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ABOUT NAIITS

Vision Statement

NAIITS exists to address topics of present concern in Indigenous/Native North American ministry and mission. These topics range from evangelism to discipleship to leadership and community development as they relate to Indigenous Christian ministry and worship.

Through symposiums, gatherings, publishing, and dialogue, NAIITS seeks to bring together men and women of varied experience and background in mission, ministry and community service from within the mainstream of evangelical Christian faith, intentionally providing a forum for the development of biblical and theological thought from within Indigenous North American points of view.

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An important component of the work of NAIITS includes publication. NAIITS publishes papers and book reviews that reflect an Indigenous perspective on doing theology and community work within an Indigenous environment and related academic subjects. Ideas for papers and/or completed materials may be submitted under the following guidelines:

- Length should not exceed 3000 words for papers, 5000 for requested feature articles.
- Book reviews are to be of relevant recent publications and should not exceed 800 words.
- Format is to be based on Turabian, latest edition (see this journal as template)
- Submissions must include footnotes and a bibliography.
- Submissions are required by October 31 of each year.
- Include a 3-5 sentence Bio.
- Email submissions to office@naiits.com

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Theologies of Reconciliation: *Les Sauvages et Le Sophistiqué*

WHEATON College hosted the 2015 symposium. It was our second visit to the campus – the first being in 2012. We experienced a marked change in our reception on the campus this time. In 2012 lingering concern remained about the nature of Indigenous cultural expressions of Christian faith – something we have become quite used to from most quarters of the evangelical church at any rate. Last year, however, we felt able to engage more fully as Indigenous people of faith on this campus without any sense in which it would offend Wheaton's ethos. We commend the administration – particularly President Phil Ryken who offered such a warm welcome. We are grateful for this openness to us as fully Christian and fully Indigenous.

THE fullest expression of our gratitude as a NAIITS community, however, is reserved for Gene and Deb Green. Gene is professor of New Testament at Wheaton and Deb is a medical practitioner in the greater Chicago area. Together they have advocated untiringly for an improvement in the majority church's understanding of Native American and immigrant American history and relationship. Out of a deep desire to be a part of the change they desired to see, they became part of the NAIITS community and our good friends. In the mutual journey of understanding the past, they have afforded us the honor of helping them see life through our eyes. It is to them that we owe a debt of gratitude for making Wheaton possible, not once, but now twice.

Thanks Gene and Deb!

THE 2015 symposium, co-hosted by Wheaton College, opened with loud acclaim for Adrian Jacobs' keynote presentation entitled, *I Am Not Your Noble Savage*, the first article in this volume. In his inimitable way Adrian led us down the path of history's continued regurgitation of the notion that those who are

not like us are “savage”. He plays, blatantly and to good effect, with the title of the symposium: *Theologies of Reconciliation: Les Sauvages et Le Sophistique*. In this manner he addresses the perplexing question of who, by reason of their actual behaviour, was acting in the least civilized way – those depicted in historical writings as savages, or those who perceived themselves as sophisticated?

JACOBS’ paper describes a colonial mentality militating against real reconciliation as if he were reporting on a prairie tornado touching down here and there with devastating impact. Beginning with the Greek “savage trope” nestled so deeply in Christianity’s fold, Jacobs touches down on the Doctrine of Discovery, nation statehood, and images of “the Other” as savage, concluding with the colonization of Biblical interpretation as prescriptive, not preface, to make his case. The reader will be both chastened and challenged.

IN Patricia Vickers’ *Story and Truth: Christ and the Ayaawx (Ts’msyen ancestral law)* we find a reflection on Ayaawx as the “Old Testament” into which the New Testament as the revealing of the Christ is dovetailed. The “fit” is provided by the common themes of purification and the need for a restored harmony and spiritual balance – something lost to the human community through negligence and its transgression of codes of conduct and laws for life. It is the Ayaawx – the stories held by the people – that provide the connections making identification with the Christ, the one toward whom those very stories pointed, clear. It is at the intersection of the Ayaawx with the person, work, life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus – the story of the gospel – that the way toward reconciliation and restored balance is found. It is a place that requires the honest confrontation with the story and experience of colonialism.

MELISSA Harkrider’s *I-Ga-Tse-Li-Ga: We Belong to One Another – Reconciliation in Cherokee Hymns and Worship* directs our attention to the use of Cherokee hymns as a means of creating, in the Cherokee community, a people who were “shapers and sharers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Linked to the preservation of language and the continuing efforts of the Cherokee people to preserve their culture, Harkrider offers the composition and dissemination of hymns on the themes of

repentance and reconciliation, as a clear identification of Cherokee agency in faith and faith's transmission. Here we have Cherokee people choosing to engage Christian faith as a means of cultural protection and the propagation of language.

FOUR papers were presented in tandem: *No Reconciliation Without Repentance: Accepting Collective Responsibility for Historical Sin* by Anna Robbins, *Calling Euro-Americans to Tear Down Their Internal Forts* by Thomas Hughes, *The Politics of Repentance and The Risk of Reconciliation* by Melanie Kampen, and *Logic is a Battering Ram: One Girl's Journey of Awakening* by Annika Pretchuk. These papers offer various awakenings to the need for change. From experiences of personal reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and the need to change theological foundations, to discourses of personal repentance, each contributes to an understanding of reconciliation – its need and means.

ROBBINS'S article calls for a re-visitation of the notion of personal versus communal responsibility and repentance, challenging people to move beyond a defensive position expressed as a "That didn't happen on our watch" response, to a "We are complicit" call to action.

HUGHES builds upon Robbins's theme with an invitation to Euro-North Americans to stop barricading themselves into positions that insulate them from accountability and responsibility for right relationships and relatedness. Instead, he advocates action by "Examining the history of Christian missions to Native Americans, listening to Native American theologians and peoples, and by broadening our hermeneutical perspective beyond the Western European worldview."

MELANIE Kampen and Annika Pretchuk share personal perspectives of journeys into awareness and change – one a personal tale leading to the realization that White privilege is deeply situated in a truncated, therefore racialized, history of Canada; the other a challenge to rethink the nature of apology and forgiveness as, yet again, the wielding of power in the hands of those exercising White privilege.

WHAT does it mean to apologize and seek/ask for forgiveness? In a short but adept study of White settler efforts to hasten reconciliation, to get on with it as it were, Melanie Kampen introduces us to another instance of a seemingly benign effort to repair relationships that has profoundly damaging consequences. Through her analysis of personal experience, Kampen is clear that the majority society must re-think the nature of apology and forgiveness.

ANNIKA Pretchuk's presentation takes place in the context of a different, though nonetheless personal journey into the world of Indigenous people and their history – one not taught to her by the country she had first held with such high esteem as a daughter of immigrant parents. Through her tale of a radically changed perspective she offers a picture of possibility – people can move from racial stereotypes to an intentional, thoughtful action toward reconciliation.

IN a well-crafted, well presented, and equally well-received case study of an ongoing community situation in which they are personally involved, Sherelle Cotecson and Matt LeBlanc [full disclosure, Matt is my son] provide us with a pragmatic example of an Indigenous value and practice of community reconciliation. *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: A Community Process* offers us a glimpse of an indigenously framed mode of bringing health and well-being back to a community devastated by the betrayal of trust in a series of interpersonal transgressions. This “live” study is about community healing, not gratification of the individual need to forgive or be forgiven. As such, it challenges our sense of justice and injustice when punishment is not immediately meted out to the transgressor, if at all. In fact, as Cotecson and LeBlanc make clear, even the language of perpetrator and victim maintains a separation in the community between parties that must be dealt with if reconciliation is to authentically begin.

OUR dual-papers by Marc Lavesseur, *Redemption through Reconciliation Pathway: Soteriology from a First Nations Perspective*, and *La Réconciliation, L'œuvre de La Rédemption : La Sotériologie selon une Perspective Relationnelle* begin with a brief discussion of Western theological method contrasted with a generalized Indigenous theological framework as a means to

understanding differences in soteriological perspective. Soteriology, he contends, is better understood as multi-layered reconciliation, not as atonement for punishable individual sin. Levasseur offers us a reasoned approach to salvation as full reconciliation – one that is to be lived-out within the continuing mystery of the Creator of all things, not parsed by increasingly complex anthropocentric doctrines which serve to divide and fragment. This volume celebrates the first occasion for printing a paper written in French and its edited translation.

THESE thought provoking discussions on reconciliation and forgiveness are NAIITS' contribution to the final days of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission which so painfully and publically exposed the government and church sponsored Residential Schools' attempts at cultural genocide in Canada. The intent of these schools parallel the Boarding School era in the USA - an era still not addressed there by the US government or church community with nearly the same level of authenticity or impact.

IN all, this journal is one of the best yet, containing robust discussion, significant personal testimonial, and alternative theological perspectives, built upon a strong commitment from its presenters to seek after the Creator of all things who is the reconciler of all of Creation.

Terry LeBlanc

Founding Chair and Director,
NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community

ARTICLES

Symposium Papers

This section of Volume 13 (2015) of the Journal of NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community consists of papers presented by nine authors at the June 2015 Symposium sponsored by NAIITS. It was hosted by Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. The theme *Theologies of Reconciliation: les sauvages et le sophistiqué* gives somewhat of a playful nod towards early traders, missionaries, and settlers who regarded Indigenous peoples as savages or, as in the Jesuits, *les sauvages*.

I AM NOT YOUR NOBLE SAVAGE

ADRIAN JACOBS

I Am Not Your Noble Savage¹

Since Ancient Greek times there has been an anxiety producing trope that lies at the very heart of this influential Western culture. Although there are many good and innovative things in the foundation documents of this culture that find their expression in modern Western culture, the “savage” trope is a very detrimental one to Indigenous people. Greek and Roman culture is still highly esteemed. A look at government and national monuments will display Greek and Roman cultural elements. The Western church has taken this Greek and Roman context as its foundation and has adopted the same troubling trope in its mission approach.

Why #Ferguson²

White fully armed protestors can walk down the streets of St. Louis and the police yawn. Black families march unarmed and three police forces come out with military vehicles and tanks, riot gear, and all the latest armaments. Why the disparity of treatment – “Because they are savages, right?” Why 1,181 missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada and no public inquiry – “Because they are savages, right?” Why Mike Brown, Eric Garner, and other Black men and boys killed by police forces without charge or discipline – “Because they are savages, right?” Why Indian Residential School nutrition experiments on starving Native children – “Because they are savages, right?” Why electric chairs for Indigenous students for

¹ For a fuller discussion, see Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Savage Anxieties: The Invention of Western Civilization* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2012). Williams is a Lumbee Indian from North Carolina, a Harvard educated lawyer, and faculty member at University of Phoenix. He spoke at University of Edmonton in 2012. What intrigued me was the title of his presentation: “Avatar and the Idea of the Savage in Western Culture.” His book clarified many things for me and gave me a reference point to understand my own Haudenosaunee culture and the Western culture I deal with every day.

² See Adrian Jacob's poem, “Why?” in Addendum at end of this article, for online references to these news items.

the amusement of Indian Residential School teachers and administrators – “Because they are savages, right?” Why the highest rate of Native American men killed by police in the US – “Because they are savages, right?”

Western Christianity’s Embrace of The Savage Trope of Classical Greek Culture

InterVarsity Press’s *History of Christian Thought* starts with a chapter entitled “Greek Philosophy”.³ The West looks to early Greek culture as the genesis of Western ideals of democracy and free thought. Part of this esteem for Greek culture is traceable to the Apostle Paul’s efforts to contextualize a Semitic, eastern cultural, tribal, clan based, community centered, elder esteeming, and covenantal religion into a Koiné Greek culture, abstract valuing, intrinsically categorized, future focused, youth esteeming, dichotomous thinking, reductionist analyzing, rhetorically argumentative via polemics, in a Greek worldview and religious framework. What Paul did is not prescriptive for Christian mission but serves as the first effort to contextualize across cultural divides and thus is a preamble for Christian mission.

The Bible as Preamble and not Prescription

The Western⁴ church’s⁵ view and use of the Bible has been detrimental to Indigenous people because of its underlying ethnocentrism.⁶ By ethnocentrism I mean the naïve or simple yet wrong understanding that:

what I see, through my cultural understanding,
is what the Bible is saying, and,
therefore is the teaching all others should embrace.

³ Jonathon Hill, *History of Christian Thought* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007).

⁴ *Western* in this writing means cultures originating from Europe and those that colonized other areas of the world, including specifically Canada and the United States.

⁵ *Church* in this writing means the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant Churches in Europe and in Canada and the United States.

⁶ *Ethnocentrism* comes from the New Testament Greek word *ethnos* which means ethnic group or nation. *Ethnos* is similar to the Old Testament word in English “Gentile” which means any other non-Jewish “nation.” *Ethnocentrism* is to view the world from the central perspective of an ethnic group or nation.

Ethnocentrism means that I am blind to the fact that what I see is coloured by my history, culture, and the values I hold as an individual in the midst of a culture that also has broadly held values. When we walk through life, we walk through a social construct we call society with a worldview shaped by our cultural concepts and ways of seeing. The assumptions underlying our society are often invisible to us or so “matter of fact” to us that when someone questions these assumptions we react with, “Of course these values are right and true and self-evident!” This kind of statement is evidence that we are blind to our own way of seeing things. Ethnocentrism sees only what its ethnos (group of people) see. Other ethnos can experience the exact same event and see something very different.

The Western colonial world encountered an Indigenous world of such a fundamentally differing worldview that it dismissed the Indigenous one as strange, fear-inducing, and finally as wrong, and therefore in need of replacing with the familiar and comforting European (Western) way of thinking about life and the right way of living and being. This meant that if Indigenous people read the Bible and came up with conclusions other than those of the colonial missionaries, Indigenous people were deemed to be wrong and therefore in need of education and instruction so that they could come up with the “right” (i.e. Western) answers.

Western struggle with theological issues based on a Greek cultural worldview are only a preamble to the Indigenous struggle with their theological issues based on their reading, understanding, and interpretation of the Bible and all that this reflection means to their being “doers of the word and not just hearers.” The Indigenous view of the Bible is as valid as any other people’s view. The assumptions of Western missionaries need to be placed on the back burner and reduced to the category of “an important resource” in the Indigenous theological effort. Indigenous values, world view, and culture must come to the forefront in thinking through the meaning of the Bible in our times.

What is colonialism?

Colonialism is when a country establishes a colony in another part of the world. A colony is an extension of the mother country

in a territory separate from it and under its control. The laws, government, and economies of the mother land are set up to rule in the colony. England established “New England” in the northeast coastal area of present day United States of America. France considered the areas where their settlements, churches, and businesses functioned to be “New France.” The Dutch did the same thing and called what is now New York City “New Amsterdam” (Amsterdam is/was the capital of Holland). The European geographic names in North America indicate the areas where there were colonial settlements; i.e. in French areas French names, in English areas English names, in Spanish areas Spanish names etc.

The main feature of colonialism is that the colony becomes an extension of the motherland. Indigenous people inside the colony are expected and forced to accept the rules and ways of the colony. Indigenous ways are seen as primitive, barbaric, or savage. Colonialization represents civilization and therefore the Indigenous people must become civilized in order to live in the colony. Indigenous laws and ways are not legitimate because they are not written down as the European’s are and, even if they were written down, they are different from those of the colonizer and are deemed not good because they are different.

The Policy of Assimilation

Indigenous people within the colony must then be civilized to accept the laws and ways of the colony. To do this, the education process happens through the Policy of Assimilation. This means that the colonizers, educators, and leaders take the education process away from the traditional Indigenous leaders (parents, grandparents, elders, extended family leaders, chiefs, clan mothers etc.). This Policy of Assimilation was recognized as wrong when the Prime Minister of Canada apologized to the survivors of Indian Residential Schools on June 11, 2008. He said it has no place in Canada. That apology did not mean the end of this policy though, because since that time, the Government of Canada has implemented a policy of assimilation in an even greater way than before.

The English methodically extended the borders of their territory and required Indigenous people within these territories to either assimilate or be exterminated. The French intermarried with

Indigenous people and spread their trading networks over a vast territory that they claimed as theirs. The Spanish killed the top leaders of Indigenous nations and assumed ownership over them and their lands. In each case, Indigenous nationhood was attacked and foreign ways were imposed upon the Indigenous people. This is colonialism.

Colonial History

Colonial accounts of victory over Indigenous heathens are all simply propaganda meant to demonize Indigenous people in order to justify colonial atrocities. The nobleness of their colonizing task was highlighted so that they could fundraise and get investors to support their efforts. Official colonial history was a public relations campaign meant for and used by the ancient wisdom of oppression to subjugate, steal land, and to exploit Indigenous people all around the world. The actions of colonizing psychopaths were retold in official history as tales of noble patriotic courage necessary to bring order out of an inscrutable heathenish chaos.

Christian mission by denominations has taken the discipleship mandate of the Great Commission and used the same Policy of Assimilation to accomplish the Christianization of Indigenous people. This is not what Jesus meant by the Great Commission. God is the Lord of nations and does not destroy nations through Christian mission. The nations with all of their glory will enter the Great City of God and this includes all of our Indigenous nations. We will look like, sound like, smell like, act like and be the unique Indigenous nations that we are. However one interprets the Great Commission, it cannot mean that we will become part of one version or denomination of the church as it now exists.

I will enter the New Jerusalem as Haudenosaunee with my Cayuga nation *gustowah* (headdress) and regalia, dancing with water drum and rattle accompaniment. I will not walk slowly and stiffly in a three-piece suit with a white collar according to some denominational regulation. Our Indigenous nationhood is honored by the Lord of Nations and will be received into that New Jerusalem in great celebration and joy. Christian mission in the spirit of what Jesus meant will be part of the reason for this great cosmic nationhood party!

Colonial Powers Use of the Bible

Controlling and dominating authorities used the Bible to justify the hold hetero-sexual men have over society. This narrow group of leaders exercises a strong hold over what they consider the unwashed, unlearned, and uncivilized masses. The colonial powers have changed the Great Commission given by Jesus into a colonizing task of imposing their colonial values, systems, and processes on Indigenous people. This “missionary” task now draws a few fortunate souls into the heathen-saving business as missionaries. Whatever Jesus meant by the Great Commission I am sure that it does not mean colonization.

The message of Creator has always been expressive of the beauty and responsibility of human, creature, and creation dignity. The work of Satan has always been an assault on human dignity, creature dignity, and creation dignity – an assault on Mother Earth, the feminine, and the vulnerable. Creator protects, defends and nurtures the safety of those who are vulnerable. Colonialism in this view is an expression of bullying treatment of those who are more vulnerable. The mission of Jesus on the earth was always expressive of support and advocacy for the weak and vulnerable. The message of the Bible should not be used to support colonization and the use of the Policy of Assimilation with Indigenous people.

A lesson of the Bible is that in the midst of truly inspired holy utterance, one also hears controlling evil voices and strategies of indignity. These voices and strategies manipulate people to strengthen the hold of evil, justify special treatment of the colonial elite, and exploit vulnerable Indigenous nations. This twisted use of the Bible by controlling colonial powers makes people think that the inevitable will of destiny is behind them and that victims of their Policy of Assimilation should suffer without resisting their control. The Bible is full of prophets who resist the political powers which try to victimize the vulnerable. Indigenous followers of Christ who resist the colonial Policy of Assimilation do so in the spirit of the biblical prophets. I may suffer but I WILL RESIST!!! Defenders of the so-called orthodox positions are mere defenders of a controlling colonial delusion. The Bible is NOT my ONLY rule of faith and practice, for

My own reason contributes.

My family's wisdom contributes.

My culture's wisdom contributes.
Other people's reason contributes
Other people's religion contributes.
Other people's wisdom contributes.
The evidence of science contributes.
The evidence of medicine contributes.
The evidence of _____ contributes.
Scholars help us.
Theologians help us.
Historians help us.
And their books help us.

This openness to contributions of truth and wisdom from so many good sources is an unlimited thing and does not confine you to a book written 2,000+ years ago. You are not limited to a vague understanding of many other cultures in totally differing and unique cultural contexts so far removed from today's reality. These ancient cultures are impossible to fully recreate in this time and place so far removed from them. We can read scholars who can help us understand something about those ancient times, but we have so many other contributions to wisdom and truth that we bring to our study of the Bible. In some creeds the word "only" as in "the *only* rule of faith and practice" is the nail clenched in ignorance.

The Bible as Preamble and not Prescription

The Bible is a collection of stories of various peoples and individuals who recount in their language and cultural understanding their encounter with Creator. There are various writing genres used and varying teaching and sharing styles expressed. The common thread is the grand cosmic narrative that has at its heart the Christ story and this big picture construction is attributed to the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is the story of the origins of the universe, the origins of humanity with her or his place in a beautiful creation, the human story of change and development, the sad story of broken relations, the story of types and shadows pointing to Creator's interventions, the Christ story of example and of redemption and restoration of all things.

It is an important book to the follower of Christ. It is a revealing book. It is a guiding book. But it cannot be the **ONLY** or **FINAL**

rule of faith and practice. The Bible is really just a preamble. It serves as a resource given to us to help guide us in our own faith struggle. It is not a prescription for our lives today. It is not a book that says to us, “This is what you should do now. This is the way you should do it.” This is a challenging view of the Bible for those who cling to it as their only and final guide in their lives.

Preamble

When I say that the Bible is a preamble, I mean that it is the story given to us telling us of the struggles to engage with Creator undertaken by many peoples and individuals from the long history of the biblical record. It was their best effort at explaining their encounter with an unseen God and their best interpretation of what this God meant for their lives. It is not a perfect record without flaws. It is a human document and as human it is not a perfect document. The Holy Spirit was involved in the recorded expression of this encounter, but it is not a book dropped out of heaven and completely and only authored by Creator. In that case it would be a perfect book but since it is not then we need to accept it as a human document co-authored with Creator.

As preamble, the stories contained in the Bible serve as a resource given to us to help us in our lives today. It is not a simple prescription that we are to simply follow without serious and deep reflection. As best we can, we reflectively read and think about the words/stories of the Bible and, with the most informed sacred imagination we have, do our best to understand what the story tells us. With our well-informed imaginations, we may disagree with the writers of Bible books and passages. We may even legitimately think that they were wrong and even foolish in their conclusions and writing. What we should do is, as carefully as we can, read and pass on as faithfully as possible, the stories passed to us by the Bible writers.

By preamble I also mean that the Bible is an informative document. For example, in the case of Christian mission, the Apostle Paul story is an example of a contextualization effort of the Hebrew-based spiritual tradition's embrace of the Christ story in the Greek/Hellenist world. It answers Greek/Hellenist questions and serves as example of a contextual effort in a patriarchal system. Since this effort takes serious concerns of

Greek culture and gives an answer to these questions, it serves as a great example of contextualization. Greek cultural values and concerns, however, are not those of the whole world and do not need to be arbitrarily applied to differing cultural contexts.

Not Prescription

When I say that the Bible is not prescription I mean that it is not meant to be a prescription for how to live for all future times. The idea of “timeless truth” is to be carefully examined. Those who claim to see this timeless truth in the Bible often see only what their cultural eyeglasses permit them to see. The idea that the Bible as timeless truth must be applied to all other cultures world-wide is not a wise view of the use of the Bible. The Bible is not the final rule of faith and practice but a recorded preamble effort that is varyingly useful in other times and places when the Creator/Christ story is wrestled through in unique cultural contexts in time and place. It is an invaluable resource that will show us what other people saw during their encounter with Creator and as they tried to convey the significance of this in their writings.

A prescription is instruction for future action. It is a writing that says, before you act, this is what you must do. It is a recipe to be followed. It is guidance to be adhered to. It is someone saying to you, “When you find yourself in these circumstances, this is what you do.” This is fine and excellent advice if you are in the same context and the one giving you direction is familiar with you and the life you are engaging. If the one giving you direction does not know your context and is not familiar with you and the life you are living, then to slavishly and blindly follow their directions is foolish. Translating advice across cultures is fundamentally difficult and requires much reflection and very careful interpretation.

The Bible is the story of previous individuals and groups who have encountered Creator’s engagement with them in the vicissitudes of their lives and have sought to articulate their best understanding of this encounter in the written record. It is a story. It is fundamentally a story. It is a reflective story that tries to give a framework of understanding to this mystical Creator-human encounter. It is a human story. It is about a divine, holy, loving and guidance-giving being who engages with humanity in

compassion and accountability. The divine side of the story is complete as divinity is. The human side of the story, including the telling of the story, is human, and as human, flawed. Creator has given us intelligence and the ability to make judgments. We are able to sift through chaff and winnow the wheat.

Handling the Story

The healthiest way to treat Scripture is also the best way to handle the traditional teachings of our Elders. The image I see is that of a circle around a fire. The Elder shares the story or traditional teaching, often in the form of a story. Each person is focused on the fire in the middle while the elder tells the story. After the story is told there is a long reflective pause as each person thinks about what the Elder has said. Each person then shares what they see in the teaching. Finally the Elder shares their reflection on the teaching. In this approach each listener can listen to each of the other listeners and add to their own insight. They can also carefully critique the insights of others looking to the teaching itself for confirmation or rejection or pause concerning the insights of others that are shared. In this image we see that the fundamental value of this transmission of wisdom from our Elders is that it is fully and accurately passed on to others in the telling. Here we are not to rush to conclusions or to morals of the story. The story teaching remains central and is the standard by which people's insight is evaluated.

This is a good image to consider when dealing with Scripture, namely, pass on as faithfully and accurately as you can the Scripture; allow opportunity for reflection; treat the reflections of others with respect; share your perspective; allow the Scripture to correct or affirm the perspectives of others; and then move forward with careful reflective corresponding action. This approach assumes a humility that says, "This is what I see. This is not all that can be taken from the Scripture. We all have the responsibility to think this through for ourselves and be doers of the word and not just hearers."

This handling of the Elders' teachings and the Scripture means we must handle them well, with skill and accuracy. We must be as true to the telling of them as we can be. We are poor communicators if we do not do our job of handling these important things with clarity and care. We must study well. We

must listen carefully. We must be willing to be corrected. While I was growing up in the Handsome Lake Longhouse I would see, on occasion, a prompter who would go to the speaker and whisper in their ear some important missing aspect of the teaching they were delivering and the speaker would fill in what he omitted. The Thanksgiving Address of our Haudenosaunee people begins with the speaker saying he will do his best. At the conclusion there is an admission of weakness on the part of the speaker who says that if he has left anything out, it is his mistake and there is an appeal to grace by asking each one to add the thing that has been overlooked. We need to have this kind of humility when handling sacred teachings like those of our Elders and the Bible.

An Indigenous Parable

Creator made everything. The last thing he made was humans. Humans being the last and weakest of his creation, he made all things teachers of humans. The humans were weak though and could not see that they needed all the teachings of other created things. And so humans stumbled along in life, having accidents and getting sick and dying.

The creation, plants, and animals had pity on the humans and showed them from time to time cures and corrections for the things that made human life difficult. Slowly and little by little, humans became aware of their dependence on all of creation to take care of them and they offered thanks to Creator for helping such helpless beings as themselves.

The humans grew in number and spread throughout Turtle Island, as they referred to the land they lived in. They became large families, clans, and nations. The land taught each nation the best ways to live in their regions. The coasts taught. The mountains taught. The plains taught. The great lakes and rivers taught. The woodlands taught. The tundra taught. The sparse northern forests taught. And each nation learned the lessons of their lands. The land gave them their languages. The Elders read and listened to the lessons of the land and passed them on to the people.

The people finally grew into maturity and lived humbly with the land the Creator had given them. They enjoyed the fruit of the

ground and gave thanks for the animals that gave their lives for the people. The humans were thankful and returned thanks to Creator, to rocks and dirt of the land that was Mother to them, providing all that they needed from the time they emerged from the land through their mother's wombs until they returned to the land once again as dust.

All of the lessons of the land and the Elders were Creator's message, Creator's Original Instructions to the humans in their nations and in the land they lived in. As the people listened and kept the Original Instructions they were happy and the fires of thanksgiving lifted their Thanksgiving Addresses up to the Creator and out to the creation.

Then one day some wise seers among the people foretold the coming of another people. These people would come with strange ways and the humans were to be prepared for them for their lives would be deeply affected by this new people. At first the new comers were weak, sickly and many died. The humans took pity upon these weak newcomers. They saw in them their own weakness when they were small, weak, and blind like little children and could not see that the land, the plants and the animals had much to teach them. They began to teach them but it was hard to do this since the newcomers were small, weak and blind as children and did not see their need for the lessons of the land.

The newcomers also brought knowledge of Creator's son who had visited them in their part of the world and the message of peace and friendship that he brought to their war torn ways. The humans received this message as it agreed with the lessons of their lands. At first there was a flourishing and a celebration of the good news of Creator's son. The newcomers learned the languages of the humans and translated the message. Leaders arose and began to celebrate in their own ways these new teachings.

At first the newcomers were happy that the humans embraced the teachings but then they grew numerous and were not so small and weak. When they began to dominate the land they grew uncomfortable with the humans changing the celebrations that they knew so well. They began to conflict more and more

and then began to oppose the humans, not just in the celebrations of the Creator's son, but in all the ways of the humans. The humans became sick by the newcomers' diseases and with the oppression of their ways they became small and weak once again. They experienced a crucifixion and death like the Creator's son, who was rejected by those he was sent to. The humans realized that the newcomers, even though they grew strong and took over the land, were really still small, weak and blind. Though they learned to live in the new land they forgot their dependence as they grew in numbers. The humans began to turn away from the newcomers' ways and began to reject their celebrations of Creator's son. The humans began to take another look at the message of Creator's son and to embrace it in their own ways and not as demanded by the newcomers.

Something of the original joy came back to them. The familiar humility, the familiar dependence on the land, the familiar voice of Creator, the old thanksgiving ways, these were again the joy of the people. They rediscovered what they lost in the death stage that they endured. The drum, the chant, the smoke, the ceremonies, the feasts, the traditions, the elders, they all came back again and the humans were happy.

They began to see that the story of the Creator's son was not the strange one told by the newcomers but one that was very much like the stories of the land and the ancient ones their Elders told. The humans took back control of their lives and communities once again and the people came out of a very long darkness.

A new day dawned and the days of the Original Instructions and the humans' struggle with the story of the Creator's son came together into a renewal of hope. Human languages came back to life and lit up whole communities with the old lessons. Humility once again was the sweet aroma among humans who were thankful for all the gifts Creator provided them in all their relatives in creation. The willing sacrifice of Creator's son for the humans and for the newcomers was of the same spirit as that of the animals and plants that gave their lives to sustain one another. The rocks once again sang. The trees once again clapped their hands. The night skies rang out in praise to Creator. Once again humans were happy and gathered their

minds into one voice of thanksgiving to all their relatives in creation and to Creator and there were smiles all around.

Addendum: A Poem – Complete with References

WHY?
Adrian Jacobs

Why can white gun owners walk down the street in St. Louis fully armed and the police do nothing and then when unarmed black men women and children march in the Ferguson protest of unarmed #MikeBrown's shooting, tanks and fully armed riot police come out?

“Because they're savages.”

http://blogs.riverfronttimes.com/dailyrft/2014/10/st_louis_open_carry_walk_raises_objections_from_mayor_slay_rep_stacey_new_man.php and

<http://boingboing.net/2014/08/13/ferguson-protesters-hold-peac.html>

Why does NBA player Thabo Shafoloso miss the playoffs because the NYPD broke his leg?

“Because he is a savage.”

<http://www.thenation.com/blog/208009/nba-player-missing-playoffs-because-nypd-broke-his-leg-why-sports-media-silence>

Why would Officer Darren Wilson shoot teenager #MikeBrown 10 times while he is running away?

“Because he is a monster savage.”

http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2014/1/darren_wilson_s_racial_portrayal_of_michael_brown_as_a_sup_erhuman_demon.html

Why wasn't the police officer charged for murder when he choked #EricGarner to death while arresting him?

“Because he is a savage.”

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-police-officer-wont-face-criminal-charges-in-eric-garner-death-1417635275>

Why would a 12 year old boy #TamirRice holding a pellet gun be shot less than 2 seconds after the police arrive?

“Because he is a savage.”

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/05/tamir-rice-investigation-cleveland-police>

Why 1,881 #MMIWG (missing or murdered Indigenous women or girls)?

“Because they’re savages.”

<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/mmaw-faapd-eng.pdf>

Why are Indigenous men even more likely to be murdered than Indigenous women in Canada?

“Because they are savages.”

<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/indigenous-men-are-more-likely-to-be-murdered-than-anyone-else-in-canada-745122>

Why do Indigenous people who are 4% of the Canadian population make up 23.3% of the federal prison population?

“Because they are savages.”

<http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/rpt/oth-aut/oth-aut20121022info-eng.aspx>

Why do Indigenous men in Canada make up 25% of the federal, provincial and territorial prison population?

“Because they are savages.”

Ibid.

Why do Indigenous women in Canada make up 41% of the federal, provincial and territorial prison population?

“Because they are savages.”

Ibid.

STORY AND TRUTH: Christ and the Ayaawx (Ts'msyen ancestral law)

PATRICIA J. VICKERS

Stories and Reality

STORIES are an integral part of our lives as human beings. There are stories told by grandparents and parents about the family children are born into, their relationship with the land and the principles that have led their families throughout the generations. There are stories that children who are born into violence tell themselves to escape an intolerable reality, of the innocence of snowdrops and the safety of willow branches. There are stories that adults who struggle with self-loathing tell themselves about success and failure, the perfect relationship, work and the redeeming quality of money. Stories create an escape from anxiety. In twelve step programs, stories created in one's mind are also referred to as fantasies, and something to avoid. In the wave of positive thinking, stories are a doorway to living "as if." Stories are powerful transporters in whatever way one chooses to create and develop them.

When truth is the foundation, the rock that stories are built upon, it can be food that feeds the soul in the *spiritual* Feast Hall¹ to nourish and sustain all beings. In the spiritual Feast Hall, the door is open wide to know or to accept all that is unknown. In my tradition, everyone has a crest and tribe they belong to. We all follow the line of our mothers, and our fathers' lines are a significant presence in our growth and maturation. In the spiritual Feast Hall, the host is the Eternal One, the Great Unknown and we are called to celebrate the mystery and beauty of life, to study principles of goodness through right action in ceremony, ritual, song and humour—in all relationships. In the Feast Hall of life, we are seated at our family's table without

¹ The Feast Hall is where all ceremonies relating to the Ayaawx take place, such as acknowledging and celebrating the continuation of a traditional name, births, marriages, divorces and the resolution of conflict.

shame or guilt, without arrogance or self-righteousness. Beauty and truth bring one to humility and respect.

This is a story of how the Ayaawx is the Old Testament that receives the New Testament of Christ, how it opened its door, heart and mind to the great mystery of medicine, spiritual medicine of the Eternal One that is beyond the healing quality of plants through the halayt² or the destructive power of dead animal parts through the haldawgit.³ Joining together the Spirit of Christ, the teachings of Christ with the Ayaawx is the “old, old story” of purification and spiritual balance.

Ayaawx and Respect

The Ayaawx is a body of ancestral teachings and practices that assist human beings to live in spiritual balance. It was given to Ts’msyen, Nisga’a, and Gitxsan Indigenous peoples who all share the common language of sm’algyax.

The heart of the Ayaawx is respect. Respect as a spiritual quality is more than actions or behaviors. Respect is an energy force outside of self that one enters into that guides one to right action. To enter into respect is to direct one’s intention toward a specific action or behavior in relationship with the Eternal One, the ancestral principles, with self, and with all living beings. To live respectfully is intentional action of the mind, heart, and soul in relationship with the Eternal One. If one described the Ayaawx as a dwelling for a family and extended family, respect would be the fire, the source that keeps all beings warm and provides heat for food preparation located at the centre of the house.

In fighting in the courts for equal terms and as the guardian of their territories, Gitxsan Chief Delgamuuxw, in his opening address concerning the Ayaawx, states:

For us, the ownership of territory is a marriage of the Chief and the land. Each Chief has an ancestor who encountered and acknowledged the life of the land. From such encounters come power. The land, the plants, the

² Shaman, the word also means power or specific dance. See the sm’algyax dictionary for the definition: <http://web.unbc.ca/~smalgyax/>

³ Sorcerer, witchcraft. See the on-line sm’algyax dictionary for the definition: <http://web.unbc.ca/~smalgyax/>

animals and the people all have spirit—they must be shown respect. This is the basis of our law.⁴

By using the metaphor of marriage, Delgamuuxw refers to the law, the Ayaawx, as a spiritual entity and the relationship between the Chief and the Land as a sacred relationship, holy. “Encountering” the land is a great implication. In addition to the Ayaawx, there are adaawx (sacred stories) about the relationship of the Chief’s House with the land and supernatural beings. Adaawx have been passed down through the line for thousands of years. There are adaawx about betrayal and conflict, acts of disrespect that take the main character to the supernatural world where the male or female returns to the family and community with teachings from the supernatural world that are incorporated into human practices of ceremony and ritual. Delgamuuxw then goes on to describe the need for the relationship between the Chief and the Land to be upheld and supported by the people of his House, who are his blood relations, his family and extended family. The relationship between the Chief and the Land is the principal relationship but not necessarily the most important one. Time in the realm of the Ayaawx is unlimited; the past, future and this present moment are all intertwined.

Maturation and the Ayaawx

Encounters with supernatural beings in the past are a part of our life today. Whether carved in masks, incorporated in crests, lyrics in a song, Chief’s screens, carved cedar poles, or danced, our history and our future are with us in this moment. Living respectfully is to have knowledge of how power moves through entities and is a part of one’s personal existence. Maturation involves growing in the understanding of right use of power. And when one examines the origins and nature of power, one must also learn the parameters of responsibility as it relates to personal and collective power. On responsibility, Delgamuuxw goes on to say:

The Chief is responsible for ensuring that all the people in his House respect the spirit in the land and in all living things. When a Chief directs his House properly and the

⁴ Gisday Wa and Delgam Uukw, *The Spirit in the Land* (Gabriola, BC: Reflection, 1992), 7.

laws are followed, then that original power can be recreated. That is the source of the Chief's authority.... My power is carried in my House's histories, songs, dances and crests. It is recreated at the Feast when the histories are told, the songs and dances performed, and the crests displayed. With the wealth that comes from respectful use of the territory, the House feeds the name of the Chief in the Feast Hall. In this way, the law, the Chief, the territory, and the Feast become one.⁵

Respect for the land and all living beings is a foundational teaching for Indigenous people throughout North America.

Purification

Acquiring power to respect self and another comes through the act of purification. Vital seeds have their roots in fertile lessons found in both preparation for and in the ritual of purification. Purification, when practiced from the heart, enables one to gain clarity and direction, come to an understanding of spiritual principles, and acquire practical skills of observation. Purification increases the ability to see and simultaneously increases the capacity to understand, to observe without judgment; increases patience, stillness, the ability to wait, awareness of thoughts, emotions, and sensation and an intimate connection with the land and all beings.

Indigenous practices of purification rituals vary not only throughout North America but also between Indigenous peoples on the Northwest coast of British Columbia. For sm'algyax speaking peoples, suwilsgüüt⁶ (purification/cleansing) practices were and continue to be passed down through the woman's family. The teachings are private and exclusive to the family. In general terms, suwilsgüüt involves fasting, bathing, drinking plant medicines, and prayer. Also possibly included in purification are continence/chastity and solitude. The location of the bathing place is knowledge that is private to the family, but is always where running water flows. Throughout the northwest coast of British Columbia, boughs from the cedar tree are used to brush off negative energy. Before one goes to take the boughs

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Kenneth Campbell, *Persistence and Change: A History of the Ts'msyen Nation* (Prince Rupert, BC: School District #52 & Tsimshian Nation, 2005), 57.

from the tree, one is taught the tree is a living being and a prayer of gratitude is prayed to acknowledge the importance of the boughs in the ritual. All that surrounds the bathing place is alive and lessons may come at any moment through any being, for when Creator God spoke, all beings were born. Nature is the voice of Creator God. When we relate to all that is, we relate to Creator God. Purification is an essential practice in keeping one's heart, mind and soul clean and open to live life respecting the Creator, self, and all beings.

Purification is necessary because before the coming of the Gospel of Christ to the Northwest coast, there was the knowledge of bad medicine or witchcraft, the knowledge of evil. All thought arises from the heart so when one speaks of carelessness or behaviors that intentionally cause harm, it is referred to as action without heart. Purification is the act of cleansing self physically, mentally and emotionally but especially cleansing the heart. When one's actions are good, the result is goodness and the individual is in a state of spiritual balance, a place of peace. Violence in the oppressive act of colonization altered the collective state of spiritual balance for Indigenous North Americans.

Christ The Stream, Christ The Medicine

Those who gave their hearts and lives to the Spirit, the teaching of Christ in the late 1800s and early 1900s from the villages on the Northwest coast of British Columbia already had an understanding of the supernatural power of Christ. They understood the one who was born of a virgin, for there is the story of Txamsem who found his way to the heavens to become a pine needle and when the Princess, the daughter of the Chief in the heavens, drank the water with the pine needle, she became pregnant with Txamsem in the form of a baby. When Txamsem was able to steal the ball of light, the sun, he changed into raven to eventually cast the light into the skies to bring our world from twilight to daylight.

When Christ was born, animals, stars, and supernatural beings in the heavens celebrated his birth. It was not unusual then, that such a one born of a virgin should be called to the desert to be with the wild animals to fast and pray, to be obedient to his calling—that although he met the same challenges as any other

human, he did not depart from his purpose. The ancestors understood Christ's ability to speak truth, to see through falsehood, to heal the sick and raise the dead, walk on water, pull a coin from the mouth of a fish. It all came from his discipline through study, prayer, solitude and obedience.

However, when sacred text is not followed or lived by teachers and ordained ministers, this creates distortion for those who are searching for help in following Christ's teachings. The Christian church was part of the delusion of entitlement and the delusion of progress. Acts of dehumanization through the church, government and society targeting all ages, but especially children, is a history of bad medicine for over one hundred and fifty years. This dehumanization is what we name oppression.

Transforming Oppression

Oppression is a spiritual act. As Brazilian educator Paulo Freire describes in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,⁷ injustice and violence in oppression has impacted not only the spiritual balance of the oppressed, but the oppressor as well. As oppression is a spiritual act, it cannot be reversed; it can only be transformed. Decolonization is not possible. Colonization as an oppressive spiritual act cannot be reversed, it can only be transformed. Transforming a spiritual act requires access to a power outside of and greater than self.

Ernie Thevarge's⁸ recount of a personal incident reminds us of the greater good given us as an antidote to bad medicine both spiritually and physically, through plant medicines. Ernie once told a story of his response to becoming ill from bad medicine being placed on him. He said it was winter time and he became very ill. He tried different plant medicines to bring himself back to health, but rather than regaining health, the illness increased. He said he knew he was close to death. While lying very weak in bed he "saw" that someone he knew had put bad medicine on him. He could see what the person had used. He pulled together what strength he had remaining to find the shrub that carried an antidote. He said at one point he was crawling, but managed to pull himself over frozen ground and winter's cold to find the

⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 26.

⁸ In conversation with Ernie in April 2007.

antidote to the curse. He was not angry or boasting of his power, he was simply pointing out that bad medicine exists and that the Creator has given us ways to meet the curses that are sent our way. With no anger, no resentment or bitterness, no fear or shame—only the knowledge that there is a greater good that has given us rituals, ceremony, songs, stories and medicines to keep us in a state of spiritual balance, to give us the strength to respect self and all beings.

We as human beings do not transform oppression. For those who believe in the teachings of Christ, one is called to obey the two great commandments: to love the Lord God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind, and love our neighbor as ourselves.⁹ It is through obedience, through dying to self, that one is able to be in this life with a clean heart.

Where the Teachings Meet

When one goes into a fast, he or she is out on the land and comes to realize after several fasts—or perhaps on the first one—that he is not in control of life. Events unfold, and it is not because one is good or bad, but simply because things changed: the wind brought a change in weather and it rained all night, or the temperature dropped, or the coyotes were busy and noisy. One comes to understand the most important state is the state of acceptance, acceptance of being emptied, searched deeply, being taught to wait, sitting with the great silence, of life and death; the acceptance of understanding that one must learn to let go and keep letting go. Letting go of mental constructs about self, others and the meaning of the world and space. Letting go of all and anything that one clings to. This is both the knowledge and meaning of following in the way of Christ in the wilderness and the garden. In solitude one learns that the Eternal One is ever present, ever listening, ever seeing, and is much more than we can imagine. Acceptance in the place of being emptied is losing any image or identification of self, for in doing so is great freedom; it is an act of faith in the Almighty One. For a person who believes in the teachings of Christ, this is the act of letting go of one's will, letting go of one's need to be right, or the one in authority and turning one's life into the way of Christ.

⁹ Matthew 22: 37-39.

Through fasting, prayer, contemplation, meditation, ceremony and ritual, one comes to understand that there is a life force greater than self, a life force that is incomprehensible, mysterious. When one comes to this place of acceptance, there is an understanding of Christ's words, "He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it."¹⁰ To accept vulnerability as an Indigenous Christian does not mean one accepts the injustice by the oppressor. It does not mean that one accepts the violence that a father, mother or any other relative imparts on the innocent. To accept vulnerability is to understand that we are unable to control the intentions and actions of others, to accept we are not the judge of the actions of another.

Elders demonstrated that they understood vulnerability and accepted it with grace. An example of this acceptance is the elders of Kitselas and Kitsumkalum who were waiting for the canoes of the Rediscovery Youth canoe voyage of July 2003 from Kispiox to Prince Rupert. The elders were waiting in the hot sun on the shores of the Skeena River on Ferry Island. They instructed the canoes to portage around Kitselas Canyon. This meant they had to wait an extra two hours in the hot sun. The only ones impatient and anxious were ones younger than the elders, who were in their 80s and 90s. But the elders understood to respect nature means patience is a necessity. They also knew that everyone would be learning about respect for the river by following their request so everyone would be safe and that this is more important than demonstrating any skill one might have with a canoe. Their wisdom, from prayer and a relationship with the land, had many connecting lessons and principles that were not apparent until the instructions were followed.

Conclusion

We live in a time where there is recognition by churches, government and society that historical relations are acts of dehumanization, not only for the oppressed for as one group dehumanizes another, they dehumanize themselves. We are conditioned to the normalization of dehumanization. Former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Phil Fontaine, in

¹⁰ Matthew 10:39

a published letter in the Huffington Post,¹¹ writes that it is a history of genocide. This definition of the colonizer/colonized relationship is not so readily accepted, for we then move away from softening wrongdoing with the voice of good intentions to what is actual—sin, with shame and guilt. There is no room for denial when both parties accept it was an attempt to not only remove the Indian from the child, but an attempt to truly rid “the Indian problem” from society altogether.

We are at a time of urgency as Indigenous peoples. It is time to act for the earth, our mother, for the first human was formed from her soil. It is time to act for all beings by being one with the teachings of our ancestors at the place where they intersect with the teachings of Christ. We are called to meditate, contemplate, empty ourselves, be searched by the All Seeing and All Knowing One, to be accountable and responsible for our thoughts and condition of our hearts, to love ourselves and our neighbours, to love the Almighty One in all that we do and say, entering into the great energy of love everlasting. By doing so, by listening and then acting, the Almighty Supernatural will do the transforming and we will ride the wave of that purifying energy.

¹¹ See http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/bernie-farber/canada-genocide-first-nations_b_4122651.html (accessed on April 30, 2015).

**TSVRS: WE BELONG TO ONE ANOTHER:
Reconciliation in Cherokee Hymns and Worship**

MELISSA HARKRIDER

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Good Afternoon.

I AM a person of many, various bloodlines – a White woman of European and Cherokee descent. I am also the wife of Curtis and mother of Ethan of the Cherokee Nation Oklahoma. Please accept my humble thanks for the invitation to speak with you today. As mentors, friends, and scholars, you have welcomed my family to your community. You have encouraged and blessed us with your friendship and wisdom.

In our time together this afternoon, I would like to study Cherokee hymns as another example of a vibrant and powerful expression of Christian faith and Native cultural practices. In the words of Potawatomi elder and teacher Casey Church, we seek “the seed of the Gospel planted in the soil of ...Indigenous earth and allowed to grow and flourish by being watered by the culture ways of the people.”¹ Learning about and listening to these songs also conveys how Indigenous worship practices embody reconciliation between Native and settlers, with Creator and his wayward children, and in the hearts, minds, and spirits of Native believers.

In the first part of this talk, I would like to reflect on some of the challenges entailed by such a study. How do we go about it *in a good way*, a way that honors Native traditions and perspectives and contributes to their flourishing today? Then, we will consider the importance of songs and dance in traditional Cherokee society and how Cherokee culture became a means through which the gospel was conveyed. Cherokee men and

¹ Casey Church, “Creating Native American Expression of Christian Faith: More than the Looks on Their Faces,” NAIITS Symposium, George Fox University, Newberg Oregon, June 2014.

women were not simply passive consumers of Western forms of worship. Rather, they were creators, translators, and actors in this vibrant expression of corporate worship. In the third and final section, we will listen to and discuss a few examples of the hymns themselves to see how they conveyed Cherokee understandings of God as Creator, their valuing of community worship over individual experience, and the central role of women in Cherokee faith communities.

As others have, I would like to depart at times from the text of my paper. It is in so many ways incomplete and imperfect. It should be reshaped in light of the conversations we have had. So at the outset, I should explain the title of the paper.

TṢṠṠ (i-ga-tse-li-ga)

This is an expression in the Cherokee language of identity and wholeness. In English, its rough translation is “we belong to one another.” Its meaning, though, is much richer than this English approximation. TṢṠṠ describes the intimate relationship between people and their community. In English, we use personal pronouns to describe possessions we own and people with whom we have a relationship. So, we speak of “my book” and “my office” as well as “my mother” and “my father.” Possession and relationship, though, are two different concepts in the Cherokee language. Possession can only be applied to a thing that exists separately from its owner—something that can be transferred, removed, seized, etc.

In contrast, relationships involve mutuality and so cannot be understood apart from the people they describe.² TṢṠṠ is a word that embodies this understanding of relationship. It means a community of people who are defined by and, in turn, define one another.³ It expresses the idea that a person’s pursuits

² For further explanation of this distinction, see Ruth Bradley Holmes and Betty Sharp Smith, *Beginning Cherokee* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 133-135, 149-150. It is very similar to the argument conveyed in the Apostle Paul’s discussion of the relationship of the different members to the body in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. The Cherokee terms for the parts of the body provides a dynamic way of understanding Paul’s point about the relationship between believers within the church body. See Holmes and Smith, *Beginning Cherokee*, 150-151.

³ TṢṠṠ is based on the Cherokee word for ours TṢṠṠ (i-ga-tse-li). Its literal translation might be closest to “the our who are us.” It is used in this way in the

within this community are shaped by and responsive to the needs of others. It encourages individuals to find their greatest joy in work that helps the community as well as themselves flourish. It conveys the idea that the flourishing of the individual and the community are intimately entwined.

It is very similar to the argument conveyed in the Apostle Paul's discussion of the relationship of the different members to the body in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Indeed, the Cherokee words for the parts of the body provide a dynamic way of understanding Paul's point about the relationship between believers within the church body. In Cherokee, to speak of a hand or a foot must necessarily include reference to the person it is a part of, i.e. "my hand," "your foot." To speak of "a hand" without noting to whom it belongs is to acknowledge that it has been permanently detached from its body and, thus, can no longer be considered part of it. It is detached. Dead.

In listening to Adrian, Shari, and Patricia, it seems to me that reconciliation must involve acknowledging difference and allowing another to define them. Prevailing scholarship on Cherokee hymns has relied primarily on English translation and missionary records. The result is a view of Indigenous music that assumes that the words simply repeat Western understandings of God and rehash Western melodies. But such interpretations are mistaken. Through the work of generations of Cherokee men and women, working in collaboration with non-Native supporters, we have these hymns in Cherokee. And they convey with power and conviction Cherokee culture and insights about Creator, Jesus, community and what it means to be whole.

Learning in a Good Way: Challenges and Opportunities in Native American Studies

At the outset, it is important to emphasize that drawing attention to the experiences of Indigenous Christians in the past should not in any way diminish the sufferings and injustices of Native communities because of the actions of individual Christians or the church as a body. As many in the NAIITS community and in

Cherokee New Testament to describe the community belonging to "our Lord Jesus Christ." Passages that use this term include Romans 1:4, Ephesians 3:14, and 1 Peter 1:3. See American Bible Society, *Cherokee New Testament* (New York: American Bible Society, 1860), 227, 299, 361.

other fields have demonstrated, the Christian church was complicit in the dispossession and forced assimilation of Indians throughout North American history. When, in spite of the devastation brought by White Christians, Native men and women embraced the gospel, they were told to strip themselves of the vestiges of their culture and adopt instead the language, dress, and worship practices of White settlers. This inflicted great harm upon Native communities that continues today. As a result, many Indigenous people still view the Jesus way as a faith at war with Native culture.⁴

For many Natives, the role of ceremony and spirituality in shaping tribal identity is also complex and contested. Native elders and writers have emphasized the rootedness of Native spirituality in the land, Natives' understanding of creation in terms of interdependent relations among humans, animals, and plants, and the diversity of tribal religious traditions.⁵ In Native communities, there was no separation between religion and the other dimensions of daily life. As Joel Martin notes, Indigenous communities “fused spirituality with place and practice to imbue every day, local realities with the most profound significance.” Thus, traditional beliefs and ceremonies have often been viewed

⁴ Indigenous scholars have devoted careful study to traditional religions among native peoples, the loss of these traditions, and the deep wounds inflicted upon Native communities by individual Christians and Christian institutions. Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003); Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999); George E. Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008); George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Fixico, *American Indian Mind in a Linear World*, 1-63, 141-172; and Wilma Mankiller, *Every Day is a Good Day* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing), 11-40.

⁵ Useful surveys on the history and diversity of Native religious traditions include: Joseph Epes and Emily Cousins, *Teaching Spirits: Understanding Native American Religious Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Arlene Hirschfelder and Paulette Molin, *The Encyclopedia of Native American Religions* (New York: Facts on File, 1992); James Treat, ed., *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, George E. Tinker, *A Native American Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001); Joel W. Martin, *The Land Looks After Us: A History of Native American Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

as vital to tribal memory, culture, and survival. Tragically, many Indigenous leaders and scholars view Christianity as inherently opposed to Native identity. They cite its emphasis on the concept of sin, the exclusivity of its claims of Truth, and its hierarchical understanding of relations in creation as evidence of its incompatibility.

Native Christians have increasingly sought to respond to these claims through their efforts to promote reconciliation and Indigenous understandings of Christianity.⁶ The ministry of NAIITS and its supporters is dedicated to encouraging men and women in their journey towards a transformative relationship with Christ that incorporates their social and cultural identities.⁷ Indigenous people have rightly cautioned others, especially White scholars, to take care in their approach to the study of Native communities and their history. In White mainstream culture, Indigenous people are often treated as stereotypes and depicted as either savages or romanticized as innocent “children of the forest.” These representations frequently portray Indians as caricatures with red skin, feather headdresses, and nonsensical languages—Chief Wahoo, Pocahontas, or Tonto are just a few examples. Such images suggest that *real* Indians no longer exist. As Philip Deloria (Dakota), Eva Marie Garoutte (Cherokee Nation), and Devon Abbott Mihesuah (Choctaw, Chickasaw) have argued, these depictions convey more about White misunderstandings of Native culture and the racism entrenched in American society than they do about the

⁶ Terry LeBlanc, “New Old Perspectives: Theological Observations Reflecting Indigenous Worldviews,” in *Global Theology in Evangelical Perspective: Exploring the Contextual Nature of Theology and Mission*, edited by Jeffrey P. Greenman and Gene Green (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012); Randy Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012); Woodley, *Living in Color: Embracing God’s Passion for Ethnic Diversity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004); Richard Twiss, *One Church Many Tribes: Following Jesus the Way God Made You* (Ventura, CA: Regal Publishing, 2000); Andrea Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008). Many of these writers have contributed extensively to *NAIITS: Journal of the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies*, which began publication in 2003 [currently published as *NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community*].

⁷ Adrian Jacobs, Richard Twiss and Terry LeBlanc, “Culture, Christian Faith and Error,” *NAIITS: Journal of the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies* 1 (2003): 5-35.

experiences and realities of Indigenous peoples. For historians, there is the further problem of whether their studies perpetuate the view of Indigenous peoples as relicts of the past and ignore the contemporary needs and struggles in Native communities.⁸ These concerns raise important questions in how we approach this study of Cherokee Christians and the role of culture in shaping their faith. How will this research honor and respect Indigenous peoples and traditions? In what ways will it enrich Native communities and respond to their contemporary needs? How have Native perspectives and cultural practices shaped the material, scope, and approaches adopted in this study? These are questions not typically asked among Western scholars. Indeed, some would seem to run counter to conventional practices in the academy—promote your research agenda, assert your intellectual freedom in the pursuit of your topic, avoid presentism in your research.

In her scholarship, Devon Abbot Mihesuah (Choctaw, Chickasaw) has proposed guidelines for Native scholarship that emphasizes the need to cultivate a relationship with the Indigenous community studied, to adopt a posture of humility and a readiness to learn from Native ways, and an orientation

⁸ For discussions of Native identity and methodologies, see Devon Abbott Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes and Realities* (Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press, 1996), 101-105; Kent Carter, “Wantabes and Outalucks: Searching for Indian Ancestors in Federal Records,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 56 (Spring 1988): 94-104; William Hagan, “Full Blood, Mixed Blood, Generic and Ersatz: The Problem of Indian Identity,” *Arizona and the West* 27 (Winter 1985): 309-326. Frank Porter, *Strategies for Survival: American Indians in the Eastern United States* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); Delphine Red Shirt, “These are not Indians” *American Indian Quarterly* vol. 26 no. 4 (2002): 643-644; Robert Redsteer, “An Open Epistle to Dr. Traditional Cherokee of the Nonexistent Bear Clan,” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 27 (1 and 2): 376-380; Cornel Pewewardy, “So You Think You Hired an ‘Indian Faculty Member?’ The Ethnic Fraud Paradox in Higher Education,” in *Indigenizing the Academy*, ed. Devon Mihesuah, 200-217 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Eva Marie Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003). Several scholars have examined this issue particularly among the Cherokee tribes. See Circe Sturm, *Becoming Indian: The Struggle over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (Santa Fe: SARS Press, 2010); Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002); Theda Perdue, *Mixed Blood Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens: University of Georgia, 2005); Randy Woodley, *Mixed Blood Not Mixed Up* (Chambersburg, PA: Healing the Land Press, 2005).

that pursues research projects based on the needs and interests of the tribal community.⁹ This research, then, is grounded in the family ties and bonds of friendship that join me to Cherokee people. Its focus on hymnody points to ongoing Cherokee efforts to preserve and promote the flourishing of Cherokee language and culture. Its use of Cherokee sources in conjunction with missionary records emphasizes Cherokee perspectives, sympathetic, ambivalent, and critical, towards Christianity and missionary work in their homeland. Although my efforts will inevitably fall short, I hope you will share your wisdom and insights to make it stronger and gently correct my mistakes.

Music in Traditional Cherokee Society

In his essay, “Pretty Shellshaker”, Choctaw elder Gary White Deer explained the importance of music to the identity and culture of Southeastern tribes in the US:

Songs touch every facet of Southeastern tribal life. There are songs for healing, songs for witching, songs for ceremony, hunting songs, songs for babies, songs for gathering plants, songs for mourning, songs for war, gaming songs, songs that hold history, songs for courtship, songs for carousing, songs for weddings, and songs for protection. All these kinds of songs are like paths of sound upon which we may continue as tribal peoples.¹⁰

Cherokee and European accounts attest to the centrality of music in Cherokee society. The songs and dances associated with traditional Cherokee beliefs were preserved by elders and storytellers. In the late nineteenth century, traditional healers such as Tagwadihi, Ayasta, Walini, and Swimmer Ayunini agreed to share some of these narratives with James Mooney who published their accounts in several volumes.¹¹ Stories such

⁹ Devon Abbott Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes and Realities* (Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press, 1996), 128-135. See also *Indigenizing the Academy*, ed. Devon Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Susan Miller. *Native Historians Write Back* (Texas Tech University Press, 2011).

¹⁰ Gary White Deer, “Pretty Shellshaker” in *Remaining Ourselves: Music and Tribal Memory: Traditional Music in Contemporary Communities* edited by Dayna Bowker Lee (Oklahoma City, OK: State Arts Council of Oklahoma, 1995), 10.

¹¹ James Mooney, “The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees,” *Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1885-1886* (1891): 301-397; Mooney, “Myths of the Cherokees.” *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American*

as the tale of Stone Man or Spear-Finger Woman demonstrate the power of music to convey wisdom, bring healing, and uncover deceit.¹² Songs were integral to traditional worship in key festivals such as the Green Corn Ceremony and also accompanied the ceremonial rituals and invocations woven into daily life.¹³ Traditional religious songs continue to be preserved in the work of Eastern Cherokee artists like Paula Nelson and Walker Calhoun. They employ melodies and lyrics passed down through oral traditions and in compositions such as the “Cherokee Song of Seasons,” the “Bear Dance,” “Women’s Firemaking Song,” and “The Trees are Singing.” Both Nelson and Calhoun note the similarities between these traditional songs and traditional Cherokee hymns like *Guide Me Jehovah*.¹⁴ European travelers in Cherokee territory in the eighteenth and nineteenth century also commented on the role of music in Cherokee society. Lt. Henry Timberlake described in his journals (1761-1765) the diversity of Cherokee songs and their integration into Cherokee society. He likened their music to “a sort of loose poetry” and noted how often Cherokee people composed new songs and tunes “off hand” to fit the need. On other occasions, such as the celebration of the Green Corn

Ethnology, 1897-98, part I (1900): 3-576. European observers in the eighteenth and nineteenth century often viewed Cherokee rituals through their own cultural lens and frequently misinterpreted or maligned Cherokee spirituality. In the nineteenth century, scholars began to turn to oral histories from Native men and women for a more accurate view of traditional religion. For further discussion of Mooney’s work, see L.G. Moses, *The Indian Man: A Biography of James Mooney* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); Duane H. King, “James Mooney, Ethnologist,” *Journal of Cherokee Studies*, vo. 7 no. 1 (1982): 4-8; “James Mooney, among the Cherokee,” in *Great Smoky Mountains Colloquy*, vol. 7 no. 2 (Fall 2006): 1-3. Max E. White, “Anthropologists and the Eastern Cherokees,” in *Anthropologists and Indians in the New South* edited by Rachel A. Bonney and J. Anthony Paredes (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 11-16.

¹² Mooney, “Myths of the Cherokee,” 316-320.

¹³ For the stories of Stone Man and Spear-Finger woman, see Mooney, “Myths of the Cherokee,” 316-320. For a discussion of the role of songs in Cherokee festivals, ceremonial rituals, and invocations, see Mooney, “Myths of the Cherokee,” 463.

¹⁴ Paula Nelson and Walker Calhoun both participated in the 2002 Berea College Celebration of Traditional Music. Video segments of their performances and lectures are included in the Berea College Digital Collections at [http://cdm16020.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/search/searchterm/Cherokee/order/no sort](http://cdm16020.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/search/searchterm/Cherokee/order/no%20sort), accessed May 29, 2015.

Ceremony, they adopted a more solemn refrain to “offer thanks to God for the corn he has sent them.”

Cherokee people also used songs and dances to honor laudable deeds and provide for the poor in their midst. Henry Timberlake recounted how the members of a village would spread a large animal skin on the ground. Accompanied by musicians, individual warriors would then offer a dance that narrated an important deed performed on behalf of the community. At its conclusion, the dancer would cast some item of value on the skin. The ceremony continued until each had participated in the ritual. The proceeds would then be divided between the musicians and those in need.¹⁵ Similarly, in his monograph published in 1775, James Adair described the importance of music in Cherokee ceremonies of healing and in expressing their sorrow in times of great distress.¹⁶

The music of Southeastern tribes was also distinct in important ways from European musical traditions. Timberlake was struck by the emotional intensity of their songs and the repetition of certain syllables or refrains, traits which he likened to Scottish music. A century later, these distinctive elements of Cherokee music remained even as Cherokee music reflected more mainstream musical influences. At the end of the nineteenth century, James Mooney noted in a conversation with American composer John Phillip Sousa the distinctive sound of Cherokee music. He described it as a “minor key” and thought it gave the music a “plaintive effect.” Like Timberlake, he emphasized the repetition of verbal refrains and musical segments.¹⁷

¹⁵ Duane H. King, ed., *The Memoirs of Lt. Henry Timberlake: the Story of a Soldier, Adventurer, and Emissary to the Cherokees, 1761-1765* (Cherokee, NC: Museum of the Cherokee Indian Press, 2007), 30, 31, 35, 36.

¹⁶ James Adair, *The History of the American Indian* (London: E & C Dilly, 1775), 230-32. Adair, like Timberlake, viewed Cherokee ritual though his own intellectual frame as a Western European and this led him at times to misinterpret the purpose and meaning of rituals. Nonetheless, his account attests to the link between music, ritual, and worship in traditional Cherokee society.

¹⁷ John Philip Sousa, *National, Patriotic, and Typical Airs of All Lands* (Philadelphia, PA: H. Coleman, 1890), iv-vi, 59. Sousa includes two compositions (“Ball Songs” and “Yo Wi Danuwe Yo Wida Danuwe”) based upon his interview with Mooney and his transcription of Mooney’s remarks about Cherokee music.

For all their distinctiveness, Timberlake and Mooney viewed Cherokee songs as lacking in range and depth, especially in their tendency to repeat certain phrases and use of a small number of melodies for their hymns. Such comments reflect the features that musicologists and ethnologists have also used to characterize Southeastern tribal music. Cherokee hymns, they note, often employ “short sections repeated and combined in various ways.” Cherokee music particularly “combined phrases in fours and sevens,” for example, using “seven phrases four times.” As Mooney notes, four and seven are sacred numbers to the Cherokee. The Cherokee were divided into seven tribes, seven votes was the number used to condemn an offender in Cherokee stories, and healers used formulas of four and seven ingredients in their medicines or to measure the duration of days in their treatments. In Cherokee religious tradition, seven was a symbolic number used frequently in stories about creation.¹⁸

Cherokee tunes also used “four or five note scales” rather than the seven note scale more frequently utilized in Western music. In this they resembled the musical traditions of other North American tribes, such as the Creek and Blackfoot. Interestingly, five note scales are also common in Scottish bagpipe music, which may explain why Timberlake compared Cherokee music to Scottish tunes.¹⁹

Cherokee oral traditions and histories, eighteenth and nineteenth century European accounts, and contemporary studies of ethnologists and musicologists today provide compelling evidence of music’s vital role in binding Cherokee communities together. They also delineate the differences between Cherokee and Western European songs and dances. When Christian missionaries arrived in Cherokee territory, they encountered a people with a vibrant and distinctive musical tradition that was integral to their identity and culture and would prove to be a significant avenue for the sharing of the Christian gospel.

¹⁸ Mooney, “Sacred Formulas,” 322, 334, 335, 351, 359, 361, 362, 369, 371, 376-8, 383, 385-6, 392-395.

¹⁹ Bruno Nettl and Helen Myers. *Folk Music in the United States: An Introduction* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State Press, 1976), 38-39. Bruno Nettl, *Blackfoot Musical Thought: Comparative Perspectives* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1989), 43, 105.

The Gospel, Missionaries, and Cherokee Christians

Cherokee people faced many challenges in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For many, this entailed adopting practices that would help their expansionist neighbors recognize the tribe as a unified nation with the hallmarks of ‘civilized’ society—a constitutional government, an orderly society with written laws, and a written language. Prominent members of the Cherokee Council, composed of thirty-two chiefs, advocated education as one route to achieving these goals for Cherokee society.²⁰

By 1800, Cherokee councilors agreed to the establishment of mission schools if sponsored by and under the oversight of local Cherokee leaders. They allowed different Christian groups to establish centers of learning in Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. The first school was established by Moravians at Spring Place in northwest Georgia in 1805.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), a group that included Congregationalist and Presbyterian members, established a school at Brainerd near Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1817. Baptist efforts in the 1820s resulted in a school at Valley Towns in North Carolina and later the development of a day school at Tinsawatte in northern Georgia. Methodist missionaries established a number of day schools at Oothcaloga and Pinelog.²¹

²⁰ For a discussion of Cherokee history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Colin Calloway, *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History* (New York: Bedford St. Martins, 2008), 34, 47-51, 160, 162, 176-177, 202-204; Robert Conley, *The Cherokee Nation* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Theda Perdue and Michael Green. *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears* (New York: Penguin, 2008); Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Cultural Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1998), 159-184.

²¹ For discussion of missionary work among the Cherokee see William McLoughlin, *The Cherokees and Christianity, 1794-1870: Essays on Acculturation and Cultural Persistence*, ed. Walter H. Conser (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008); William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries 1789-1839* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); William McLoughlin, *Champions of the Cherokees: Evan and John B. Jones* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); William McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 350-388, 428-448; Althea Bass, *Cherokee Messenger* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936); Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Cultural Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1998), 159-184; Robert Conley, *The Cherokee Nation* (Albuquerque, NM: University of

By all accounts, missionary efforts met considerable challenges in making their appeals to Cherokee people. Missionaries faced staunch resistance from traditional Cherokee leaders who viewed the faith with hostility and suspicion. Itinerant ministers and zealous converts alike often sowed discord in a society that cherished harmony and consensus. New believers, many of them in late adolescence, offended village elders with their admonishments which ran counter to Cherokee insistence on respect for the wisdom of elder men and women. These challenges meant that White missionaries made little headway in the three decades of their ministry in the eastern homelands of the Cherokee.²²

Most historians agree that only a minority of tribal members accepted Christianity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the first two decades since their establishment, Moravian, Congregationalist, and Presbyterians missions reported only a few hundred men, women, and children had embraced the gospel and joined a local congregation. By the 1820s, Baptist and Methodist preachers and teachers had established schools and mission centers which proved more successful. Between 1820 and 1838, nearly 1,500 Cherokee men and women joined Baptist and Methodist churches. Unlike their Moravian, Congregationalist, and Presbyterian brothers and sisters, Baptist and Methodists conveyed the gospel in ways that resonated with Cherokee religious and cultural practices. They favored large outdoor meetings, frequently employed powerful oratory in their appeals, and were more willing to accept Cherokee believers as preachers and local church leaders. Some rites, like the Baptists' use of full immersion in baptism also

New Mexico Press, 2005), 82, 100; Rowena McClinton, "Introduction," in *The Moravian Spring Place Mission to the Cherokees, Abridged Edition* edited by Rowena McClinton (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 2010), 1-13; Laura M. Stevens, "The Souls of Highlanders, the Salvation of Indians: Scottish Mission and Eighteenth Century British Empire," in *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape*, 179-200; Pointer, *Encounters of the Spirit*, 83-88, 204.

²² See McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries 1789-1839* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); McLoughlin, *Champions of the Cherokees*, 143-147, William McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 350-388, 428-448; Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 159-184.

seemed to resemble their tradition of “going to water” to purify themselves.²³

The development of the Cherokee syllabary and the integral role of music in Cherokee life facilitated the acceptance of Christianity among Cherokee men and women. In the early nineteenth century, Sequoyah created a syllabary that designated a symbol for each of the 86 distinct sounds in the Cherokee language. During his work, Sequoyah narrowed his syllabary to 85 symbols which were derived from the printed English script of the Bible, the Greek alphabet, and signs he created. In 1821, Sequoyah demonstrated the effectiveness of his syllabary before the National Council. By 1825, the National Council voted to establish both a national academy and a newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*. Within five years, the Cherokee nation had achieved widespread literacy rates.²⁴

Cherokee Christians in their collaborations with American missionaries were key agents in the composition and production of Cherokee translations of the scriptures and Cherokee hymnbooks. Elias Boudinot, for example, worked with Samuel Worcester, a White Congregational minister associated with the Brainerd mission, to produce a number of translations of Christian scripture, including the Gospels of Matthew and John and the Acts of the Apostles.²⁵ Catharine Brown, David Brown,

²³ See Robert Conley, *The Cherokee Nation* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 82, 100; Rowena McClinton, “Introduction,” in *The Moravian Spring Place Mission to the Cherokees, Abridged Edition* edited by Rowena McClinton (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 2010), 1-13; Laura M. Stevens, “The Souls of Highlanders, the Salvation of Indians: Scottish Mission and Eighteenth Century British Empire,” in *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape*, 179-200; Pointer, *Encounters of the Spirit*, 83-88, 204; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance*, 382; McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, McLoughlin, *Champions of the Cherokee*; Althea Bass, *Cherokee Messenger* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936); Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Cultural Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1998), 159-184.

²⁴ Willard Walker and James Sarbaugh, “The Early History of Cherokee Syllabary,” *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Winter, 1993), pp. 70-94. See also William McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 350-388, 428-448; Margaret Clelland Bender, *Signs of Cherokee Culture: Sequoyah’s Syllabary in Eastern Cherokee Life* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2002).

²⁵ Elias Boudinot and Samuel Worcester, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New Echota: John F. Wheeler and John Candy, 1833); Boudinot and Worcester, *The Gospel*

John Arch, and Lydia Lowery worked with other missionaries such as Daniel Butrick to produce translations of scripture and compose hymns using Cherokee syllabary and frequently employing Cherokee tunes.²⁶ Lydia Lowery, for example, composed the hymn “God is My Friend” after receiving a vision following her study of Psalm 23. It was included in the Cherokee Speller, a textbook used at the Brainer mission, and also in subsequent editions of the Cherokee Hymn Book.²⁷

The centrality of music to Cherokee life also meant that hymns were enthusiastically received, reinterpreted, and used by Cherokee Christians. *The Cherokee Hymn Book* was published in six separate editions between 1829 and 1836. Missionary records noted that more than 9,000 copies had been printed for a Cherokee population of 16,000. As Barbara Duncan notes, it is likely that nearly every Cherokee household had a copy, and many owned several copies. In his journal, John Thompson described how his itinerant visits to Cherokee villages drew large crowds who were particularly attracted to music and received hymnbooks in their own language with “the greatest pleasure.” He recounted how two Cherokees, “a young man and a young woman”, followed the missionaries on foot for “nine or ten miles” in the mountainous region because they had not been able to obtain a copy at Thompson’s earlier visit. Thompson cheerfully gave each of them a copy of the text they so earnestly desired. The popularity of the hymnbook was based upon its use

According to Matthew. 3rd edition (Park Hill, Indian Territory: Mission Press, 1840). Elias Boudinot and Samuel Worcester, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ according to John*, 2nd edition (Park Hill, Indian Territory: Mission Press, 1841). See Bass, *Cherokee Messenger*, 31-51, 178-98; Perdue, *Cherokee Editor*, 3-38. ²⁶ For accounts of their work, see *The Brainerd Journal: a Mission to the Cherokees, 1817-1833*, edited by Joyce B. Phillips and Paul Gary Phillips (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Catharine Brown, *Cherokee Sister: The Collected Writings of Catharine Brown, 1818-1823*, edited by Theresa Strouth Gaul (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014); *The Payne-Butrick Papers*, edited and annotated by William L. Anderson, Jane L. Brown, and Anne F. Rogers (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010). ²⁷ Daniel Butrick, *A Cherokee Spelling Book* (Knoxville, TN: Heiskell and Brown, 1819), 60-62; Elias Boudinot and Samuel Worcester, *Cherokee Hymns: Compiled from Several Authors and Revised*, printed for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (New Echota, John Wheeler, 1829). See also “Hymn 19” in *Cherokee Hymnbook: New Edition for Everyone* (Cherokee, NC: Museum of the Cherokee Indian, 2014); Barbara Duncan, “Introduction,” *Cherokee Hymnbook: New Edition for Everyone* (Cherokee, NC: Museum of the Cherokee Indian, 2014).

of Cherokee syllabary and its adaptation to the musical preferences and traditions of the Cherokee. Successive editions often added new hymns, adapted diverse melodies to different compositions, and frequently emphasized those concepts valued in Cherokee culture—reverence for the Creator, the importance of harmony and collaboration over individual achievements, and the role of women in shaping and conveying spiritual truths through music.²⁸

Cherokee Hymns as a Path to Reconciliation

For the final section of this talk, I would like to facilitate a discussion of how Cherokee musical traditions and cultural practices produce songs that powerfully conveyed the truths of the Gospel message and transformed the lives of Cherokee and European Christians. As noted at the outset, many of these hymns emphasize the theme of reconciliation with God and others in their compositions. It is crucial to note that this study would not have been possible without the labors of generations of Cherokee believers and the support of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians whose efforts to promote Cherokee language and culture have resulted in widespread access to Cherokee texts, education programs in the Cherokee language, and the publication of several different editions of Cherokee scripture and hymn books.

Please accept my sincere gratitude for your engagement this afternoon.

G.V Thank you.

²⁸ Barbara Duncan, "Introduction," *Cherokee Hymnbook: New Edition for Everyone* (Cherokee, NC: Museum of the Cherokee Indian, 2014); John Thompson, Letter, March 12, 1829, in *The Missionary Herald*, vol. 25 no. 6 (June, 1825), 184-5.

Cherokee Hymnbooks and Media Resources

Texts

Boudinot, Elias and Samuel Worcester. *Cherokee Hymns: Compiled from Several Authors and Revised*. Printed for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. New Echota, John Wheeler, 1829.

_____. *Cherokee Hymns: Compiled from Several Authors and Revised*. Printed for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. New Echota, J.F. Wheeler and J. Candy, 1833.

Cherokee Hymn Book: Compiled by the Cherokee Nation Cultural Resource Center. Tahlequah, OK: Cherokee Nation, 2005.

Cherokee Hymn Book: New Edition for Everyone. Cherokee, NC: Museum of the Cherokee Indian, 2014.

Robinson, Willena, and Prentice Robinson. *A Small Collection of Cherokee Hymns. From 1830 on....* Tulsa, OK, Cherokee Language and Culture.

Albums and Songs

Cherokee Language and Culture. *Sacred Hymns in the Cherokee Language*. 2 vols. Tulsa, OK: Cherokee Language and Culture, 2000.

Cherokee National Youth Choir. *Building One Fire*. Tahlequah, OK: Cherokee Nation, 2002.

Cherokee National Youth Choir. *Cherokee Sunday Morning*. Tahlequah, OK: Cherokee Nation, 2005).

Cherokee National Youth Choir. *From the East*. Tahlequah, OK: Cherokee Nation, 2014.

FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION: A Community Process

SHERELLE COTECSON and MATT LEBLANC

FORGIVENESS and reconciliation are most often regarded as between two parties. An offense may originally happen between individuals or groups of individuals but the breakdown in relationships goes far wider than that. Jesus said in Mathew 5:23 & 24, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift." Here we see that relationship and interaction with the divine cannot be and was never intended to nullify nor lessen the importance of human relationships. I have seen and experienced offense and reconciliation in the almost two decades of engagement with Indigenous peoples. Tribal communities have a keen sense of community especially in dealing with conflict.

In many of the reconciliation processes in the mainstream culture in the Philippines, much focus has been trained on the offending party, especially because they are almost always in the position of power. The motivation is apparently their sense of obligation to be reconciled and the overtures are almost always dictated by what they deem to be "grand enough" gestures that the offended party cannot help but respond favorably. I have been to many feet washing ceremonies, but I felt that the purpose was to provide closure, and, for the most part, for the sake of the offenders. While it is true that the dignity of the process, before it can even start, hinges crucially on the initiative of the offending party, it is also important to be cognizant of the responsibility of the offended party in the whole process. What would motivate the offended party to even consider reconciliation and, more importantly, the pursuit of a stronger and more vibrant relationship afterwards? What kind of initiatives will help bring this about and what are the specific and collective roles of the different members of the community and even outsiders working in community?

Seeking to understand the nature of forgiveness and reconciliation within and between certain Indigenous groups in the Philippines can lead to insights that are valuable—not just in strengthening ongoing relationships—but can also breathe life into those relationships that have broken down. The exercise has also given me a deeper understanding of the response of Indigenous communities to the Christian message.

The Matigsalugs, an Indigenous group in Mindanao, Southern Philippines, do not have a word for asking for forgiveness. However, there is no denying that the burden of responsibility for the offense is felt farther and wider than the individuals involved. Community life can take a stand depending on the gravity of the conflict situation.

They have a ritual process called *Meupiyán Tuhawang* which literally means good relations. It is important to note that *Meupiyán Tuhawang* is considered first as a gift of *Manama* (Creator) and, secondly, a responsibility of his creation and specifically mankind. Thus an offense is considered a violation of both the gift and the responsibility.

In this process, especially in the heels of the conflict, timing is of great importance. For the offender to directly approach the offended party is considered at worst adding insult to injury and at best trivializing the situation. What he/she or the family does instead is approach a respected elder in the community and declare his culpability and unworthiness to seek forgiveness by himself/herself. This is cognizant of the fact that, even if the wrong was primarily directed to a specific person or groups of person, the action has inevitably compromised the “*Meupiyán Tuhawang*” in the community. The elder then goes to the offended party bearing a gift (usually a chicken) and starts the conversation enumerating relationships between him/her and the offended party and continues to expand until the offender is included in the circle of relations. Nothing is mentioned yet regarding the offense but nobody doubts as to the intension of the elder. The offended party is allowed to express their sentiments regarding the offense but not in a direct manner. Only when there is a hint of willingness to consider reconciliation will the conversation intentionally turn toward

that direction. The negotiation then begins and the first stages are all about gestures. The words used are mostly symbolic to describe developments that both parties are already comfortable with. This form of communication has been unfairly described as going in circles by outsiders but there is actually a deliberate direction to this.

The gift symbolizes the sincerity both of the offender and the elder/mediator and the recognition that offense causes loss to the offended party. It is interesting that in the Gospels, when Jesus would talk about forgiveness, “it is almost always couched in financial terms: debt, cost, repay, etc.”¹ The gift is recognition of that loss and not an attempt to “pay off” the offended party or reduce that loss to something quantifiable.

Over the years of being with the Matigsalugs in different communities, I have been offender, offended, and somewhere in between in this spectrum.

The first incident related here is between one of the project implementers and an outside organization identified with the mainstream (Cebuano) culture managing the project. What is seen here is the interplay between the Matigsalug ritual practice of achieving *Meupiyang Tuhawang* and Cebuano concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation through the linguistic lens provided by the words *pasaylo*, Cebuano for forgiveness which literally means “passing over” and *pahangyo* which means to make a plea. What motivated both parties to initiate and pursue reconciliation despite threats to the sense of honour of one and pragmatism of the other?

Ate² Luz Angit is one of the local health volunteers from Gumitan, a Matigsalug Indigenous community my organization, Tribal Mission Foundation International, Inc. [TMFI] has been working with for over 20 years. During the visioning exercise at the start of a new project, she expressed that at first she was not keen in being a part of this new venture because she felt ashamed of the way a previous project ended and her part in it.

¹ April Kelsey, “Forgiveness and Reconciliation,” *Revolutionary Faith/Taking Back Christianity*, <http://revolfaith.com/2014/12/30/forgiveness-and-reconciliation/> (accessed February 8, 2015).

² A Tagalog honorific title meaning “older sister”.

She repeated this statement on two other occasions and my interest was piqued. What struck me was not so much that they feel they have offended us or the organization but that there was an occasion for shame worth mentioning. I was immediately alerted to the fact that, what to us was just reported as a “variance” in project implementation, caused deeper feelings of shame. At the appropriate moment, I pursued the conversation with her and her husband to get a deeper insight into her perspective over what happened. On a previous project there were some targets that were not met and they made promises that they were not able to keep. Money was involved and over time it became apparent that the project was not going where everybody thought it was going and admittedly we were the ones who called a halt to it. As project implementation leaders, the couple felt a huge responsibility and the initial reaction was to withdraw because of shame. However, as another opportunity came to work together, she said she reflected back on our history together in the community. There were numerous occasions that they have been given *pasaylo* (forgiveness) and the right to make *hangyo* (request or plea) restored. She interpreted it as them and our organization having “passed over” that shameful event. It became very clear to her that the ongoing presence of the organization in the community had gone beyond projects and activities. This made her realize that there was no need to feel shame because for her, the continued relationship means *Meupiyang Tuhawang* prevailed.

It sounded very benevolent on our part but as a representative of the organization, it made me wonder if it is just pragmatism that makes us stay in the community. Or is it because of the self-imposed sense of responsibility over the welfare of the community? I realized that years of engagement in the community have also greatly shaped us as an organization. We have become who we are because they have also patiently let us walk alongside them. This is now the main motivation behind our continued presence in the community. It may have started with activities, projects and our “mission,” but over the years the relationship has grown stronger. Pulling out of the community is way down the list of responses to conflict situations.

In the course of our conversation, we both realized that offense was not just one sided. The fact that they felt shame also

reflected the way we managed the project. Their faults were just more visible. Her husband had a very picturesque way of describing what happened and the dynamic of our relationship. He said, “We are like the river where you can see the bottom very clearly. You are like the ocean that one needs to dive into just to get a glimpse.” I was struck by how the description captures both the reality of our distinction from and connection to each other.

Even though we were talking of events in the past, they felt that we needed to make a ceremony to signify *Meupiyán Tuhawang* (good relations). They have a practice called *nipis nga bato* (which literally means a thin flat rock). We exchanged items (they gave me a chicken and I gave them my flashlight) to symbolize that the offense has been covered and the items were both signatures and witnesses together with the other people present. It was an interesting and profound experience of a reconciliation that took place when none of the parties overtly pursued it. None of that could have happened outside the context of relationship.

A far more serious case will provide a deeper understanding of this *Meupiyán Tuhawang*. Incidents of abuse that took place in an Ata community were brought to light just recently. This tribe is closely related to the Matigsalugs and live on the opposite side of a mountain range in the same area in the Southern Philippines. At the outset, there was a danger of roles blurring especially for us who may be from the outside as organizations, and yet closely linked to the incident and the people directly affected.

I was first introduced to the Ata communities through our relationship with TMFI in 2009. They introduced me to the area tribal chief and I was invited to speak at an Ata youth camp. From there, the relationship between iEmergence and the community grew to include other community members as well as a local pastor and his wife who were the partners of TMFI in their Student Assistance Program that supported Ata youth to finish high school. These youth came from remote communities and were housed by the pastor and his wife so they could attend classes. Our interactions with the youth, the pastor, his wife and other community members led to the development of an

Indigenous Youth Leadership [IYL] program that supported the youths' desires to re-value and intentionally learn their cultural values and forms to discover what the expression of that looked like for them in this generation.

After one IYL activity this year, it became clear to us that something was amiss with one of the Ata youth and so we gently asked her what was going on. It was then that she shared a story about some inappropriate behaviour by the pastor towards the female boarders in the house and upon further investigation, it was evident that the abuse was far more insidious, involving multiple female students over a five year period.

We can take a step back here and recognize our humanity and the reaction that we have as people to these types of situations: righteous anger, frustration, and an enflamed sense of need for justice and restitution, even punishment in most cases. Even though we are not necessarily the ones directly offended, we feel the need and even the right to rush after our understanding of justice for the Offended. The usual immediate response at this point would be to go to the nearest police station or abuse centre and report the incidents so that the Offender can be apprehended and charged with a crime.

This approach places the Offender at the centre of the crisis and concerns itself mainly with punishing them. Although the intention is to bring justice, it is most often decided by those disconnected from the situation and outside of relationship with the Offended, their surrounding community and support system. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:26, "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." He is recognizing the reality that when an Offense happens, it does not just happen to the individual, but that the entire community is affected and feels the pain and consequences. Relationships become broken and there is a need for restoration. For restoration to happen fully, the entire community becomes central to the reconciliatory process.

As I have engaged with communities in the Philippines, it has been very evident to me that this understanding, the centrality of relationship and the communal, connected nature of life within their communities, is embedded in all that they do. The need to

ensure the health of the community weighs in on every decision made, including conflict resolution.

As an outside organization, coming from a worldview and perspective that was not Ata, we had a choice to make. Were we going to decide what justice looked like for the community, based on our cultural view and need for immediate action, or were we going to prioritize relationship first, not allowing our needs for justice to overshadow the true need for healing and reconciliation for the community offended. It was very clear to us that the correct path lay in ensuring that the community and its process be given the priority.

So what is our role as an outside organization in this whole process, especially when we were the ones first entrusted with the story? At the outset of this situation, there were many voices coming from many perspectives on how we as an outside organization needed to engage a crisis such as this. Suggestions ranged from us taking the lead in ensuring that the Offender gets brought to a criminal justice system, to reporting the incident and breaking away to allow the system to run its course.

In the midst of the process unfolding, we sat down and asked the tribal chief how he saw our role as outsiders in supporting the reconciliation process. He started talking about the relationships that we had built over the years and how we had become part of the community in many aspects. Those relationships had created the safe space where the Offended felt that they could share the story and be heard. He asked that we continue to walk with him and those involved throughout the remainder of the process. I got this real feeling that our presence alone was all that was being asked. Not our wisdom or knowledge on the concepts and protocols for reconciliation, they already had all they needed as a people to resolve these issues. It was enough that we continued to walk in relationship with them. To be present without pretense.

The experience provided a deep and intense insight into culture that also provided parallels to Biblical truth. My own personal quest in doing this study stemmed from my experience of patronizing processes of forgiveness and reconciliation almost

always initiated and led by the offending party. In those instances, the offended party was made to feel obligated to reciprocate instead of being recognized as the ones who now bear the responsibility if true reconciliation were to take place. Most of the time, these were isolated events that were rushed into the “ceremony” planned by the offender. Intentionally or not, these processes continue to disempower the victims or the offended party.

As the picture of the abuse started to become clear, it was very apparent that the whole community was needed for restoration to happen. As organizations, there were some legal parameters that needed to be satisfied but that only made it more necessary to ensure that the traditional way of settling conflict be given premium as they naturally come with the support system of the community in contrast to the polarizing and invasive effects of legal actions.

When the tribal chief started to take leadership over the issue, his focus and priority was to facilitate and usher the offended party to a place where he can make sound decisions in resolving the matter. In this case, the offender was not the one who initiated reconciliation. When confronted, he did own up to some of the accusations. However, this did not make much of a difference in the process because the offenses (even just the ones he owned up to) were serious enough and considered an offense against the whole community. *Meupiyang Tuhawang* was gravely compromised and not just in one community. All throughout the conversations, it was very obvious that relationships played a key role in the consideration

My naïve and romanticized picture of the responsibility of the offended party in bringing about reconciliation was greatly put to the test in this ongoing conflict. Yes, I am all the more convinced that it is the only way reconciliation can fully take place, but the further cost it puts on the offended is very sobering. During that stage of the reconciliation process, the skill of the chieftain was very crucial. He needed to bring the offended to the reality that it was going to get harder before it could get better. On top of their pain and loss, I saw them having to struggle to get past the reality that “an eye for an eye” would cause further harm to the community. In this particular case,

because the offense has caused public shame, the traditional punishment was death by beating in the hands of the offended party. One of the fathers of the abused girls said “I don’t want that to be a part of my family’s history.” All of them were also fully aware of the effects this has had and will continue to have on the family of the offender. The father of the offender is a community elder and spiritual leader they all respect and love. Some of the girls can also trace kinship with the offender. In the middle of this particular conversation, it seemed that there was no way out of this painful situation.

The chief recalled advice his father gave him when he was still young. His father said, “When you will become a leader you will come across challenges and conflicts that can seem insurmountable like the highest mountain. They can also be very bitter that just the thought of it touching your tongue is abhorrent. However, the solution is on the mountain itself. It may be hard, but you use it to get above it and sometimes the only way to get to the sweet is through the bitter.” He shared this with the girls and their parents and it was then that they started to see that in the middle of this painful situation they have started to become stronger. The girls themselves are no longer just victims but have become survivors, and if they, together with their families and the community, persevere in transforming the conflict into a positive resolution, they will then have the honour of restoring *Meupiyang Tuhawang*.

Restitution was seriously discussed especially because of the selective way the offender owned up to his offense. It was interesting that what they came up with did not hinge on the gravity of the offense on one victim over the other. It was a collective decision and it was apparent that the motivation was not to seek justice but to offer a way for the offender to access forgiveness.

This excerpt from Bishop Desmond Tutu on truth and reconciliation came to mind,

If the wrongdoer has come to the point of realizing his wrong, then one hopes there will be contrition, or at least some remorse or sorrow. This should lead him to confess the wrong he has done and ask for forgiveness. It obviously requires a fair measure of humility. But

what happens when such contrition or confession is lacking? Must the victim be dependent on these before she can forgive? There is no question that such a confession is a very great help to the one who wants to forgive, but it is not absolutely indispensable. If the victim could forgive only when the culprit confessed, then the victim would be locked into the culprit's whim, locked into victimhood, no matter her own attitude or intention. That would be palpably unjust. In the act of forgiveness, we are declaring our faith in the future of a relationship and in the capacity of the wrongdoer to change. We are welcoming a chance to make a new beginning.³

This is a reflection of our reconciliation with God. As the offended party of our sin, He chose to keep relations and took responsibility of the reconciliation. The only way for us to be able to access forgiveness and reconciliation caused Him further pain and suffering. There is no other appropriate response we can give as offenders but that of humility, gratitude and living life truly valuing and honoring the restored relationship. When the transaction is reduced to a verbal and legal declaration at one point in history, the relational motivation and the value of such reconciliation is diminished. Accessing forgiveness and reconciliation should be motivated by more than just the benefits, eternal they may be.

On a wider scope, the Southern Philippines and the whole country itself is facing the passing of the Bangsamoro Basic Law [BBL]. *Bangsamoro* means Moro Nation. This is the latest bid of the Muslim population especially in the Southern Philippines for self-determination. The Transition Commission formed by the government defines it as follows:

The Bangsamoro Basic Law is the governing law of the Bangsamoro political entity. As such, it establishes the Bangsamoro government, defines its powers and provides for its structure, among others. As a political entity it

³ Tutu, Desmond, "Truth & Reconciliation", *Greater Good, the Science of a Meaningful Life* http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/truth_and_reconciliation (accessed May 12, 2015).

“consists of people, regional government and territory that remains part of the Republic of the Philippines. It will have its own distinct political, economic and social systems suitable to the life and culture of the Bangsamoro people. It will enjoy political and fiscal autonomy.”⁴

The territory referred to here is also home to a significant number of Indigenous communities. Members of the Philippine congress have expressed doubts that they will reach a resolution before the June 11 recess and even the proposed October extension. In the meantime, reactions from every quarter run from resignation to fear. Davao city is considered a gateway city to the Muslim South. In contains a growing Muslim population that the local government has been working to proactively include. The churches in Davao City for the most part are reacting in panic as to how BBL would affect “freedom of worship.”

The evangelical church, especially two of its major networks of churches and leaders, are split in the middle as to their “position” regarding the BBL. The Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches declared their support of the BBL as founded on a biblical perspective while the Intercessors for the Philippines says “Yes to peace and No to BBL.” However, there is little effort in understanding and harnessing the relational dynamic of the tri-people (Indigenous Groups, Muslims and settlers from the north commonly referred to as Christians) in Mindanao. Like the Philippine Central Government, these positions were made by Christian leaders in the nation’s capital and expected to make significant impact in the south. There is little recognition that this is the most opportune time to engage everybody involved to face the issue as a community. The Indigenous Peoples are in a unique position to dispel fear and distrust. The Muslims consider them brothers and are not threatened by them as they are of the “Christian settlers”. There have been efforts to consult them but it bears considering if they

⁴ “A Primer on the Bangsamoro Transition Commission on the Bangsamoro Basic Law,” http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/philippines/documents/eu_in_mindanao/btc_primer_english_web.pdf (accessed June 2, 2015).

might be the right people to take the lead in this matter. They are the original inhabitants of the land, after all.⁵

⁵ For more information on the Bangsamoro Cultural Advocacy Project (BCAP) that we facilitated, please visit <http://www.iemergence.org/resources/IEC/BCAP-Final-Report.pdf>

REDEMPTION THROUGH RECONCILIATION PATHWAY: Soteriology from a First Nations perspective

MARC LEVESSEUR

Editor's note: This paper is a translated and edited version of Marc Levesseur's paper which is published next (page 83) in its original French language form. The paper was delivered in English at NAIITS.

I CONSIDER soteriology, as well as Christology, to be doctrines and dogmas central to the core of Christian orthodoxy. I believe deeply in what is referred to as the fall of mankind. I also deeply believe in Jesus Christ, his divinity, his life, his death on the cross, and his resurrection. It would be difficult to speak of Christianity if these central claims were not recognized.

In the Evangelical tradition, when addressing soteriology, the language used generally focuses on salvation, how to be saved, and that Jesus is our Savior. In reading texts on the theology of salvation and hearing messages in evangelical churches, the first lesson on soteriology begins with the fall of humankind and human guilt, with the resulting need to appropriate Jesus' death to avoid the inevitable condemnation to hell.¹ Many claim that salvation – the redemption of fallen man – is the central theme of the Bible. Believe in Jesus, repent of your sins, and you will be saved from hell after your physical death in order to go to heaven for eternity! Clearly you have everything to gain by accepting the free gift.

My goal is not to discuss these interpretations. However, I find that simplifying and thus radicalizing the message of the Bible and teaching it in this way promotes a "salvation" that is anthropocentric, individualistic, transactional, disconnected from creation, and fully focused on personal future gain. Without intending to insult anyone, I point out that these qualifiers are characteristics of Western culture and suggest that this

¹ See, for examples, Gen 3, John 3:16 and Rom 3:23.

presentation of soteriology is the result of a typically Western Euro-American cultural perspective.

In this article, I invite you to consider an approach to soteriology from a First Nations point of view. Not only is this approach more relevant for the presentation of the gospel in an Aboriginal context, but it also provides a corrective for some current methods. I also believe that with the thrust of globalization and post-modernism, it is high time to explore new ways to express the gospel. Before going further in the presentation of redemption, I'll survey some aspects of soteriology/theology from the First Nations and Western perspectives.

Absolutism, Relativism, and a Systematic Approach to Theological Perspectives

Every Christian is a theologian. Whether consciously or unconsciously, each person of faith embraces a belief system.²

Systematic theology has existed since the beginning of post-biblical Christian history. The doctors of the law, Christian theologians, and philosophers have tried to write down their understandings, interpretations, and visions of the biblical message. The history and theology of the Christian church in its broadest sense are predominantly Western. Christendom reached all the corners of the earth with subsequent waves of colonization. Today every Christian denomination or culture has its own set of Systematic Theology dictating their positions and opinions often expressed as dogmas and doctrines.

These systems are used as reference points in an attempt to discern the absolute truth. What is interesting by contrast is that the absolutist, the person who believes they have the truth and that others are automatically wrong if they think differently, operates according to cultural concepts and ideology. Yet, there is an attribute of our Creator generally understood in the different Indigenous spiritual traditions, but unfortunately not widely taught in Christian theological systems. This attribute has an anti-absolutist impact. It does not deny the human ability to

² Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1.

discern fundamental truths but emphasizes, in addition, the eternal and unknowable dimensions of the spiritual world that humans can get only glimpses.

This attribute is that our Creator is the Great Mystery. This teaching was given to me orally by elders from different nations. The concept of the great mystery puts in the forefront the fact that we know in part and that our Creator is unfathomable. Indeed, several Bible verses teach this.³ But it is not automatically emphasized when discussing who God is. The human, with limited resources, is bent on creating coherent belief systems including listing the attributes of God, listing doctrines, and perhaps a brief concluding admission of human limitations and the remaining mystery.

I believe it is erroneous, even arrogant, to theologize in this vein. This approach opens the door for thinking that we can know God exhaustively, and it greases the slide towards absolutism. I especially like the texts of Job 38-42 when God comes to speak to Job after a series of tests and gives him a lesson in humility by demonstrating the smallness and insignificance of his humanity versus the greatness and unfathomability of God.

Putting aside the unfathomable aspects of God limits our ability to understand and explain. The fact that a systematic theology statement must be humanly understandable, coherent, and explicable, forces opposite positions to emerge. Calvinism and Arminianism are the perfect examples of this. How can we humanly explain the total sovereignty of God in all things, including the selection or election of those who will be redeemed, and the teaching that all humans have access to redemption and have the freedom to choose? Humanly, it is a contradiction. And each of the defenders of these positions will prove, Bible in hand, their position and end with a humanly limited position.

It is not humanly understandable that the redeemed believers are elected, that God is sovereign in all things, that from the beginning in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had a choice, that every human is responsible individually for their actions,

³ Deut 29:29; Job 11:7-8; 38:4; 40:2; 42:3; Prov 25:2; and Rom 11:33.

and that we choose to believe and to be reconciled to God. But I think one of the attributes of God our Creator is that he is the Great Mystery and that all such statements are described in the biblical revelation and therefore, they are true. Enough on the debate over election and free choice in soteriology!

Viewing soteriology as reconciliation is a perspective which does not exhaust the truth, but it is very significant. However, the Bible presents different perspectives, such as rebirth, redemption, salvation and reconciliation, to show us a variety of angles and increase the chance that we humans understand that Jesus died for us. God does not expect us to have a detailed understanding as much as a sincere faith that results in action.

Anthropocentrism, Christocentrism, Cosmocentrism and Theocentrism.

In an ideal and perfect world, we should probably consider everything from a God-centered perspective. While our Creator has been partially revealed, there remains a great element of mystery, and to say that we, humans, have the ability to see, understand and interpret God's ways would be arrogance. In fact, our understanding is much more mundane.

Western theology has a very anthropocentric perspective. Some Christians claim to be Christocentric in their theology and proclamation of the gospel. In fact, “Within American evangelical systematic theology there has been and continues to be an overwhelming emphasis on the deity of Christ.”⁴ And the purpose of this is just a well-disguised form of anthropocentrism which ultimately highlights the Western idol, the human being. Jesus Christ is God, he is our Creator; this is not the point. The point is that education which is exclusively focused on Jesus the Savior who died for you, and whose saving work is your main focus, gives a reduced vision at the expense of the whole Trinity, and tends to make "me" an exceptional person. In fact, “I adore you Jesus: you are **My** God for what you did for **Me**.”

⁴ Kay Higuera Smith, Jayachitra Lalitha and L. Daniel Hawk, eds., *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations: Global Awakenings in Theology and Praxi* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 153.

If you still doubt the anthropocentric tendency of Western theology, here are some additional points. After the flood, God made a covenant whose sign is the rainbow in the sky. With whom did God establish the covenant? The vast majority of Westerners answer, with Noah and his descendants, which means with humans. Yet the text clearly says that God made a covenant with all of creation, with living beings and the earth.⁵ Now, what was the result of sin in Eden? Again the list has a clear anthropocentric trend: human suffering, the separation of humans from God, etc. Yet the consequences are also suffering for the rest of creation that has been corrupted by human sin.⁶ And redemption is seen as not only or entirely anthropocentric, but individualistic. “For God so loved *“your name”*, that he gave his son”⁷ Let us reread this passage from an Aboriginal cosmocentric design perspective. “For he who is our Creator so loved the cosmos that he gave his son”⁸ Heresy perhaps you will think. Yet the word translated “world” in English and interpreted as humans by most Westerners is the word “Kosmos” which is defined by the ancient Greeks as the universe – all that is on earth, including “in the sky,” spiritual beings, and certainly humans. To further illustrate the point, one could now read the passages of Romans 8: 19-23 and Colossians 1: 15-19.

Anthropocentrism and individualism, in addition, have the effect of accentuating the concept of personal and futuristic gain. Why should a Westerner accept salvation? Just because he is a sinner and wishes to go to heaven rather than hell? All of these points, although part of the truth, are in fact the ends and not the beginnings of the story?

The future-oriented vision of the West makes its presentation of the gospel with that same focus. Instead of starting with the beginning where our Creator created everything in harmony (Genesis 1), you are first told that you are a sinner (Genesis 3) and that Jesus died for you (John 3) instead that our Creator came to earth to become a human in the person of Jesus (John 1). To understand reconciliation, we must understand the purpose of the Creator and see the Bible as a whole not just

⁵ Gen 9:8-17

⁶ Rom 8:19-23

⁷ John 3:16

⁸ Ibid.

Genesis 3, John 3, and Romans 3. We must start from the beginning and read to the very end, including Genesis 1, John 1, Romans 1, and Colossians 1, decentralizing the message from our human navel in order to understand, at least to the best of our ability, the divine perspective.

So the stories of Genesis 1-2 and Romans 1, which speak of the universal revelation of God in the creation, are essential as a foundation for an understanding of the Biblical message in its entirety. In a disconnected theology of creation, the "cosmos" may also have the tendency to disconnect itself from the Creator. To say that the theme of the Bible is the salvation of humans only is an anthropocentric concept that implies that God exists for humans alone.

Relational and Community purpose of our Creator.

God's intent to establish community with creation is a central theme of the entire biblical message.⁹

When looking at the Bible as a whole, one quickly realizes that the purpose of God is relational, that God seeks to build a community, a nation composed of various beings with whom he will maintain harmonious relations.

Proof of our Creator's purpose for community and relationship is demonstrated in the creation of the world community where harmony prevails: the covenant with creation after the flood; the establishment of God's people in Israel; the sending of Jesus Christ as Savior Messiah; the establishment of the church; and the promise of the new earth where harmony will be restored. In this perspective God's own intentions are at the forefront, rather than the needs of human beings. Here we have theocentrism rather than anthropocentrism. God is a relational being in himself, in his trinity. By his great power he created a world, a community that expresses his glory. All the glory goes to him!

Why do we need reconciliation?

Harmony

In the beginning, Kice Manito, the one who is our Creator, the Almighty, Father of all spirits, Father of all humans and who is a

⁹ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 112.

Great Mystery, created the earth.¹⁰ The earth was created from only sacred elements such as water, air, rocks and fire. The earth is the most independent part of creation; she depends only on our Creator.

And then Creator told the earth to produce plants and seeds.¹¹ So the earth became the mother of all plants. And plants depend on their mother. They need water, land, sun and air and also their Father, our Creator. This was good, all in interconnection, harmony, and balance.

Following that, the one who is our Creator spoke again to the earth and created fish,¹² birds, animals and all living creatures.¹³ So once again, the earth became the mother of all living creatures. All those creatures depend on each other and they also depend on all plants, on their mother earth and on the Creator. This was good, all in interconnection, harmony, and balance.

Finally Creator said, let us create human beings.¹⁴ So from our mother earth humans were created. We are the most dependent living creatures on the earth. This is why we were created at the end. We depend on each other, on animals, plants, our mother earth and our Father, our Creator. Without all of these, we cannot live or survive. And our Creator gave us the responsibility to take care of creation, to seek to conserve harmony and balance.¹⁵ Our Creator said that this was really good. Interconnection, harmony, and balance. Everything was perfect and secure.¹⁶ All those perfect relationships deeply filled all our spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional needs.

Our Almighty Creator gave creation freedom. The relational and community objectives of the one who is the Father of all spirits and all humans, our Creator, insured that he left creation the freedom to choose. Like a good loving father, he wanted only the

¹⁰ Gen 1:1

¹¹ Gen 1:11

¹² Gen 1:20

¹³ Gen 1:24 : 2:19

¹⁴ Gen 1:26 ; 2:7

¹⁵ Gen 1:26, 28-29 ; 2:15, 19-20

¹⁶ Gen 1:31 ; 2:25

good for his children. A relationship is something that is not forced, where both parties are free to want or not want to be in touch. History tells us that some of the angels rebelled,¹⁷ that human freedom given at creation resulted in the wrong choice¹⁸ and the rest of creation was stained by the fault of humans.¹⁹

Broken Harmony

The snake, which is associated with Satan, is the inspirer, the tempter, but in the end, it is humans who freely chose to turn their backs on God, to disobey him, breaking the harmonious and perfect relationship between humans and God.

The consequences have affected the entire relationship. From that moment on, humans have had a difficult relationship with the land, with plants, with animals and with other human beings. The harmony was broken and all the interactions and interdependencies have been disrupted.²⁰ Never have earth and humanity recovered the harmony that existed before the sin of Adam and Eve.

Whether one takes the position that sin has become part of human nature or not, it is and remains true that harmony is broken; needs are not easily met, security is gone, death is real, and mankind are sinners.²¹ That is why we need reconciliation. Not only we, but the whole of creation.

Reconciliation with our Creator: the main concept and final goal of redemption.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his

¹⁷ Ezek 28:12-17

¹⁸ Gen 3

¹⁹ Rom 8:19-23

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Rom 3

fullness dwell in him,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Colossians 1 [NIV]

I have proposed in this article to give an overview of soteriology from the perspective of reconciliation. Our Creator came to earth, became incarnate as a human in the person of Jesus. Through his life, his death on the cross, and resurrection, he has reconciled everything in heaven and everything on earth, and in doing so he has made reconciliation possible for humans.

What is reconciliation?

Instead of simply writing a definition from a dictionary, I did some research on the word *reconciliation*: I looked at its translations and the concepts associated with it in the Old Testament (Hebrew) and New Testament (Greek).

The first observation is that the concept of reconciliation is expressed in the New Testament. According to the Strongs code in the Greek New Testament, we find four (4) Greek words commonly translated "reconciliation": *Diallasso* [dee-al-las'-so],²² *Katallage* [kat-al-lag-ay '],²³ *Katallasso* [kat-al-las'-so],²⁴ and *Apokatallasso* [ap-ok-at-al-so-las'].²⁵ All these words are built with the same suffix, *Allasso* [al-las'-so], which is preceded by the prefixes *Dia* [dee-ah '], *Kata* [kat-ah'] and *Apo* [Apo ']. *Katallage* and *Katallasso* are in fact very similar words with minor grammatical differences.

From the definitions of all the words, including the suffix and prefix, I have been able to establish five (5) statements to define reconciliation.

1. **Reconciliation is not done alone.** It is done by, through, with, for, and between two or more people or "parties." This is not a one-way process but is shared equally by at least two persons. Each participant exercises their freedom to choose.

²² Matt 5:24

²³ Rom 5:11; 11:15, 2 Cor 5:18b, 19b

²⁴ Rom 5:10 ; 1 Cor 7:11 ; 2 Cor 5:18a, 19a, 20

²⁵ Eph 2:15, Col 1:20,21

2. **There is a clear change, transformation.** Conditions after reconciliation differ from those prior to reconciliation.
3. **There is a transaction, a repair, refund, [which is] just, and fair for both parties.** This defines an exchange seen in fair and equitable restorative actions.
4. **Reconciliation is a relational process.** This is the re-establishment of a relationship through a relational process and the purpose of reconciliation is clearly a harmonious relationship.
5. **Go back to an original state.** This is a return to the original state of harmony as it was in the past. This notion is mainly expressed by the prefix *Apo* that is present in Ephesians 2:15 and Colossians 1:20-21.

We may therefore summarize the definition of reconciliation as a relational process between two parties, where there will be concrete actions to achieve the restoration of a damaged or broken relationship.

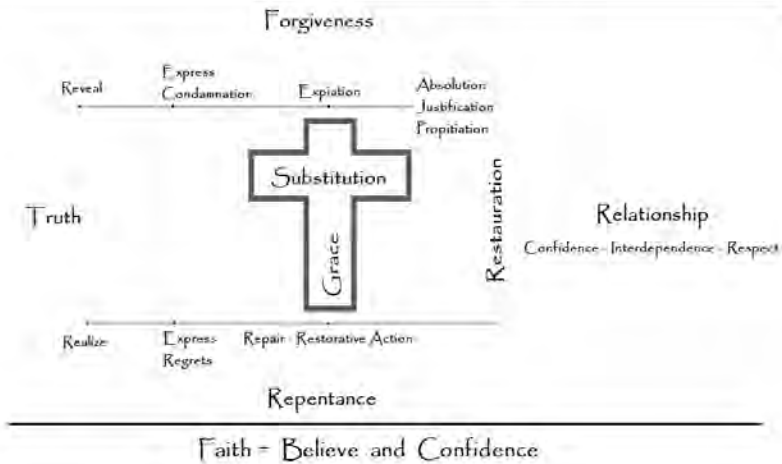
The Three Steps of Reconciliation.

It is easy to understand that when a relationship is broken or damaged, it is necessary for reconciliation to take place. It is not, however, always easy to see how to accomplish this. By defining the term reconciliation well, it already gives us a better idea of what the process is. How it functions is still somewhat mysterious at this point.

To establish a concept of reconciliation, I gathered the themes of soteriology – reconciliation between God our Creator and human beings – to understand what God has revealed about our reconciliation with him. In fact, this process applies to human reconciliations – both with God and with one another.

A schematic of the process of reconciliation in three simple steps is shown next.

The three (3) steps of reconciliation process



Step 1: Truth

Truth is the beginning of any conflict resolution, healing, or reconciliation process. Without it, reconciliation cannot take place. When conflict results in a broken relationship between two people, as long as these two persons do not come into a relational process that highlights the truth about the situation, the conflict will remain. This is the spirit behind the text of Matthew 18:15. Go to the other person to bring out the truth about the situation.

Jesus came to teach the truth.²⁶ "I tell you the truth." This phrase keeps coming out of Jesus' discourse in the Gospels. It appears thirty times in the Gospel of Matthew alone. The word *truth* is mentioned over 180 times in the New Testament.

If a human denies the existence of the Creator revealed universally through creation, in other words has no faith, he/she is inexcusable.²⁷ And if humans do not recognize that harmony between God and humans is broken, that their relationship with God is broken because of the evil committed by their ancestors and themselves,²⁸ they cannot be reconciled with God.

²⁶ John 1:17; 8:32; 14:6

²⁷ Gen1-2; Rom 1:18-20; Heb 11:1-6; Titus 1:1

²⁸ Gen 3-11; Rom 3:23

God, motivated by his love for us, reaches out to humans to reconcile himself with them.²⁹ But if people do not recognize the existence of God and the evil they do so as to repent, the reconciliation process will be prevented from starting. God clearly teaches that we must reconcile ourselves with him and with others. It is the spirit of the two commandments; love God and love your neighbor. The mark of a disciple is the love for God and others.³⁰

On the other hand, God is not reconciled with humans who deny the truth.³¹ It is the same when we are faced with aggressors, abusers, and people who cause us harm. We have our part to play, but that does not mean that we must remain in relation with these people if they deny the truth and do not demonstrate genuine repentance.³²

This step is the first step of faith. It is to believe in God, to trust him and to glorify him for who he is and what he does. But faith is not just a matter of belief. It becomes a conviction that is expressed in concrete actions.³³

Although it may seem at first glance that this step is entirely based on human beings, it is and remains entirely the work and grace of God. If God does not reveal the truth, humans would not know it.³⁴ Sin has obscured and defiled human consciousness. It is Jesus, the embodiment of truth, who is revealed to us; and it is the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment.³⁵ Faith is also considered a gift from God.³⁶ So, although humans choose whether or not to put their faith in God, this is all God's work.³⁷

The next step is forgiveness and repentance. Both form one step because they are interrelated and interdependent. However,

²⁹ John 3:16; Rom 5:8; 2Cor 5:14-20; Col 1

³⁰ Matt 5:23-24; 22:37-40; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27; John13:34-35

³¹ 2 Tim 3:8

³² Prov 14:7; 22:5

³³ John 2

³⁴ Rom 3:11

³⁵ John 16:7-11

³⁶ Rom 10:17

³⁷ 2 Cor 5:18

truth is the foundation for repentance and forgiveness. Without truth, everything that follows will be distorted!

Step 2: Forgiveness and Repentance

In recent years, I have had various opportunities to speak with Christians about forgiveness and repentance. I found more people were bothered by my questions than I found ones with clear and complete answers. I also believe that there are a lot of cultural presuppositions surrounding forgiveness and repentance. Yet this is at the heart of salvation, reconciliation with God, and with other humans. Realizing this, I was not surprised to see the poor quality of relationships and conflict resolution on the part of those who call themselves Christian. Are they really different from the average non-Christian? Yet, should not love and harmonious relations be the characteristics of believers?³⁸

Forgiveness

Recently I have regularly experienced moralizing lectures to the effect that I had to forgive, be silent, forget the past, and look forward to the future. I am not alone in receiving these quick ways to deal with injustice. They sound like insults against my integrity. I feel anger at the injustice done to me. Someone had not only abused me, and treated me unfairly, but they also dumped on me, the victim, the weight of the offense. I was unable to forgive, to forget, to erase the evil that had been done. Many people whom I accompanied on their healing journey had the same inability to forgive. In fact, often when we refuse to forgive, what we actually want is justice. We want the person who hurt us to recognize the evil they have done, admit it, and fix it by paying what is owed. We need justice.

The emphasis in theology on the love of God to save us has led us to believe that God, full of love and in his immense grace, simply declares forgiveness. If that were the case, not only did Jesus die needlessly but all humans would also be forgiven.

Yet there are several hundreds of biblical passages that speak of God's wrath that humans face because of their actions and attitudes. There is no doubt God feels anger against human

³⁸ John 13:34

injustice. Fortunately, it is also written that God is slow to anger,³⁹ and that he will not keep his anger forever.⁴⁰ Does God have the same need for justice that I feel? Absolutely. God did not merely say or declare a pardon, absolution, to all humans. It was necessary for the justice of God to be fulfilled in order for him to be able to forgive.

What does it mean to forgive?

When someone commits an injustice, he is in debt in regard to the offended person. Forgiveness is to erase, to atone, to remit or repay this debt and remove the consequences. "Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors."⁴¹ This text is also well illustrated in Matthew 18: 23-35, the parable of the servant on whom the Master has compassion and forgives a debt. The servant goes away and in turn refuses to have compassion and cancel a debt. The teacher is furious at the lack of compassion of his servant to whom he forgave the debt.

All steps of forgiveness are activated by the same motivation, love.⁴² However, in the name of love, we must not minimize the reality of sin. To forgive is not to ignore the wrong. Instead, in the name of love we must passionately pursue truth, righteousness, and justice.

The Process of Forgiveness

- **Stage 1 of forgiveness: Revealing evil.**

God asks us to forgive with compassion, as many times as necessary.⁴³ That we need to forgive is a fact! However, many interpret this simply as you have to "forgive" but they forget to consider the part of the text that says "as God has forgiven us."

God revealed the law through Moses and for those who don't have the law, their conscience is given to them and God will judge accordingly.⁴⁴ In doing so he clearly denounced sin and human injustice.⁴⁵ Revealing evil is the first step of forgiveness. This step is done in truth. Jesus said, "Think not that I am come

³⁹ Ex 34:6; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15, John2:13; 4:2

⁴⁰ Mic 7:18

⁴¹ Matt 6:12

⁴² Pro 10:12; John 3:16; 1 Co 13 :4-6; 2Co 5:14; 1 Pet 4:8

⁴³ Matt 18:21-22

⁴⁴ Rom 2:1-16

⁴⁵ Rom 4:15

to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."⁴⁶ We know that by his life, death and resurrection, Jesus came to fulfill God's forgiveness and provide for reconciliation. In human reconciliation, the scriptures teach us, "If your brother sins, rebuke him."⁴⁷ The purpose is to reveal sin, in love, with reconciliation as our purpose.

- **Stage 2** of forgiveness: Expressing condemnation.

This step is the action that follows the highlighting of sin. This is to express, to denounce, to condemn evil. "There is none righteous, no not one"⁴⁸... For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."⁴⁹ In order to have forgiveness, there must be conviction and repentance. To forgive without denunciation of evil and without any repentance is to tolerate sin and be an accomplice in some way.⁵⁰

- **Stage 3** of forgiveness: Expiation.

This part is the fulfillment of justice. Expiation is to repay the debt, repairing the harm done. All expiatory sacrifices of the Old Testament were part of this step. The offender did wrong, he or she committed an injustice; there must be a compensation, a fair reimbursement of the offense. Without this, there can be no forgiveness. The whole expression of God's justice is in the need for atonement. "Now, according to the law, nearly everything is cleansed with blood, and if there is no bloodshed, there is no forgiveness."⁵¹

Interrelationship and Interdependence between Forgiveness and Repentance

I will take a moment at this point to demonstrate the interrelationship and interdependence between forgiveness and repentance. Until now, to forgive was a process independent of repentance. But at the stage of atonement and restitution, forgiveness depends on who owns the responsibility to repair and return, that is to say the person who committed the injustice. Forgiveness and repentance are completely dependent and

⁴⁶ Matt 5:18

⁴⁷ Matt 18:15; Lk 17:3

⁴⁸ Rom 3:10

⁴⁹ Rom 3:23

⁵⁰ Ex 34:7; Pro 17:15

⁵¹ Heb 9:22

related at this point. We will see later how it is set up in salvation.

- **Stage 4 of forgiveness: Absolution / Justification / Propitiation.**

The final step of forgiveness, once atonement is accomplished is absolution, erasing the condemnation of sin. Only God can erase our sins completely. This makes us righteous before God and makes him reconciled to us, finding once again favour with him. The restoration of the relationship is through justification and propitiation.

Repentance

Repentance is something that has many different meanings depending on the culture from which it comes. In Western Euro-American culture, repentance usually refers to an expression of the feeling of regret, admitting to the person that we have offended them and asking forgiveness. The notion of reparation or restitution is almost nonexistent. This opens the door to false repentance and makes it very difficult for the offended to forgive and to understand forgiveness.

In the Algonquian languages, there is no word to express repentance. This is simply because someone who hurt another did not have to apologize or express regret but rather did have to do a restorative action. Repair or restore the harm done. This goes well with the notion of atonement necessary to forgiveness. In biblical Greek, the word used 54 times to talk of repentance is *Metanoia* [met-an'-oy-ah] and speaks of the sadness we feel for our sins and sorrow for having offended God that leads to a change of mentality and intention. There is no expression of regret or repair included in this definition. I have heard preachers speak on repentance on the basis of this definition only. Salvation is summarized as believing that Jesus died for your sins and feeling sadness about your sins. It is not a question of judging people's hearts, but it is clear that the above summary of salvation is incomplete.

In biblical Hebrew, the word *Naham* [naw-kham'] means regret, suffering from grief, to repent. In contrast to the NT, repentance in the OT was accompanied by a penitential tradition, fasting, prayer and expiation, restitution and sacrifice. The key to

understanding and defining repentance is to first understand God's forgiveness in the dimension of the atonement.

- **Stage 1 of repentance:** Being aware of evil, of sin.

The first step of repentance also takes its source in truth. Be fully aware of sin, see it in all its horror, its filth, wickedness and realize the consequences for God, the offended person, yourself and others. Emotionally, the person may feel shame, guilt, sadness and this may be experienced as suffering. The greater and more sincere our awareness of sin or wrongdoing the more we will engage in the steps that follow.

- **Stage 2 of repentance:** Expressing regret.

Although I consider the whole of repentance as primarily an action, I believe that the step of expression of regret is essential. Facing the offended person, confessing our wrong and expressing our regret and sadness about our wrong action is an important step towards reconciliation. It is the same regarding God. We become aware of our sinful human nature and admit our faults. We tell him our sadness and sorrow considering all he had to do for us.

- **Stage 3 of repentance:** Repair, repay.

I know that in Western Euro-American culture to make reparation is not part of the definition of repentance for a majority of people. Once regret is expressed to them, the offended party is expected to forgive. The offender says, Jesus paid for me, his work has substituted for my sin and salvation is a free gift from God. It is not by works, I have nothing to do. This creates a strong debate concerning the part that good works play in salvation.

In the Epistle of James,⁵² there is a complete dissertation on faith and works. The conclusion is that faith without works is dead faith and works are done as a demonstration of faith. If you have faith, your actions will follow. It is just logical. Here is the same logic. As faith without works is empty, repentance without restitution is meaningless. If you really believe that God exists, that he is our Creator, something should change in your life and be visible in your actions. Now if you are really aware of the

⁵² John 2

harm you have done to God, that this evil has cost him his life, by your fault, don't you want to do something about it?

Can we repair the harm or repay our debt before God. No, not at all. Every human being is responsible for each one of his/her sins. Human guilt includes the debt of all the evil committed since childhood. It is impossible to repay this debt, it is too immense. In fact, repayment of this debt, even if a person became aware and acted to perfection with good deeds the rest of his/her life, would not compensate for the evil committed. That person still deserves death and eternal separation from God. In other words, it is impossible for a human to redeem himself/herself.

How then can we have God's forgiveness to be reconciled with him? This is why the work accomplished by Jesus our Creator through his life, death and resurrection is essential. At the cross before dying, Jesus said, "It is accomplished."⁵³ The cross is the sacrifice of our Creator who thus made atonement, made the forgiveness of God and our repentance possible through our having been restored. By the way, to repeat for emphasis, everything is the work of God who has done it all. At the same time, the fact remains that every human has the choice to repent and put their trust in Jesus for the repayment of their debt.

So what do I suggest to make this right? It remains the responsibility of the person who committed an offense to provide for restitution. You still have a life with God. Your life! Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice to atone for your debt. From a repenting heart, you have to give your life as a living sacrifice to God.⁵⁴ Your good works are not to earn God's forgiveness but are simply a humble recognition because Jesus sacrificed himself for you. The teaching that salvation is a free gift of God has led many to believe that it was free for God.⁵⁵ Rather, God paid a great price.⁵⁶ And although God offers grace freely to humans,⁵⁷

⁵³ John 19:30

⁵⁴ Rom 12:1

⁵⁵ Eph 2:8

⁵⁶ 1 Co 6:20; 7:23

⁵⁷ Rom 11:6

true and authentic faith leading to real repentance will produce a change and actions by the person who believes.⁵⁸

I suffered an injustice, the person does not repent, what should I do?

We too often hear that people who have experienced abuse and injustice must forgive while the evil done by abusers has never even been recognized. It is serious to put such pressure on an abused person.

How then can a person, injured and angry about an injustice, deal with their problem if it can't be released through forgiveness? The offended person simply must deliver, or transfer to God, this debt that the offender has towards them while realizing that our God is a God of justice, a great debt collector. All those who do not repent will be judged and will have to pay.⁵⁹ For those who repent, we know that Jesus paid the debt. Our need for justice before God is met! Everything has been accomplished!

Step 3: The Restored Relationship.

The end of a true reconciliation is that the relationship is restored. We are now in contact. What does it mean to have a relationship with God? The answers I get most frequently are: go to church, read the Bible and pray. Although these are all good things, I doubt that these answers would apply if I were to ask you what it is to have a relationship with your spouse. The two greatest commandments are to love God and your neighbor. These are relational commands. After some reflection I found three points that are the basis of a relationship; trust, interdependence, and respect.

Frequently life teaches us to not trust and to not depend on others. We tend to apply the same rule in our relationship with God. Trust relates to security. This is the first thing that sin has destroyed. Learning to trust in God more and more every day, is to find the path of harmony. Without trust, you cannot feel loved by God. You are suspicious of him! Often, in order to arrive at trust we must express to God that we depend on him, that we

⁵⁸ John 2:14-26

⁵⁹ Deut 32 :35; Lk 17 :1-4; Rom 12 :19

need him. In a healthy relationship, both parties are interdependent. They mutually meet their requirements and they need one another. Is God dependent on us? God, in creating choice, left humans free to choose. This puts him in some way dependent on our response. Also, did he not choose humans to do his work? To conclude, respect is paramount. Without respect, there is no relationship. Respect for God means that he is feared, that we will obey him and recognize his glory in all things.

LA RÉCONCILIATION, L'ŒUVRE DE LA RÉDEMPTION: La Sotériologie Selon Une Perspective Relationnelle

MARC LAVESSEUR

Introduction¹

2 Corinthiens 5: ¹⁸ Et tout cela vient de Dieu qui nous a réconciliés avec lui par [Jésus-] Christ et qui nous a donné le ministère de la réconciliation. ¹⁹ En effet, Dieu était en Christ: il réconciliait le monde avec lui-même en ne chargeant pas les hommes de leurs fautes, et il a mis en nous la parole de la réconciliation. ²⁰ Nous sommes donc des ambassadeurs pour Christ, comme si Dieu adressait par nous son appel. Nous supplions au nom de Christ : Soyez réconciliés avec Dieu! (SG21)

Je considère la sotériologie tout comme la christologie, comme des doctrines et en grande partie des dogmes constituant l'essentielle de l'orthodoxie chrétienne, toute dénomination confondue.

Je crois profondément en ce que nous appelons la chute du genre humain. Je crois aussi profondément en Jésus-Christ, sa divinité, sa vie, sa mort à la croix et sa résurrection. Je fais ces deux affirmations immédiatement pour ne pas laisser susciter le doute sur l'importance que j'attribue à ces vérités. Je considère qu'il serait difficile de parler de christianisme si l'on ne reconnaît pas ces affirmations.

J'ai véritablement commencé à étudier et à faire des recherches sur la sotériologie en 2008. Pourtant, je suis née dans une famille chrétienne, assistant à une église baptiste et ayant été enseigné sur le sujet dès mon plus jeune âge. J'ai fait profession de foi dans mon enfance, j'ai demandé d'être baptisé durant mon adolescence et je n'ai jamais remis en doute Jésus-Christ et la valeur de son sacrifice.

De 2000 à 2006, j'ai étudié la théologie sans pour autant remettre en perspective les angles, les concepts et les modèles enseignés. J'étais entouré de la culture dominante occidentale et du monde

¹ Editor's Note : This article is the original version of the previous article written by Marc Levasseur, included here for our French readers.

évangélique, s'il y a bien deux doctrines que l'on ne doit pas douter ou contredire au risque de passer pour un traître et un hérétique, ce sont bien la christologie et la sotériologie.

Pourtant, étudier la théologie fut l'une des plus grandes épreuves de ma foi. Plus j'étudiais les modèles, les positions diverses et surtout les divergences, plus ma foi voulait mourir. L'étude de la spiritualité de mes ancêtres des Premières Nations d'Amérique a contribué à protéger ma foi, ma croyance en un Créateur et en sa révélation. En même temps, ce qui m'empêchait de renier ma foi chrétienne était l'œuvre de Jésus-Christ. Peu importe les divergences de position, de doctrine, d'opinion, Jésus, le Créateur, était bel et bien venu sur terre, en humain et était mort sur la croix.

En 2007, je débutais mon implication dans un ministère avec la Nation Innu sur la Côte-Nord du Québec. La première année fut pour moi une plus grande prise de conscience de qui je suis en tant qu'autochtone et de partager avec mes frères et sœurs combien difficile est la compréhension de l'évangile. Je me souviens, au début de 2008, d'avoir partagé pour la première fois avec Terry Leblanc mes tiraillements intérieurs face à la proclamation de l'évangile selon une perspective occidentale que je percevais comme déconnecté de la réalité autochtone et de la création. En plus d'avoir expérimenté une guérison de mon identité face à notre Créateur, le constat suivant fut claire pour moi que les ressources occidentales existantes n'étaient pas adaptées pour l'évangélisation, la formation de disciple et la relation d'aide chrétienne dans un contexte autochtone.

De 2008 à 2010, ce fut une période intensive d'étude, de méditation durant mes temps libre afin de trouver une approche pertinente. Je remercie Dieu de m'avoir guidé et accompagné par son Esprit dans mes études et la compréhension des choses que j'ai acquises.

De 2010 à 2014, j'ai commencé à partager, à enseigner et à propager ce que Dieu m'avait appris. Et j'ai vu Dieu utiliser cela pour l'avancement de son œuvre dans la vie des gens de toutes nationalités et non seulement avec mes frères et sœurs des Premières Nations. Non seulement des gens ont professé leur foi en Dieu et Jésus-Christ, mais des guérisons

émotionnelles et de la maturation se sont mises en place premièrement dans ma propre vie et, ensuite, dans celle des gens auprès de qui Dieu m'a utilisé. Des gens brisés par des années d'abus de toute sorte et entaché par des abus spirituels, ou le nom de Dieu et de Jésus fut mélangé aux atrocités de ce monde, goûtaient enfin la pleine liberté en Christ. Tout a été accompli à la croix, tout a été accompli! Quel merveilleux message d'espoir.

Je ne me conçois pas du tout comme évangéliste, même si j'ai en moi un feu dévorant qui me pousse à proclamer le merveilleux message de la réconciliation. Dans ce travail, je vais tenter de définir par écrit le concept du salut selon la perspective de la réconciliation.

1. Restructuration de la sotériologie

1.1 Pourquoi restructurer la sotériologie

Dans la tradition évangélique, lorsqu'on aborde la sotériologie, le langage utilisé tourne majoritairement autour du salut, d'être sauvé, que Jésus est notre sauveur. C'est pour cela que sotériologie et christologie sont indissociables. Je regardais récemment un guide produit sur la théologie du salut et, comme pour l'essentiel du message que j'ai entendu dans plusieurs églises, le premier enseignement débute avec Genèse 3, la chute de l'humain et fait le pont directement et sans surprise avec Jean 3, surtout au verset 16 et Romains 3.23: "... car tous ont péché et sont privés de la gloire de Dieu." (SG21)

Le salut de l'humain, la rédemption de l'humain déchu, voilà le thème central de la Bible diront certaines personnes. Sauvé de quoi? Et bien de l'enfer, après notre mort physique pour pouvoir aller au ciel pour l'éternité ! Mon but n'est pas de débattre de la véracité ou non de ces affirmations. Cependant, je trouve que centrer et radicaliser le message de la Bible comme si le message biblique tenait en Genèse 3, Jean 3 et Romains 3, c'est incomplet et déséquilibré. Cela ne tient pas en compte le contexte et vient en diminuer la grandeur et la portée.

Enseigner ces vérités selon ce type de structure fait la promotion d'un "salut" individualiste, transactionnel et anthropocentrique. Je me permets de noter que ces trois mots sont des caractéristiques de la culture occidentale. Serait-il

possible que cela soit le résultat d'erreurs d'interprétations culturelles afin d'avoir une conception sotériologique plus accommodante pour la société occidentale?

Ce qui est aussi intéressant à noter, c'est les déséquilibres que cette conception de la rédemption apporte en commençant par Jésus lui-même. "Within American evangelical systematic theology there has been and continues to be an overwhelming emphasis on deity of Christ" (Smith, Lalitha, Hawk 2014). Jésus-Christ est Dieu, il est le Créateur. Cela n'est pas le point. Le point est que l'enseignement centré et radicalisé sur "Jésus est mort pour toi, il est ton Sauveur à toi" vient mettre en relief l'œuvre de Jésus uniquement au détriment de l'ensemble de la trinité et tend à faire du "toi" un être exceptionnel. Je t'adore Jésus, tu es Mon Dieu pour ce que tu as fait pour Moi... Bien que je croie cela vrai, cela reste une vision réduite et une forme d'anthropocentrisme juste bien déguisée. Cela finit aussi par faire ressortir des idoles la Bible du fait qu'elle contienne la révélation spécifique de "mon salut" et l'humain.

Nous savons que tous les mouvements et les réformes théologiques dans les faits répondaient à des déséquilibres sur des positions. Et humblement, j'espère que la contribution des Premières Nations en théologie répondra au déséquilibre de la perspective de la rédemption, car, ne s'agit-il pas là de l'essence même du christianisme.

Quoi écrire de nouveau sur le sujet qui n'ait jamais été écrit ? En fait, absolument rien. Rien de ce que je vais écrire dans ce travail n'est essentiellement nouveau dans son contenu pour un théologien. Cependant, je propose un changement dans la forme et surtout dans l'expression du message de l'évangile qui, je crois, est actuellement plus que nécessaire, et ce, peu importe la culture, la langue et l'endroit.

1.2 Lorsque des concepts humains tentent d'expliquer un Dieu insondable

Every Christian is a theologian. Whether consciously or unconsciously, each person of faith embraces a belief system.
(Grenz 2000.)

La théologie systématique existe depuis les débuts de l'histoire chrétienne postbiblique. Des docteurs de la loi, théologiens et

philosophes chrétiens, ont tenté de mettre par écrit leurs compréhensions, leurs interprétations et leurs visions du message biblique. Augustin d'Hippone vers la fin des années 300 après Jésus-Christ est un exemple de ces théologiens qui ont tenté de conceptualiser en un système cohérent sa compréhension biblique et nous lui attribuons entre autre le concept du péché originel.

L'histoire de l'église chrétienne dans son sens large et de sa théologie sont purement occidentale. Partant des Grecques et des Romains, peuples très impérialistes, pour se transmettre dans l'ensemble de l'Europe et, ensuite, à travers les vagues de la colonisation, la chrétienté a rejoint tous les racoins de la terre. Aujourd'hui, chaque dénomination ou culture chrétienne possède ses énoncés de théologie systématique venant dicter leurs positions et leurs opinions souvent exprimées sous forme de dogmes et de doctrines.

Ces systèmes servent souvent de référence pour tenter de discerner la vérité absolue. Ce qui est intéressant par contre, c'est que l'absolutiste, la personne qui croit détenir la vérité et que les autres qui ne pensent pas comme elle sont automatiquement dans l'erreur, est plus un concept et une idéologie culturelle. Je constate aussi que plus l'ethnocentrisme est fort dans une culture, plus l'absolutisme est présent.

Nous retrouvons un attribut du Créateur largement répandu parmi les différentes traditions spirituelles autochtones qui, malheureusement, n'est pas très exposé dans les systèmes théologiques chrétiens. En fait, cet attribut a un effet anti-absolutiste. Il n'enlève pas la capacité à l'humain de discerner des vérités fondamentales mais fait en sorte de garder à l'esprit humain la conception qu'il y a plus grand, au-delà de lui-même et une part d'incompréhension qui est et qui subsistera à jamais. Cet attribut est que le Créateur est le Grand Mystère. Cet enseignement m'a été donné oralement par des aînés de différentes nations. Le concept du grand mystère met à l'avant plan le fait que nous connaissons en partie et que Dieu est insondable. Effectivement, plusieurs versets bibliques nous l'enseigne (Dt 29.29, Jb 11.7-8, Jb 38.4, Jb 40.2, Jb 42.3, Pr 25.2, Rm 11.33). Mais il n'est pas automatiquement mis à l'avant-plan dans la liste de qui est Dieu. L'humain s'acharne à créer des

systèmes de croyances cohérents à partir de ses limites humaines où il fait l'énumération de qui est Dieu, une liste des attributs, une liste des doctrines et, uniquement à la toute fin de nos ressources humaines, il termine par ce qu'il ne peut conceptualiser en disant que le reste, c'est l'aspect inconnu de Dieu, le mystère.

Je crois que c'est une erreur, voire de l'arrogance, de faire de la conceptualisation de cette façon. Cette façon de faire ouvre la porte toute grande à penser que nous pouvons connaître Dieu, posséder la vérité absolue et glisser vers l'absolutisme. J'aime particulièrement les textes de Job 38 à 42 lorsque Dieu vient parler à Job après sa série d'épreuves et qu'il lui donne toute une leçon d'humilité en lui démontrant la petitesse et l'insignifiance de son humanité versus la grandeur insondable de Dieu.

Je trouve en même temps que de mettre de côté l'aspect insondable de Dieu limite la compréhension et l'explication de concept. Le fait qu'un énoncé de théologie systématique se doit d'être cohérent, humainement compréhensible et explicable fait que des positions opposées sont apparues. Le calvinisme et l'arminianisme sont les parfaits exemple de cela. Comment humainement expliquer la totale souveraineté de Dieu en toute chose y compris dans le choix ou l'élection de ceux qui seront rachetés et l'enseignement que tous les humains ont accès à la rédemption et qu'ils ont la liberté de choisir. Humainement, il s'agit de contradiction. Et chacun des défenseurs de ces positions prouvera bible à la main sa position et terminera avec une position humainement limitée.

Je ne crois pas qu'il soit humainement explicable que les croyants rachetés sont élus, que Dieu soit souverain en toute chose, que depuis le début, dans le jardin d'Éden, Adam et Ève aient eu le choix, que chaque humain soit responsable individuellement de ses actions et que nous ayons le choix de croire et de nous réconcilier avec Dieu. Mais je crois qu'un des attributs de Dieu notre Créateur est qu'il est le Grand Mystère, et que tous ces énoncés sont décrits dans la révélation biblique et que, par conséquent, ils sont vrais. Je ferme ici le débat de l'élection et du libre choix en sotériologie!

Pour terminer ce point, la conceptualisation sotériologique selon la réconciliation est une perspective, mais je ne crois pas qu'en elle seule, elle détienne l'ensemble de la vérité absolue. Pour moi personnellement, elle est très significative. Cependant, la Bible nous présente différentes perspectives telles que la nouvelle naissance, la rédemption, le salut et la réconciliation afin de nous illustrer la chose sous différents angles et augmenter les chances que nous, humains, nous comprenions que Jésus est mort pour nous. Je ne crois pas que Dieu s'attende de nous d'avoir une compréhension détaillée mais une foi sincère qui se traduit en action.

1.3 L'absence de modèle de réconciliation avec le Créateur

Plusieurs passages de la Bible parlent de la réconciliation humain avec humain, Dieu avec l'humain et aussi Dieu avec tout ce qui est dans le ciel et sur la terre. Voici les versets extraits du Nouveau Testament.

Matthieu 5: ²³ Si donc tu présentes ton offrande vers l'autel et que là tu te souviennes que ton frère a quelque chose contre toi, ²⁴ laisse ton offrande devant l'autel et va d'abord te réconcilier avec ton frère, puis viens présenter ton offrande. (SG 21)

Romains 5: ¹⁰ En effet, si nous avons été réconciliés avec Dieu grâce à la mort de son Fils lorsque nous étions ses ennemis, nous serons à bien plus forte raison sauvés par sa vie maintenant que nous sommes réconciliés. ¹¹ Bien plus, nous plaçons notre fierté en Dieu par notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, par qui maintenant nous avons reçu la réconciliation. (SG 21)

1 Corinthiens 7: ¹¹ – si elle est séparée de lui, qu'elle reste sans se remarier ou qu'elle se réconcilie avec son mari – et que le mari ne divorce pas de sa femme. (SG 21)

2 Corinthiens 5: ¹⁸ Et tout cela vient de Dieu qui nous a réconciliés avec lui par [Jésus-] Christ et qui nous a donné le ministère de la réconciliation. ¹⁹ En effet, Dieu était en Christ : il réconciliait le monde avec lui-même en ne chargeant pas les hommes de leurs fautes, et il a mis en nous la parole de la réconciliation. ²⁰ Nous sommes donc des ambassadeurs pour Christ, comme si Dieu adressait par nous son appel. Nous supplions au nom de Christ. Soyez réconciliés avec Dieu! (SG 21)

Éphésiens 2: ¹⁵ Par sa mort, il a rendu sans effet la loi avec ses commandements et leurs règles, afin de créer en lui-même un seul homme nouveau à partir des deux, établissant ainsi la paix. ¹⁶ Il a voulu les réconcilier l'un et l'autre avec Dieu en les réunissant dans un seul corps au moyen de la croix, en détruisant par elle la haine. ¹⁷ Il est venu annoncer la paix à vous qui étiez loin et à ceux qui étaient près. ¹⁸ À

travers lui, en effet, nous avons les uns et les autres accès auprès du Père par le même Esprit. (SG 21)

Colossiens 1 : ¹⁹ En effet, Dieu a voulu que toute sa plénitude habite en lui. ²⁰ Il a voulu par Christ tout réconcilier avec lui-même, aussi bien ce qui est sur la terre que ce qui est dans le ciel, en faisant la paix à travers lui, par son sang versé sur la croix. ²¹ Et vous qui étiez autrefois étrangers et ennemis de Dieu par vos pensées et par vos œuvres mauvaises, il vous a maintenant réconciliés ²² par la mort [de son Fils] dans son corps de chair pour vous faire paraître devant lui saints, sans défaut et sans reproche. (SG 21)

En prenant conscience de la présence et de l'importance de la réconciliation dans la Bible, ce qui m'a préoccupé était l'absence du concept sotériologique où la réconciliation était le thème principal et où l'on retrouvait tous les éléments tels que la justification, la substitution, la propitiation, le pardon et la repentance. *Theology for the community of God* par Stanley J. Grenz fut le premier livre doctrinal qui mettait réellement en avant-plan la réconciliation comme fondement sotériologique. Mais encore là, la description de la réconciliation est encore légère et brève. Il semble que les autres commentateurs et ceux qui écrivent des livres de doctrine n'ait pas trop d'intérêt envers ce sujet. C'est certain que, lorsque tu commences la réflexion sur le sujet par Genèse 3, l'humain est coupable, il est condamné, ce que tu rechercheras sera la façon dont il peut être sauvé. Tu ne chercheras pas la réconciliation, le rétablissement d'une relation. Pas de temps à perdre avec la relation, c'est être sauvé que l'humain a besoin, de son billet aller simple pour le ciel !! Petit sarcasme.

Il semble aussi, après que j'ai lue plusieurs commentateurs que plusieurs ne semblent pas très à l'aise de traiter du sujet de la réconciliation. Henry C. Thiessen dans son *Guide de doctrine biblique* traite la réconciliation entre Dieu et l'humain comme un "avant-salut", faisant l'analogie entre la réconciliation et la propitiation et disant que l'action de la réconciliation par Jésus a apaisé Dieu et c'est pour cette raison que Dieu envoie des bénédictions temporelles même à ceux qui ne sont pas sauvés.

Je suis complètement en désaccord avec un tel point de vue car, premièrement, cela ne correspond pas du tout à la définition du terme tant dans le texte original grec que dans la définition du mot réconciliation et ses dérivés. Je parlerai de la définition du

mot plus en détails au chapitre 3. Deuxièmement, je ne pense pas que, dans les textes de Matthieu 5.23-24 et 1 Corinthiens 5.11 où il est fait mention de réconciliation humain-humain, cela se définisse comme une bonne disposition de cœur et un apaisement de la colère mais du rétablissement de la relation vécu préalablement.

Pour bien comprendre la réconciliation, il faut comprendre le but du Créateur et voir la Bible dans un tout, pas uniquement Genèse 3, Jean 3 et Romains 3. Il faut partir du début jusqu'à la toute fin, en incluant les Genèse 1, Jean 1, Romains 1, Colossiens 1 et décentrer le message de notre nombril humain pour le comprendre, du moins au meilleur de notre compréhension, selon une perspective divine.

2. Le Créateur et la création

Le message de la réconciliation ne s'enseigne pas en deux minutes avec un bracelet où se trouvent des billes de couleurs. Car pour comprendre que nous avons besoin de nous réconcilier, nous devons savoir premièrement avec qui, pourquoi et comment. C'est pour cela que nous avons besoin de comprendre le Créateur, la création et ses objectifs selon l'ensemble de sa révélation.

2.1 Le Créateur se révèle

Dans notre désir d'apporter l'Évangile aux populations qui n'en ont pas eu connaissance, et ce, jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre, le point de départ de notre proclamation ne peut être que la création. Ceci est également vrai pour notre propre culture étant donné que de moins en moins d'Occidentaux connaissent les Écritures. De plus, le message de l'Évangile lui-même devrait toujours être étroitement lié à la création. La terre nous a été confiée par son Créateur; nous ne sommes que de simples gérants de la propriété d'autrui. Nous devrions donc respecter la terre qu'a créée notre Père céleste et en prendre un soin attentionné. Nous devrions la servir, la protéger, chercher à en développer le potentiel devant Dieu, tout en nous gardant d'en faire un objet d'adoration. (...) La Bible est la plus importante et la plus claire des révélations de Dieu aux hommes; malgré cela, elle reste incompréhensible en dehors de la création qui nous entoure. (Davis 2011)

Ce texte, écrit par un théologien occidental, est effectivement l'un des plus centré sur la création que j'aie eu le plaisir de lire. Il est rare de voir et de lire cette perspective. Cependant, sans

vouloir le dénigrer, je trouve malgré tout que ce texte contient des barrières culturelles typiques de la culture occidentale.

La première est que c'est joli ce qui s'y trouve, mais, lorsque l'on observe la réalité des chrétiens occidentaux nord-américains, nous ne voyons pas mettre en pratique le fait que la terre ne nous appartient pas, que nous devons la respecter, lui apporter des soins attentionnés et encore moins que l'humain est le "serviteur" de la terre.

Mon second point est concernant la révélation. Si la Bible est la révélation la plus importante et la plus claire des révélations de Dieu aux humains, est-elle la révélation universelle à tous les humains, en tout lieu et à toute époque? La réponse est non. La seule révélation universelle est la création.

J'approuve sans réserve dans les affirmations du Dr Davis que, sans la création, la Bible est incompréhensible. Je ne suis pas certain par contre à quel point il applique son affirmation concrètement en herméneutique. Je doute fortement que, pour lui, cela veuille dire qu'il va utiliser la révélation de la création pour interpréter la Bible.

J'ai fait, illustrée ci-dessous, une conceptualisation simplifiée d'un modèle théologique couramment enseigné pour illustrer la révélation de Dieu aux humains. J'ai simplifié ce modèle à sa plus simple expression, le but n'étant pas de couvrir en entier le sujet de la révélation de Dieu mais simplement d'illustrer mes affirmations.

La révélation de Dieu aux humains

Révélation spéciale
La Bible (autorité suprême)
Jésus-Christ

Révélation générale
La création
La conscience

Voici quelques observations. Dans ce modèle, le langage “spécial” et “général” vient immédiatement conférer un rôle hiérarchique de la révélation dite spéciale sur la révélation dite générale. Elle est spéciale, supérieure, possédant la suprématie et l’autorité. Et, on note qu’à l’intérieur même de chacune de ces deux catégories, il y a une hiérarchisation comme le Dr Davis l’a lui-même affirmé : “*La Bible est la plus importante et la plus claire des révélations de Dieu aux hommes* » (Davis 2011). En d’autres mots, elle détient l’autorité suprême sur toutes les autres formes de révélations de Dieu. Appliqué concrètement en principe d’herméneutique, cela veut dire que la Bible sera normative et autoritaire, qu’elle servira à l’interprétation de tous les autres formes de révélations. On voit aussi apparaître ici un peu de culture *a priori* occidentale de la supériorité du concret et du rationnel sur le non-concret et le subjectif.

Aussi les règles traditionnelles d’herméneutique disent-elles que, pour interpréter le texte biblique, nous devons l’étudier dans son contexte historico-grammatical, la culture dans laquelle il a été écrit, et respecter le rapport d’analogie à l’ensemble du texte canonique. Aucune règle d’herméneutique, par contre, dit que l’on doit respecter que Dieu s’est révélé par la création premièrement, que cette révélation peut servir comme base d’interprétation du texte biblique et aussi servir à comprendre et à définir, autant qu’il est humainement possible de le faire, notre Créateur.

C’est fou pourtant combien les théologiens rabaissent les formes de la révélation de Dieu autre que la Bible alors que Dieu lui-même dans la Bible affirme des hypothèses et des certitudes sur la base des autres formes de révélation. Dans Romains 1.19-21, il est affirmé que tout être humain, de tout temps, de toute époque, a la révélation de l’existence de Dieu devant lui par la création. Et cela fait en sorte que tout humain ne rendant pas gloire à Dieu le Créateur, Dieu est juste de le condamner. Pour Dieu, la révélation de la création est suffisante pour condamner un humain. Ensuite, le passage de Romains 2.12-16 parle de tous ceux qui n’auront pas eu la loi, que l’on peut appliquer à la révélation de la Bible, que ces gens seront jugés sur la base de leur conscience qui les accuse et non selon la loi. Donc, Dieu juge que la conscience des gens est suffisante pour les accuser et les tenir responsables du mal commis s’ils ne s’en repentent pas.

Je comprends que la Bible est précieuse, qu'elle a une fonction normative et qu'elle est, sur une foule de sujet spécifique, la seule source de révélation de Dieu. Je n'ai pas le désir de minimiser la Bible de sorte que mes enfants dans sept générations ne considèrent plus le caractère sacré de ce livre. Cependant, je crois qu'un équilibre peut être apporté là-dedans car parfois, j'ai le sentiment qu'on idolâtre le livre plutôt qu'adorer le Créateur. J'aimerais qu'un jour l'on comprenne l'interdépendance des révélations de notre Créateur et que l'on mette l'accent là-dessus plutôt que sur l'hierarchisation de ceux-ci.

2.2 Commencer l'histoire par le véritable début pour mieux en comprendre le but!

La révélation de Dieu à l'humain ne débute pas à Genèse 3 mais à Genèse 1. Elle ne débute pas par cette expression "l'humain a péché et est condamné" mais commence par Dieu le Créateur et ensuite la révélation universelle pour tout le genre humain, la création. Donc, les récits de Genèse 1-2 et Romains 1 nous parlant de la révélation universelle de Dieu par la création sont essentiels comme fondation pour une compréhension du message biblique dans son ensemble. Une théologie déconnectée de la création peut aussi avoir la tendance de se déconnecter du Créateur lui-même. Dire que le thème de la Bible est le salut de l'humain est un concept anthropocentrique qui sous-entend que Dieu existe pour l'humain.

Lorsque l'on regarde la Bible dans son ensemble, on se rend rapidement compte que le but de Dieu est relationnel, que Dieu cherche à établir une communauté, un peuple, composée d'êtres divers avec qui il entretiendra des relations harmonieuses. "God's intent to establish community with creation is a central theme of the entire biblical message" (Grenz 2000).

Dans cette perspective, on se retrouve avec le but de Dieu mis à l'avant-plan plutôt que le besoin de l'humain. Vous voyez apparaître le théocentrisme plutôt que l'anthropocentrisme déguisé.

- Genèse 1-2: Création du monde, communauté où règne l'harmonie. Dieu veut une relation avec des humains d'une façon spéciale, il crée le choix.

- Genèse 3-8: Rupture de l'harmonie par le choix et la faute des humains, 1^{er} jugement planétaire de Dieu avec le déluge. La famille de Noé est épargnée ainsi qu'un couple de chaque espèce animal pour repeupler à nouveau la terre. Promesse de Dieu à la création de ne plus détruire par les eaux.
- Genèse 11: Dispersion et séparation des humains selon des langues (éventuellement des cultures) différentes.
- Genèse 11: Ancien Testament Relation de Dieu avec Abraham et sa descendance, le peuple d'Israël. Relation particulière de Dieu avec ce peuple, Son peuple. L'humanité est encore corrompue et a besoin de réconciliation. Promesse d'un Messie.
- Les Évangiles: Venue du Messie, de Jésus-Christ. Le Créateur venant lui-même en tant qu'humain pour la rédemption de l'humanité et offrir la réconciliation.
- Actes des apôtres et les Épîtres: Établissement sur terre de communautés formant le peuple de Dieu, qui sont en relation avec lui maintenant et pour l'éternité. La corruption continue de s'étendre sur la terre.
- 2 Pierre 3, l'Apocalypse et autres: 2^{ième} jugement planétaire. Destruction de la terre. Seuls les "rachetés" seront épargnés. Nouvelle terre et nouveaux cieux, le royaume de Dieu revient sur terre vivre avec les rachetés. Une nouvelle communauté où la corruption n'existe plus et où règne l'harmonie. Tous les humains qui y seront auront choisi d'avoir une relation avec Dieu.

2 Pierre 3 : ⁵ De fait, ils veulent ignorer que des cieux ont existé autrefois par la parole de Dieu, ainsi qu'une terre tirée des eaux et au milieu d'elles. ⁶ Ils oublient volontairement que le monde d'alors a disparu de la même manière, submergé par l'eau. ⁷ Or, par la parole de Dieu, le ciel et la terre actuels sont gardés pour le feu, réservés pour le jour du jugement et de la perdition des hommes impies. ⁸ Mais s'il y a une chose, bien-aimés, que vous ne devez pas oublier, c'est qu'aux yeux du Seigneur un jour est comme 1000 ans et 1000 ans sont comme un jour. ⁹ Le Seigneur ne tarde pas dans l'accomplissement de la promesse, comme certains le pensent; au contraire, il fait preuve de patience envers nous, voulant qu'aucun ne périsse mais que tous parviennent à la repentance. ¹⁰ Le jour du Seigneur viendra comme un voleur [dans la nuit]. Ce jour-là, le ciel disparaîtra avec fracas, les éléments embrasés se désagrégeront et la terre avec les œuvres qu'elle contient sera brûlée. ¹¹ Puisque tout notre monde doit être dissous, combien votre conduite et votre piété doivent-elles être saintes ! ¹² Attendez et hâtez la venue du jour de Dieu, jour où le ciel enflammé se désagrègera et où les éléments

embrasés fondront. ¹³ *Mais nous attendons, conformément à sa promesse, un nouveau ciel et une nouvelle terre où la justice habitera.* (SG21)

Dieu est un être relationnel en lui-même, dans sa trinité. À travers sa toute puissance, il crée un monde, une communauté qui exprime Sa gloire. Toute la gloire lui revient!

2.3 Pourquoi avons-nous besoin de réconciliation?

Pourquoi avons-nous besoin de réconciliation? Simplement parce que Dieu en créant l'humain, il a aussi créé le choix. Il a laissé l'humain libre de choisir de rester en bon terme, en harmonie ou de désobéir, de rompre l'harmonie. L'objectif relationnel et communautaire de Dieu a fait en sorte qu'il laissa l'humain libre de choisir dès la création. Une relation est quelque chose qui ne se force pas, où les deux parties sont libres de vouloir ou de ne pas vouloir entrer en relation.

L'harmonie (Gn 1.1 à 2.25)

Tout commence par Dieu. Il est lui-même en relation parfaite dans la trinité. Il crée la terre de façon parfaite et équilibrée. L'interaction et la relation entre tous les éléments sont harmonieuses. Dieu déclare cela bon (Gn 1.10). Dieu dit ensuite à la terre de produire des plantes, toutes selon leurs espèces vivant en interaction avec le reste de la création et dépendant de leur "mère", la terre. Dieu décréta encore que c'était parfait (Gn 1.12). Dieu, par la suite, dit encore à la terre de produire des animaux, des poissons, ect. Encore une fois, l'harmonie est parfaite. Ils sont tous dépendants du Créateur, de leur mère la terre, des plantes et ils ont tous besoin des uns des autres. Dieu décrète encore cela comme étant bon.

Finalement, en dernier, il crée l'être vivant le plus dépendant de la création. Celui qui a besoin de tous les autres pour vivre, l'humain. Encore une fois, il part de la terre pour engendrer l'humain dans lequel il met le souffle de vie. Dieu confie à cet être le plus dépendant de la création une responsabilité particulière de prendre soin, de gérer, et il lui donne la capacité et certain pouvoir pour accomplir cette tâche. Quel contraste ressort de cela. Il met en charge l'être le plus dépendant ! Je trouve cela tellement intelligent. Si l'humain ne prend pas ses responsabilités comme il le faut, il se punit lui-même et cause

son propre tord, car il le fait à l'encontre de ses propres besoins, de ce qu'il dépend pour vivre.

Tout est parfait. En harmonie. La sécurité règne, les besoins sont comblés. Les mots qui priment sont relation, interconnexion, interdépendance. Et Dieu dit que cela était très bon (Gn 1.31).

L'harmonie brisée (Gn 3.1 à 11.9)

Le serpent, que l'on associe à Satan, est l'inspirateur, le tentateur, mais en bout du compte, ce sont les humains qui ont librement choisi de tourner le dos à Dieu, de lui désobéir venant briser la relation harmonieuse et parfaite entre l'humain et Dieu. Mais les conséquences ont affecté l'ensemble des relations. À partir de ce moment, l'humain a une relation difficile avec la terre, avec les plantes, avec les animaux et avec les autres êtres humains. L'harmonie fut rompue et tous les interactions et interdépendances furent bouleversées. Jamais la terre et l'humanité ne retrouvèrent l'harmonie précédant le péché d'Adam et Ève.

Que l'on soit pour une position que le péché fait partie désormais de la nature humaine ou pas, il reste et demeure que l'harmonie est rompu, les besoins sont difficilement comblés, la sécurité n'existe plus, la mort existe et tout humain est pécheur (Rm 3).

C'est pour cela que nous avons besoin de réconciliation, non seulement nous, mais l'ensemble de la création.

3. La réconciliation avec le Créateur, l'œuvre de la rédemption

3.1 La réconciliation, concept principal et objectif final

Dans la théologie occidentale, on met comme concept principal le salut de l'humain, la rédemption ou le "rachat" de l'humain. C'est pour cela que nous retrouvons dans certains énoncés de théologies systématiques le concept de la sotériologie, le salut humain. *Christ est mort pour me sauver moi*. Il existe aussi le concept biblique de la nouvelle naissance.

Je vous propose, dans cet essai, de changer le concept principal du "salut" par celui de la réconciliation. Et de changer l'affirmation *Christ est mort pour me sauver moi* par cette affirmation : *Dieu, le Créateur, a rendu possible la réconciliation*

aux humains par la vie, la mort sanglante à la croix et la résurrection de Jésus-Christ qui ce faisant a réconcilié tout ce qui était dans le ciel et tout ce qui est sur la terre.

Au lieu d'aborder la question de l'évangélisation et de la conversion selon le concept de "chacun doit être sauvé", je vais plutôt l'observer sous un autre angle : "chacun doit avoir une relation avec Dieu et pour y parvenir, il doit premièrement se réconcilier avec lui."

3.2 Qu'est-ce que la réconciliation?

Avant de donner une définition simple à partir d'un dictionnaire, j'ai fait une recherche du mot réconciliation et les traductions ou concepts qu'y s'y rattachent dans l'Ancien Testament (hébreu) et le Nouveau Testament (grec) à partir du code Strongs.

Le concept de la réconciliation est exprimé majoritairement et littéralement dans le Nouveau Testament. Selon le code Strongs, il n'y a pas de traduction en hébreu biblique de la réconciliation. Le seul passage qui s'en approche est le texte dans Job 22:21. Par contre, dans le grec du Nouveau Testament, on retrouve quatre mots traduits couramment par réconciliation et qui définissent ce qu'est la réconciliation.

Job 22 : ²¹ Réconcilie (Cakan^{Radical}) -toi avec Dieu, sois en paix avec lui! C'est ainsi que tu connaîtras le bonheur. (SG 21)

Matthieu 5 : ²³ Si donc tu présentes ton offrande vers l'autel et que là tu te souviennes que ton frère a quelque chose contre toi, ²⁴ laisse ton offrande devant l'autel et va d'abord te réconcilier (diאלססו) avec ton frère, puis viens présenter ton offrande. (SG 21)

Romains 5 : ¹⁰ En effet, si nous avons été réconciliés (katאלססו) avec Dieu grâce à la mort de son Fils lorsque nous étions ses ennemis, nous serons à bien plus forte raison sauvés par sa vie maintenant que nous sommes réconciliés (katאלססו). ¹¹ Bien plus, nous plaçons notre fierté en Dieu par notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, par qui maintenant nous avons reçu la réconciliation. (katאלללל). (SG 21)

Romains 11: ¹⁵ En effet, si leur mise à l'écart a entraîné la réconciliation (katאלללל) du monde, que produira leur réintégration, sinon le passage de la mort à la vie ? (SG 21)

1 Corinthiens 7: ¹¹ – si elle est séparée de lui, qu'elle reste sans se remarier ou qu'elle se réconcilie (katאלססו) avec son mari – et que le mari ne divorce pas de sa femme. (SG 21)

2 Corinthiens 5: ¹⁸ Et tout cela vient de Dieu qui nous a réconciliés (katallasso) avec lui par [Jésus-]Christ et qui nous a donné le ministère de la réconciliation (katallage). ¹⁹ En effet, Dieu était en Christ: il réconciliait (katallasso) le monde avec lui-même en ne chargeant pas les hommes de leurs fautes, et il a mis en nous la parole de la réconciliation (katallage). ²⁰ Nous sommes donc des ambassadeurs pour Christ, comme si Dieu adressait par nous son appel. Nous supplions au nom de Christ: «Soyez réconciliés (katallasso) avec Dieu! (SG 21)

Éphésiens 2: ¹⁵ Par sa mort, il a rendu sans effet la loi avec ses commandements et leurs règles, afin de créer en lui-même un seul homme nouveau à partir des deux, établissant ainsi la paix. ¹⁶ Il a voulu les réconcilier (apokatallasso) l'un et l'autre avec Dieu en les réunissant dans un seul corps au moyen de la croix, en détruisant par elle la haine. ¹⁷ Il est venu annoncer la paix à vous qui étiez loin et à ceux qui étaient près. ¹⁸ À travers lui, en effet, nous avons les uns et les autres accès auprès du Père par le même Esprit. (SG 21)

Colossiens 1: ¹⁹ En effet, Dieu a voulu que toute sa plénitude habite en lui. ²⁰ Il a voulu par Christ tout réconcilier (apokatallasso), avec lui-même, aussi bien ce qui est sur la terre que ce qui est dans le ciel, en faisant la paix à travers lui, par son sang versé sur la croix. ²¹ Et vous qui étiez autrefois étrangers et ennemis de Dieu par vos pensées et par vos œuvres mauvaises, il vous a maintenant réconciliés (apokatallasso), ²² par la mort [de son Fils] dans son corps de chair pour vous faire paraître devant lui saints, sans défaut et sans reproche.

Dans le texte de Job 22.21, on retrouve la forme radicale de *Cakan* [saw-kan']. Il s'agit de la seule place dans l'Ancien Testament que ce verbe est utilisé sous cette forme. Aussi, voilà pourquoi le terme varie beaucoup d'une traduction à l'autre autant en français qu'en anglais. Un petit fait intéressant, outre la période de la genèse, l'action du récit du livre de Job serait parmi les plus anciens du monde, au temps des patriarches. Donc, tout se déroule alors qu'il n'y a pas d'alliance ou de promesse entre Dieu et le peuple d'Israël. C'est quand même intéressant qu'on y parle de relation avec Dieu.

Dans le Nouveau Testament par contre, on retrouve quatre (4) mots grecs couramment traduits par "la réconciliation": *Diallasso* [dee-al-las'-so], *Katallage* [kat-al-lag-ay'], *Katallasso* [kat-al-las'-so] et *Apokatallasso* [ap-ok-at-al-las'-so]. Tous ces mots sont construits à partir du même suffixe, *Allasso* [al-las'-so], qui est précédé des préfixes *Dia* [dee-ah'], *Kata* [kat-ah'] et *Apo* [apo']. *Katallage* et *Katallasso* sont en fait un même mot dans leur construction et leur définition, il s'agit d'une différence de conjugaison.

Voici les définitions selon le code Strong:

- *Cakan* [saw-kan'] ^{Radical} : montrer une harmonie, être familier avec et connaître intimement.
- *Allasso* [al-las'-so]: Changer, changement, échanger une chose pour une autre, transformer, transformation.
- *Dia* [dee-ah'] : Par, à travers, avec, pour.
- *Diallasso* [dee-al-las'-so] : Changer l'esprit de quelqu'un, réconcilier, être réconcilié, renouveler une amitié.
- *Kata* [kat-ah'] : Entre, envers.
- *Katallasso* [kat-al-las'-so] : Pratiquer le change (comme pour de la monnaie en valeur équivalente), Réconcilier (ceux qui ont un différend), retourner en faveur avec, être réconcilié avec quelqu'un et recevoir dans notre faveur.
- *Katallage* [kat-al-lag-ay'] : Échange, change (Le travail des changeurs de monnaie, en valeur équivalente), ajustement d'une différence, réconciliation.
- *Apo* [apo'] : Origine ou cause d'un effet, le lieu d'où quelque chose provient ou est prise.
- *Apokatallasso* [ap-ok-at-al-las'-so] : Se réconcilier complètement, revenir à un état d'harmonie comme autrefois.

On retrouve donc plusieurs points qui définissent la réconciliation.

- **Par, à travers, avec, pour, entre.** Bref, cela ne se fait pas seul. La réconciliation se fait par, à travers, avec, pour et entre deux personnes ou deux “parties”. Ce n’est pas un processus unilatéral mais fait de part égale, ensemble, par au moins deux parties.

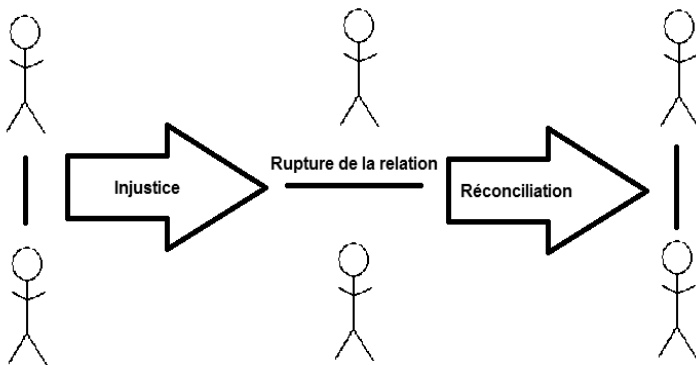
Changement, transformation. Il y a clairement un changement, une transformation. L’après réconciliation est différent de l’avant réconciliation.

- **Échange, ajustement d'une différence en valeur équivalente.** Dans la définition même des quatre (4) mots grecs se traduisant par “la réconciliation” se trouve la notion de transaction, d’ajustement, d’échanger une chose pour une autre de façon équivalente, sous entendu de façon juste et équitable, pour les parties. Cela définit un échange où se trouve une ou des actions de réparation juste et équitable.
- **Revenir à un état d'origine.** Le préfixe *Apo* est celui qui définit le plus précisément cette notion. Il s’agit d’un retour à l’état

d'origine, à l'harmonie comme autrefois. Cette notion est clairement exprimée dans Colossiens au chapitre 1.

Relation, retour de l'amitié, être familial et intime. Le dernier point met l'accent sur le caractère relationnel de la réconciliation. Il s'agit du rétablissement d'une relation, sous entendu qu'elle a été endommagée ou rompue. La finalité de la réconciliation est clairement une relation harmonieuse. On peut donc synthétiser la définition de la réconciliation comme étant un processus d'échange relationnel entre deux parties, où il y aura des actions concrètes afin de parvenir à une restauration d'une relation endommagée ou rompue.

Voici une petite illustration:

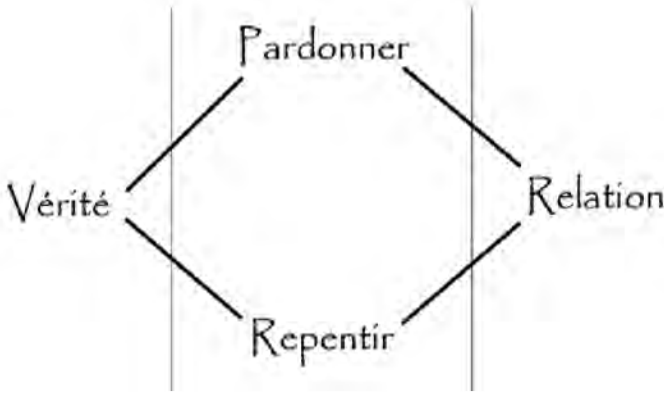


3.3 Les étapes de la réconciliation avec le Créateur

Il est facile, voire naturel, de comprendre que lorsqu'une relation est rompue ou endommagée, il est nécessaire de se réconcilier. La façon de le faire n'est pas aussi simple par contre. Déjà, bien définir la réconciliation donne une meilleure idée du processus qu'elle est. La façon dont elle s'opère demeure encore un peu mystérieuse à ce point.

J'ai rassemblé les thèmes de la sotériologie, de la réconciliation entre Dieu le Créateur et l'humain, afin de comprendre ce que contient le processus de la réconciliation comme Dieu nous l'a révélé lui-même. En fait, ce processus s'applique dans la réconciliation humain – Divin et humain – humain. Il s'agit du sentier vers la vie, la guérison, la liberté et l'harmonie.

Voici illustré en trois étapes simples, en quelques mots, le processus de la réconciliation.



Étape 1. La vérité

La vérité est le commencement de tout processus de résolution de conflit, de guérison, de réconciliation. Sans elle, la réconciliation ne peut pas avoir lieu. Il en est de même dans une réconciliation humain – humain.

Lorsqu'un conflit viendra briser la relation entre deux personnes, tant que ces deux personnes ne viendront pas dans un processus relationnel mettre en lumière la vérité sur la situation, le conflit demeurera. C'est l'esprit derrière le texte de Matthieu 18.15: aller vers l'autre pour faire sortir la vérité sur la situation.

Jésus est venu pour faire connaître la vérité. "Je vous le dis en vérité". Cette phrase revient sans cesse des discours de Jésus dans les Évangiles, une trentaine de fois uniquement pour l'Évangile de Matthieu. Le mot vérité est cité plus de 180 fois dans le Nouveau Testament.

Jean 1.17: En effet, la loi a été donnée à travers Moïse, mais la grâce et la vérité sont venues à travers Jésus-Christ.

Jean 8.32 : Vous connaîtrez la vérité, et la vérité vous rendra libres.

Jean 14.6 : Jésus lui dit : "C'est moi qui suis le chemin, la vérité et la vie. On ne vient au Père qu'en passant par moi."

2 Timothée 3.8 : De même que Jannès et Jambres se sont opposés à Moïse, de même ces hommes s'opposent à la vérité. Ils ont l'intelligence pervertie et sont disqualifiés en ce qui concerne la foi.

Tite 1.1: De la part de Paul, serviteur de Dieu et apôtre de Jésus-Christ. – J'ai été chargé d'amener ceux que Dieu a choisis à la foi et à la connaissance de la vérité qui est conforme à la piété.

Hébreux 11: ¹Or la foi, c'est la ferme assurance des choses qu'on espère, la démonstration de celles qu'on ne voit pas. ²C'est à cause d'elle que les anciens ont reçu un témoignage favorable. ³Par la foi, nous comprenons que l'univers a été formé par la parole de Dieu, de sorte que le monde visible n'a pas été fait à partir des choses visibles. ⁶Or, sans la foi, il est impossible d'être agréable à Dieu, car il faut que celui qui s'approche de lui croie que Dieu existe et qu'il récompense ceux qui le cherchent.

Si l'humain nie l'existence du Créateur révélé universellement par la création, en d'autres mots qu'il n'a pas la foi, il est inexcusable (Gn 1-2, Rm 1.18-20). Et si l'humain ne reconnaît pas la vérité que l'harmonie entre Dieu et les humains est rompue, que sa relation est brisée avec Dieu à cause du mal commis par ses ancêtres et lui-même (Gn 3-11, Rm 3.23), il ne peut pas être réconcilié avec Dieu.

Dieu motivé par son amour pour nous tend la main à l'humain pour qu'il se réconcilie avec lui (Jn 3.16, Rm 5.8, 2Co 5.14-20, Col 1) mais, s'il ne reconnaît pas l'existence de Dieu et le mal qu'il fait de sorte à entrer dans la repentance, le processus de réconciliation sera bloqué en partant. Dieu nous enseigne clairement que nous devons nous réconcilier avec lui et avec les autres. C'est l'esprit des deux commandements; Aime Dieu et aime ton prochain. Et la marque d'un disciple c'est l'amour qu'il a pour Dieu et les autres (Mt 5.23-24, Mt 22.37-40, Mc 12.30-31, Lc 10.27, Jn 13.34-35).

Par contre, Dieu ne se réconcilie pas avec des humains qui nient la vérité (2Ti 3.8). Il en est de même lorsque nous sommes face à des agresseurs, des abuseurs et des gens qui nous causent du tort. Nous avons notre part à faire devant Dieu, mais cela ne veut pas dire que nous devons demeurer en relation avec ces gens

s'ils nient la vérité et qu'ils ne fassent pas preuve d'une authentique repentance (Pr 14.7, Pr 22.5).

Cette étape est le premier pas de foi. Il s'agit de croire en Dieu, de lui faire confiance et de lui rendre gloire pour qui il est et ce qu'il fait. La foi n'est pas juste au niveau de la croyance. Elle devient une conviction qui s'exprime dans des actions concrètes (Jc 2).

Bien qu'il puisse sembler à première vue que cette étape repose entièrement sur l'humain, elle est et demeure entièrement l'œuvre et la grâce de Dieu. Si Dieu ne se révèle pas, l'humain ne le connaîtra pas (Rm 3.11). Le péché a obscurci et souillé la conscience humaine. C'est Jésus, l'incarnation de la vérité, qui se révèle à nous et c'est l'Esprit-Saint qui convainc de péché, de justice et de jugement (Jn16.7-11). La foi est aussi considérée comme un don de Dieu (Rm 10.17). Alors bien que l'humain choisisse de mettre ou non leur foi en Dieu, tout cela est l'œuvre de Dieu.

L'étape suivante est le pardon et la repentance. Les deux forment une seule même étape du fait qu'ils sont liés et interdépendants. Cependant, la vérité est la fondation pour la repentance et le pardon. Sans vérité, tout ce qui suivra sera faussé!

Étape 2 Le pardon et la repentance, l'œuvre de la croix

On a mis tellement de l'avant que le salut est une grâce gratuite de Dieu qu'on vient à croire qu'il est effectivement gratuit. En fait, oui et non. Chose certaine, il n'a pas été gratuit pour Dieu. Au contraire, Dieu a payé un grand prix (1Co 6.20 et 7.23). Et bien que Dieu l'offre par sa grâce gratuitement à l'humain (Rm 11.6), la foi vraie et authentique menant à une réelle repentance produira un changement et des actions de la personne.

La notion de salut par la grâce, la foi, la repentance et la place des œuvres sont le cœur du débat entre les diverses dénominations chrétiennes. Personnellement, je crois que la rédemption de l'humain est entièrement une grâce de Dieu qui s'acquiert par la foi menant à une repentance. Je crois aussi qu'il y a beaucoup de présuppositions culturelles entourant le pardon et la repentance.

Dans les dernières années, j'interrogeais plusieurs chrétiens en leur posant diverses questions. *On vous a enseigné que tu devais pardonner, que Dieu t'a pardonné, que tu dois te repentir. Pouvez-vous m'expliquer ce qu'est vraiment le pardon ? Expliquez-moi c'est quoi se repentir ? Aussi, devons-nous pardonner à quelqu'un qui n'est pas repentant ? Dieu pardonne-t-il à ceux qui ne se repentent pas ?* J'ai trouvé plus de gens embêtés par mes questions que de réponses. J'ai moi-même pris conscience que je ne m'étais jamais posé vraiment ces questions et qu'il m'était impossible de formuler une réponse avec assurance. Pourtant, c'est le cœur du salut. C'est l'essentiel de la mort de Jésus sur la croix. C'est le cœur de la réconciliation autant avec Dieu qu'avec les autres humains. En me rendant compte de cela, je n'ai pas été étonné de constater la piètre qualité des relations et des résolutions de conflits de la part de ceux qui se disent chrétiens. Aucune différence par rapport à la moyenne des gens. Pourtant, l'amour et les relations ne devraient-ils pas être la caractéristique des croyants?

Tout est accompli.

À la croix, avant de mourir, Jésus a dit : "Tout est accompli (Jn 19.30)." Tout est accompli. La croix est le sacrifice de notre Créateur qui, ce faisant, pourvoyait au pardon et à la repentance. Et oui, vous avez bien lu, à la repentance. Sans la croix, il serait impossible à l'humain de rencontrer les critères d'une repentance acceptable pour Dieu. Ce point sera développé plus loin. En se sens encore une fois, tout est l'œuvre de Dieu qui a tout accompli. À lui la gloire et l'honneur de la réconciliation qu'il nous offre dans sa grâce ! En même temps, il demeure que l'humain a le choix de se repentir ou non. L'œuvre de la croix qui vient rendre possible le pardon de Dieu et la repentance des humains se fait par la substitution pour l'expiation des fautes, ce qui apporte la justification et la propitiation à pardonner pour Dieu.

Qu'est-ce que pardonner?

Lorsque quelqu'un commet une injustice, il est en dette face à la personne offensée. Le pardon, c'est d'effacer, d'expier, de remettre ou de rembourser cette dette et d'en enlever les conséquences. Dans Matthieu 6.12, il est écrit : *"et remets-nous nos dettes, comme nous aussi nous remettons à nos débiteurs"*

(Darby).” Ce texte est très bien illustré en Matthieu 18.23-35 par la parabole du serviteur à qui le Maître a compassion et à qui il remet une dette. Le serviteur s’en va et refuse d’avoir à son tour compassion et refuse de remettre une dette. Le Maître est furieux du manque de compassion de son serviteur à qui il a remis la dette.

Dieu nous demande de pardonner avec compassion, autant de fois que cela sera nécessaire (Mt 18.21-22). Nous devons pardonner, c’est un fait ! Cependant, plusieurs interprètent cela simplement de la façon suivante “tu dois pardonner” et oublient de considérer la partie du texte “comme Dieu nous a pardonné.”

J’ai vécu des abus dans ma vie et, longtemps, on m’a servi un discours moralisateur à l’effet que je devais pardonner, me taire, oublier le passé et regarder vers l’avenir. Je ne suis pas le seul qui s’est fait servir ces phrases gratuites mais complètement irréalistes. Au-dedans de moi, elles résonnaient comme des insultes contre mon intégrité. Je ressentais de la colère face à l’injustice commise à mon endroit. On m’avait abusé, maltraité, traité injustement et on remettait sur moi, la victime, le poids de l’offense. J’étais incapable de pardonner, d’oublier, d’effacer le mal commis.

Beaucoup de gens que j’ai accompagnés dans des sentiers de guérison avait le même blocage: incapable de pardonner. En fait, lorsque nous bloquons à pardonner, ce que nous voulons en fait, c’est la justice. Nous voulons que la personne qui a fait du mal reconnaisse le mal qu’elle a fait, avoue et qu’elle paie, qu’elle répare ce qu’elle nous doit.

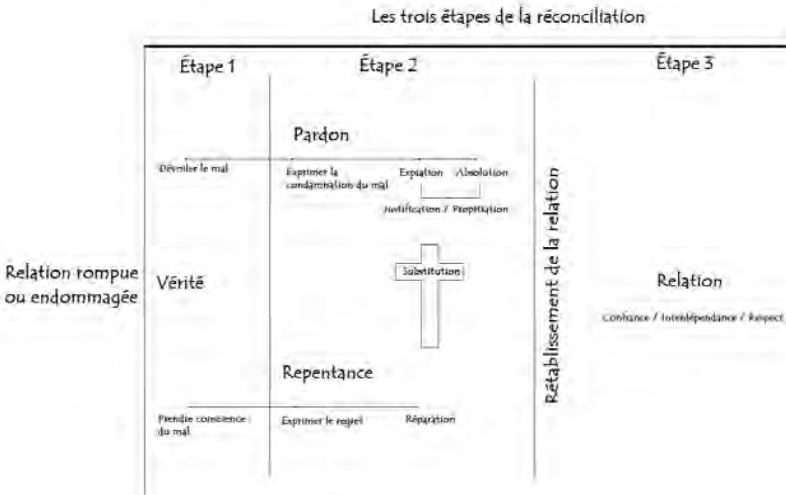
Est-ce que les injustices de l’humain amènent Dieu à la colère ? Oui, Dieu ressent de la colère face aux injustices des humains, à ceux qui transgressent la loi.²

² Ex 32.11; Nb 22.22, 25.3; Dt 6.15, 7.4, 9.7, 31.17; Js 23.16; Jg 6.39; 2S 6.7; 2R 22.17; 1Ch 13.10, 27.24; 2Ch 24.18, 25.15, 28.9, 29.10, 30.8, 34.25, 36.16; Esd 7.23, 8.22, 10.14; Ne 13.18; Job 4.9, 9.13, 20.23, 20.28, 21.17; Ps 7.12, 27.9, 56.8, 77.10, 78.31; És 51.20, 51.22; Jr 10.10, 25.15, 42.18; Da 11.36; Os 11.9; Jon 3.9 // Jn 3.36; Rm 1.18, 2.5, 3.5, 4.15, 5.9, 9.22, 12.19, 13.4; Ép 5.6; Col 3.6; 1Th 5.9; Hé 4.3; Ap 1.10, 14.19, 15.1, 15.7 et 16.1

Impressionnant le nombre de passages qui parlent de la colère de Dieu face aux actions et attitudes des humains. Soixante références sur la colère de Dieu face aux injustices et à la méchanceté de l'humain. Il n'y a pas de doute. Heureusement, il est aussi écrit que Dieu est lent à la colère (Ex 34.6, Né 9.17, Ps 86.15, Jl 2.13, Jon 4.2) et qu'il ne garde pas sa colère pour toujours (Mi 7.18).

Est-ce que Dieu a ce même besoin de justice que moi je ressens ? Encore une fois oui tout à fait. Dieu n'a pas simplement affirmé ou décrété un pardon, une absolution, à l'ensemble des humains. Pour qu'il y ait pardon de Dieu, il a fallu que le besoin de justice de Dieu soit comblé. Alors, comment Dieu a-t-il fait pour nous pardonner? Répondre à cette question, c'est trouver le chemin du pardon.

Les étapes du pardon



Jean 3: ¹⁴ Et tout comme Moïse a élevé le serpent dans le désert, il faut aussi que le Fils de l'homme soit élevé ¹⁵ afin que quiconque croit en lui [ne périsse pas mais qu'il] ait la vie éternelle. ¹⁶ En effet, Dieu a tant aimé le monde qu'il a donné son Fils unique afin que quiconque croit en lui ne périsse pas mais ait la vie éternelle. ¹⁷ Dieu, en effet, n'a pas envoyé son Fils dans le monde pour juger le monde, mais pour que le monde soit sauvé par lui. ¹⁸ Celui qui croit en lui n'est pas jugé, mais celui qui ne croit pas est déjà jugé parce qu'il n'a pas cru au nom du Fils unique de Dieu. ¹⁹ Et voici quel est ce jugement : la lumière

est venue dans le monde et les hommes ont préféré les ténèbres à la lumière parce que leur manière d'agir était mauvaise.²⁰ En effet, toute personne qui fait le mal déteste la lumière, et elle ne vient pas à la lumière pour éviter que ses actes soient dévoilés.²¹ Mais celui qui agit conformément à la vérité vient à la lumière afin qu'il soit évident que ce qu'il a fait, il l'a fait en Dieu. (SG21)

Étape 1 du pardon – Dévoiler le mal

Il faut garder en mémoire que la motivation de la réconciliation, c'est l'amour. C'est par amour que Dieu a créé le monde et qu'il a pourvu à la réconciliation. Toutes les étapes du pardon sont animées de la même motivation, l'amour.

1 Corinthiens 13: ⁴L'amour est patient, il est plein de bonté; l'amour n'est pas envieux; l'amour ne se vante pas, il ne s'enfle pas d'orgueil, ⁵il ne fait rien de malhonnête, il ne cherche pas son intérêt, il ne s'irrite pas, il ne soupçonne pas le mal, ⁶il ne se réjouit pas de l'injustice, mais il se réjouit de la vérité; ⁷il pardonne tout, il croit tout, il espère tout, il supporte tout. (SG21)

Proverbes 10: ¹²La haine fait surgir des conflits, alors que l'amour couvre toutes les fautes. (SG21)

Proverbes 27 : ⁵Mieux vaut un reproche ouvert qu'une amitié cachée. ⁶Les blessures d'un ami prouvent sa fidélité, tandis que les baisers d'un ennemi sont trompeurs.” (SG21)

1 Pierre 4: ⁸Avant tout, ayez un amour ardent les uns pour les autres, car l'amour couvrira une foule de péchés. (SG21)

Cependant, au nom de l'amour, il ne faut pas minimiser la réalité du péché. Pardonnez n'est pas ignorer le mal. Au contraire, au nom de l'amour nous devons rechercher passionnément la vérité, la droiture et la justice.

Par conséquent, pardonner ne signifie pas excuser une mauvaise action. Si celle-ci peut se justifier, elle doit être comprise et non pardonnée. Le pardon concerne l'inexcusable. Le pardon ne consiste pas non plus à le nier, à fermer les yeux sur les méfaits de quelqu'un, ou à prétendre qu'il ne s'est rien passé. De telles réponses ne font qu'excuser le péché au lieu de l'éradiquer par la douloureuse chirurgie du pardon. En le cachant, nous permettons au mal de rester hors d'atteinte, mettant ainsi les autres en péril. (Inrig 2007)

Dieu a premièrement révélé la loi par Moïse. Ce faisant, il dénonçait clairement le péché et les injustices humaines. Dévoiler le mal est la première étape du pardon. Cette étape se fait dans la vérité. Jésus dit dans Matthieu 5.17: “Ne croyez pas que je sois venu pour abolir la loi ou les prophètes; je suis venu non pour abolir, mais pour l’accomplir.” Nous savons que, par sa vie, sa mort et sa résurrection, Jésus est venu accomplir le pardon de Dieu et pourvoir à la réconciliation.

Dans la réconciliation humaine, voici les textes de Matthieu 18.15 et Luc 17.3 : “*Si ton frère a péché [contre toi], reprends-le*”. Il s’agit de définir et de dévoiler distinctement le péché.

Étape 2 du pardon – Exprimer la condamnation

Cette étape est l’action qui suit la mise en lumière du péché. Il s’agit d’exprimer, de dénoncer la condamnation du mal. Dans Romains 3: ¹⁰*Il n’y a pas de juste, pas même un seul*” ... ²³*Car tous ont péché et sont privés de la gloire de Dieu* (SG21). Pour qu’il y ait pardon, il faut qu’il y ait condamnation et repentance. Car pardonner sans dénonciation du mal et sans qu’il n’y ait de repentance, c’est tolérer le péché et s’en rendre complice d’une certaine manière.

Exode 34.7: Il garde son amour jusqu’à 1000 générations, il pardonne la faute, la révolte et le péché, mais il ne traite pas le coupable en innocent et il punit la faute des pères sur les enfants et les petits-enfants jusqu’à la troisième et à la quatrième génération! (SG21)

Proverbes 17.15 : Celui qui acquitte le coupable et celui qui condamne le juste font tous deux horreur à l’Éternel.

Étape 3 du pardon – L’expiation

Hébreux 9.22: Or, d’après la loi, presque tout est purifié avec du sang et, s’il n’y a pas de sang versé, il n’y a pas de pardon.

Cette partie est l’accomplissement de la justice, le moment de rembourser la dette, de réparer le mal commis. Tous les sacrifices expiatoires de l’Ancien Testament s’inscrivaient dans cette étape. L’offenseur a fait du tort, il a commis une injustice. Pour pardonner, il doit y avoir réparation, remboursement de l’offense. Sans cela, il ne peut y avoir de pardon. Toute l’expression de la justice de Dieu se trouve dans la nécessité de l’expiation.

Interrelation et interdépendance entre le pardon et la repentance.

Je fais une parenthèse à ce point pour démontrer l'interrelation et l'interdépendance entre le pardon et la repentance. Tout le contexte Juifs et ce depuis l'époque de Moïse et des lois prescrites par l'Éternel, la conception de pardonner quelqu'un était intimement liée à la réparation, la restitution, l'expiation de l'injustice commise. Pour qu'il y ait réparation, la responsabilité première de la personne qui a péché, qui a commis l'offense, est de pourvoir à la restitution. La personne qui a commis le mal doit rembourser et avec compensation pour le mal commis. Ce principe se retrouve très clairement dans Exode 22 et d'autres textes de la loi juive.

Nous entendons trop souvent que des gens ayant vécu des abus, des injustices, doivent pardonner alors que les abuseurs n'ont jamais même reconnu le mal. Cela est loin de pardonner à quelqu'un qui a reconnu le mal et fait la restitution. Il ne peut pas y avoir de pardon sans expiation, sans restitution. C'est grave de mettre une telle pression sur une personne abusée.

Comment alors une personne blessée, en colère contre une injustice, peut composer avec cela si elle ne peut se libérer par le pardon? Simplement, elle doit remettre, transférer à Dieu, cette dette que l'offenseur a envers elle. Et prendre conscience que notre Dieu est un Dieu de justice, un grand collecteur de dettes. Et tous ceux qui ne se repentiront pas seront jugés et devront payer. Notre besoin de justice face à Dieu est comblé! Tout a été accompli!

Deutéronome 32: ⁵ C'est à moi qu'appartient la vengeance, c'est moi qui leur donnerai ce qu'ils méritent quand leur pied trébuchera! En effet, le jour de leur malheur est proche et ce qui les attend ne tardera pas. (SG21)

Romains 12: ¹⁹ Ne vous vengez pas vous-mêmes, bien-aimés, mais laissez agir la colère de Dieu, car il est écrit : C'est à moi qu'appartient la vengeance, c'est moi qui donnerai à chacun ce qu'il mérite, dit le Seigneur. (SG21)

Luc 17: ¹ Jésus dit à ses disciples : "Il est inévitable qu'il y ait des pièges, mais malheur à celui qui en est responsable !"² Il

*vaudrait mieux pour lui qu'on attache à son cou une meule de moulin et qu'on le jette à la mer, plutôt qu'il ne fasse trébucher un seul de ces petits.*³ *Faites bien attention à vous-mêmes. Si ton frère a péché [contre toi], reprends-le et, s'il reconnaît ses torts, pardonne-lui.*⁴ *S'il a péché contre toi sept fois dans une journée et que sept fois [dans la journée] il revienne [vers toi] et dise: ' J'ai eu tort ', tu lui pardonneras.*"(SG21)

L'œuvre de la croix, l'expiation de nos péchés.

Comment alors pouvons-nous avoir le pardon de Dieu pour être réconcilié avec lui? L'humain est responsable de chacun de ses péchés. Il porte la dette de tout le mal qu'il a commis depuis son enfance. Mais c'est impossible de rembourser cette dette, elle est bien trop immense. En fait, pour rembourser cette dette, même si une personne en prenait conscience, qu'il agisse à la perfection et qu'il fasse des bonnes actions le reste de sa vie, cela ne restituerait pas pour le mal commis. Elle mérite quand même la mort et la séparation éternelle d'avec Dieu. La seule façon qu'un humain peut payer par lui-même sa dette, c'est de mourir et d'être séparé éternellement de Dieu. En d'autres mots, il est impossible pour un humain de se racheter lui-même.

C'est là que la croix est essentielle pour le pardon de nos péchés. Revenons au texte d'Hébreux 9.22: *Or, d'après la loi, presque tout est purifié avec du sang et, s'il n'y a pas de sang versé, il n'y a pas de pardon* (SG21). Pourquoi le sang versé? N'est-ce pas morbide? Le sang versé signifie la mort. La juste rétribution de nos péchés est la mort. Nous méritons de mourir pour le mal que nous commettons. Et Jésus, le Créateur fait homme, est venu sur terre à travers une vie sans péché, sans dette, et sa mort injuste, car il ne méritait pas de mourir, a pourvu à travers la substitution à l'expiation de nos péchés. La preuve de sa victoire sur la mort est sa résurrection.

Romains 5: ⁸Mais voici comment Dieu prouve son amour envers nous: alors que nous étions encore des pécheurs, Christ est mort pour nous. (SG21)

Colossiens 1: ¹⁹ En effet, Dieu a voulu que toute sa plénitude habite en lui. ²⁰ Il a voulu par Christ tout réconcilier avec lui-même, aussi bien ce qui est sur la terre que ce qui est dans le ciel, en faisant la paix à travers lui, par son sang versé sur la croix. (SG21)

Étape 4 du pardon – Absolution / Justification / Propitiation

La dernière étape du pardon, c'est l'absolution, l'effacement de la condamnation du péché. Seul Dieu peut effacer nos péchés totalement. Cela nous rend juste aux yeux de Dieu et le rend propice, bien disposé, à notre égard. Le rétablissement de la relation peut se faire grâce à cette justification et cette propitiation.

La repentance

La repentance est quelque chose qui a beaucoup de différentes significations dépendant de la culture d'où l'on vient.

Chez les Premières Nations, il n'y a pas de mot pour exprimer la repentance dans les langues algonquines, parce que quelqu'un qui faisait du mal devait non seulement s'excuser ou exprimer son regret mais faire une action de réparation, voire réparer ou restituer le mal commis. Cela va bien avec la notion d'expiation nécessaire au pardon.

Dans le grec biblique (Strong's), le mot utilisé 54 fois pour parler de la repentance est *Metanoia* [met-an'-oy-ah] qui signifie la tristesse qu'on éprouve de ses péchés et la douleur d'avoir offensé Dieu qui conduit à un changement de mentalité et d'intention. Il n'y a ni expression de regret ni réparation d'inclus dans cette définition. Comment se faisait la repentance pour un grec au premier siècle? Je ne le sais pas. Ce que je trouve un peu fou, c'est que j'ai entendu des prédicateurs prêcher et définir la repentance sur la seule et unique base de cette définition. Donc le salut se résumait à croire que Jésus est mort pour tes péchés et à ressentir une tristesse face à tes péchés. Pas très surprenant que les gens qui se "convertissaient" selon cette doctrine n'avaient pas trop compris ce que Jésus a fait à la croix et peu de fruits, d'actions et d'œuvres étaient manifestés dans leur vie. Il ne s'agit pas de juger le cœur des gens. Mais c'est clair qu'uniquement se baser là-dessus, c'est incomplet.

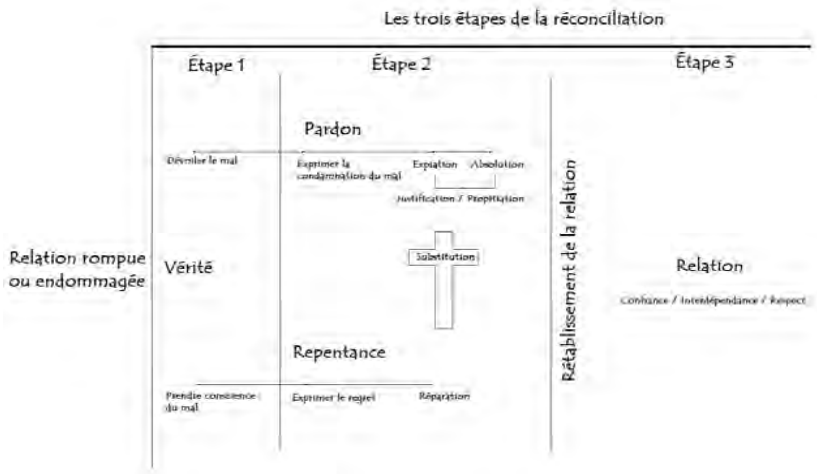
Dans la culture occidentale, la repentance fait généralement référence à exprimer le sentiment de regret, de repentir à la personne que nous avons offensé en lui avouant avoir commis une faute et en lui demandant le pardon. La notion de réparation, la restitution, est quasi inexistante. Cela ouvre la

porte toute grande à de fausse repentance et rend très difficile pour l'offensé de pardonner et de comprendre le pardon.

Dans l'hébreu biblique, nous avons le mot *Nacham* [naw-kham'] qui signifie regretter, souffrir de chagrin, se repentir. Par contre, la repentance dans l'Ancien Testament était accompagnée d'une tradition de pénitence, de jeûne, de prière et d'expiation, de restitution et de sacrifice.

Pour comprendre la repentance du point de vue de la réconciliation avec Dieu, il faut premièrement comprendre le pardon de Dieu surtout dans la dimension de l'expiation.

J'ai illustré la repentance selon les trois étapes suivantes.



Étape 1 de la repentance – Prendre conscience du mal, du péché.

La première étape de la repentance prend sa source dans la vérité. Il s'agit de prendre pleinement conscience du péché, qu'on le voit dans toute son horreur, sa souillure, sa méchanceté et qu'on s'aperçoit des conséquences pour Dieu, la personne offensée, soi-même et les autres. Selon la dimension émotionnelle, la personne ressent de la honte, de la culpabilité, de la tristesse et cela peut être souffrant. Plus grande la prise de conscience du péché ou de la mauvaise action est, plus sincères seront les étapes suivantes.

Étape 2 de la repentance – Exprimer le regret

Bien que je considère dans l'ensemble la repentance comme une action, je crois que l'étape de l'expression du regret est essentielle. Aller face à la personne offensée, lui avouer notre tort et lui exprimer notre regret et notre tristesse face à notre mauvaise action sont de grands pas vers la réconciliation. Il en est de même face à Dieu. C'est prendre conscience de notre nature humaine pécheresse et l'avouer. Lui exprimer notre tristesse et la tristesse que nous éprouvons du fait qu'il a dû mourir pour nous.

Étape 3 de la repentance – Réparer, rembourser.

Je sais que, dans la culture occidentale, faire réparation ne fait pas partie de la définition de la repentance pour une majorité de gens. Une fois le regret exprimé, pour eux, il suffit pour l'autre partie de pardonner. Ils disent que Jésus a payé à leur place, qu'il s'est substitué à leur conséquence du péché et que le salut est une grâce gratuite de Dieu. Ce n'est pas par les œuvres, je n'ai rien à faire. Ce qui fait éclater tout un débat autour de la part des bonnes œuvres dans le salut. Je vais tenter de mettre de l'ordre là-dedans.

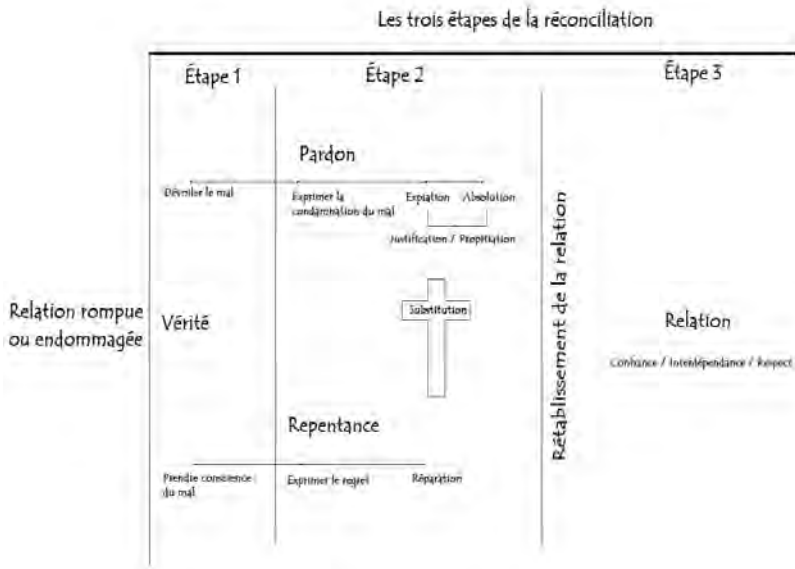
Dans l'Épître de Jacques, il y a tout une dissertation sur la foi et les œuvres. La conclusion est que la foi sans les œuvres est une foi morte et que les œuvres sont en fait la démonstration de la foi. Si tu as la foi, tes actions vont suivre. C'est juste logique. Ici, il s'agit de la même logique. Comme la foi sans les œuvres est vide, la repentance sans la réparation n'a pas de sens. Si tu crois vraiment que Dieu existe, qu'il est notre Créateur, cela devra changer quelque chose dans ta vie et être visible dans tes actions. Maintenant, si tu es réellement conscient du mal que tu as fait à Dieu, que ce mal lui a coûté la vie, par ta faute, ta responsabilité, ne vas-tu pas répondre à cela?

Peut-on réparer le mal ou rembourser notre dette face à Dieu? Pas du tout. Non. Elle est bien trop grosse. C'est pour cela que même dans la repentance, c'est l'œuvre de Dieu, sa grâce qui fait en sorte que nous pouvons nous repentir parce que Jésus s'est substitué, qu'il a payé à ma place, qu'il a réparé pour moi. Alors, je n'ai rien à réparer? Oui, tu dois encore à Dieu une vie. Ta vie! Jésus s'est offert en sacrifice pour expier ta dette. D'un

cœur repentant, tu dois offrir ta vie comme un sacrifice vivant pour Dieu. Tes bonnes œuvres ne sont pas pour gagner le pardon de Dieu mais une humble rétribution étant donné que Jésus s'est sacrifié pour toi.

Romains 12: ¹Je vous encourage donc, frères et sœurs, par les compassions de Dieu, à offrir votre corps comme un sacrifice vivant, saint, agréable à Dieu. Ce sera de votre part un culte raisonnable. (SG21)

Étape 3, La relation restaurée



Je n'irai pas en profondeur dans cette étape. La fin d'une vraie réconciliation, c'est que la relation est restaurée. Nous sommes maintenant en relation. Qu'est-ce que signifie avoir une relation avec Dieu? Les réponses que je reçois le plus fréquemment sont; aller à l'église, lire la Bible et prier. Bien que ce soit toutes de bonnes choses, je doute que ces réponses s'appliquent si je vous demande ce qu'est une relation avec votre conjoint(e). Les deux commandements sont: "aime Dieu et aime ton prochain." Il s'agit de commandement relationnel. Donc, j'ai réfléchi et j'ai trouvé trois points qui sont la base d'une relation : la confiance, l'interdépendance et le respect.

C'est drôle que la vie nous enseigne à ne pas faire confiance et surtout à ne pas dépendre des autres. Et nous avons tendance à appliquer ces mêmes réflexes dans notre relation avec Dieu. La confiance est la sécurité de la relation. C'est la première chose que le péché a détruite. Apprendre à faire confiance en Dieu de plus en plus chaque jour, c'est retrouver le sentier de l'harmonie. Sans confiance, tu ne peux pas te sentir aimé de Dieu. Tu te méfies de lui!! Souvent, pour y arriver, on doit exprimer à Dieu qu'on dépend de lui, qu'on a besoin de lui. Dans une relation saine, les deux parties sont interdépendantes. Ils comblent mutuellement leur besoin et on a besoin de l'un l'autre. Est-ce que Dieu est dépendant de nous? Dieu en créant le choix, il a laissé l'humain libre de choisir. Cela le met en quelque sorte en dépendance de notre réponse. Aussi ne choisit-il pas des humains pour accomplir son œuvre? En terminant, le respect est primordial. Sans respect, il n'y a pas de relation. Respecter Dieu, c'est le craindre, vouloir lui obéir et reconnaître sa gloire en toute chose.

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NO RECONCILIATION WITHOUT REPENTANCE: Accepting Collective Responsibility for Historical Sin

ANNA ROBBINS

THERE will be very little in this paper that will be new to anyone involved in movements of reconciliation and justice between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Nevertheless, what is written here needs to be written, and said, over and over again, in many contexts, until it begins to root itself in the lives of white Christian evangelicals, and yields transformation. What I have written here is primarily for them; they constitute my main audience. But I need the hearing, reading, and input of Indigenous brothers and sisters, so that the content is correct and clear, and so that what I speak is a faithful representation of what needs to be said without causing further marginalization. I submit my work, and ask for your help in formulating these thoughts well, and seek forgiveness for places where it simply reinforces my own prejudices and pretensions, as I continue my own journey of conscientization and transformation.¹

My conviction to engage an agenda of transformation emerged from a conversation several years ago with a Mexican theologian, who had developed a ministry of transformation for impoverished communities in urban slums and in rural Indigenous communities. Impressed with both his theology and practical results, I asked him what I needed to do. “Leave the transformation of the poor to us,” he said. “You go back, and transform the rich. The rich need to be transformed.” My motivation in my theological work since that time has been towards transformation in Christ, directed towards the rich, the powerful, those who marginalize others, and who have inherited the guilt and the responsibility of past atrocities, as well as enacting our own present collective sinfulness. My specific

¹ I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to present this paper at the NAIITS Wheaton symposium in June 2015. In particular, I have benefitted greatly from the comments made in response, a few of which are incorporated in the present work. Others I continue to ponder and incorporate into my work going forward.

audience is evangelical Christians, who, despite the end of Christendom, still enjoy a degree of privilege and power that makes them strategic object and subject for transformation.

There are challenges to the task of calling White evangelical Christians to repent. Often, we think that as ‘the saved,’ we are least in need of the transforming power of the gospel. Largely as individualists, we do not see how repentance is possible for past atrocities that we did not commit, nor do we recognise our collective responsibility for continuing marginalization. Rather we tend to think of *ourselves* as marginalized in an increasingly secular society. Surely exiles need to forgive, not seek forgiveness! Moreover, we tend to think that if we have received the gospel, and Indigenous people have received the gospel, then we are the same. Although we are made one in the body of Christ, sharing the same Spirit, this ‘saming’ of the other does violence to those aspects of difference that need to be maintained if we are to form a new *community* in Christ. Not allowing the other to be ‘Other’ also glosses over our need to repent, not as a one-time apology, but as a continuous attitude out of which we act Christ-like selflessness that privileges the needs of other. In this paper, I intend to consider briefly the need for repentance by White people in North America and the necessity of repentance for reconciliation. I will suggest ways that a biblical theology indicates a collective moral responsibility that makes a collective repentance possible; and finally how those resources and others can help us move past the need to ‘consume’ difference and allow the Other to be Other, and yet one in the Spirit.²

Which Comes First: Forgiveness or Repentance?

A great deal of reconciliation literature from a theological perspective focuses on forgiveness, in particular the call for victims to offer forgiveness, as a prerequisite for repentance. This is partly because those who write about reconciliation often are writing from the perspective of, and for, the victims of conflict. In such a context, forgiveness is seen as an empowering

² My use of ‘Other’ in this paper should be read as the philosophical concept of acknowledgement and respect of the sacredness of those who are not ‘me’ (recognizing our propensity to make others the ‘same’ and therefore disrespect difference), and *not* as the sociological concept that uses ‘other’ as a category of undifferentiated distance.

act, as victims become the arbiters of a new future, forged in an abandonment of vengeance. This is seen in the South African context, where forgiveness as amnesty was offered in exchange for truth-telling, with no requirement for repentance.³ From the context of conflict in the former Yugoslavia, Miroslav Volf writes, “Why forgiveness first, and then repentance? Because the goal of forgiveness is not simply to lighten the forgiver’s psychological burden, not even simply to diffuse conflict, but to return the offender to the good and, ultimately, to restore communion between the wrongdoer and the wronged.”⁴ The restoration of the offender is a heavy burden to place on the ones who have been wronged.

Volf doesn’t place the entire burden for healing on the victims: “Forgiveness itself is like a gift. And just as a gift must be received in order to be truly given, so also must forgiveness.” He is careful to note that forgiveness is not automatic, but is relationally connected to repentance: “We receive forgiveness by repenting – by naming our objectionable deeds as wrongs, by grieving over the injury inflicted, and by determining to mend our ways.”⁵ Volf goes on to discuss how victims themselves need to repent, particularly in order to avoid the sins of enmity and envy. However, at least in the West, Volf’s work is read most often by the heirs of historical violence, and less by its victims. Reading the call to victims to repent and offer forgiveness can too easily be adopted as an excuse for taking historical responsibility for wrongs; it can allow us to think that all is well. It can lead us away from repentance rather than towards it. As de Gruchy reminds us, the attitude ‘let bygones be bygones’ “...[cheapens] the suffering of victims, disregarding the sacrifice of those who struggled against apartheid, and dishonouring the memory of those who suffered and died.”⁶

De Gruchy argues that forgiveness is always the prerogative of the victim, and cannot be expected or required, and he notes the error in not requiring repentance as part of the TRC process in

³ See John W. de Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice*, Minneapolis (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002).

⁴ Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011), 115-116.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁶ de Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 178.

South Africa. While a call to forgive seems laudable at face value, it may have the effect of not achieving the intended reconciliation. There is an indication that forgiveness places an unfair burden on those who have already been victimized, without spelling out what the expectation for repentance might look like.⁷

The difficulties inherent for reconciliation – when forgiveness is highlighted rather than repentance – are noted well by Ray Aldred, Terry LeBlanc and Adrian Jacobs. Addressing the ‘Forgiveness Summit,’ on the *Indian Life Ministries* blog, they rightly point out the injustice, and, by implication, the poor theology, inherent in seeking forgiveness *before* repentance.⁸ Though writing broadly for the Canadian political context, they express eloquently something I have long believed about reconciliation literature in general: ‘We are concerned that current talk about forgiveness, without repentance, may place on aboriginal people the responsibility of opening the blessing of heaven. If this is so, it seems the victim will be victimized once again.’⁹ The alternative question they pose is this one: ‘So for Canada and those who are part of her political, maternal care, the question is not about the survivors of abuse forgiving; it is about abusers asking, “What does repentance look like for us?” Or, even more pointedly, ‘What does ‘not assimilating’ First Nations people look like for us?’ Here, Aldred, LeBlanc, and Jacobs give us the question that we too must answer. It is not surprising that Canadians in positions of political power would find it difficult to answer these questions. It is much more surprising, and unacceptable, that followers of Jesus are unable to respond. This is a theological issue before it is a practical one.

⁷ The pacifist stance of scholars like JH Yoder highlights the role of forgiveness while allowing the perpetrator to go free. Justice is not the aim, but a love that finds its power in non-resistance, and forgiveness. See John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972). What is perhaps most detestable here is the offering of a theology that can then be used to justify sinful behaviour, as some might argue it did in Yoder’s own life, rather than leading to repentance and transformation.

⁸ This concern is also clearly expressed by Palestinian Christian Naim Stifan Ateek, *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008).

⁹ Ray Aldred, Terry LeBlanc, and Adrian Jacobs, “Thoughts on Forgiveness and Aboriginal Residential Schools,” *Indian Life Ministries*.

http://www.indianlife.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=208&Itemid=32 (accessed May 22, 2015).

Just as theology has contributed to an understanding of the role of forgiveness as strategic in reconciliation, so can theology describe for us, name and empower a genuine – though not cheap – repentance.

Forgiveness for sin is available to us in Christ, through his atoning sacrifice. The offer is made but the relationship is not restored until the sinner turns to God out of sorrow for her sin. She turns away from her former way of being – kills the old self – and finds new life in the forgiveness that Christ offers. The sinner's repentance does not earn forgiveness from God. But it indicates the acceptance of the forgiveness, and the forging of a new path. This new path is one of reconciliation, whereby the sinner is forgiven, but continues to be transformed through an applied dynamic of repentance and forgiveness that characterises the whole of life. Indeed, sanctification is a life-long process. The action of God in Christ enables our repentance. We repent for our sin that is sin against him as we come to recognise it as such in our lives, and, as we recognise its cost, we also own our sin against others and seek to make things right.¹⁰

But how do we understand, and apply, these theological realities beyond individual acts? If Jesus died not only for the sins that we each commit on daily basis, but also for the sins of people groups, and countries, how do we repent of those?¹¹ The limits of our evangelical theology here become starkly apparent. In a service of reconciliation at a slave castle on a bluff hanging over the Ghanaian coast, one Christian leader struggled to apologize on behalf of his people, alive or dead, for their participation in,

¹⁰ Forgiveness and repentance need to be further framed by the tree of life at the beginning and end of the gospel story. I am grateful to Terry LeBlanc for the theological reminder that the first tree mentioned in the garden in Genesis 2-3 is the tree of life. Before sin, and after sin, is *shalom*, and the goal of transformation is *shalom* for all creation.

¹¹ Cf. Walter Rauschenbusch, who believed that in his atoning work, Christ did not bear the sins of individuals, but rather those of society as a whole. These public sins are connected back to individuals, who cause them. Although I have elsewhere indicated some of the weaknesses of Rauschenbusch's collective interpretation, he nevertheless awakens us to collective aspects of Christ's work, and thus our collective moral responsibility. See Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, Library of Theological Ethics Edition (Louisville: WJKP, 1997). Cf. Anna Robbins, *Methods in the Madness: Diversity in Twentieth-Century Christian Social Ethics* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004).

or inheritance of benefits from, the transatlantic slave trade. It was not a lack of compassion that held him back, nor regret or sorrow for the past. It was a theological limitation that is widespread in congregational churches, that has little grasp of the collective morality that characterizes our responsible existence.¹²

In fact, repentance has been little explored and explained at least theologically in collective terms, despite the fact that collective sin has been widely discussed in some circles. We are left in a predicament; we are offered forgiveness by people who have been wronged, we acknowledge structural sin, but without an understanding of collective repentance we are left simply with a collective excuse: It's the structures of society, the principalities and powers that have led to this situation; it has nothing to do with us, with me. It is little more than a collective plea, 'It's not my fault, the devil made me do it!' Fixing it is the government's problem and not mine.

Emphasizing forgiveness and neglecting repentance, then, not only places an unfair burden on the victims of injustice, it neglects the moral responsibility of the one who must repent. Those needing to repent are not provided with the theological or practical resources to empower repentance, and then to embody and enact that repentance in meaningful ways. Once again where the church should lead the way, she often falters and drives the nails in more deeply.

If we are to offer repentance rightly, and live in an ongoing posture of repentance, we need many things, but I will elaborate two in particular. First, we need to develop a biblical understanding of collective responsibility that involves both sin *and* repentance. This will allow us to understand how sins of the past are our sins, as well as recognize the sins that are uniquely ours in the present. Secondly, we need to understand that being one in the Spirit does not mean that we are all meant to be the same. A modernist treatment of biblical teaching leads

¹² Some churches over the past three decades have offered apologies for Christian participation in the atrocity of Residential Schools. However, in congregational churches, there is comparatively very little engagement with Indigenous people or engagement with related issues, let alone acceptance of moral responsibility for past and present marginalization.

evangelicals to seek replication of the self in others. This process of ‘saming’ undermines rather than serves the Kingdom of God, since the Kingdom grows through an embrace of difference in an ever-evolving community. Surrendering self and privileging the Other is the attitude and posture of repentance required to move beyond assimilation of others, and towards reconciliation of diverse selves.

Toward a Biblical Theology of Collective Repentance

For some cultures around the world, the idea that we should *need* to establish the collective nature of our moral responsibility would seem absurd. However, coming to birth in a ruggedly individualist cultural context, evangelicalism in most forms has almost entirely neglected a collective interpretation of moral responsibility. *I* have decided to follow Jesus; *I* come to the garden *alone*. Much of evangelical theological and spiritual understanding has revolved around the notion of the individual in a uniquely personal relationship with God. Indeed, this is how we understand our salvation, our Christian walk, and the way we meet God at the end. Alone.

Of course there is some biblical warrant for the personal. “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved,” goes the verse in Acts 16:31. But we forget that it continues: “you and your household” which completes the thought and the action. The gospel might come to the hearts of individuals, but we are never called alone, and we cannot remain alone.

Similarly, we are responsible before God for our own sins. This is widely agreed. It is less widely agreed that we are responsible to repent of our sinful condition, inherited from Adam as a result of our solidarity with the human race.¹³ But the scriptures teach that such solidarity does characterize our human existence. We are responsible for sins committed by the groups of which we are part, and not only those sins we have directly committed as individuals. This is not merely legalism, but a reflection of the wholeness for which we were created.

¹³ Alasdair McFadyen examines a few aspects of collective sin in his book, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust, and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000).

Let me explain. In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve rejected the goodness for which they were created when they rebelled against God as individuals. They wanted to be like God, and they bore the consequences of this rebellion. As a result, these consequences fell to humanity, and to the earth. There were individual and collective aspects. Moreover, in Genesis 11, when the tower of Babel was built, out of a collective pride that asserted the will of the community to power and its ability to reach God – to be like God – the punishment was meted out to the whole community. No doubt there were individuals who were busy doing other things and not laying brick on brick. But as part of the group, they are held responsible for the actions of the group, and so bear the consequences of punishment to the group.

The call for group repentance is found throughout Scripture. The king often represents the people, both by implicating them in his sin, and through the call and response of repentance.¹⁴ The prophets are sent to call entire people groups to repentance (e.g. Jonah, Ezekiel, Amos). God consistently calls his people, as a people, to repent and turn to him. At the very least the solidarity of humankind in Adam and in Christ points to some form of collective moral existence. The judgment meted out in Revelation is directed toward the city and its economic system, not against individuals in the first instance. Though there is little evidence of actual national repentance in response to these calls, it does not negate the fact that God sends prophets to issue the call. It seems contrary to his character that God would hold his people responsible for collective realities without offering an ability to repent collectively. While some interpreters suggest that examples of collective responsibility are merely a reflection of cultural realities, I suggest they reflect theological and moral realities, though never completely disconnected from the moral responsibility of the individual.

Many interpreters argue that Ezekiel 18-20 is the turning point for understanding the Hebrew collective mentality.¹⁵ In these chapters, the people are called to repentance, but not for the sins of their forebears in the first instance. Rather, they are told that

¹⁴ Joel Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

¹⁵ Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 204.

they are responsible each for their own sin (18:4). Some suggest that it is here, in chapter 18, that the maturing view of the ancient near eastern mind reaches individualistic enlightenment.¹⁶ “Was a (repentant) person to be considered guilty in later years for sin committed earlier, and vice versa? Surely not, says the prophet: those in exile are there for their own sins and not those of their parents....”¹⁷ Yet, it is clear that exile has already happened. If the worst has already happened, what is the point of repentance? Is it real repentance that the Lord seeks? What is the expected outcome of repentance?

Andrew Mein argues that it is too late for Israel’s repentance to avert the judgment to come, but the call to repentance makes it clear that they are responsible for the coming disaster.¹⁸ Contrasting God’s justice with Israel’s injustice, the call to repent “not only underlines the responsibility of Ezekiel’s audience, but also helps them to accept the prophet’s conclusions: ‘If one knows that one can repent and start anew, then it is easier to admit one’s guilt.’ Thus the repentance motif is a carrot that is held out to the people to help them admit that they are guilty and deserving of the punishment they have received.”¹⁹ How is it that they are not responsible for the sins of their fathers, and yet are punished for them, and also called to repentance themselves? It must be more than a carrot to entice their repentance.

Chris Wright helps us grasp this passage well. Wright clarifies Ezekiel’s point in 18:4, as undoing a popular proverb the people were using to get off the hook of responsibility: “Innocent people do suffer as a result of other people’s wickedness. But that does not mean that courts can punish the innocent for the sins of the guilty.”²⁰ The point is not that there is now a shift in the prophet’s mind from collective to individual responsibility. Rather, Wright indicates that Ezekiel’s message is to highlight the people’s own guilt, their own participation in the continuing sins of Israel that have led to exile. Wright suggests that you cannot shift the blame to others as the Exiles were doing. The

¹⁶ Fishbain and Raitt, cited in Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 204.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

¹⁸ Drawing on Joyce, Mein *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, 206.

¹⁹ Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 166.

²⁰ Christopher Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel* (Leicester: IVP, 2001), 188.

notion from 18:4 that individuals will be punished for their own sin does not undo the collective notion. Rather, “This has the effect of leaving untouched that element of truth which lay behind the proverb (namely, that children do suffer because of the sins of their parents), but of denying the self-excusing that was being made of it by the exiles (namely, blaming their parents for their own suffering).”²¹ In the words of Blenkinsopp, “If the descendants are punished, it is not because of the family connection but because they reproduce and perpetuate *freely* the conduct of the parent.”²²

When we are called to repent of sins of the past, in which we did not directly participate, we are quick to shift the blame to someone else, or to unjust structures, when in actual fact, we rightly deserve the blame because we continue to benefit from past exploitation; we perpetuate unjust structures, we harbor our own racist views, we continue the rebellion against God by refusing to acknowledge the sin that has so damaged others is our own sin. The power of collective sin is that its moral responsibility comes home to each individual – not simply as an inherited punishment, but as a guilt that we continually enact ourselves. Wright sees Ezekiel confronting the people who are blaming their predecessors for the collective sin that deserved punishment with this response:

Yes, you *are* suffering the final consequences of many generations of sin; but no, you are *not* being wrongly punished as innocent victims of somebody else’s guilt, because, far from being innocent, you yourselves are just as guilty of the same sin as your forebears. If you are being ‘put to death’ (in exile), it is because you yourselves are persons who have sinned. Stop trying to shift the blame.²³

We are called to repent then, of the atrocities that the church and the government visited on Aboriginal people not only because of the sins of those who went before, and because we have benefitted from past exploitation, but because we ourselves are guilty. We also must own *our* responsibility for perpetuating

²¹ Ibid., 188.

²² Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel* (Louisville: WJKP, 1990), 82.

²³ Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel*, 188-9.

sinful actions against Indigenous people, through neglect or offense. Repentance is necessary because we are guilty; repentance is possible because we may yet be forgiven. Repentance will lead us to stop sinning, and to prevent others from sinning as well. Repentance will lead us to humility, and stop trying to make everyone else be like us. Repentance recognizes humanity, but rejects assimilation, and allows the other to be Other.

The Other²⁴

Repentance in such a case cannot be simply a one-off event. Certainly it involves right remembering, along with feelings of remorse and regret. It leads from there towards apology.²⁵ As significant as the apology may be, it only has merit when there is ongoing action towards restitution. In the words of Desmond Tutu, “If you steal my pen and say I’m sorry, without returning the pen, your apology means nothing.”²⁶ People who sin are not able to embody reconciliation “until their concern has passed from themselves to the ones they have wronged, and – the severest test of all – until they are able to treat those who wrong them with as much generosity as they have received from their forgiver.”²⁷ Rather than repentance being something we can say we have done and is now finished, it must be more of an attitude that we adopt, or a posture that we embody. It is to take on the mind of Christ, and in humility, consider others better than ourselves, in choosing to remember the wrong that we have done. As this dynamic of repentance and forgiveness moves us on a new path together, repentance must be a continuing posture, or else the Other will be assimilated without differentiation, and the marginalization and victimization of the past will continue as the memory of difference is eroded. What is required is a surrender of the self that frees the other to be Other in a way that privileges their humanity as it bears the

²⁴ Please see comment in footnote 2.

²⁵ Donald Shriver, *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (Oxford: OUP, 1995). Shriver also indicates the conditions for apology as well as suggesting ways that the process moves forward from the apology.

²⁶ Cited by Shriver, *An Ethic for Enemies*, 224.

²⁷ C.F.D. Moule, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation* (London: SPCK, 1998), 22-3. I have edited that language of the quote for inclusiveness.

imago dei.²⁸ This is a very difficult thing to do in a contemporary, consumer culture.

In a consumer culture, we treat one another simply as commodities to be consumed as we replicate ourselves in what we see around us. This is how we extend our power over others, and deny our contingency, our vulnerability, our death. The modern ethic encouraged replication, where individual identity was magnified in the group, rather than derived from the group. The group itself would also seek to extend its power and deny its contingent nature, behaving as though it had a single, choate will.²⁹ This can only lead to conflict if we agree with Levinas that rather than being reducible to my grasp of being, “the other’s entire being is constituted by its exteriority, or rather its alterity....”³⁰ Seeking to replicate oneself or one’s group in another is quite simple a violence on the Other. This is the reality of European encounter with North American Indigenous people. It is a will-to-power, that destroys the Other that must be acknowledged in the past and present if repentance is to bear any fruit.³¹

According to philosopher Jean Baudrillard, reconciliation is impossible in the contemporary realm. It is impossible because alienation no longer exists when the hyperreal takes the place of reality. Only a jolt, a shock, like a violent death or protest, is able to offer a glimpse of alienation in a contemporary consumer society, where image has replaced the real. Levinas notes that it is “only a being whose solitude has reached a crispation through suffering, and in relation with death, takes its place on a ground where the relationship with the other becomes possible.”³² Christ has suffered a violent death, revealing the alienation that exists between people, and between people and God. A radical self-giving – a daily death to self - is able to subvert the way of death, as Christ by his spirit raises us to new life. As we surrender our

²⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁹ Cf Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Scribner’s, 1943).

³⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 43.

³¹ Hence, the Residential Schools policy being rightly described as genocide by Canada’s TRC.

³² Levinas, *The Levinas Reader*, 43.

lives, our privilege, our power, and take up the protest of the oppressed and the marginalized we collectively subvert a system that denies alienation and makes reconciliation impossible.

Just as evangelicals tend to be individualistic, so do we tend to be modernist in our approach to the world. Becoming a Christian means dying to self and living for Christ. So shouldn't we all look the same? We have little appreciation for the faith-culture dynamic that characterizes embodied life. We forget that it is not Western Christians that others are called to emulate, but Christ himself. All believers strive towards Christ-likeness from the lived reality of diverse cultures. By the creativity and grace of the Spirit, we are diverse, yet one. The gift of oneness is an invitation into a creative journey of new community, not an invitation to sameness.

Noting that “ethnic identity has proved capable of creating some of the most vexing and intractable cleavages in human society,” one New Testament scholar has explored several elements of identity, ethnicity and reconciliation in Luke-Acts. Drawing on social identity theory, Aaron Kueker challenges the ways that Christians have lived out their ‘saming’ behavior in attempting to replicate the self in the Other. He argues that the church is not a community of sameness, but rather, in the Spirit, we move into the future as an ever-changing reality as people of all cultures are embraced by the call of the Spirit of God.

Whereas “positive social identity is usually maintained by negatively evaluating the ‘other’,” we see this dynamic subverted when the Spirit is brought into intergroup contexts.³³ Unsurprisingly for a Luke-Acts scholar, he sees the Holy Spirit emerge “as the central figure in the formation of a new social identity.” However, unlike some NT scholars, he demonstrates that while the Holy Spirit “chastens and transcends ethnic identity,” God also affirms difference, and diversity.

Tracing the unfolding ethnic conflicts, and their resolutions, in the early church, we see those in power making room for the

³³ Aaron Kuecker, *The Spirit and the ‘Other’: Social Identity, Ethnicity and Intergroup Reconciliation in Luke-Acts*, Library of New Testament Studies, (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011), 48.

Spirit's incorporation of others. Rather than requiring the Gentiles to be like them, the Jews journeyed with them into a new, shared reality; one that emphasized the work of the Spirit in the life of the other, and not simply a replication of the self. It was not an easy path, and needed to be worked through in diverse contexts. It seems that some perhaps never grasped the diversity of new community. Social identity maintenance, collective will-to-power, failure to sacrifice self in favour of the other – regardless of what we call it, means the same thing. When we deny the humanity of the other, we sin deeply. And when we try to 'same' the Other, we sin deeply. We have sinned, sinned terribly, and we continue to sin. But the Spirit calls us to, and empowers us for, transformation.

That the early church leaders were able to see that God was doing a new work beyond the identity of culture remains a challenge for us today. That they could surrender their cultural agenda in submission to the work of the Spirit bears significant implications for how we repent of the collective sin that is inherited, and yet our own, in our encounters with Aboriginal people. Kueker argues that "individuals empowered by the Spirit have a transformed ability to look beyond the (privileged) identity of self or in-group and so to extend in-group benefits to all manner of 'other'. This is a fundamental human transformation.... Privileged identity is only rightly expressed when it bears a concern for the 'other'."³⁴

Such transformation is beautifully expressed in the joy that the Jews expressed when Cornelius and his household became followers of Jesus Christ. It is extended when the Council in Jerusalem decides not to "make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God" (Acts 15:19). Instead, they sacrifice their own self-interest, and are able to recognize that just as God has not discriminated between Jew and Gentile, then neither should they be in the business of putting yokes on others. They end up offering minimal guidelines for the Gentiles, and allow Jew and Gentile together to make up the new community in Christ.

Instead of regarding repentance as a one-time event, we take up our cross daily – die to self – and follow Christ. As we lay down

³⁴ Ibid., 95.

our self-interest, and consider the other better than ourselves, we begin to live repentant lives that are reconciled to others, but not requiring of others what we cannot achieve ourselves. We are all received by grace. The Spirit delights that in our difference, we are one. From creation to consummation, the 'wholeness' of things is remarkable for the way that diversity expresses oneness in worship of the Creator. It is only in the light of difference that 'oneness' or indeed 'reconciliation' has any meaning.

Repentance then, serves the other and not the self. Repentance means we will surrender any claims to what is 'ours' or 'mine' and remember that the Kingdom belongs to God. We must remember rightly the events of the past and confess our guilt in the present. Repentance will be lived out daily in openness to the Spirit that allows the Other to be him or herself, and yet say he is my brother, she is my sister. It means privileging the Other, and working to make structures bend to their service, even if it costs us something; perhaps especially if it costs us something. Then we will see resonances of repentance in collective actions as well as individual ones.

The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians, "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who ... made himself nothing... by taking the very nature of a servant" (Phil 2:5-7). This attitude, this posture of humility when applied to repentance, starts with each believer, and extends to the collective realm. Until we are willing to lose our power and privilege (which we often pretend we do not have as an excuse for inaction) we are not exhibiting a posture of repentance. Unless we are willing to see transformation that honours and privileges the other take place in institutions and structures as well as in individual lives, repentance will remain but a hollow shell.

Going Forward

Reconciliation requires repentance, on individual and collective levels. White evangelicals have not had a legacy of understanding moral existence in collective terms. Yet, just as theology contributed rich resources to understanding the role of forgiveness in reconciliation, so does theology have something to offer to our understanding of collective repentance. Human

beings bear moral responsibility as individuals, and on a collective level. This helps us to own the mistakes of the past, as well as recognize our sins of violence and marginalization today.

The call to own the injustices of the past, and their perpetuation in the present is nothing other than a call to follow Christ. It is a costly journey, but not one that is readily understood or grasped. The need to embrace our collective responsibility for collective wrongs is urgent. The biblical and theological resources are there to empower the journey towards reconciliation, but we need to learn the humility of putting the other first, and thinking of the other as better than ourselves. In a posture of submission to Christ and the Other, perhaps evangelicals can begin a fresh conversation, where we recognize the Other, and where we surrender control, because the Spirit is leading us to new places.

May it be so, in this generation.

LOGIC IS A BATTERING RAM: One Girl's Journey of Awakening

ANNIKA PRETCHUK

I SAT in church not long ago, speaking with a woman who works as an ER nurse at our Thunder Bay [Ontario, Canada] Regional Health Sciences Centre. She was telling me about her encounters with First Nations people in the emergency room. She told me that from “homeless drunks” to “brain-fried addicts,” when First Nations people living in remote northern reserves get to such a bad state that their own communities can no longer manage them, they are given a one-way ticket to Thunder Bay. “We are the bottom of the barrel,” she exclaimed.

I don't presume for one minute that I have anything knowledgeable to offer to the subject of reconciliation. After all, my own journey to understand the history and realities that Indigenous people face on a daily basis is just beginning, only really less than a year ago. However, on numerous occasions in my life I have ended up on “the other side of the table”, often to my own humiliation, and it is through these experiences that I have gained invaluable insights and an understanding of humanity that I would have never had otherwise. So I tell my story, humbly from the other side of the table, as a first generation Finnish-Canadian growing up in a small Canadian town, surrounded by First Nations people that I never really had anything to do with – until I visited Mishkeegogamang First Nation.

Nothing I have ever read or seen or heard has gripped me in the way that getting in a car and driving five and a half hours from my home and arriving in a completely different world has. How could a place like this exist, not only in Canada, but five and a half hours from my house?! I was in shock. But as my eyes were opened to a new reality, I quickly began to realize at what cost all of my Euro-Canadian White privilege had come. I was only as “rich” as I was, because of this seemingly ‘foreign world’ and those who had been left to survive in it.

I met my little friend Heidi, a big smile highlighting a mouth full of fillings, behind the school building as I was out taking pictures of a beautiful sunset on Osnaburg Lake in this northern Ontario reserve. With no parents in sight, and having only known Heidi for minutes, she leapt into my arms and hugged my neck so tight I couldn't breathe. At that moment she took my heart. The next day she showed up for the first time at the adventure camp we were operating on the school grounds, where I found her coming out of the lake after a swimming session. She was shivering in her drenched jeans and hoodie, so I invited her onto my lap and held her tight as we both looked silently over the lake. I couldn't help but think, "This girl is a year older than my son, and this is the world she lives in. And in a few short years she will be required to leave her family and the only world she knows to come to a city like Thunder Bay for school, where people will hate her and balk at her, solely because of the colour of her skin and their perception, which she will eventually sink and disappear into."

Quite abruptly, I came face to face with my own reality: the reality that for thirty-five years I had lived what I thought was a good Christian life, loving my neighbours and serving my community, but had never even considered that these other people, who were just a part of the scenery of Thunder Bay, were meant to be a part of my journey of reconciliation with God, with His creation, with humanity. In a forty-eight hour visit to another world, my life was changed forever.

I came home, and all of a sudden the scenery had become alive: faces of mothers walking their children to school, men in conversation waiting at a bus stop, an old legless man in a wheelchair, stuck in the middle of the street with cars swerving around him. What?! I slammed on my brakes and leapt out of my van to go to his aid. How could people just swerve around an old man in a wheelchair like he was just an obstruction on the road, and keep driving?! I was livid. But more and more these situations kept happening, and I began to realize that they had always been happening, I had just never noticed them before. The condition of Thunder Bay, "the bottom of the barrel" so to speak, has become so normalized, that some human beings are objectified as just scenery or even as obstructions, while other

human beings thrive and live “a good Christian life” against this backdrop. And it is to this reality that I returned, with a new desperation to also awaken others to the beautiful and tragic faces I was now seeing and longing to be reconciled with. But how would I get past the blank stares and sometimes sheer apathy I was being greeted with when I mentioned the words “reconciliation” and “First Nations” in the same context, even to many of my fellow Jesus followers?

“Logic is a battering ram,” says Seth Godin. “People are moved by stories and drama and hints and clues and discovery.”¹ Although there is absolutely a place for battering logic and the loud proclamation of truth (especially where the truth has been oppressed and hidden), my personal journey of awakening, as a well-meaning Canadian citizen and follower of Jesus, was not catapulted by the hearing of another loud truth, but by way of a whisper of truth through the affection of a small child. She connected the heart of my humanity with the heart of another. And that small interaction of heart-connection went deeper and quicker to places in my heart than knowing any broken history, or statistics, or government, could. All because this brokenness was in humanity, a child sitting in my arms.

So as a non-Indigenous from the other side of the table, I am asking the same question: how can we communicate truth in a way that will not only have its recipients acknowledge the realities of the past, but also be compelled to become active members in the truth of the present and of a reconciled future?

As my experience in Mishkeegogamang set me on a new path of learning and understanding, I began to discover that my journey in connection with First Nations people was actually not just beginning but had been going on my entire life. I realized that within the life script I had grown up in, was also woven a racial script, which I had learned through my surroundings early in life. Babcock and Keepers give the definition of a life script as follows: “A life plan based on a decision made in childhood, reinforced by the parents, justified by subsequent events and

¹ Seth Godin, “The market is not seduced by logic,” The Seth Godin Blog, entry posted September 25, 2010; <http://www.typepad.com/services/trackback/6a00d83451b31569e2013485327423970c> (accessed February 1, 2015).

ending according to plan.”² Robert L. Williams adds that, “Racial scripts however, are more specific and play a major role in the continuance or discontinuance of racism, bigotry, prejudice and stereotypes.... In its simplest form a racial script is the process by which racist attitudes are learned, maintained and expressed.”³

And thus, my memories came to life: dressing up in jingle dresses with my friend as a kid and dancing to Native music, wishing I could go to a Powwow with her; singing songs in Sunday School about children ‘red and yellow, black and white’; hearing one of my relatives talk about the “Indian welfare bums”; walking past groups of Native students in the hallways of my high school. My entire life journey has included First Nations people, but the way I have seen or not seen them has been highly informed by my influences growing up. In the absence of being directly taught about the true history of Canada and present conditions that First Nations people continue to endure, my environment had shaped my understanding of them and affected how I would relate to them.

Do you remember that moment when your parents shifted from being the heroes of your life and the end-all-be-all of truth, to being fallible human beings who made mistakes just like you and indeed wouldn’t be around forever? I do. I was stopped at a set of traffic lights, lights that I had driven through many many times throughout my years, usually with my parents and often fighting in the back seat with my sister, when it hit me. This time I was driving alone, and as I sat there deep in thought, a wave of sadness came over me. By now I already knew that my parents weren’t perfect and that they made mistakes, but for some reason in that moment it really started to dawn on me that my parents were slowing down and getting older in front of my eyes – that their role in my life and my role in theirs was beginning to change. I thought about all of the times we had driven through these lights, on the way to piano lessons and riding lessons, going camping and on road trips, singing silly songs and telling bad jokes. But most of all I thought about how much my parents

² D.E. Babcock and T.D. Keepers, *Raising Kids O.K.: Transactional Analysis in human growth and development* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1976), 276.

³ Robert L. Williams, *Racism Learned at an Early Age through Racial Scripting* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2007), 43.

had been my world and my everything, and how they had been the epitome of perfection and truth to my childhood mind. Now my adult mind was seeing them in a new light, still with no less love, but now with a fuller understanding and a deeper affection.

A similar wave of sadness came over me just a few weeks ago as I read an article from an immigration page on Canadian values:

- Canadian values include freedom, respect for cultural differences and a commitment to social justice. We are proud of the fact that we are a peaceful nation....
- Equality—We respect everyone’s rights ... Governments must treat everyone with equal dignity and respect
- Respect for cultural differences—We try to understand and appreciate the cultures, customs and traditions of all Canadians, whether they were born in Canada or came here from another country.
- Freedom—As Canadians, we enjoy basic freedoms, such as freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of religion and freedom of peaceful assembly.
- Peace—We are proud of our non-violent society and our international role as peacekeepers....⁴

As a first generation Finnish-Canadian, living blindly in my White privilege, I grew up so proud of my country, so proud to be a Canadian (although to be completely honest, I rather enjoyed always being just a little displaced - Finnish when in Canada, and Canadian when in Finland). But as a typical Canadian, I truly believed that these were the values held by my country, my land, my home. And I was proud to belong to it. But then my perception shifted.

Peggy McIntosh calls White privilege “unearned entitlement,” “unearned advantage” and “conferred dominance”. In an article on White privilege she states further:

⁴ “What are Canadian Values?” <https://www.durhamimmigration.ca/creating%20community/Pages/WhatareCanadianValues.aspx> (accessed May 12, 2015).

I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege as males are taught not to recognize male privilege I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets, which I can count on cashing in on each day, but about which I was “meant” to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks.⁵

It made me sad to realize that I had understood a fractioned history to be the whole truth; that I had been proud of a country that proclaimed such grandiose virtues, all the while going to great lengths to keep the actual truth from its citizens. It made me angry to realize that I, along with many others, have been deceived to believe a fragmented version of history. Yet, I am still proud of my many fellow ‘typical Canadians’ who *do* hold onto these values and who *do* work hard to live by these virtues. So I live with this dissonance, and now am faced with the reality that with this new understanding comes a responsibility: a responsibility to share my story and to share what I have come to understand of Canada as still a far-from peaceful or free country for many who live in their ancestral land but are not considered equal, yet a country with the make-up of many well-meaning good citizens who have been led astray by their racial scripts and a lack of proper education, but for whom it could take very little to shift their perceptions.

If I couldn’t bring the entire population of Thunder Bay (or at least my entire church community) to experience for themselves what I had experienced in Mishkeegogamang, then I would need to bring the stories from Mishkeegogamang to Thunder Bay – and then hope that people would come and listen. So together with a few others, I helped to plan a conference, which came to be known as *Walking Together: the Journey of Reconciliation*, and to which were brought the stories of First Nations people from across Canada through some fine presenters from the ministry called *Indigenous Pathways*.

⁵ Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” in *Peace and Freedom*, July/August (1989), 10-12.

To my amazement, over 250 people showed up to this conference, representing over 15 churches from the Thunder Bay community. Over the two days I got a sense that people in Canada are more than ready for discussion of the issue of reconciliation, especially within the church. Each of the presenters brought their own story and perspective, in their own style and humour, woven together into a beautiful tapestry of a new racial script for many. From moments of heaviness and tears to enthusiasm and laughter, participants of the conference left with hope that there is a way forward together – a way by which we can learn to reconcile our past and live once again in right relationship with one another, just as our Creator intended.

In the Greek New Testament, the word gospel is the translation of the Greek noun *euangelion*. In classical Greek, the noun *euangelion* became a technical term for the message of victory, though it was also used for a political or private message that brought joy.... In the New Testament these two words, *euangelion* and *euangelizo*, became technical terms for this message of good news offered to all men through faith in Christ.”⁶

From a video of the 2003 Urbana Conference, I heard a wise man say, “The gospel must be preached in the heart language of the people.”⁷ In this context I would state, that the gospel of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC] must be preached in the heart language of the people. What is the heart language of the people?

The ER nurse, of whom I spoke earlier, attended the Walking Together Conference. She emailed me during the last session saying, “I am a convert. And you have to know that I see the worst of the worst.”

“People are moved by stories and drama and hints and clues and discovery.”⁸

⁶ “What is the Gospel?” <https://bible.org/article/what-gospel> (accessed May 12, 2015).

⁷ Ray Aldred, “Cross-Cultural Conversion,” Urbana 2003. <https://vimeo.com/47112766> (accessed May 10, 2015).

⁸ Godin, *op. cit.*, (accessed February 1, 2015).

THE POLITICS OF REPENTANCE AND THE RISK OF RECONCILIATION

Melanie Kampen

“BETWEEN 1870 and 1996, hundreds of thousands of Indigenous children in Canada and the United States were separated from their families and forced to attend Indian residential, boarding, and day schools that were run by government and various Christian denominations. The goal of these schools was to assimilate Indigenous children into settler society; as the heads of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (U.S.) and Department of Indian Affairs (Canada) put it, “to kill the Indian in the man” and “to get rid of the Indian problem.” Indigenous languages, histories, religions and cultures were routinely suppressed and condemned. Indigenous children were often beaten and sexually abused. Many ran away from the schools. Many died and their bodies were not given proper burial.”¹ The last Indian Residential School in Canada closed in 1996.

“On June 11, 2008, the Conservative prime minister of Canada, Stephen J. Harper, issued an official apology on behalf of the Canadian state to Indigenous survivors of the Indian residential school system.”² While suspect by some, the Harper apology was initially widely received as an important step in reconciliation between settlers and Indigenous peoples in Canada. I have a photograph of a stained glass window in the Canadian Parliament building in Ottawa. A friend of mine took this photo when she was on a tour of the building. She asked the tour guide if it was to honour the survivors of Indian Residential Schools. The tour guide emphatically clarified that it was to honour Prime Minister Harper’s apology – a self-congratulatory icon!

¹ Steve Heinrichs, “Confessing the Past: Mennonites and the Indian School System.” Free download available at the Mennonite Church Canada resource centre online. <http://resources.mennonitechurch.ca/ResourceView/43/16436>

² Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 105.

Not a year after his apology, on Sept. 25, 2009, at the G20 gathering in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, Harper stated that Canada “has no history of colonialism.” Harper’s apology is one among a proliferation of institutional apologies made in the late 20th Century into the present. This trend has not only been noticed among so called secular institutions, but is a growing phenomenon among religious institutions as well, particularly Christian ones: these are referred to as church apologies, or acts of ecclesial repentance.

My presentation today will focus on church apologies in Canada made to Indigenous survivors of Indian Residential Schools. I should note from the outset that my interest is not so much in the content or reception of these statements, but in their function. In other words, I draw on these specific apologies to point to a broader element of how institutional apologies operate in spheres of power and privilege: namely, settler colonialism and whiteness. Drawing on the work of critical theorists Sara Ahmed and Glen Coulthard, and theologian James Cone, I interrogate this operation with another one: that of an empty apology, as antithetical and counterproductive as that phrase might initially appear. What I mean by this will hopefully become clear by the end of the presentation.

A peculiar and striking feature of apologetic statements made by churches in Canada for their role in Residential Schools is their outright requests for forgiveness. The apologies often include elements of naming their participation in running the schools as harmful and wrong, acknowledging the paternalism and cultural and spiritual superiority that was exercised; confessions of shame, guilt, remorse, and repentance; and then the explicit requests for forgiveness from the survivors of these atrocious schools.

This is striking, at least to me, and not in a good way. What strikes me in this gesture (this request for forgiveness) is the effect it has on the power relation between the Christian settlers offering the apology and the Indigenous peoples. Whatever one may think of the sincerity of the apology itself, I argue that this request marks it as self-justifying speech. The request for forgiveness places the onus on those who have been harmed. To put it in simplified terms, the offenders’ apology places the

burden of responsibility for reconciliation on the victims. What does this do in terms of power? Essentially, it maintains the power of settler Christians; apologies are made, sincere words of remorse are spoken, perhaps even symbolic gestures towards reconciliation are made, but in the end, these apologies, along with their requests for forgiveness, maintain the current distribution of socio-economic, political, and cultural-religious power throughout all levels of society. *Apologies don't change anything.*

Few can argue with this claim, indeed conservatives and liberals alike will point to the failure of institutional apologies to effect change. Unless the words are followed through with some course of action, they are empty. The common critique of apologies is that they don't do enough, that they are empty.

What is an apology? From the Greek *apologos*, the classical definition is “a speech in defense.” From there springs an entire genre called apologetics, what we know as speech in defense of something, usually one's own beliefs about something, essentially self-justifying speech. But what if we were to take a different etymological route with regards to the word *apology*? What if we parsed it as *apo-logos*, in which *logos* signifies a dominant discourse, and *apo* indicates a term of negation? Thus, *apo-logos* together would signify the negation of a dominant discourse. What if an apology then were not a self-defensive speech-act employed for the maintenance of a dominant system, but a self-offensive or negating speech-act that effectively decomposes the *logos* in question? Such an apology, were there ever such a thing, would certainly be risky.

What is an *empty* apology? In contemporary nomenclature an empty apology is usually one that carries no weight: it is empty of regret, empty of sincerity, empty of change, and certainly seems empty of any kind of attempt to negate a dominant discourse. Indeed, we usually acknowledge that empty apologies keep the current, dominant relation of things in place. But again, in this thought experiment, I am thinking of a different understanding of “empty.” I am thinking of the theological notion of kenosis: self-emptying. An empty apology would then constitute the negation of a dominant discourse.

What does this mean? As a colleague of mine, Tapji Garba, has articulated so aptly: “a good apology, if there were such a thing, would be an empty apology with no future, no expectation. It would be a fragile apology. One that doesn’t do any work, or doesn’t intend to do any work. It’s more like a statement of decomposition. There’s no shift in responsibility, no movement from you to me.”³

Apologies, whether they are self-defensive or expressions of regret, have a way of imposing responsibility on the recipient whether intentionally or not. Expressions of regret can be particularly culpable in this regard (next time you give or receive an apology for something, listen closely to the rhetoric and look for subtle forms of self-defensive language and phrasing, it may surprise you). Apologies are weighty, as I suggested above. They are filled with the weight of regret, guilt, and all sorts of desires and intentions to do better next time, and to make right what has been wronged. Filled with all these things, apologies are weighty. Anyone who has offered a sincere apology has felt this weight in herself. Certainly this weightiness can be harmful when bottled up and carried around. More could be said about the psychology of this, but what I want to address here is the way in which the weightiness of apologies can further harm those it is meant to assuage, those to whom it is offered, those who have already been harmed. Apologies do so by placing the onus of responsibility on the victim, the oppressed, the one who has been harmed, in an effort to alleviate the offender, oppressor, and the one who has caused harm.

Most commonly, an apology is initiated as an exchange, with the expectation of forgiveness, grace, or something else in return – an economy of repentance in which power is maintained through an apology, to which the victim then becomes indebted. But with an empty apology, *apo-logos*, there is only a self-emptying negation of the dominant discourse, of that which caused the harm. An empty apology, then, does not carry any weight: the burden of responsibility, the expectation, the exchange with the one who has been hurt. An empty apology, fragile in its lightness, uncertain in its powerlessness, bearing no future. This is risky.

³ Tapji Paul Garba, personal correspondence, August 15, 2014.

But, settler colonialism doesn't need to risk its identity in repentance, does it? I mean, it is not necessary for the survival of white bodies to risk their identities, their discourses, their institutions, etc., in their apologies. The function of apologies as self-justifying speech-acts is a) a feature of settler colonialism (the links between Christianity, repentance, and apologies here are not ancillary), and b) the reproduction of what Sara Ahmed calls the phenomenology of whiteness.

Settler colonialism in Canada and the U.S. is fully amalgamated with whiteness. What is the phenomenology of whiteness? Ahmed describes it as the way in which spaces "take shape by being orientated around some bodies, more than others."⁴ Further, she writes, "We can also consider 'institutions' as orientation devices, which take the shape of 'what' resides within them [...] how institutional spaces are shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others: white bodies gather, and cohere to form the edges of such spaces."⁵

Ahmed's description of how whiteness functions is lucid and worth quoting at length: "Whiteness is only invisible for those who inhabit it. [...] Spaces are orientated 'around' whiteness, insofar as whiteness is not seen. We do not face whiteness; it 'trails behind' bodies, as what is assumed to be given."⁶ She goes on to argue that the institutionalization of whiteness is something that is produced and reproduced in the ways that spaces orientate bodies and bodies in turn shape spaces. As she herself puts it, "spaces extend bodies and bodies extend spaces. The impressions of the surface function as traces of such extensions."⁷

I want to suggest that the way in which whiteness extends itself, by bodies and institutions, is operative in both personal and institutional apologies offered by white settlers to Indigenous peoples. I have already described how apologies place the onus of responsibility on Indigenous peoples. I see this as an extension of whiteness; the borders of the space that white settlers occupy is reinforced through apologies and this

⁴ Sara Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," *Feminist Theory* 8 (2007): 157.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 158.

whiteness is also extended into Indigenous spaces: geographical, cultural, religious. In other words, the space of truth and reconciliation becomes white space. The term *apo-logos*, however, calls for something else, something antithetical, and definitely counter-productive.

One of the Hebrew words translated as “repent” in the Christian Old Testament is the word *shuwb*, which literally means “to return” or “turn back.” To turn back is risky. To turn back on one’s identity is risky. To turn back on one’s progress, one’s social power, the extension of one’s identity in space, and the acceleration of reconciliation is risky. To empty oneself and negate dominant structures is risky. To repent is risky.

The problem with apologies and repentance is not that they don’t do enough, it’s that they do too much. Or rather, we think they do more than they do, we think they can effect social change. So often I see appeals to liturgies of repentance being made in churches as a panacea for complicity in violence. But this whole frame of reference for measuring regret and change is problematic. I do not think that we should therefore stop writing liturgies of lament, confession, repentance. I do want to think about how these liturgies interact with our identities.

I have proposed to think of apologies and repentance as self-emptying negation of dominance and turning. In this sense, repentance and apologies do nothing, no-thing, apo-logos. Apologies and repentance risk their own efficacy by way of the kenotic gesture. Thus an apology and repentance necessarily involves self-emptying, negating, decomposing ones identity. What I mean by self-emptying negation is not self-effacement or annihilation. What I mean is decentering oneself. And decentering means risking ones identity. When whiteness is decentered it is destabilized. This instability, this fragility risks the decomposition of the dominant power relations. We might think of this decomposition as a kind of “turning” of identity (i.e. repentance).

So decentering identities on the one hand. On the other, identities are not static, they do not stand still. And so we must also think about the movement of identities, especially dominant ones that are moving from the center to the periphery. The

position of bodies matters vis a vis identities. Inevitably, bodies take up space. The question then is one of posture and movement: how do we inhabit the spaces in which we reside? Kenotic or self-emptying posture is based on proximity. It requires standing in the same place with others and recognizing the violence of that presence, of taking up and reproducing white space. And this kenotic posture moves negatively with relation to dominance. This movement of kenosis is constituted again by decentering, by acting behind others, by stepping back, or by walking alongside them, by stepping to the side. This can also lead to the decomposition of dominant relations; because they are no longer centered, dominant identities become destabilized. This is the kenotic, self-emptying position of the fragile identity. The movement of repentance that negates the logos of whiteness, settler colonialism, and cis-hetero-patriarchy, by decentering itself. This movement of repentance is a kind of *turning-inside-out*.

The question of forgiveness remains: what to make of the requests for forgiveness that both states and churches have made. What is the relation between forgiveness and reconciliation? Here's the thing that people often forget: if you're going to request forgiveness, you had better be prepared to accept 'no' as a legitimate response, just as you would 'yes'. You cannot apologize for the forced conversion to Christianity and assimilation to Whiteness on the one hand and then condemn a refusal to forgive on the other. Indeed, someone's refusal to forgive, that 'no', may very well foster justice much better than the extension of White repentance and apologies towards the acceleration of reconciliation. What do I mean by this?

In Canada, the public often expresses its impatience with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and its annoyance at the continuous calls for a national inquiry on over 1000 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. Both of these reactions are marks of its whiteness, its social power. These initiatives by Indigenous people pose interruptions in the extension of whiteness that we call assimilation. The public's frustration with Indigenous peoples is commonly expressed in the phrase "why can't they just get over it?!" And yet, in his remarkable book, *Red Skins, White Masks*, Glen Coulthard suggests that it is this very refusal to "get over it," what he calls resentment/ressentiment, that

speaks a resistant ‘no’ to the apologetics and politics of repentance and the kind of reconciliation that the state and churches offer. It is worth quoting him at length here:

I contend that what gets implicitly represented by the state as a form of Indigenous *ressentiment*—namely, Indigenous peoples’ seemingly pathological inability to get over harms inflicted in the past—is actually a manifestation of our *righteous resentment*: that is, our bitter indignation and persistent anger at being treated unjustly by a colonial state both historically and in the present. In other words, what is treated in the Canadian discourse of reconciliation as an unhealthy and debilitating incapacity to forgive and move on is actually a sign of our *critical consciousness*, of our sense of justice and injustice, and of our awareness of and unwillingness to *reconcile* ourselves with a structural and symbolic violence that is still very much present in our lives. Viewed in this light, I suggest that Indigenous peoples’ individual and collective resentment—expressed as an angry and vigilant *unwillingness to forgive*—ought to be seen as an affective indication that we deeply care about ourselves, about our land and cultural communities, and about the rights and obligations we hold as First Peoples.⁸

This refusal, resentment’s ‘no’ to the politics of repentance and reconciliation performed by settler colonialism, attests to the covert reproduction of whiteness enacted in the institutional apologies for Indian Residential Schools.

Similarly, in his book *Risks of Faith*, theologian James Cone discusses reconciliation in terms of the black power movement in America, but in relation to the Gospel of Jesus. For Cone, any biblical understanding of reconciliation must be premised on the notion that the heart of the Gospel message is liberation of the oppressed. What he writes about black liberation can also be said of decolonization and the kenosis that I have been talking about here. He writes, “[R]econciliation is what God does for enslaved people who are unable to break the chains of slavery. To be reconciled is to be set free: it is to have the chains struck off the body and mind so that the creatures of God can be what they are. Reconciliation means that people cannot be human and God cannot be God unless the creatures of God are liberated

⁸ Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*, 126. Emphasis is the author’s own.

from that which enslaves and is dehumanizing.”⁹ Furthermore, he writes,

When Paul says, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,” this is not a sentimental comment on race relations. The reconciling act of God in Christ is centered on the cross, and it reveals the extent that God is willing to go in order to set people free from slavery and oppression. [...] Because God has set us free, we are not commanded to go and be reconciled with our neighbours, and particularly our white neighbours. But this does not mean letting whites define the terms of reconciliation. *[Reconciliation] means participating in God’s revolutionizing activity in the world, changing the political, economic, and social structures so that distinctions between rich and poor, oppressed and oppressors, are no longer a reality.*¹⁰

This, my friends, is the risk of reconciliation.

Two years after the United Church of Canada gave its statement of Apology to First Nations in 1986, the All Native Circle Conference responded “by acknowledging the apology but not accepting it. Alf Dumont, an Aboriginal UCC minister, said that the verbal apology could not be accepted because it ‘must be lived out if it’s to be a real apology.’”¹¹ Partly because of this response, the UCC was challenged to see an apology not primarily as ‘closure,’ but an ongoing task. The site of the 1986 apology, a gravel parking lot in Sudbury, Ontario, has become important. In August 2005, Aboriginal people of the UCC gathered there¹² and “[a] stone cairn was erected to mark the event. However, the cairn was left incomplete on the advice of the Elders who felt that time must be given to see how the church lives out the apology. More stones are to be added as the United Church lives out its apology.”¹³

⁹ James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968-1998* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 38.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* Emphasis mine.

¹¹ Quoted in Russell Daye, “An Unresolved Dilemma: Canada’s United Church Seeks Reconciliation with Native Peoples,” *The Ecumenist* 36, no. 2 (May 1999), 11-15 quoted in Jeremy Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance: The Churches Confront Their Sinful Pasts* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 59.

¹² Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance*, 59.

¹³ “Right Relationships letter from Laverne Jacobs,” The United Church of Canada, last updated May 10, 2007 <http://www.unitedchurch.ca/aboriginal/relationships/letter>.

The nature of the politics of repentance is that apologies and liturgies of lament too often seek to accelerate the process of reconciliation without paying attention to what the victims of harm, the oppressed, are voicing as necessary changes for justice, liberation, and healing to happen. This is why I have proposed that while churches ought to continue to do truth telling work about their own complicity in the violence of colonialism, and lament this, any act of repentance or apology must be a kenotic one if it is to foster liberation and healing for both oppressors and the oppressed. The uncertainty and destabilization of unjust social power arrangements that comes with the kenotic gesture is precisely the risk of reconciliation, and it is a risk of our faith in Jesus as saviour, as liberator.

CALLING EURO-AMERICANS TO TEAR DOWN THEIR INTERNAL FORTS

THOMAS HUGHES

*Can I hear the cry of this wretched people and be silent?
Can I see these wrongs and not speak out? I should be
ashamed of my manhood, if I dared to be silent; I should be
recreant to my awful trust as a shepherd of souls!*¹

THIS WAS Bishop Whipple’s “Plea for the Red Man,” written almost 150 years ago, and yet I could still utter it today.² This plea with Deloria Jr.’s critique that Christians should “stop talking and let us see what you can *do*,” weighs profoundly on my heart.³ I broach the topic of reconciliation with great trepidation and hope that the internal work that I undertake here might embolden other Euro-Americans to act as allies and accomplices with Native Americans.⁴ Although the demarcation between allies and accomplices is unclear, I will use them as distinct terms that point to different postures that Euro-Americans can adopt. The term ‘ally’ is used to designate a “member of a dominant group in our society who works to dismantle any form of oppression from which she or he receives the benefit.”⁵ Whereas, the term ‘accomplice’ is used “when we

¹ Bishop Whipple’s “Plea for the Red Man,” Project Canterbury, reprinted from the “Missionary Paper,” No. 24, Epiphany 1868.

² *Ibid.*, <http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/whipple/plea1868.html> (accessed May 15, 2015). I give Whipple the benefit of a doubt that by “wretched people” he is referring to them as desolate or dejected, not inferior or despicable.

Interestingly, Whipple connects the plea for the ‘red man’ with the plight of the African race and the recent abolishment of slavery in 1865.

³ Vine Deloria Jr., “Christianity and Indigenous Religion: Friends or Enemies?” (1987) in *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America*, ed. James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1999), 161.

⁴ I use Euro-Americans to signify those who live in North America, with European descent. I acknowledge that there are other non-Native Americans without European descent, but that is beyond the scope of my research. I also use Native Americans to designate Indigenous persons living on the North American continent.

⁵ Bob Pease, *Undoing Privilege: Unearned Advantage in a Divided World* (New York: Zed Books, 2010), 180. Pease is adopting Ayvazian’s definition of ally and so shall I for this paper.

fight back or forward, together, becoming complicit in a struggle towards liberation.”⁶ In reading Waziyatawin’s book, *What Does Justice Look Like? Liberation in Dakota Homeland*, I was struck by one of the tasks in liberation and ultimately reconciliation being that of taking down forts, specifically Fort Snelling. Yes, there are human-made structures that need to be torn down, or at the least, left to stand in recognition of the atrocity that was perpetuated through it.⁷ The latter is honestly the more difficult because it requires us to acknowledge and confess that the past treatment of Native Americans was genocide and ethnocide – that would not boost tourism to those sites. And yes, there needs to be land reparations and truth-telling as well. All these actions would signify that Euro-Americans are becoming accomplices. However, I question whether I could fully engage in this activism, if I have not already become an ally. In order to become an ally, I would suggest Euro-Americans need to take down internal and metaphorical forts by removing symbols that “celebrate all that was gained at Indigenous expense and everything that serves to rationalize genocide, ethnic cleansing, land theft, and colonization.”⁸

As a Euro-American, I argue that Euro-Americans should become allies by tearing down our internal forts through examining the history of Christian missions to Native Americans, listening to Native American theologians and others, and by broadening our hermeneutical perspective beyond the Western European worldview. Through this endeavor, we, Euro-Americans, should strive to relinquish the reins of control and listen to Native American critiques of the church and the larger society in order to move towards being accomplices.⁹

⁶ Indigenous Action Media, “Accomplices not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex,” <http://www.indigenouaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/> (accessed May 15, 2015). Examining and assessing the “Accomplices not Allies” movement against varying models of ally praxis goes beyond the scope of this paper.

⁷ Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press, 2008), 105. Waziyatawin criticizes the current undertaking of making Fort Snelling a “fun-filled tourist destination,” and argues that it should in the very least stand as a “Holocaust museum” to educate the public of the genocide of Dakota people.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁹ I imply here that being an accomplice is an ongoing process, which we do not engage in statically or temporally. Whereas, being an ally is often inclined

I will describe how coming to learn of Episcopalian missions to Native Americans, particularly the Dakota Sioux, has begun to tear down my inner forts of resistance. Then, I will describe how the critiques of Vine Deloria Jr. refine my beliefs about the church and its role in fostering self-determination. Finally, I will draw on Jace Weaver to offer a Native American hermeneutic to refine how I and Euro-Americans see the world.

Episcopalian Missions to the Sioux – What has been done?¹⁰

The history of Episcopalian missionary work among the Sioux, which started with the Santee Mission in southern Minnesota [MN], cannot easily be distilled into a single narrative. On the one hand is the grim reality of assimilation and forced removal of Native Americans. On the other hand, some Native Americans such as the Deloria family, rose to prominence in the Episcopal Church's leadership. Deloria Jr., a strong critic of the Episcopal Church and Christianity in general, recognized that an "appreciation of the long history of church involvement with the tribes is desperately needed."¹¹ Virginia Driving-Hawk Sneve's book, *That They May Have Life: The Episcopal Church in South Dakota, 1859-1976*, presents this dual narrative of both positive and negative interactions between Native Americans and Euro-American missionaries. However, she strongly reminds us that "It was unfortunate that the early missionaries believed that the Dakota had to change his entire way of life to become a Christian. Their whole purpose was to civilize, and they indiscriminately tried to drive out all Indian ways."¹² This is the prevailing tendency of missionaries to Native Americans, yet the Episcopal Church was considered to be lax in this regard by other Euro-American Christian missionaries.

towards a static and temporary position. Yet, I still contend that we need both of these terms.

¹⁰ This paper draws heavily from my research on Native American self-determination and a paper I wrote for a seminary class *Christian Theology 1*, called "Being Civilized to Self-Determining: Native Americans in the Episcopal Church."

¹¹ Vine Deloria Jr., *The Indian Affair* (New York: Friendship Press, 1974), 58. I note that Deloria wrote this statement before his more polemical works, such as *God is Red*; however, I view his continual engagement and critique as appreciating the history of the church, and not just dismissing it entirely.

¹² Virginia Driving -Hawk Sneve, *That They May Have Life: The Episcopal Church in South Dakota, 1859- 1976* (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1977), 4.

I will examine three key figures in the beginning of Dakota Territory missions. They are: Bishop Henry Whipple, of Minnesota; Rev. Samuel Dutton Hinman, deacon; and Bishop William Hare, of Niobrara.¹³ Bishop Whipple was a staunch advocate for Native Americans, as he wrote “A Plea for the Red Man” to the President of the United States:

There are questions pressing upon us more grave than the hanging of a few hundred Indian prisoners. They concern a nation's broken faith, and the reform of a crying evil. Deeply as our people feel on the question of slavery, they may see here on the border a system which in curses to body and soul, in the loss of manhood, home, and Heaven, has worked out a degradation to red men, which slavery has never done for the African race.¹⁴

Episcopal bishops, rectors, and others endorsed this plea across the United States. Anderson notes how Bishop Whipple was both a “product of his time... rife with paternalism and enshrouded in ethnocentrism” and “as the single bulwark between white malevolence and Indian desperation.”¹⁵ In retrospect, there needs to be caution against praising Whipple too much for his advocacy, yet also against denigrating him for his support for the reservation system. All in all, we can say he was an ally, albeit not perfect, in that he voiced the need for systemic change in regards to the treatment of Native Americans. Samuel Dutton Hinman, who attended Whipple’s divinity school, would come to live alongside of Native Americans and be less focused on their assimilation.

Whipple appointed Hinman to start a Santee Mission at Redwood, Minnesota, in 1859. This Santee mission would become part of South Dakota [SD] missions. Hinman accompanied the Santee as they were imprisoned at Fort Snelling in 1862, relocated south in 1863 to Dakota Territory, and again relocated in 1866 to Niobrara region. He translated most of the *Book of Common Prayer* into the Santee dialect. He

¹³ Niobrara is a river between Nebraska and South Dakota; here is a helpful map of the different tribes,

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/60/Sioux01.png>

¹⁴ Whipple, “Plea.”

¹⁵ Owanah Anderson, *400 Years: Anglican/Episcopal Mission among American Indians* (Cincinnati, OH: Forward Movement Publications, 1997), 68.

allowed the “Indians to continue their traditional practice of placing food on the graves of the dead and to attend native dances.”¹⁶ His involvement with the Native Americans earned him the “respect of the Indian clergy, [however] he did not get along with the white missionaries.”¹⁷ Hinman’s closeness to Native Americans and to some extent estrangement from other White missionaries could indicate that he was more of an accomplice, by becoming enmeshed with the lives of Native Americans, granted not necessarily complicit in the struggle for liberation. Yet, his engagement with Native Americans would be questioned by Hare, after he became a bishop of the Sioux Nation and in charge over Hinman.

Hinman and Hare became engrossed in a 10-year controversy. Hare indicted Hinman of “gross immorality, misconduct, and the dishonest and unfaithful use of money,” and Hinman responded with a charge of libel and malicious intent.¹⁸ A further exploration of this dispute is beyond the scope of this paper. However, this dispute does highlight some differences between how missionaries reacted to Native Americans. Hinman lived alongside the Santee and received abuse from other Euro-Americans when he accompanied them to Fort Snelling. Whereas, Bishop Hare recognized that “The Indian’s old life was like his moccasin soft and easy-fitting. The new life is like a tight hard leather boot. It rubs him and makes him sore.”¹⁹ This recognition implies that the Native American life and practices were disposable or exchangeable for a new life. His tremendous efforts to educate the Native Americans had good intentions, that they can “be trained to be self-supporting in order to have independent control of their lives.”²⁰ All this is to say Bishop Hare was more inclined to ‘civilize’ the Native Americans rather than allow their practices.

These three figures – Bishop Whipple, Hinman, and Bishop Hare – show the complex postures that Euro-Americans had as they engaged with Native Americans. I have suggested that Bishop

¹⁶ Sneve, *That They May Have Life*, 17-20, 24.

¹⁷ Anderson, *400 Years*, 96.

¹⁸ Sneve, *That They May Have Life*, 24-25.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 117. She also made the remark of educating Native Americans for whatever their future, even including the possibility of them dying out.

Whipple and Hinman can be seen as potential examples of being an ally and accomplice, respectively. However, Deloria Jr. would put Bishop Whipple and Bishop Hare on par as being “more concerned with the settlement of Minnesota and surrounding states than with the preservation of the Sioux and Chippewa tribes. They played a very influential role in having the reservations of their states allotted.”²¹ This brief synopsis shows how complex the Episcopalian missions were and how Euro-Americans missionaries have a mixture of good intentions and unchallenged prejudices.

Vine Deloria Jr. – Are We Listening?

This history is not complete without examining and listening to the Deloria family. The Deloria family, of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, was very influential in the Episcopal missions to the Sioux as they often rose to leadership within the church. Philip, also called *Tipi Sapa* (Black Lodge), was ordained in 1892 and became one of the “Saints of the Ages.”²² His son Vine also was ordained and held an executive post within the Episcopal Church. Philip’s grandson, Vine Deloria Jr., though never ordained, received a graduate degree in theology in 1963. It is Deloria Jr.’s critique of the church during the Civil Rights era that I will focus in on.

Deloria Jr. would take his place in the General Convention Special Program where he called for “More Real Involvement.” Deloria Jr., Rev. Ronald Campbell (Pine Ridge, SD), Rev. Wilbur Bearheart (Porcupine, SD), and Yvonne Warhol (Sioux of MN), voiced this at the Executive Council meeting in February 1969. They requested:

- “Self-determining voice” in the life and mission of the Episcopal Church,
- Program for the training of native clergy,
- Establishment of a National Committee on Indian Work,
- Appointment of an Indian staff member on Executive Council,
- Participation by Indians in decision making at all levels,
- High priority for lay and ordained Indian leadership,

²¹ Deloria Jr., *The Indian Affair*, 50-51.

²² “Saints of the Ages” refers to the reedos in the Washington Cathedral Church of the Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C.

- Appointment of Indians to Church posts and committee assignments.²³

This group advocated for recognition of the Native Americans' traditions and its importance for a strong church. Deloria Jr. said, "The Indian people consider the Episcopal Church as an Indian religion."²⁴ Warhol stressed, "The Indian expects religion to permeate all of life. On the reservation the Church is used for community gatherings as well as for Church services."²⁵ Bearsheart asked simply, "Give us back our leaders.... Where there is an Indian clergyman the Church is strong."²⁶ The voice of the Native Americans reverberated with hope for the possibility of self-determination to build communities that embodied their "Indian religion," and promoted more "Indian clergy."

However, Deloria would resign from the General Convention Special Program later that year and go on to strongly criticize the Episcopal Church and Christianity in general. The rise of the Black Power and Red Power movements complicated matters even more. As Deloria writes, the "churches abruptly switched their support to the more militant members of the Indian community [and other minority groups]."²⁷ The Episcopal Church primarily gave support to these militant groups through financial grants, such as funding the documentary "Huey" on the Black Panther leader. As Whipple's "A Plea for the Red Man" connected the plight of the African race and the degradation of the "red man," the power movements would expose this connection even more. Though the oppression and liberation of African-Americans and Native-Americans are intersectional, that is, the oppression and/or liberation of one group affects the other, they are not synonymous. Deloria Jr.'s stated criticism was "Indians became, in their [church's] eyes, a sub-group of the black community; many lessons learned in working with

²³ "Council Approves Budget," Executive Council Episcopal Church (Diocesan Press Services, February 13, 1969); http://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.pl?pr_number=74-8 (accessed May 15, 2015).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Council Attendees Speak to Needs of Indian Episcopalians," Executive Council Episcopal Church (Diocesan Press Services, February 13, 1969); <http://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSsearch.pl> (accessed May 15, 2015).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Deloria Jr., *The Indian Affair*, 55.

American blacks were considered applicable to American Indians in spite of the cultural differences between the groups.”²⁸ As allies, we need to listen to Deloria Jr. and acknowledge the complexity of engaging with minority groups. Euro-Americans need to check their presumptions of knowing what is best for other peoples and movements, and listen deeply and patiently to a diverse group of voices, not just the militant voices.

The shifting of budget in support of militant advocates presented for Deloria an even larger and more important problem. He noticed the need for theological education to provide stability and unity, yet the Church merely reacted to the pressing needs. He argued that the

most important missing ingredient was the lack of a consistent and relevant theology.... When it did move the Episcopal Church chose the most tangible but least sophisticated weapon in its institutional arsenal: Money. Unless the church moves substantially into the support of theological education of considerable content, it will probably remain vulnerable to the ebb and flow of popular social issues and become a pale version of a private foundation.²⁹

This is a stinging critique considering that Deloria’s family was well educated; however even here can be seen one of the first calls for a theological self-determination, rather than financial charity. This is a challenging response because it calls for Euro-Americans to relinquish the control and allow Native Americans to be in control and guide Euro-Americans in how they can be allies and accomplices.

This nascent Native American theology must include the renouncement of the Doctrine of Discovery. This Doctrine, as it will hereafter be called, allowed Euro-American governments to seize land from Indigenous peoples, as seen in the history of the United States’ land allotments and the formation of reservations. This Doctrine would continue into the 1960s, as Deloria remarks,

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Vine Deloria, Jr., “GCSP: The Demons at Work,” (1979) in *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America*, ed. James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1999), 66.

“The present position of the United States government is that it holds our lands and communities as its wards. When this doctrine is traced to its origin it lands comfortably within the Doctrine of Discovery....”³⁰

The Native American dependency on Euro-Americans for their livelihoods would also extend into matters of spirituality, especially for those who converted to Christianity. The theological position of evangelizing and ‘civilizing’ the Natives further entrenched the prejudice that we, as Euro-Americans, are the “spiritual parents,” the ones who propagate Christians – therefore, Native Americans have to rely on us for the gospel and the standards for right belief and right practice. (Yet it is beyond the scope of this paper to explain how the history of the Doctrine and Euro-American theology came to be interrelated.) Native Americans critique this prejudice by pointing out Euro-American theology’s focus on the temporal and the individual. This will be explored more in the hermeneutical section below. Deloria, who is a major proponent of this critique, does echo the same tension of the Native clergyman at the beginning of this paper. Deloria wrote,

For better or for worse, the Christian churches *do* represent a tangible expression of whatever sense of morality or integrity American society has left. As such, the Indian people need some clearly defined relationship to the churches, since the issues of treaties and education that must be raised with the government are essentially moral and ethical and require the assistance of the churches.³¹

We Euro-Americans cannot erase the past of conquest and ‘civilizing’ Native Americans; however, we can start to examine our biases and begin undoing systems of dependency and oppression. One tangible way of examining ourselves and challenging unjust systems is by creating space for Native American self-determination both politically and theologically. Being allies for political self-determination involves engaging with issues of sovereignty, rights, and sustainability.

³⁰ Vine Deloria, Jr., “An Open Letter to the Heads of the Christian Churches in America,” (1972) in *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America*, ed. James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1999), 81.

³¹ Deloria, *The Indian Affair*, 58.

Jace Weaver – How do we see?

Examining the history of Euro-American missionaries to Native Americans and listening to Native American critiques of the church are first steps. We also need to examine our hermeneutical lenses, the way we perceive and understand the world, in order to begin to dismantle our privilege. By understanding Native American hermeneutics, we Euro-Americans, can better understand the importance of communal identity and self-determination as part of the struggle for liberation and reconciliation. Simply put, our interpretative lenses depend on recognizing our perspectives of the world, either temporally or spatially; and our identity, as an individual or as a community. Homer Noley writes, “For American Indian people, hermeneutics must extend beyond the interpretation of biblical texts.... We maintain that Indian people must be able to assert their own interpretations of their cultures.”³² This Native American hermeneutic contains an element of self-determination that pushes back against the Euro-American interpretations of not only Scripture but also understandings of Native American culture.

Weaver would develop this as post-colonial hermeneutics, albeit criticizing its “ahistorical, universalizing, and depoliticizing” characteristics.³³ Discussing Native Americans and post-colonial discourse is beyond the scope of this paper, yet the importance of a political theology is evident in Weaver’s hermeneutic. He stresses that the hermeneutic recognizes “Native worldviews are, in fact, much closer to the worldview of the ancient Israelites than of the modern West. After all, Yahweh was first and foremost the tutelary, local tribal deity of the Hebrew people, whose acts they recognized in their lives.”³⁴ Secondly, this hermeneutic must affirm traditional practices, which have often been denied in the missionary attempt to ‘civilize’ the Native peoples. Thirdly, this hermeneutics will stress the importance of land and community.

³² Homer Noley, “Hermeneutics: Origin of Belief,” in *A Native American Theology*, eds. Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, George E. “Tink” Tinker (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 30-31.

³³ Jace Weaver, “From I-Hermeneutics to We-Hermeneutics: Native Americans and the Post-Colonial,” in *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods*, edited by Jace Weaver (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 13.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

The significance of land and community appears sharply in Native American interpretations of kingdom of God and lordship of Christ, respectively. These elucidations also criticize Euro-American Christianity as time-centered, almost neglecting place entirely, and individualistic rather than community focused. As Euro-Americans we can become allies with Native Americans for self-determination in allowing them to speak and not dismiss this critique, even if it is a broad generalization. However, notions of land and community are often interrelated, so a clear-cut discussion between the two is near impossible.

This brings us full circle to Jace Weaver's post-colonial Native hermeneutics. He argues that community is not

Just a hermeneutical tool and a necessary context in which to understand a text, but also the goal of every interpretation and every text to be interpreted.... The task of hermeneutics is not merely for an individual – or even a community – to understand a text, but it is even more for building the community.³⁵

Therefore, by challenging our Euro-American temporal and individualistic presuppositions, we can begin to understand the richness of Native American thought and practice in regards to land and community. This richness has been effaced by Euro-American attempts at 'civilizing' Native Americans, but it has not been destroyed. We may learn a lot about ourselves from the history of colonization, yet we cannot truly know Native Americans unless we start to learn from the land. Also by grasping the political plight of Native Americans, we can enter into solidarity as we confront systems, such as the Doctrine, of oppression. Through this solidarity, we can truly become, as Weaver coined, a "communitist," the community as a whole being an activist for the Native community that is among us, and develop a we-hermeneutic that allows for self-determined Native American voices.³⁶

Conclusion

Thus, by briefly examining three missionaries to the Dakota Sioux, we are able to see the complexity behind engaging with

³⁵ Ibid., 22.

³⁶ Ibid.

Native Americans. Through listening to Deloria Jr., we, Euro-Americans, can recognize how adverse the church has been to being allies and accomplices. By engaging with Weaver, we realize the need for a broader hermeneutical lens through which to see the world, or, in the very least recognize that there are different lenses that are equally as valid as our own.

