource extraction efforts early in Jackson's career? The historian Alan Trachtenberg states that "land and minerals . . . served economic and ideological purposes, the two merging into a single complex image of the West: a temporal site of the rout from past to future, and the special site for revitalizing national energies" (Campbell 2007:200). Ultimately, the extraction of resources became a defining factor of the United States' image of Western civilization. To further Western civilization meant extracting resources throughout the continent, an aspect of colonialism that was hinted at in 1493's *Inter Caetera*. Therefore, through Jackson's reach as superintendent for the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions, this framework for the purpose and ideology of the boarding schools became these missionaries' more nuanced gospel.

THE ALASKA COMITY PLAN

While Protestant entities in the contiguous United States were creating assimilative institutions based on established Western Christian doctrine, Russian Orthodoxy was embarking on a missionization and education defined by the doctrines of the eastern church. The Latin-speaking (western) and Greek-speaking (eastern) churches split in 1054, causing both a geographical and ideological divide that included Orthodoxy not officially recognizing Latin doctrine such as *Inter Caetera*. Nearly 700 years later, these two ideologies would meet again in Alaska, which was occupied by Russia and its Orthodox Church from 1724 to 1867 (Wickersham 1927:4).

RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY AND ITS INFLUENCE IN ALASKA

Russia's educational influence during its occupation of Alaska began with a request to Empress Catherine II, who had introduced freedom of religion to all of Russia earlier, for "teachers to explain further the tenets of the faith" to the Alaska Native populations, to which Catherine responded and "dispatched missionaries to the field immediately" (Oleksa 1992:34). Shortly after, Russian schools were established in places such as Kodiak by clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church in the 1830s.

While more investigation is needed to uncover the story of the Russian education system within Alaska, it can be said that the systems and categorization of personhood of Indigenous peoples used by the Western Church, were not used by Russian Orthodoxy. The Orthodox response to Alaska Native peoples and practices was systemically different. One reason for this difference was the Eastern monastic influence and approach by many like St. Herman and St. Innocent Veniaminov (Oleksa 1992:37). This created an openness to Alaska Native cultures and beliefs among some Russian missionaries, who not only allowed Native languages in their schools but also saw that "these people were intimately connected to each other and their environment. . . . They loved their land, their families, their community, their culture and their Creator" (Bates and Oleksa 2008:31). These interactions between Russian Orthodox monks and Alaska Native populations were not a syncretization of belief systems but instead an Alaska Native Orthodoxy "created by Native Americans rather than imposed by the missionaries, a result of a dialogue rather than 'influence'" (Tsapina 2000:2). As a result, a distinct religious tradition rooted in Alaska Native beliefs and practices arose in the form of Alaska Native Orthodoxy.

Those working in the lucrative fur industry, however, did not share this view of the Alaska Native peoples. G. I. Shelikhov of the Shelikhov-Golikov Company was known to have killed hundreds of Sugpiat in 1784 because of "the Native inhabitants' unwillingness to become dependent on the new arrivals" (Williams 2009:30). This difference in the dynamic of power and treatment of the Alaska Native peoples often set the monastic and fur trader approaches apart and put them at odds with one another. This tension between Russian extractive workers and the Orthodox Church meant that there was little cooperation between

the two, unlike the model Jackson was carrying out in the United States at the time. While these Russian extractive entities were mainly concerned with the fur trade, they were aware of the richness of the other resources found in Alaska. This is illustrated well in Claus-M. Naske and Herman E. Slotnick's work, *Alaska: A History of the 49th State*, where they state:

> The company hired Enoch Jhalmar Furuhjelm, a Finnish mining engineer, to mine coal at Port Graham using machinery purchased in Boston. At the time of its greatest activity the mine employed 131 men and produced 35 tons a day, more than enough to meet the company's needs. When coal shipped to San Francisco sold at a loss, the company abandoned attempts to develop an export trade. Governor Nikolay Y. Rosenberg became discouraged when he discovered that the company could not compete with the more efficient Americans. . . . The Russians found petroleum, copper, and amber in their colony, but no industry developed. There was some mining of mica on the Kenai Peninsula, and some panning for gold took place. But in the 1860s, with the fur trade declining and the company's other enterprises either fading or being of too slight a character, there was, according to geographer James R. Gibson, "little choice for the Russians but to leave." (Naske and Slotnick 1987:58)

The Russian inability to compete with the United States in this market was one factor that contributed to their selling of Alaska in 1867 (Naske and Slotnick 1987:58). Though the Russian Orthodox Church's influence is still seen today in many Alaska Native communities along coastal Alaska, there is little evidence of the Russians' educational frameworks being adopted by the United States, who saw the Orthodox Church's contextualization of Alaska Native beliefs as incompatible with their merging of Americanization and Christianity.

JACKSON'S INTRODUCTION TO ALASKA

In 1877 Jackson made his first trip to Alaska.[20] At this time, ecumenical consolidation of assimilative work through boarding schools was practically nonexistent. The denominations that were present in Alaska operated independently. The Presbyterians were mainly in Southeast Alaska, the most accessible area when traveling from the contiguous United States. By 1877, they had already come to understand that this area was rich in resources (Campbell 2007:234). While the Presbyterians were intent on expanding throughout the state, other denominations began populating Southeast Alaska, often with the same goal of resource extraction in mind. This led to the first Comity Plan meeting on January 19, 1880, in the former Methodist Missions building at 805 Broadway in New York City (Jackson 1885–1896:97). Jackson stated that "the purpose of the Conference and the need of some arrangement (for) which the several Missionary Societies should not interfere with one another in Alaska work" (Jackson 1885–1896:101).

In attendance were Henry Kendall and Sheldon Jackson, representing the Presbyterians; John Reid, who represented the Methodists; and Henry Morehouse, who was secretary of the American Baptist Home Missions Society, with "the Congregational secretaries declin[ing the original meeting] and the secretary of Domestic Missions of the Episcopal Church . . . [who Jackson separately] saw in person" (Jackson 1885–1896:101). Later, the group included the Moravian, Congregationalist, and Roman Catholic Churches, who Jackson specifically states "acknowledged the courtesy of the Government and expressed a desire to cooperate" (Jackson 1885–1894:31). This would suggest that while the original 1880 meeting was groundbreaking, there were several Comity Plan meetings, the first instances of ecumenism in the Western churches. While Jackson does occasionally reference the Orthodox Church in a neutral sense, they were never invited to or designated land at any Comity Plan meeting.

Information concerning the original meeting is sparse, as no notes were taken during the meeting and the invitations were issued by the Presbyterian Secretary of Home Missions and delivered by Jackson, who "carried them in person to the secretaries of the several mission societies" (Jackson 1885–1896:101). Furthermore, the word "comity" was not used by those in attendance in the primary source material recently found. One of the largest pieces of missing evidence is the map that Field (1895:145–147) described: "Sheldon Jackson has spread out a map of Alaska. . . . Here was an ideal distribution of the missionary force." This leads us to wonder if this detail was real or an act of theater by the writer.

Finding information about the meeting proved to be a problem for the episcopal secretary of domestic missions in 1895, Rev. William S. Langford, who seemed to have no recollection of the event despite being named by Field (1895:145–147) as an attendee. Jackson referenced the lack of written evidence in a letter to Langford where he stated, "Nor do I remember that there was any written

agreement between the secretaries themselves, only a tacit understanding on the subject . . . to the present, that understanding has been quietly but effectively carried out, so that after the lapse of 15 years, you will find upon the map of Alaska that the mission of several churches are mainly located in the regions marked out by the Conference of 1880" (Jackson 1899:3). What becomes quickly apparent is that Jackson's statement about no written notes is an acknowledgment that this agreement was carried out in secret. As mentioned earlier, this secretive nature of the "Conference of 1880" led, ironically, to the Presbyterian–Episcopal relationship coming into conflict when the latter began planting ecclesiastical institutions in the former's area of Southeast Alaska, breaking the agreement of what we now call the Comity Plan (Jackson 1885–1896:102).

Langford denied the meeting ever took place, stating, "I have never heard of such a meeting, nor have I or any officer of this society been present at any such meeting," as his fear was "another entangling alliance has been made" (Jackson 1894–1898:90–91). In a letter to Jackson, Langford said, "In 1880 we had no officer known as the 'General Secretary' [referencing Field's work]. I was chosen in such position in 1885. . . . We who are now here have no memory of any such letter or meeting of secretaries as you allude to" (Jackson 1877–1908:46). In an ironic turn of events, these conflicts led to Jackson, Langford, and the other secretaries describing the meeting, including a copy of the original Comity Plan map that also includes the later agreements with the Congregationalists and Moravian Churches in a collection of letter correspondence (Jackson 1885–1896:106). This conflict was resolved when it was realized that Episcopal representation consisted of the former secretary, Dr. Twing, who died shortly afterward (Jackson 1885–1896:101). Therefore, the question of the purpose—and content—of this secretive meeting can only be fully answered with the discovery of primary source material.

INTERPRETING THE COMITY PLAN MAPS

The Comity Plan map (Fig. 3) is one of the most discussed and reimagined documents in the existing narrative. While it is a visually striking image that highlights the colonial intent concerning Alaska, there is more to be gleaned from it. Even with the Congregational and Moravian inclusions (who were not part of the original meeting in New York), the most telling part is the lack of ecclesial representation in the North and Interior. Noticeable are the large swaths of land that lay without "claim" from the denominations, even when they were given the option to do so (Jackson 1885–1896:106). This seems to hint that gaining land through boarding schools was not the intent behind their choices. Instead, there is another motivation for their selections. They "divided the land between the missions of different denominations so that one should not interfere with another" (Jackson 1885–1896:106). While motive will be discussed later, this correlation between objective and strict segregation of use of land reveals there are other factors that must be considered.

History has shown that the selected locations are resource-rich areas. Examples include the gold rushes on the Yukon, where the Episcopal Church laid claim before any others, and in Southeast Alaska, which by the mid-1880s produced "the largest industrial gold mine in the world" (Campbell 2007:234). Comparing the Comity Plan map to the only other map found in Jackson's collection validates the intent of the system (Jackson and Princeton Theological Seminary 1859–1908) (Fig. 4).

This map is a geological survey executed by Ivan Petroff in 1880. Petroff (Campbell 2007:235) ascribed to the "gold belt theory," which suggested that there was a wealth of gold stretching from Southeast Alaska southward to California. Petroff stated that "crossing into our Alaskan boundary away back and concealed from the sea by the towering summits of the coast ring . . . our miners . . . shall find the free gold and rich quartz in unwonted abundance." He also believed that this "gold belt" would "inspire the energies of numerous individual prospectors, who would open the country through their wandering efforts to discover precious metals in the frozen gravels of northern creeks" (Campbell 2007:235).[21] This pseudoscientific theory was ascribed to by many, including Jackson. This can be seen in a letter to the director of the Geological Survey, from whom Jackson received reports as late as 1907, including "Bulletin No. 287 on the Juneau Gold Belt of Alaska" and "A Reconnaissance of Admiralty Island" (Jackson and Princeton Theological Society 1906–1907:491). This is another example of the linkage between resource extraction and the ideology of westward expansion playing out through Jackson's framework, which hinged on the forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples.

What is also striking about this geological map, especially in the Southeast region, is the addition of glaciers within the key, which otherwise only includes timber resources.[22] While lumber was, and continues to be, a significant industry in Southeast Alaska, the existence of

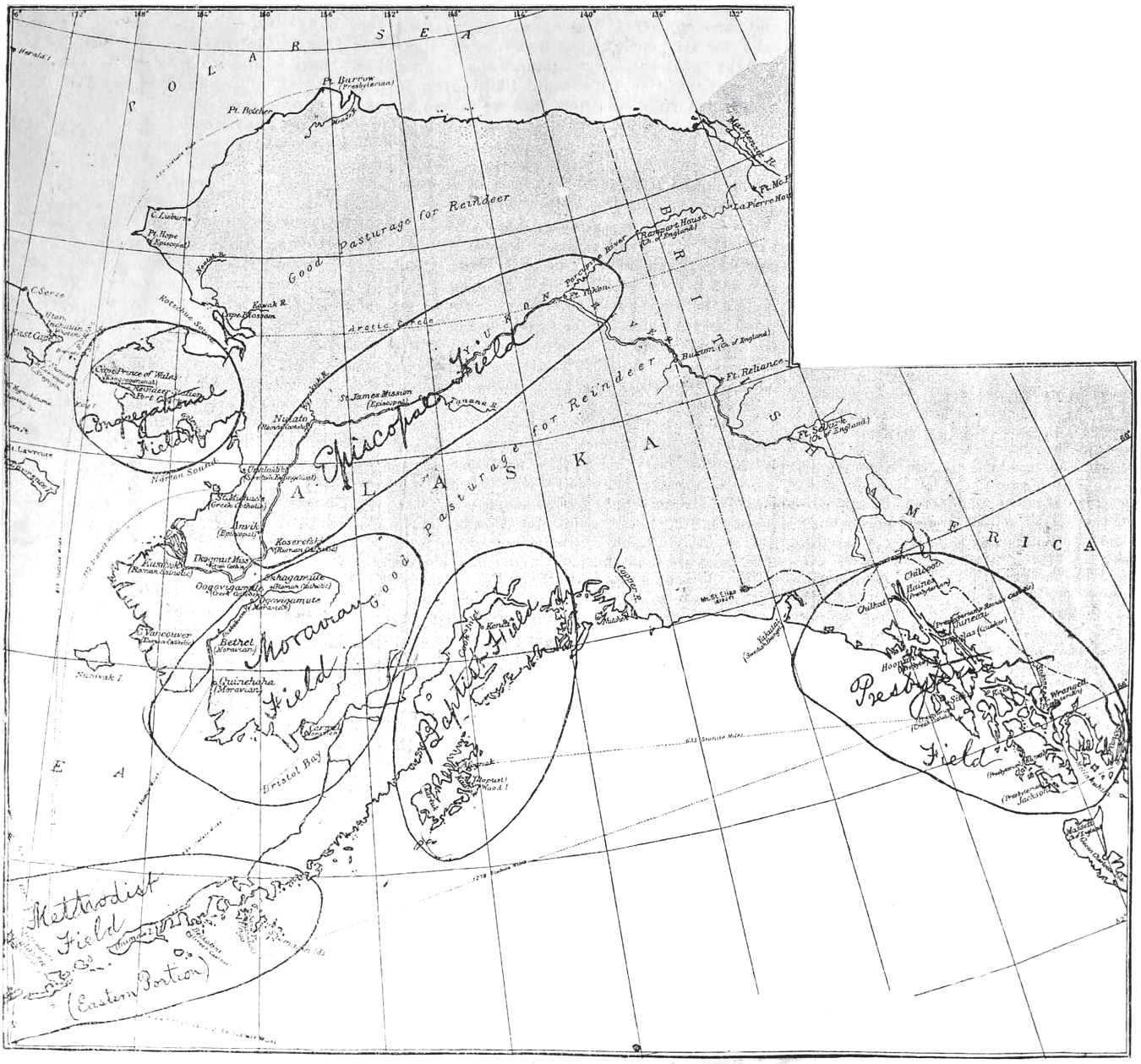

Figure 3. Comity Plan map. Courtesy of the Presbyterian Historical Society (Jackson 1885–1896:106).

glaciers in an area created an even more tempting possibility. In the late nineteenth century, there was a belief that "the study of the glacial phenomenon had . . . 'a direct value in its connection with the distribution of the placer gold deposits and on the existence and position of the buried channels of rivers and streams, in which some of the richest of those deposits are often found to occur'" (Campbell 2007:238). While the richest glacial fields were found in Southeast Alaska, the Baptist and Methodist fields were also abundant with glacier-rich land. This may have left the Episcopal field without gold-signifying glaciers; however, it is shown through their correspondence that this was not an issue. Gold was only one of many resources to be extracted in the areas these denominations chose, as lumber, fish, coal, pelts, etc. were also of interest to these institutions. While the gold belt theory can be best described as pseudoscience—and opinions of Petroff's work as inaccurate at best by his peers and many modern scholars (e.g., Black 1981; cf. K. Pratt 1997)—Jackson's continual reliance upon Petroff throughout his career in Alaska highlights his trust in the work being done.

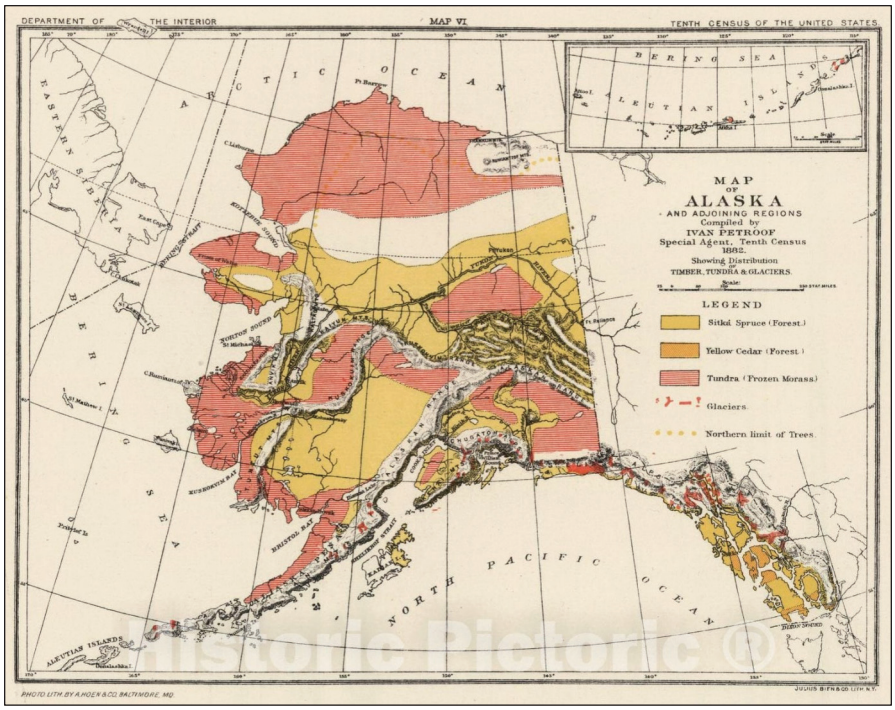

Figure 4. 1883 Geological Survey of Alaska map by Ivan Petrof. Courtesy of Princeton Theological Seminary (Jackson 1859–1908).

COMITY PLAN OBJECTIVES

When reading Henry Field's and others' work, the main consensus is that the various ecclesial institutions chose the areas represented on the map. While this might be true of the Presbyterian and Episcopal denominations (who were not present at the meeting but were later briefed), Methodist and Baptist schools had yet to be established, making this theory invalid. This is backed up by the Methodist Church's own account, which states, "Dr. Reid chose this section when Alaska was divided among the various Missionary Societies…and because next to the Sitka District, this is easiest of access from the states and has the most promising class of people to work.…October, 1886, our first school was opened at Unga" (Jackson 1888–1900:25).[23] Therefore, by the Methodist Church's own account, their first school opened six years after the Comity Plan meeting, making any argument for areas chosen out of existing precedence invalid. The Methodist account reveals several different elements not previously introduced to the conversation, including dispelling the idea that current occupation correlated to space claimed. Transportation within the Methodist region is also mentioned in the quote above as being the best way to gain access to the contiguous United States. This level of access via transportation is connected to the economics of their choice of region, leaving the transportation "of what" without answer. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate Jackson's correspondences to fully understand the motives behind this discourse.

Two subjects are surprising in their consistency when discussing the meeting: the first is how brief and almost nonexistent the discussion of Native education was, and the second is the plentifulness of resources in their respective areas. In 1899, Jackson stated: "During the past two years rich gold mines have been discovered in the valley of the Yukon, and nearly one half of the total white population of Alaska is now in the Yukon vally [*sic*]—and 40 Mile Creek and Circle City, both in the Yukon Valley are rapidly outstripping Juneau. At the same time rich mines on Cooks [*sic*] Inlet and Unga Island are attracting immigration to the sections where Baptist and Methodist are at work" (Jackson 1899:3–4).

In an 1895 letter between Jackson and the Episcopal Church that predates the gold rush, Jackson discusses the Episcopalian region and states, "Settlers are pouring [in] attracted by its gold mines, he [the Episcopal Church] will have a diocese, not only vast in extent, but that in a few years will have a population that will equal that of many of our Western States and territories.…They will reach every heathen in the frozen North and carry the Gospel to the borders of the Arctic circle" (Jackson 1885–1896:98). While the Episcopalians were granted first pick within this region due to their preexisting work, it is important to recognize the large role gold played in the Yukon River basin being the place they were relegated to. As for the Baptists and Methodists, Jackson wrote to Langford, "At the same time rich mines on Cooks [*sic*] Inlet and Unga Island are attracting a white immigration to the sections where the Baptist and Methodist are at work" (Jackson 1885–1896:104). What becomes immediately evident is that the absence of the education status of the Native population was filled with discussion of wealth through resources, the many extraction workers making their way to the region, and Western expansion. One of the few

instances where Jackson or the others mention education or conversion is in the earlier quote that referred to Alaska Natives as the "heathens in the frozen North." Through this exchange, Jackson reveals the real motivation for the regions chosen during the Comity Plan meeting: access to the natural resources known about at the time.

The American Baptist denomination also sheds light on the various extractive industries that could be explored in Alaska in their 1889 *Home Missions Monthly*, which begins with a list of what had been extracted thus far:

Fish, oil, bone and ivory	$3,225,000
Furs	$1,750,000
Gold	$2,000,000
Silver	$50,000
Total	$7,025,000

> The output of the canning factories has grown from 36,000 cases of four dozen one-pound cans in 1883 to 460,000 cases in 1889. The product of the mines, so far, are mainly gold and coal. There are a large number of excellent coal seams. "Deposits of coal," says the report, "have been found in a dozen or more places upon the islands and coats of southern Alaska, and at Cape Lisburne in the Artic. Samples of many of them may be seen on exhibit at Juneau and Sitka. The coal fields of the Kenai Peninsula are very extensive, and the coal layers, three in number, one above another, with layers of clay between, aggregate fifteen feet in thickness at the place of the exposure upon the beach. It is convenient of access, with a good harbor, and it is estimated that it can be delivered in San Francisco for $3.25 per ton." (American Baptist Home Mission Society 1890:107)

Accounting for inflation, the total worth of the production for 1899 in 2023 dollars is $227,556,550. From seeing the earnings for one year, it would be an understatement to say the total earnings for the 83 years the Baptists operated in the region would be astronomical—and even larger for the statewide operations across all ecclesial entities. While this is a staggering number, this Baptist publication also reveals the top eight products of most interest: fish, oil, bone, ivory, furs, gold, silver, and coal. The article also mentions the role of the transportation of extracted resources provided by the other denominations in describing its "ease of access" to locations such as "San Fransico [sic]" (American Baptist Home Mission Society 1890:107). It also gives the exact cost for transporting these resources. From just these passing statements, the role of transportation in Alaska is a subject that should be investigated further in the future.

What ultimately made the Comity agreement so groundbreaking is that it was the first time that such a diverse collection of Christian denominations joined in an ecumenical cause, which likely influenced future such meetings. While the Plan of Union of 1801 was structured to provide personnel support in the field, the Comity Plan was almost entirely based on resource extraction and other economic ventures carried out independently by each group. Jackson employed this model earlier in his career, and as time went on he succeeded in carrying out this framework on a larger scale with more partners.

Jackson's public voice in the status of extractive work in Alaska and its connection with missions' work in Alaska is highlighted in his article "What Missionaries Have Done for Alaska." In a section titled "Some Results of the Work," he states:

> If you ask the average miner the result of missionary work, he will tell you that there are no results whatever from these twenty-five years' work of the churches in Alaska. He does not stop to think that he is in the country as the result of that work. During the past few years many thousands of white men have gone from all parts of this country to the Alaska Gold-mines. . . . Why is it that the white man can go everywhere? It was not always thus. The miner will tell you that it is because the people are so docile; but (h)is knowledge of Alaskan History is very slight . . . (it is) because missions have been established there for ten or fifteen years. (Jackson 1903:497–504, 500–502)

Jackson takes credit for the success of mining in Alaska in terms of his role in making the population "docile" through his establishment of missions. This correlates to Jackson's earlier work in Wind River in "domesticating" the Sioux population for the purpose of opening the land to the extraction of resources at the expense of Native populations. As will be discussed later, denominations profited off resource extraction in two ways: (1) off the workers populating the area and (2) directly off the materials being extracted. This model established in Alaska through Jackson and the Comity Plan set a precedent for all colonial projects of the Western church throughout the world.

As for the Presbyterian Church, the Board of Home Missions Annual Meeting reports that discuss Alaska are centered around its resources, as seen in the following example.

> [Alaska's] great forests are yet unknown, its mines are undeveloped, its fisheries are hardly heard of, and its seal trade has only begun. What population

> may yet pour into the islands on its coast where the climate is mild and the means of subsistence easily obtained, no one can tell. Already there are here from thirty thousand to forty thousand Indians wholly dependent on our church for their education and religious advantages. (Presbyterian Church of the United States of America Board of Home Missions 1883:7)

From the wording found in this report, it is undeniable that the Presbyterian gaze is on the resources—and Native education is a secondary priority. This becomes even more focused in the 1888 report where the Presbyterians define the term "comity" for the entire denomination after discussing natural resources found in the Black Hills.

> In as much as competitions have sometimes arisen from apparent rivalries, and from irregularity in the dismissal of ministers and church members from one missionary body to another, it was agreed that the missionary force of the different bodies should be so distributed as to cover the greatest extent of territory compatible with efficiency; that cities of more than 15,000 inhabitants should be opened to joint occupancy by the different missions, while those of less population should be left to the Church first entering the field, unless abandoned for more than one year. It was also resolved that in smaller towns already occupied by the different denominations, the desire of the people, the claims of property and priority should be taken into consideration, and that only one church should remain, unless a mutual agreement should be arrived at. All disputed questions are to be referred to a board of arbitration, whose members are to be elected by the several missions. It was agreed that no minister or such member should be received into another church unless regularly dismissed by the proper authorities, and on the distinct understanding of the mission from which he separated. (Presbyterian Church of the United States of America Board of Home Missions 1888:32)

What is interesting about this "Missional Comity protocol" was how it took more from the Jacksonian model than the Plan of Union of 1801 in its structure, being carried out within the context of the Black Hills. The model was centered on profit through extraction, keeping ecumenicism at arm's length. As stated earlier, the Alaska Comity Plan was less about enforcing already-formed private jurisdictions than creating them for the purpose of resource extraction. Therefore, this legal definition of "comity" more mirrors the twentieth century's that was defined in *Hilton v. Guyot* (1895), which stated that "whatever comity means, it is a concern that arises from the sovereign equality of states. . . . Thus, as the twentieth century began, it was still clear that the doctrine of comity derived from the respect that one sovereign paid to another . . . as such, the obligation to do justice bound courts to protect vested rights" (Paul 2008:27–28). These jurisdictions could not be understood as public law during this timeframe, but they could be understood as an obligation to recognize the private ecclesial sovereignty between denominations.

It was this yearning for the profit coming from natural resources that fueled the need for ecclesial bodies to create ecumenical structures for the purpose of furthering Western civilization. The design of this operation was always to the benefit of these ecclesial institutions and to the detriment of Indigenous populations. While this can also be seen through the other denominations, it was the Presbyterians, through Sheldon Jackson, who fully systematized this new form of colonialism. This model was disseminated in an assortment of ways, most directly through secretaries such as John Reid, a Methodist leader who was an active in the Canadian context and can be seen using this structure later.[24]

There is an abundance of correspondence concerning the affiliated churches' ability to make money from the miners entering Alaska, but there is another level to these denominations' ability to generate revenue by working directly with various extractive companies, some of which still are in existence. This is most directly represented in Jackson's correspondence with resource extraction companies and his handling of their involvement in Alaska. This can be seen in Jackson's correspondence with Reynolds Alaska Development Company, where he states that he has received their "prospectus for 1907" and that "the week does not pass that I do not get them from mines from Mexico to Alaska. . . . A prospectus without a knowledge of the men behind it is of no value whatever to me" as "it usually goes into the waste basket without being read" (Jackson and Princeton Theological Society 1906–1907:343). Jackson's opinion of Reynolds Alaska Development Company changed, however, when he was invited to be "entertained" by them during his stay in Washington, DC, leading to a prospectus being signed (Jackson and Princeton Theological Society 1906–1907:345). Shortly afterward, Jackson wrote that he would send money to buy "500 shares of the deferred stock of the Reynolds Alaska Development Company" (Jackson and Princeton Theological Society 1906–1907:385).[25] From the beginning, Jackson states that receiving and signing

prospectuses for extractive industries was a very common practice. While that on its own is not terribly shocking, his purchase of stocks in the company following the grant of permission to work does prove surprising.

This reveals a more sinister level to Jackson's framework, as in his position as U.S. secretary of education, he would directly profit off the resource extraction allowed through the assimilation of Alaska Native children. The insidious nature of Jackon's deployment of his reformational ideology of personhood, grounded in committing cultural genocide for the prospect of monetary gain, cannot be stressed enough. Further, this system was later adopted on a global scale.[26] While the agreements made within this meeting were not legally binding, the terms set by these various Protestant denominations became the framework for how each understood the other's work, and it influenced their future agreements with the federal government concerning the territory of Alaska.

ECUMENICAL WORK

While the original denominations that took part in the 1880 meeting were included in the Comity Plan, several others also became involved with assimilative education in Alaska. In terms of Moravian inclusion, Jackson recounts this later addition to the Comity Plan:

> In the spring of 1883, having an opportunity of visiting Bethlehem, Pa., I secured a conference with the late Edmund de Schweinitz, D.D., a bishop of the Moravian Church, and urged upon him the establishment of a mission to the Eskimo of Alaska. A few days later the request was repeated in writing, which letter, on the 23rd of August, 1883, was laid before the Moravian "Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen." (Jackson and Princeton Theological Seminary 1892–1893:179)

Other later inclusions consisted of the Swedish Evangelical Union Mission in 1886, which was first located in Unalakleet and later moved to Yakutat; Roman Catholics, who took the unclaimed areas in the Interior; and the Congregationalists through the American Board of Home Missions in 1890 (Jackson and Princeton Theological Seminary 1892–1893:183–187). With these additions, the Comity Plan was the largest ecumenical effort found in North America to date.[27] There is not much evidence regarding the involvement of resource extraction as a cause for ministry; however, the above-mentioned churches did find common ground on the subjugation of Indigenous peoples for the expansion of empire. Despite these agreements, there were several instances of Protestant–Roman Catholic friction, such as the Jesuit intrusion into Kotzebue in the 1920s, when the "Quakers did protest to the Bureau of Education . . . citing Sheldon Jackson's promise of an exclusive field," although by this time the "Bureau maintained neutrality in the dispute" (Flanders 1991:51). It became clear that the federal government wanted to divorce itself from such agreements made behind closed doors, as by this time all who were in attendance at the original Comity Plan meeting had passed away.

While the separation of church and state today is a contextually distinct issue from its understanding in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jackson's conflation of federal and ecclesiastical entities laid the groundwork for his eventual resignation as secretary of education in 1908, as a result of the 1906 Churchill Report. In addition to Jackson receiving "pay from both the federal government and the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions," Churchill reported that this relationship between church and state became "so confused that no one could sort out what exactly had transpired" because "Jackson had not been concerned about distinguishing between government and the mission assets or funds" (Flanders 1991:48). This commingling of federal and ecclesial bodies—which came about through Jackson's appointment and the preexisting Comity Plan—not only shaped the boarding school system in Alaska but had effects that would be seen for decades to come through the work of Hall Young and the Presbyterian-ordained Alaska Governor John Brady.

THE COMITY PLAN TODAY

The ongoing legacy of the Comity Plan can still be seen throughout Alaska, as exemplied bt the Eklutna Vocational School. Though Eklutna opened in 1909, after Sheldon Jackson's death, it was informed by the same model of resource extraction and assimilative education. The school leaders, E.L. Everett and his wife Myrtle Everett (later Bragaw), were no exceptions to this. Not only did they purchase fishing rights in the Cook Inlet at Trading Bay (Myrtle Everett Bragaw and Anchorage Museum Collections n.d. [folder 9]), the Everetts also gained mining land claims at the "Willow Creek Mining District," which were rich with gold and coal at the time (Myrtle Everett Bragaw and Anchorage Museum Collections n.d. [folder 7]). Because they ran an industrial school, the Everetts tapped their students as labor, as can be be seen in

photographs in their collection at the Anchorage Museum of Alaska Native children working within these extractive industries (Myrtle Everett Bragaw and Anchorage Museum Collections nd [folder 1]) (Fig. 5). According to the 1930 yearbook, many of the trades taught at Eklutna correlated to the industries the Everetts were already invested in (Myrtle Everett Bragaw and Anchorage Museum Collections n.d. [folder 6, pp. 20–21]). Therefore, in the case of this institution, the prospect of resource extraction within assimilative education evolved to include the labor of minors in extractive industries.

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND THE COMITY PLAN

Throughout the centuries and throughout the world, ecclesial bodies have worked to develop a way of legitimizing the displacement of Indigenous peoples in the name of God. Through structures meant to dehumanize Alaska Native peoples while propping up the expansion of a colonial Western civilization, assimilative education became a vehicle for resource extraction through the Comity Plan. This colonial endeavor for monetary gain led to one of the first ecumenical movements, one not of charity but of a systematic oppression that spread throughout the world and still affects Alaska Native peoples negatively today. The disastrous results and structures of violence have remained through the present time.

Johan Galtung, in his work Violence, Peace, and Peace Research, defines structural violence as "the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is…when the potential is higher than the actual is by definition avoidable and when it is avoidable, then violence is present" (Galtung 1969:168–169). When violence is somewhat hidden or societally accepted, this is often due to the structure having multiple offenders, making the violence harder to recognize, and the "actual" quality of life for the oppressed being significantly lower than the "potential."[28] Jackson's boarding schools system treated the humanity and identity of Alaska Native peoples as less than those of individuals of European descent, thereby erasing the personhood of Native populations. This loss of identity and personhood correlates to many issues, existing ideologies, and forms of violence Alaska Natives face today at high rates (for example, suicide and forms of abuse), but the loss of identity/personhood and its connection to the resource extraction endorsed by the Comity Plan reveals another

Figure 5. "Labor Camp" ca. 1924–1941. Myrtle Everett Bragaw Collection, Anchorage Museum, B2021.008.3.

issue. "A 2016 Department of Justice-funded study found that in the United States, 'Native women are 1.2 times as likely as non-Hispanic white women to have experienced violence in their lifetimes,'" and that "In energy boomtowns, Native women are particularly susceptible to becoming crime victims due to their locations in rural and remote communities" (Washington 2020:723–724). Boomtown settings, which foster the dehumanization of Alaska Native women, combined with large quantities of transient males working in extractive industries, greatly contribute to various forms of abuse. For instance, "Native women are particularly susceptible to human trafficking due to their concomitant exposure to risk factors, including domestic violence, sexual assault, economic exploitation, and generational poverty" (Washington 2020:725). Through resource extraction and cultural genocide coming together, Jackson's Comity Plan in Alaska has significantly contributed to the missing and murdered Indigenous women crisis, if not introducing it to Alaska. While there were many instances of abuse occurring within the schools themselves, it is important to focus on the legacy of the Comity Plan, which set out to subjugate Indigenous peoples through religious means, with economic motivations. The fact that the "actual" is far below the "potential," pertaining to the genocide of Indigenous women, has and never should be the norm. The legacy of the Comity Plan is not one of ecclesial praise but of oppression through the structures of violence these institutions propagated.

Another continued effect of the Comity Plan and boarding school era is the lack of self-compassion among Native Alaskans due to historical loss/trauma and the loss of practices associated with individual or collective cultural identity. This lack of self-compassion is directly connected to the assimilative policies described throughout this essay. In a 2023 paper entitled "Psychological Impacts of Historical Loss and Current Events Surrounding American Indian Boarding Schools," it is found that Alaska Native peoples "have experienced mass trauma as a result of colonialism and cultural genocide . . . loss of land, culture, values and traditions have been shown to heighten negative coping factors," which can reveal itself through "AI/AN people succumbing to substance use, violence, depression, and PTSD," recognizing historic loss as the main contributing factor (Sebwenna-Painter et al. 2023:2, 8).[29] While this historic loss, or destruction of cultural identity initiated through the assimilative boarding school policies, has caused all these current issues within the Alaska Native community, the restoration of self-confidence through the same cultural systems meant to be erased becomes the viable way to find healing.

The response of Alaska Native peoples in recent years has been one of resistance through revitalization of the same cultures these denominations set out to dismantle. As Maria Shaa Tlaa Williams stated in her groundbreaking chapter "The Comity Agreement" in *The Alaska Native Reader*:

> With the Native Solidarity movement of the 1960s and the landmark 1971 Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement, indigenous peoples in Alaska began to reclaim their identities. Dance festivals and new dance groups emerged as traditional dance began to be publicly embraced beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. By 1990 major dance festivals occurred annually in Bethel (Camai Festival), Anchorage (AFN Quyana Nights), Fairbanks (Athabascan Fiddling Festival, Festival of Alaska Native Arts), Barrow (Kivgiq), and Juneau (Celebration). There are literally hundreds of traditional dance groups in Alaska and young people are learning the regalia making, song composition, and the repertoires of their ancient cultural heritage. (Williams 2009:160)

This section brilliantly shows that while annihilation of culture was a key component of Jackson's plan, Alaska Native peoples are fighting for our cultural identities as the way we define ourselves. Though there are many reasons for this, a large aspect of this sudden revitalization is the yearning for cultural healing.

Cultural revitalization as healing from the structures of violence and historical loss created by the boarding school era is also seen in the Alaska Native Heritage Center's Boarding School Healing Totem Pole, raised in October 2023, followed by a Dena'ina/Haida Healing Potlatch. This pole told the history of the boarding schools in Alaska using various Haida oral traditions, with stories such as Wolf Mother and Raven. While this was a Haida pole being risen on Dena'ina land, the monument is representative of all Alaska Native peoples, coming together to bring light to a dark part of our history that still impacts all Alaska Natives. This ceremony highlighted how we can acknowledge the truth and find healing through our cultural practices—a healing that is not based on Western Christianity or ideology, but one that is defined by the practices of our ancestors, who tell us our worth and who we are as Native peoples.

CONCLUSION

My grandfather Mack Dolchok would talk to me about how, in order to talk about healing, we must first know what we need healing from. It is from the truth of our pain and oppression that we can then know what healing begins to look like, but the truth must be brought to light. It is for this reason that I tell the story that he never was able to.

Within this work the origins of the ecclesial beliefs and laws that led to the boarding schools and the Alaska Comity Plan were discussed; the contents of the Comity Plan agreement and the subsequent agreements amongst the denominations, including the central theme of resource extraction were analyzed; and a portion of the continued effects of the Comity Plan was seen through the lens of the Structural Violence Model. This was done to both accurately highlight the Alaska Comity Plan agreement and to show its continued effects upon Alaska Natives. The reasoning behind telling this story is not to highlight a part of Alaska history but to contribute to a fuller understanding of what healing looks like within the Alaska Native context.

Healing is something that Alaska Natives continue to seek but can only be realized through knowing the full truth of what occurred in the past and how it affects all Indigenous peoples today. For only when we begin to understand the structures of violence that continue to negatively impact us, what we have been told about ourselves, and the significance of who we are as Native peoples can healing begin to take place. When praxis is discovered and brought to light is when liberation and healing is found.

For in the words my Grandfather was not allowed to speak: *Chiqinik il Naqeltanich.*

NOTES

1. While this meeting was referred to earlier in various Protestant missions' society annual reports, this was the first widespread publication that made the meeting known to the general public. It should also be mentioned that while this meeting is commonly referred to as the "Comity Plan," the participants never refer to it as such. This has caused much confusion in previous researchers' attempts to find primary resources on the topic, as they are not using the same vocabulary.
2. I capitalize "the Church" to highlight the ecumenical harmony that this act of imperialism generated at this meeting. It would be a disservice to this act if we attributed it to "a few bad actors" instead of an act of the major ecclesial institutions in the United States of America.
3. Before going any further, it should be acknowledged that while much has been written about the colonization of Indigenous peoples, our histories should not be exclusively defined by the last 500 years, but by the last 100,000+ we have existed. Now that the difference between the history that affects Indigenous peoples versus the history that defines Indigenous peoples has been acknowledged, it is important to understand the earlier time and its eventual direct impact on Alaska Natives. This work also uses the terms "Alaska Native" and "Indigenous," the latter referring generally to all Indigenous peoples and the former referring more specifically to the Alaska Native peoples.
4. This can be seen in Ruth Bader Ginsburg's Supreme Court comments in the 2005 Supreme Court decision on the *City of Sherrill, New York v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York* (Ginsburg 2005), along with many other instances where it has been referred to as the "Law of the Nations"; *Johnson v M'Intosh Supreme Court Ruling* (Marshall 1823).
5. The concept of resource extraction was laid out in the earlier papal bulls: "*Dum Diversas* and *Romanus Pontifex* issued by Pope Nicholas V authorized King Alfonzo to 'search out and conquer all pagans, enslave them, and appropriate their lands and goods'" (McBroom 2018:33). with the latter bull extending and clarifying territorial demarcations belonging to Portugal. While this is an important piece of ecclesial legislation within this context, grasping how canon law was formed in this way would take us all the way back to the Mongol invasion of Rome in the fifth century, a history that includes the Crusades in the Near East and northern Africa. Therefore, it can be easily proven that this idea of "conquest" is ingrained into the Western European system of values/identity and is a topic that is too large to be fully satisfied in this writing.
6. In the 1841 work entitled *History of the United States: From the Discovery of the American Continent*, George Bancroft stated: "The Settlement of New England was a result of the Reformation; not of the context between the new opinions and the authority of Rome, but of implacable differences between Protestant dissenters and the established Anglican Church. Who

will venture to measure the consequences of actions by the apparent humility or the remoteness of their origin? The mysterious influence of that Power which enchains the destines of states, overruling the decisions of sovereigns and the forethought of states men, often deduces the greatest events from the least commanding causes" (Bancroft 1875:266). Bancroft rightly points out the impact of Reformational thought as the leading ideology in the colonization of North America, while also revealing that it was not just a Reformational versus Roman Catholic problem, and splintering within the Protestant camp shows how none of these groups were really unified. This is important to realize, as ecumenicism does not truly surface across the board until the 1880 Comity Plan in Alaska. Though these groups did not necessarily get along, they did not think twice about borrowing structures from their ecclesial enemies.

7. This theological framework of groups identifying with the peoples of Israel in their conquest of Canaan is a common theme throughout North American theology.
8. It should be noted that while these Puritans were severely opposed to Catholic Doctrine, elements of the Doctrine of Discovery were present very early on in their theology.
9. As this is an older form of English, a modernized form of this quote would be "God's divine providence hath shown God's light upon an Indian Wilderness." Mather makes many claims about the status and condition of the Indigenous peoples of North America, including the notion of the "praying Indian," but detailing them is beyond the scope of this work.
10. For further reading on Mather's understanding of the "Praying Indian," see Lonkhuyzen (1990).
11. This is not to be confused with the "Act of Union of 1801" between Great Britain and Ireland, as the two agreements are by no means related.
12. While the Plan of Union of 1801 is interesting, it is relevant to the topic at hand because it is one of the formal instances of ecclesial comity and has often been the subject referenced by other scholars as the direct ideological descendent of the Alaska Comity Plan. Yet, as will be explained later, while being ecumenical in nature, these two agreements could not be more different (e.g., see Moore 1892:5–8).
13. The Old School–New School Controversy is an important topic, but its specifics are outside the scope of this work, as it gets heavily into the issue of slavery. The revival tendencies of the Congregationalists can also be seen in photos from *Life and Light for Women*: *Women's Board of Missions 1873–1922*, the American Home Mission Society's first writing (Women's Board of Missions 1873:173–174), which places more emphasis on the Great Commission found in the gospels than on the doctrine of election (Old School). Though the "controversy" is typically presented in this way theologically, the issue between the lines of these semantics is the issue of slavery in the United States.
14. The theologies of election and total depravity are two driving forces in Hodge's work. For more on his theological reflections on the depravity of Indigenous and African American individuals, see Hodge (2015).
15. For a detailed discussion of early anthropological thinking related to social and cultural evolution, see Voget (1975:167–287).
16. Sheldon Jackson was involved in many colonial endeavors throughout his tenure in the Lower 48, including the use of boarding schools to successfully construct railroads for the purpose of tourism and resource extraction. The use of tourism and the construction of infrastructure is an important element toward understanding the fuller picture of Jackson's colonial work, but the topic is outside the scope of this article.
17. This article does not mention the Native population directly, but placing what is being said within its special and historical contexts (along with Jackson's involvement as a superintendent) reveals the "Indian Problem" being talked around. Failing to put this event into its historical context would render the article largely nonsensical. It should also be understood that, even in Jackson's time, the public would have looked down on the Presbyterian involvement in resource extraction being done under the guise of "Christian charity."
18. While Jackson had partnerships with the various companies that extracted said resources, those companies are not identified herein due to legal considerations: i.e., the entities are still in existence today.
19. This can be best seen in the writings of Presbyterianism's founder, John Calvin. Works such as *Institutes for Christian Religion* systematize his entire outlook on scripture, revealing the Reformation's hand in starting the Enlightenment era. This systemization of all things can be seen even today in not only Sheldon Jackson's writings but also the current structures of the various Presbyterian bodies.

20. Typically, people tend to place historical figures within their own context for the purpose of redemption. It cannot be stated enough that the actions carried out by the various ecclesial institutions are impossible to redeem.
21. Jackson's correspondence during his early tenure in Alaska includes a multitude of writings between him and Petroff concerning the resources of Alaska and the establishment of schools. Therefore, there should be no question that Jackson and Petroff were in constant communication (Campbell 2007:235).
22. When analyzing Petroff's map, one notices a heavy emphasis on the botany of Alaska. While this may have been an interest for Jackson, as Southeast Alaska is still famous for its lumber production, the inclusion of glaciers seems rather out of place outside of its historical context.
23. While transportation is the motive explained for the Methodist's choice of land, its accessibility to transportation to the Lower 48 of people and materials is an important element to consider when analyzing this meeting economically.
24. While this is an important topic, the Canadian Comity Plan was a later occurrence and is not addressed in this work.
25. It should be noted that Reynolds Alaska Development Company was active in Alaska until the early twenty-first century.
26. This can also be seen in other correspondence with various national leaders. Again, though it is important, this topic is outside the scope of this paper.
27. By the time Roman Catholics came to occupy the region, Jackson was not only the U.S. secretary of education but also a member of the Anti-Papal League. This explains why the Roman Catholics were given land that was previously deemed without resources.
28. While Galtung's methodology has many other layers, the purpose of introducing this concept is to reveal how the Comity Plan is still creating scenarios of violence for Alaska Natives. Though this is an important topic, it is a paper on its own.
29. Sebwenna-Painter, Beckstein, and Kraus's study concerning the historical loss/trauma is a helpful work that investigates the continued psychological effects of the boarding school era and is recommended for anyone interested in this area of study.

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