Emotions are powerful motivators for humans, and even more so emotions that are linked to religious beliefs. Matthew W. Dougherty’s *Lost Tribes Found: Israelite Indians and Religious Nationalism in Early America* explores the effect that emotions had in the construction of American empire using the lens of stories of North American Indigenous nations believed to be lost tribes of Israel. Dougherty works to complicate the seemingly ubiquitous narrative of Manifest Destiny in the early American republic by bridging the scholarly conversations of religion and nationalism. Though, as Dougherty notes, scholars have largely focused on the implications of religion in political and legal histories, *Lost Tribes Found* seeks to explore “the shared emotional life of religion and nationalism and to [show] how U.S. colonialism shaped that emotional life” (p. 6). Dougherty’s vehicle in this study is the speculation of some Europeans and Euro-Americans that North American Indigenous people were lost tribes of Israel. The existence of Indigenous people posed a problem for some Europeans and their understanding of biblical history. The explanation that Indigenous people were a lost tribe of Israel neatly brought Native nations into the biblical fold while allowing Europeans to find a classification for North American Indigenous populations within the human family. The theory also, according to Dougherty, at times served the political purposes of individuals who sought to use the emotional responses to these narratives to inspire a range of actions.

*Lost Tribes Found* approaches its investigation into religion, empire, and emotion in five chapters. Chapter 1, “Friends of Zion,” considers some of the origins of what Dougherty terms the “Israelite Indian” narrative and the ways these theories influenced evangelical Christian missions. The second chapter, “The Remnant of Joseph,” segues to engage with the complicated relationship between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Indigenous people who were understood by Mormons to be Lamanites. While the belief that Indigenous people were Lamanites affected how Mormons engaged with tribes, Dougherty concludes, “Indigenous people were at times simply props in the articulation of Mormon sacred dramas” (p. 71). Actions inspired by emotions of Israelite Indian narratives remains at the center of chapter 3, “Our Common Father,” which explores how Jewish scholar Mordecai Noah and Pequot Christian minister William Apess sought to secure a place for their communities in society and appeal to growing white populist
nationalism that was at times antithetical to Jewish American and Indigenous people. While Apess later disavowed his earlier claims of a link between Indigenous people and Israelites, others continued to be vested in a potential link even as the theory generally lost adherents by the 1830s and '40s. Amid the horror of the ethnical cleansing of the Cherokee Nation during the Trail of Tears, chapter 4, “The Original Customs of Our Nation,” details missionary Daniel S. Butrick’s collaboration with playwright John Howard Payne to collect oral narratives for a report on traditions of the Cherokee Nation. Butrick noted the strong elements of Christianity in many of the collected oral traditions. Dougherty posits that at the time Cherokee knowledge holders likely did not see these similarities as an indication that the Cherokee were a lost tribe of Israel, but for Butrick it was still strong enough evidence for a plausible connection. Increasingly whether the stories were true or not was less of a concern, but rather what was important were the range of actions from supporting Indigenous claims to lands and treaty rights to justifications for continued white national expansion that followed from emotional responses to such narratives. Dougherty hammers home this point with the the final chapter, “The Indian War Is Only Begun,” which examines the lessening of enthusiasm for the Indian Israelite theory for much of white American society. As new secular theories justifying the expansion of the American continental empire came into the mainstream political arena, they lessened the impact of Israelite Indian narratives while still driving emotional responses to continued American expansion.

Dougherty’s work is well researched and deeply rooted in scholarly conversations on religion, empire, and Indigenous studies, but Dougherty also is engaging with growing scholarship on Mormon-Indigenous relations, the intersection on Jewish and Indigenous Israelite Indian stories, and Christian missionary uses of such narratives. It is a tall order to pull each of these expansive threads together in a succinct monograph. Each chapter reads as a well-crafted and self-contained entry point into an expanding historiography. These chapters provide a constellation of information on the engaging history of tying Indigenous people to the mythology of Israelite Indians; however, at times the through line of what links these constellations together is lost in the narratives Dougherty brings to the fore. Subscribers of H-Early-America may find Dougherty’s overview of Indian Israelite narratives in chapter 1 and deeper dive into the shift from religious to secular justification most useful in understanding the role such narratives played in the process of expansion for the early United States particularly as he brings forth the interwoven linkages of emotion, expansion, and the power of religion-based faith to provide a justification for such actions.

The theory of Indigenous peoples of North America as Israelites has been debunked, but that is beside the point of Dougherty’s investigation. Rather Dougherty’s succinct conclusion highlights the impact of emotion in the expansion of the American empire. As he concludes his work, he grasps his threads and pulls them together, arguing that emotion is a powerful motivator for action, regardless of whether or not that action is based on rational thought.