
THEOLOGICAL HORIZONS

VINTAGE LUNCH | Indigenous Identity & Christian Faith *with Brendan Jamieson, All Souls Charlottesville*

1. Context

Yuree-rachen, “Circling Raven,” was a shaman from the Middle Spokane tribe in the late 1700s. He had a personal crisis of faith in Creator after his son’s untimely death, so he went to Mt. Spokane for a time of fasting and prayer. During this worship time, he received a vision from Creator, whom they called *Quilent-sat-men*, “He-Made-Us.” In the vision, *Yuree-rachen* saw white men dressed strangely, carrying bundles of leaves fastened together. He was told that the people were to learn from the teachings inscribed on the leaves. *White men were unknown to these tribal people at that time.*

~ Richard Twiss, *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys.*

...There was a prophecy in Monacan legend that said the white people would come, and they were coming from under the world to take the Indian people’s world away from them.

~ Karenne Wood, Monacan tribal member

2. Doctrine of Discovery

You cannot discover lands already inhabited. That process is known as stealing, conquering, or colonizing. The fact that America calls what Columbus did ‘discovery’ reveals the implicit racial bias of the country - that Native Americans are not fully human.

~ Mark Charles, *Unsettling Truths*

...invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens [Muslims] and *pagans* whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to *reduce their persons to perpetual slavery*, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to *convert them to his and their use and profit* (italics mine).

~ Pope Nicholas V, Papal Bull *Dum Diversas*, 1452

3. Indigenous & Colonial History

“Why should you take by force that from us which you can have by love? Why should you destroy us, who have provided you with food? What can you get by war? We can hide our provisions, and fly into the woods; and then you must consequently famish by wronging your friends. What is the cause of

your jealousy? You see us unarmed, and willing to supply your wants, if you will come in a friendly manner, and not with swords and guns, as to invade an enemy.”

~ Chief Powhatan (Wahunsonacock), 1609, in a letter written to colonists of Virginia.

Others entered our world. They named things that had names. Created fields of power. Semantic, transformative power. They name us. The silences began when they “discovered” us, when we became Other. Homeland became wilderness; land virgin (read: *empty*). Inhabited land. They could own it. Doctrine of Discovery. They could take it. Degrees of humanity. We were now not quite human. Our past appeared in museums of natural history, with dinosaurs, insects, and rocks. Not in history museums, with stories of human beings. The illusion of dichotomy; *i.e.*, history begins when they arrive, is preceded by pre-history. Thousands of years of pre-history, excluded. Because they were not here. *Ipsa facto*. Palimpsest: the covering of an ancient text by writing over it. In archaeology, the burial of a site by building on top of it. Call it the Americas.

~ Karenne Wood, *Weaving The Boundary*

4. Biblical Perspective

Although the word “peace” (Hebrew: *shalom*, Greek: *eirene*) appears over 500 times in the scriptures, this theme and its implications have been overlooked in biblical theology. God’s design for and delight in diversity are embedded in the creation narratives, which describe order, relationships, stewardship, beauty and rhythm as the essential foundations for shalom...How can a community tell if it is practicing Shalom? Fortunately, a consistent standard is given throughout the sacred Scriptures. Shalom is always tested on the margins of a society and revealed by how the poor, oppressed, disempowered, and needy are treated.

~ Randy Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation*.

Because diversity is found in the very nature of God, and consequently by design in us, we who are made uniquely in His image should not merely tolerate diversity in our own lives, but seek it and celebrate it. And the only way to bring unity to diversity is a community of brothers and sisters devoted to God and living in obedience to Him.

~ Randy Woodley, *Living in Color*

5. Key insights

I am proposing that Aboriginal culture, worldview, frame of reference, and in this case, Aboriginal Christianity, offers hope to Western missionary autism. Aboriginal people are not your problem, we are your cure...we are the conscience of your technology. We are the humanizers of your institutions. We matter, quite apart from your recognition of our worth...We are a threat to entrenched powers-that-be who refuse to open the doors of opportunity and choice to all. We are a challenge to the mindset of greed, the avarice of Babylon, calling for the equitable distribution of resources in the spirit of the Jewish Year of Jubilee. We are good medicine for you.

~ Adrian Jacobs, (quoted in *Indigenous Theology and the Western Worldview*, by Randy Woodley

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Many and Great

(concert key)

Dakota Hymn

map: V(intro), V1, V2

V1

Am

Many and great, O God, are your works,

Dm Am Em Am

Maker of earth and sky.

Am

Em

Your hands have set the heavens with stars,

Am Em Am

your fingers spread the mountains and plains.

Am

Lo, at your word the waters were formed;

Dm Am Em Am

deep seas obey your voice.

V2

Am

Grant unto us communion with you,

Dm Am Em Am

O Star-Abiding-One.

Am

Em

Come unto us and dwell with us,

Am Em Am

With you are found the gifts of life.

Am

Bless us with life that has no end,

Dm Am Em Am

eternal life with you.