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Jonathan Todd Hancock. *Convulsed States: Earthquakes, Prophecy, and the Remaking of Early America.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021. 186 pp. $95.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4696-6217-6.

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In *Convulsed States: Earthquakes, Prophecy, and the Remaking of Early America*, Jonathan Todd Hancock provides an innovative work that ties together studies of the environment and natural disasters with studies of religion and politics. Centered around responses to the New Madrid Earthquakes of 1811-12, Hancock writes about how, "in experiencing, interpreting, and debating about the earthquakes, people ascribed various and overlapping intellectual, spiritual, political, and diplomatic meanings to land" (p. 3). Fundamentally, debates and disagreements about the cause(s) of the earthquakes—whether they were natural events or a response from a providential God—had important ramifications for state building and ideas of nationhood that centered around political and religious authority. Hancock situates his work in larger historiographical discussions, crossing different fields such as "environmental, religious, and intellectual history; ethnohistory; the history of science; disaster studies and the expansion of U.S. state power through disaster relief; and colonialism" (p. 3). Further, Hancock traverses different groups of people, spending a good amount of time analyzing Native American spiritual and religious traditions as well as involvement in the War of 1812.

In chapter 1, "Quaking," Hancock gives an overview of the events of the New Madrid Earthquakes, including people's immediate responses of fear and confusion. People quickly "situated the earthquakes alongside other human and environmental anomalies in 1811 and 1812," such as the Great Comet of 1811, a fire at the Richmond Theater that killed seventy-two people, and less obvious tensions surrounding territorial expansion and population growth (p. 12). Many people turned to religion to explain the events, and the Second Great Awakening exploded in the backcountry. In the South, fears of slave rebellion were further exacerbated by the disorder during the earthquakes. Native American nations similarly grappled with the meaning of the earthquakes among larger issues surrounding responses to the territorial expansion of the United States. Different nations responded differently to both the political and territorial pressures, and "prophets who accumulated spiritual authority and sought alternative forms of governance constituted major threats to established Native leaders already contending with U.S. pressure" (p. 23). Hancock details the different responses that different groups and different people had to the earthquakes, and how the meanings and causes ascribed to the earthquakes differed, but he argues that the events also brought people together, as all recognized the significance of the shaking.

In chapter 2, "Knowledge," Hancock writes that after the earthquakes ended, people "summoned a range of traditions of inquiry into the natural world to explain their predicaments" (p. 57). One important question was whether people were responsible for the earthquakes in any way. Native Americans viewed the shaking as "signs of disease and impurity" from interacting and assimilating with Euro-Americans (p. 31). Native prophets called for the cleansing of their communities, taking indigenous thought surrounding health and nature and using it to "indict European colonialism," which had polluted their communities (p. 39). Black thinkers and writers often construed similar events as divine punishment for the enslavement and subjugation of Black Americans, and Hancock ties those writings to the 1811-12 earthquakes because of the lack of sources for Black thought on this event. He similarly writes about a revival that occurred after an 1886 earthquake in Charleston: "reading religious significance into the tremors transcended levels of formal education," as all felt the importance of the events spiritually (p. 34). Christians across the United States also debated human fault in the events, with some believing the earthquakes were divine punishment for colonist sins such as alcohol abuse, and others, such as John Wesley, seeing them as an opportunity to bring people closer to God and salvation. Still others, advancing Enlightenment ideals of empiricism, eschewed such interpretations and sought to study the natural world for an answer to the events. Though evangelicalism and empiricism came to different conclusions, the two were "linked in their mutual reliance on the experience and authority of the individual," and intellectual authority became contested and not simply given to formally educated individuals (p. 51). However, as Hancock argues, "all people balanced sustained attention to the natural world with a commitment to decoding spiritual meaning beyond the grasp of human senses" as people sought to explain their role in the events (p. 57).

In chapter 3, "Spirit," Hancock argues that the earthquakes promoted a religious revival across the nation, centered around charismatic prophets and facilitated by print culture. Figures such as Tenskwatawa and Nimrod Hughes described visions of destruction that captivated audiences. The religious revivalism increased conversions of both Black and white people, especially close to the epicenters, with massive growth in the Methodist and Baptist denominations. However, many used the terms "Earthquake religion," or "Earthquake Christians" to describe the widespread conversions followed by a lapse of interest in religion once the shaking stopped (pp. 61, 71). Those who did not convert or have an interest in revivals still noted the effect that religion had on converts during the quaking, especially in quelling people's fears. Visions, prophecies, and prophets proliferated among Native American tribes as well. Visions related to traditional stories involving the Thunder Boys or snakes (pp. 77, 79) were used to bolster arguments for dealing with American encroachment and calls for violence and war, such as those by the Red Sticks. Tenskwatawa's prediction about the earthquakes further legitimated his authority, and military threats surrounding these movements caused concern for the United States. However, some nations, such as the Delaware, Cherokee, and Quapaws, turned to traditional rituals and practices to deal with what were understood as cosmological imbalances. Though the religious responses to the earthquake varied, the spiritual significance remained consistent for the masses.

In chapter 4, "Politics," Hancock argues that the earthquakes occurred during US and Native American leaders' "experiments in nation remaking in eastern North America" (p. 87), which led to threats to the established religious and political authority of the young nation. As the War of 1812 loomed and issues related to territorial expansion and trade disrupted the early American republic, different leaders used the earthquakes to argue for "the urgent need to lend their authority and in-

corporate their interests into these nationalizing projects" (p. 87). Prophets such as the Shawnee Brothers sought to consolidate their religious and political authority, while Native Americans in other nations and locations mostly relied on "'dispersal and decentralization as the method to fight against prophetic militancy" (p. 98). Christian prophets similarly looked to bolster their own legitimacy and authority; charismatic men such as Nimrod Hughes and Lorenzo Dow discomfited the nation's leaders as they challenged existing religious and political authority norms. Similar to how Native American nations had to find a way to limit the power of prophets and their challenges to established authority, the nation had to "formulate an appropriate response that would bind the nation together without overtly alarming it" (p. 103). This became the purview of established preachers who argued for religious nationalism, fought against atheism or irreligiosity, and stated that the war was a spiritual crisis. As charismatic leaders, prophets, and visionaries—both white and Native—used the earthquakes to wrest power away from established authority, backlash occurred, showing that these leaders truly posed a threat to an already stressed order. Native nations used decentralization and dispersal as the method to avoid the threat of power from the Shawnee Brothers or the militant Red Sticks, but war occurred nonetheless. Euro-Americans attempted to wrest power from charismatic preachers by publishing denunciations and creating a print culture that attacked these leaders.

In chapter 5, "Territory," Hancock argues that the earthquakes brought massive changes to the land—both literally, with "sunk river islands, sand blows, and swamps," and also in how the United States and settlers perceived the land and their territorial claim (p. 126). Seen before as a moral wasteland, the growth of Methodist and Baptist congregations after the earthquakes led people to believe in the redemption of these towns, but to truly expand into this area, the territorial dispossession of Native people had to occur. Some Nations ceded land, such as the Quapaws, and others faced retribution for violence, such as the Creeks, who were all blamed for the sins of the Red Sticks. "Jackson and Indian Removal advocates moved the bar for meeting U.S. standards of 'civilization'" for Native Americans, but they "simply wanted Native land" (p. 126). After the earthquakes, which changed the physical, political, and religious landscape in the West, and the crushing of Native nations, the United States had a method for taking this land.

With impeccable research and pulling from a multitude of sources, Hancock explores the significance and understanding of the New Madrid Earthquakes for people across racial, geographical, and educational lines. Despite the short length of this book (132 pages), Hancock grapples with natural disasters, religion, politics, colonialism, and ideas of nationhood through the lens of this significant event. By spending a fair amount of time analyzing different Native American tribes and their responses to both the earthquake and territorial expansion into their land, Hancock makes an important contribution to both indigenous studies and religious history while still factoring in state building in the early republic. The strength of this book comes from Hancock's ability to pull from different historical fields to make an argument that should fascinate scholars from any discipline.

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