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"INDIAN AWARENESS": CAN WE SEE NON-PEOPLES AS PEOPLE?

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The designation, by the Indian-Lutheran Race Relations Committee, of an "Indian Awareness Week" in October of 1979 and 1980 certainly is fortuitous, for it was on October 12, 1492 that Christopher Columbus landed on an island in the Caribbean Sea, which, out of gratitude to God he named San Salvador for the Holy Saviour.[1] It is exceedingly ironical that almost 500 years later the descendants of European immigrants are still not "aware" of the Native Peoples of Canada.

Even statistics do not seem to impress us or our governments. Consider the ones furnished by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians:[2]

	Indians	*All Canadians*
Infant Mortality (per 1,000 live births)	49	21
Living in substandard housing	87%	11%
Completing High School	6%	88%
Unemployment	50%	6%
Households with Income under $2,263 per annum	54%	20%
Suicide (per 100,000 population)	19.7%	9.7%
Life Expectancy in years	36	62

If any other group in Canada were in similar circumstances, there would long ago have been a hue and cry raised, as has been done over the plight of the "Boat People." We have just not been aware of the Native population; perhaps, as a

1. John Schofield, "Christopher Columbus and the New World He found," *National Geographic*, 148,5 (November 1975), p. 595.
2. Distributed by the Indian-Lutheran Race Relations Steering Committee, #306 223-12 Ave. S.W., Calgary, Alberta, T2R 0G9, August 31, 1979. The statistics appear dated.

friend remarked, we have *chosen* not to be aware of them. Certainly we have not heeded their voices until recently — and then only because we heard them speak of oil.

Why have we been unaware of the Native Peoples? An answer that may be strange and startling is: we have not been able to see them as *people*.

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

The roots of that inability go back to Christopher Columbus.

In 1492 Columbus set out from Europe to find a route to India. When he landed in the Caribbean he was convinced that he had landed in India, and so he called the people *Indians*. Even when the mistake was eventually realized, no one bothered to find out the real name of these people so that they could be called by their right name. No one took them seriously enough as a people in their own right. *Los Indios* he called them, and Indians they remain.[3]

But the error goes deeper. Columbus was not at all sure what he had discovered; neither were other Europeans. He had gone West to get to the fabulous East; to find the Oriental world of exotic peoples, spices, gold, and jewels. While the people he found were exotic (they "wore only paint and swam out to the ships' boats with offerings of parrots, spears, and bundles of cotton"[4]) they were also naive and simple and seemingly uncivilized. He "gave them little red caps and glass beads which they hung about their necks, together with other trifles that they cherished as if they were precious stones of great price."[5] Then he promptly "made plans to enslave them."[6] At present-day Cuba he discovered tobacco. On Haiti, more fatefully, he was given pieces of gold.

But where was he? Although the discovery of gold made the question less urgent, it was nevertheless puzzling. Upon reflection he knew he had not reached India. Instead, he speculated, since the Garden of Eden had been placed by God in the East, he had found the Garden; or, at least, come to the borders of it! W. Richard Comstock writes: "Columbus had not reached the fabulous but mundane East; he had, rather, reached the sacred region of the original Paradise of man, before he

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3. Scofield. The absurdity of calling the Native people "Indians" became embarrassingly clear to me when, at a "symposium of Elders and Scholars" held in 1976 at the University of Alberta, one of the participating scholars turned out to be a "genuine Indian" from India, Prof. K. Dad Prithipaul. He is co-editor, with Prof. Earle H. Waugh, of the Proceedings of the Symposium: *Native Religious Traditions*, Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, Supplement 8 (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1979). The difficulties in "naming" the Native peoples is discussed by Keith J. Crowe, "Why the New Names for Eskimos and Indians?" *Canadian Geographic*, 99,1 August-September 1979), pp. 68-71.
4. Scofield, p. 595.
5. Benjamin Keen, trans., *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus by His Son Ferdinand* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1959), p. 61, quoted by W. Richard Comstock, "On Seeing With the Eye of the Native European," *Seeing With a Native Eye: Essays on Native American Religion*, Walter Holden Capps, ed. (Harper and Row, 1976), p. 59.
6. Scofield, p. 595.

fell into this world of sin and pain. In his letter to the sovereigns, Columbus suggests that while the earthly Paradise is in the East, it is perhaps an island separated from the Asiatic mainland, and so in another sense is a new fourth continent of the world — the west. Columbus wondered if the Orinoco River was actually the Gihon, one of the four rivers that, according to Genesis, flow out of Eden. In that case, he had reached, if not Paradise, then its outer proximity."[7]

This interpretation, once it was accepted, had the gravest of consequences. As Comstock explains, "Paradise belongs to the sacred world of the gods, not the mundane world of secular men and women. If the native Americans were part of the sacred world, even if perhaps only on its outer boundaries, then they were beings either more or less than strictly human. They were gods or demons, unfallen creatures possessing an original innocence or devils, with a brutish evil beyond human ken. In the early encounters of European settlers with native Americans, we see both images operating in the white man's imagination. To some Christians the native American appears as an unfallen creature close to God and either not needing salvation or else readily open to the healing Word of the Lord. To others he is a devil of such wickedness, cruelty, and lust that redemption is impossible."[8]

Neither group, it seems, ever stopped to try to see them simply as *people*. They were either super-human or sub-human. The romantics were carried away with stirring visions of the "noble savage" and many European adventurers, sick of law and order and protocol, fled to the new world to live with the Indians in untrammelled freedom. The church, whose missionaries accompanied the explorers and the treasure-seekers, tended toward the sub-human image. It debated whether these creatures had souls; if they didn't, then there was no sense in telling them the Gospel. Finally, it was decreed that they did have souls, and therefore could and should be evangelized. But by then it was too late.

For by then gold had been discovered in huge quantities in Central America, and furs in North America, and lumber and fertile lands and a Continent that seemingly went on for ever. Europeans could not resist all that. Dee Brown chronicles some of the story. "(The simple folk whom Columbus had met resisted strongly) when hordes of these bearded strangers began scouring their islands in search of gold and precious stones. The Spaniards looted and burned villages; they kidnapped hundreds of men, women, and children and shipped them to Europe to be sold as slaves. Arawak[9] resistance brought on the use of guns and sabers, and whole tribes were destroyed, hundreds of thousands of people in less than a decade after Columbus set foot on the beach of San Salvador, October 12, 1492 . . .

"(Three centuries later) the friendly Tainos[10] who had welcomed Columbus ashore had been utterly obliterated. Long before the last of the Tainos died, their simple agricultural and handicraft culture was destroyed and replaced by cotton plantations worked by slaves. The white colonists chopped down the tropical forests to enlarge their fields; and cotton plants exhausted the soil; winds unbroken by a forest shield covered the fields with sand. When Columbus first saw the land he des-

7. Comstock, pp. 60f.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 61f.
9. The name given to the original inhabitants of Cuba, Haiti, and nearby islands.
10. The Taino people inhabited San Salvador.

cribed it as 'very big and very level and the trees very green . . . the whole of it so green that it is a pleasure to gaze upon.' The Europeans who followed him there destroyed its vegetation and its inhabitants — human, animal, bird, and fish — and after turning it into a wasteland, they abandoned it."[11]

The seemingly insatiable greed of the white man — a greed that always bewildered the Native peoples who, belonging to a hunting culture, held sharing as one of their highest values — tipped the scales more and more in favor of seeing the Indian as sub-human. For if he was less than human, there was no reason to be guilty about taking his land, even land allotted as reserve land; or, for that matter, about taking his life.

The Natives who inhabited Newfoundland called themselves the Beothuk. Because they smeared their skins and clothing with red ochre Europeans called them "Red Indians" — a name that subsequently got applied to all the other Indians as well, an error just as false as Columbus'![12] The Vikings who had, about A.D. 1,000, deserted a settlement at *L'Anse aux Meadows* on the northern tip of Newfoundland called them "Skraelings";[13] John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto), who rediscovered them in 1497, and other explorers and Portuguese fishermen who came to fish the Grand Banks, called them the Red Men. They were, it seems, a nuisance. Diamond Jenness tells the story tersely, "The European fishermen who settled around the shores of the island in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries resented their petty pilfering, and shot them down at every opportunity, the French even placing a bounty on their heads; and the Micmac[14] who crossed over from Nova Scotia in the eighteenth century hunted them relentlessly far into the interior. The Beothuk attempted to retaliate, but, armed only with bows and arrows, they could not withstand the combined attacks of white and Micmac, and the last known survivor died in captivity at St. Johns in 1829. One or two families may have escaped from the island and found asylum among the Montagnais of Labrador . . . but Nancy Shawanahdit, the captive who died in 1829, was the last "Red Indian" ever seen by white men, and the year of her death marks the date of their extinction."[15] Today we call that genocide.

The "red men" of Newfoundland were not seen as people, but as animals which could be killed, like wolves and coyotes, for bounty. Indeed, a sixteenth century chronicler, Richard Edens, after describing Cabot's discovery of Newfoundland and Labrador, quotes someone's description of the inhabitants, concluding, "In all this newe lande is neyther citie or castell but they lyve in companies lyke heardes of beastes."[16]

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11. Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), pp. 2, 6f.
12. Paul O'Neill, *Legends of a Lost Tribe: Folk Tales of the Beothuk Indians of Newfoundland* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 9.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 8f. See also Howard LaFay, "The Vikings," *National Geographic*, 137, 4 (April 1970), pp. 530ff.
14. The Micmac peoples inhabited present-day New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.
15. Diamond Jenness, *The Indians of Canada*, National Museum of Canada Bulletin 65, Anthropological Series No. 15, Sixth Ed., 1963 (Ottawa, 1972), pp. 266f.
16. Richard Edens, *Gatherings from writers on the New World* (London, 1555), quoted by James P. Howley, *The Beothuks or Red Indians* (Cambridge University Press, 1915; reprinted by Coles Publishing Co., 1974), p. 3.

EUROPEAN MISCONCEPTIONS

It was also, in large part, plain curiosity that caused the Natives of North America to be viewed as either super- or sub-human. It is difficult to imagine the excitement generated in Europe by the reports of the explorers. While sovereigns lusted for the gold that would fill coffers bankrupted by wars, citizens lusted for news about these strange new lands. The book-makers who were ready to print anything from Luther's pen were equally ready to print anything about the new world.[17]

Ernst and Johanna Lehner have compiled an extraordinary compendium of such early reports. Entitled *How They* (i.e., Europeans) *Saw The New World*,[18] it reproduces the earliest maps; pictures of explorers from Erik the Red (A.D. 1000) through Merriwether Lewis (d. 1809); pictures of Native persons, villages, houses, activities; and pictures of the new world's flora and fauna. At least two astonishing realizations are gained from a perusal of this book. First, even on-the-scene reporters cast both written descriptions and drawings into European categories and mythology. Thus, narwhale tusks brought from the Arctic by whalers were interpreted to be unicorn horns, and therefore "North America was believed to be the original habitat of the unicorn"; a Native village in Carolina is laid out in orderly pattern with a straight-edged "main street"; and an "elder" from the same area is dressed in a toga.[19] Second, many drawings are imaginary. The "crook-backed ox" would never be recognized as a buffalo; the chinchilla is given the emaciated abdomen of a greyhound together with a huge feather-like tail and an ape-human face; the three-toed sloth has a very benign, though hairy, human face; the cocoa tree bears smooth-skinned fruit as big as pumpkins.[20]

It is eminently clear that the perception of the Native peoples and their land, even by first-hand observers, was a mix of fact and fancy. They were simultaneously perceived as "backward Europeans" and exotic creatures, and thus as both super- and sub-human. In Eden nothing could be *ordinary*!

MISSIONARIES AND THE NATIVES

One may suppose that reports of this extraordinary new world were read or heard by missionaries. Both images of the Native people affected them, too. On the one hand, the easy conversion of a Taino seemed congruent with the super-human image. Dee Brown writes, "Columbus kidnapped ten of his friendly Taino hosts and carried them off to Spain, where they could be introduced to the white man's ways. One of them died soon after arriving there, but not before he was baptized a Christian. The Spaniards were so pleased that they had made it possible for the first

17. For example, Cabot's voyage to Newfoundland and Labrador was reported not only by Edens (seen note 16) but also by a variety of other chroniclers. Cf. James P. Howley, pp. 2ff.
18. Ernst and Johanna Lehner, *How They Saw The New World* (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1966).
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 84, 112.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 124, 140.

Indian to enter heaven that they hastened to spread the good news throughout the West Indies."[21]

On the other hand, many reports clearly suggested the opposite image. Richard Edens cites the report he has of Cabot's discoveries, "Jacobus Bastaldus wryteth thus: — The Newe land of Baccalaos [the Spanish name for cod] is a coulde region, whose inhabytauntes are idolatours, and praye to the Soone and moone and dyvers idols. They are whyte people, and very rustical, for they eate flesshe and fysshe and all other things rawe, Sumtymes also, they eate man's flesshe privily, so that theyr cacique [chief] may have no knowledge thereof. The apparel of both men and women is made of beares skynnes, although they have sables and martennes not greatly esteemed, because they are little. Some of them go naked in the soomer, and weare apparel only in wynter . . . Northward from the region of Baccalaos is the land of Labrador, all full of mountaynes and great woods, in which are many beares and wilde boares? [sic] Th' inhabitauntes are idolatours and warlike people, apparelled as are they of Baccalaos. In all this newe land is neyther citie or castell but they lyve in companies lyke heardes of beastes."[22]

It was this conception that, with few exceptions, prevailed among missionaries and other Europeans. The few romantics notwithstanding, the Natives were everywhere seen as "savages" with neither culture nor religion. The famous Father Brebeuf reported in 1635, "It is so evident that there is a Divinity who has made Heaven and earth that our Hurons cannot entirely ignore it. But they misapprehend him grossly. For they have neither Temples, nor Priests, nor Feasts, nor any ceremonies . . .

"As regards morals, the Hurons are lascivious . . . gluttons . . . very lazy . . .liars, thieves, pertinacious beggars."[23]

In all fairness, it must be noted that Brebeuf also points out "some rather noble moral virtues" shining among them ("no kissing nor immodest caressing"; patient endurance of hunger, poverty, and sickness; generosity of gift-giving and sharing; hospitality). Nevertheless, his assessment of their lack of religion demonstrates, first of all, a colossal ignorance of Native spirituality and life-ways,[24] and, secondly, that peculiarly closed mind so typical of the "white" man by which anything Native is automatically ruled inferior, primitive, superstitious, and demonic. Thus the Jesuit missionaries of the 17th century, for example, could not entertain any other possibility except that the Montagnais, Ojibwa, Cree, and Iroquois shamans ("medicine men") were in communion with the devil for the most part and charlatans for the rest.[25]

The famous Seneca chief and orator, Red Jacket (born 1750), gave a gracious and yet stinging reproof of such refusal to see them as a people of culture and re-

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21. Dee Brown, p. 2.
22. Quoted by James P.Howley, pp. 2f.
23. *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: A Selection*, S.R. Mealing, ed, The Carlton Library No. 7 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), pp. 43f., 45.
24. See, for example, Elisabeth Tooker, *An Ethnography of the Huron Indians, 1615-1649* (Midland, Ontario: The Huronia Historical Development Council, c. 1967), in which 49 out of 183 pages are devoted to "Religion," while another 50 pages are devoted to "Life Cycle" and "Mythology," both of which deal very much with "religious" matters.
25. See, for example, *The Jesuit Relations* .. ., pp. 33ff.

ligion. Speaking to a young missionary he said, in part, "Brother! Continue to listen. You say that you are sent to instruct us how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to his mind; and if we do not take hold of the religion which you white people teach we shall be unhappy hereafter. You say that you are right, and we are lost. How do you know this to be true? We understand that your religion is written in a book. If it was intended for us as well as for you, why has not the Great Spirit given it to us; and not only to us, but why did he not give to our forefathers the knowledge of that book, with the means of understanding it rightly? We only know what you tell us about it. How shall we know when to believe, being so often deceived by the white people?

"Brother! You say there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why not all agree, as you can all read the book?

"Brother! We do not understand these things. We are told that your religion was given to your forefathers and has been handed down, father to son. We also have a religion which was given to our forefathers, and has been handed down to us, their children. We worship that way. It teaches us to be thankful for all the favors we received, to love each other, and to be united. We never quarrel about religion . . .

"Brother! We are told that you have been preaching to the white people in this place. These people are our neighbors. We are acquainted with them. We will wait a little while, and see what effect your preaching has upon them. If we find it does them good and makes them honest and less disposed to cheat Indians, we will then consider again what you have said."[26]

At the end of his speech Red Jacket offered his hand to the missionary, who refused it, saying there was no fellowship between the religion of God and the devil.[27]

CANADA'S TREATMENT OF NATIVES

Canada's treatment of the Native people (too long a story even to be summed up here[28]) was and remains profoundly influenced by the images of the Native as more or less than human. Settlers coming in increasing numbers had to be protected from the "savages," and so the Natives were herded onto reserves where they could be safely contained and controlled until they died off. When they didn't die off, they were treated as children of nature who had to be especially protected from the world of white culture and technology. Incapable of governing themselves and incapable of making decisions, it was again best to leave them on the reserve, treating them as wards of the government, until such time as they "grew up," that is, until

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26. C.W. Vanderwerth, ed., *Indian Oratory* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), pp. 44-47; quoted in *American Indian Prose and Poetry* Gloria Levitas, Frank Robert Vivelo, and Jacqueline J. Vivelo, ed., (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1974), pp. 193f.
27. T.C. McLuhan, *Touch the Earth: A Self-Portrait of Indian Existence* (New York: Outerbridge and Dienstfrey, 1971), p. 60.
28. See E. Palmer Patterson II, *The Canadian Indian: A History Since 1500* (Don Mills: Collier-Macmillan Canada, Ltd., 1972); Fraser Symington, *The Canadian Indian: The Illustrated History of the Great Tribes of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland And Stewart, 1969).

they became like white people.

Behind the work of both churches and governments among Native peoples was the conviction expressed by Columbus, who "being a righteous European was convinced the people should be 'made to work, sow and do all that is necessary and to *adopt our ways*.' "[29] Chief John Snow of the Wesley Band of Stoney Indians, Morley, Alberta, recounting the early history of his tribe's encounter with government official and missionary, puts it succinctly, "Once the whiteman's government took over control of the territory (central and southern Alberta and Saskatchewan), it became quite clear that the missionaries were simply "advance men" for the new way of life.

"Indeed, the stated goals of the government's Indian Administration, in the most simple terms, was to "educate, Christianize and civilize" us. The government was to educate and civilize the savage. The Church was to Christianize the savage. These three words, *educate, civilize*, and *Christianize*, were used synonymously by both state and Church. Sometimes it was difficult for my people to recognize whether they were talking to government representatives or church personnel because it was almost impossible to distinguish between the two."[30]

Educating, civilizing, and Christianizing the "savages" meant, in a word, their *assimilation* into the dominant culture. But despite the violence, social disarray, unemployment, poverty, discrimination — even the threat of extinction — which resistance to assimilation has cost them, the Native peoples have refused to take that road. The white man has been perplexed and angered by that refusal, especially when it has interfered with his urge toward "development." Justice Thomas Berger, speaking to the Royal Canadian Society in Toronto, is reported to have said, "The astonishing thing is that the drive to assimilate native people, whether by draconian or liberal measures, has never succeeded. The native people have clung to their own beliefs, their own ideas of themselves, of who they are and where they come from. The belief that their future lay in the assertion of their own common identity and the defence of their own interests proved stronger than any of us had realized." The refusal of the Canadian Indian to be assimilated, Berger concluded, "is a triumph of the human spirit; it is to be celebrated, not deplored."[31]

Indeed so. It is the statement — made in our hearing now for five hundred years — that in North America Europeans encountered people, fully human people, and not more or less human.

THEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS

Finally, of course, this failure to see Native peoples as people of culture and religion is a theological matter. A few of many possible dimensions are the following:

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29. See Brown, p. 2.
30. Chief John Snow, *These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places: The Story of the Stoney Indians* (Toronto: Samuel Stevens, 1977), p. 20. Chief Snow trained at St. Stephen's Theological College in Edmonton, and was ordained by the United Church of Canada in 1963.
31. Anne McNeilly, "Berger Attacks Indian Assimilation," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 19 November 1979, p. 55.

(1) First, it confronts us with the question of what the relation is between our church and our own culture. There are basically three ways in which church relates to culture:[32] one extreme is *total separation*, in which the church "exists completely apart from its environment, perhaps using another language, living in another culture";[33] the other extreme is *total assimilation*, in which "almost all of its practices and values and structures (match) those of its environment"; and the mediating position is that of *engagement*, in which the church finds ways of meshing with society while retaining its separate identity.

If Chief John Snow is right that government representatives and church personnel were virtually indistinguishable to the Stonies and that their cooperative aim was to *educate*, *Christianize*, and *civilize* the Native people, we are forced to conclude that the church in Canada was and remains very nearly totally *assimilated*.

This is not surprising. John Webster Grant, the eminent Canadian church historian, has pointed out that both early Protestant and Roman Catholic church leaders in Canada assumed that Christendom could be transplanted from Europe to the colony, on the premise "that in Europe there already existed a society in all important respects Christian, a society of which one's own nation was undoubtedly the highest and purest representative. The task of christianizing new colonies essentially consisted, therefore, of transferring to them the existing religious beliefs and institutions of Christendom. This Christian society was normally conceived as a unified entity within which religious, social and political structures could be distinguished but not separated. It was thought to be both natural and legitimate, therefore, to introduce Christianity to new colonies in conjunction with a whole social and economic complex and as part of the normal machinery of government."[34]

When that vision dimmed in the 1800s, the missionary vision of building a Christian nation took hold.[35] Canada, writes N.K. Clifford, was to be "His Dominion."[36] What that meant came clear as waves of immigrants flowed into Canada between 1880 and World War II, following the Chinese who had started coming for gold in the 1850s and to work on the railroad in the 1880s. "The vision of Canada as 'His Dominion' implied a homogeneous population which shared a heritage of political democracy and evangelical Protestant Christianity. When Western Canada began to be populated by groups who did not share this heritage, therefore, Protestants [that is, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants] saw their presence as a threat to the realization of their vision and reacted by demanding either that these newcomers conform to their way of life or that their entry into Canada be severely restricted."[37]

Orientals, Slavs, Mormons, Jews, Mennonites, Hutterites, and Doukhobors all

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32. Charles M. Austin, "LWF Study of Church Identity," a study guide issued by the Division of Parish Services, Lutheran Church in America, 2900 Queen Lane, Philadelphia, Pa. 19129, April, 1980.
33. An example of this position may be the Volga Germans described by Helmut T. Lehman, "The History and Tradition of the Lutheran Ministry," *Consensus*, 5, 4 (October 1979), pp. 24f.
34. John Webster Grant, "Religion and the Quest for a National Identity: The Background in Canadian History," *Religion and Culture in Canada*, ed. by Peter Slater. Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, 1977 (available from Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Canada), p. 10.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 13ff.
36. N.K. Clifford, "His Dominion: A Vision in Crisis," *Religion and Culture in Canada*, p. 24.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

threatened the vision.[38] Since the tide of immigration could not be stemmed, the solution was to *assimilate* the "foreigners." According to C.J. Cameron, the assistant superintendent of the Baptist Home Mission Board of Ontario and Quebec, there was only one way to do that, " . . . we shall Canadianize the foreigner by Christianizing him. Here is our greatest opportunity and our gravest responsibility, for if we do not Christianize him he will paganize us, and if we do not instill into him the highest ideals, the saloon-keeper and the ward politician will fill him with the lowest ideals."[39]

Thus the relation to culture of the dominating Christian churches in Canada through the Second World War was one of almost total assimilation. That was also the heritage of European Lutherans, but because they were as often as not lumped among the "foreigners" they remained largely an ethnic church,[40] leading a kind of double life that was neither total assimilation nor total separation, but which also largely refrained from significant engagement with culture.

The Native peoples, of course, were seen to be much further down the scale than the Slavs, not even to mention the Ukrainians and the Chinese. Missionary efforts to eradicate their "heathenish" practices were supported by government officials as early as 1882 because it was held that their rites "took the Indians off their reserves at times when the work suffered — that the dances were of 'heathenish' origin and tended to create a spirit of insubordination among the young men of the bands."[41] And in 1895 Section 114 of the Indian Act was amended making it an indictable offence to participate in any rite in which goods were given away, or in which any wounding of the body occurred.[42] This suppressed two of the prime rites of Native cultures, the Potlatch of the North-West Coast and the Sun Dance of the Great Plains, an action comparable to suppressing the Christian rites of Eucharist, Baptism, and Confirmation, the festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, and congregational suppers and Dominion Day to boot.[43] Such cultural and religious insensitivity can come only when the church is totally assimilated by the culture of its environment. Our inability to see the Native people as people of culture and religion sug-

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38. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
39. C.J. Cameron, *Foreigners or Canadians?* (Toronto: Baptist Home Mission Board of Ontario and Quebec, 1913), p. 17, quoted *ibid.*, p. 29. Clifford quotes Methodist and (after 1925) United Church voices echoing the identical sentiment, and perceiving the public school as the major agent of socialization and acculturation, pp. 28ff. "Not only the major Protestant denominations but also a host of Protestant-oriented organizations such as temperance societies, missionary societies, Bible societies, the Lord's Day Alliance, the YMCA's and YWCA's utilized this vision as a framework for defining their task within the nation, for shaping their conceptions of the ideal society, and for determining those elements which posed a threat to the realization of their purposes," p. 24.
40. Cf. Helmut T. Lehman, pp. 25f., with reference to Western Canada.
41. Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree*, Ruth M. Black, ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), note #40, p. 182.
42. *Ibid.*
43. For a description of the Potlatch see James Sevid, *Guests Never Leave Hungry*, James P. Spradley, ed. (New Haven: Yale University, 1972; McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972); for a description of the Sun Dance see Joseph Epes Brown, ed., *The Sacred Pipe*, Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux (University of Oklahoma Press, 1953; Penguin Books, 1971), chapter V.

gests strongly the assimilation of Lutheran and other churches into Canadian culture.

(2) Secondly, the failure to see Native peoples as people of culture and religion raises the question of theological method. The traditional way of doing theology has been what might be called the deductive method: moving from general truth to particular application or experience. Dogmatic truth is agreed to have been given by some authority, is arranged in a systematic and logical order, and is applied to faith and life. The traditional sermon is an excellent example of this way of doing theology, as Fred B. Craddock has masterfully shown, for it begins with a statement of the thesis (the "truth") which it breaks down into a number of points and subpoints, which are applied to the particular congregation.[44] The traditional sermon has, as well, taken its basic shape from the dogmatics textbook: God's holiness and righteousness; man's sinfulness; God's gracious salvation.

It was discovered in the 1960s that this could be an arrogant way of doing theology. It assumed passive listeners who accepted authority without question, and it was past-oriented, contemptuous of contemporary experience and insight. In another arena, Christians dialoguing with other religions found that a mode of discourse in which the conclusion preceded the development was an unproductive and offensive — and unnatural — mode of communication. More important, it was discovered that this could be a dangerous way of doing theology with lamentable consequences. Those theologians who marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. and otherwise engaged in the battle for civil rights and social justice, discovered to their dismay that oppressive structures and forces were only too eager to seize upon theological statements of man's sinfulness to justify the continuance of oppression and discrimination, and, in fact, to justify cruel treatment of protestors.

As a consequence, an inductive way of doing theology emerged. Beginning with the particulars of human life created a ground of shared or identifiable experience, and thus engaged the other person not just as a listener but as a resource (which is vital in communication); furthermore, the tradition could then be drawn upon to interpret this data. This method assumes not a lock-step process in which man moves by conversion from total darkness to total light; rather, it sees man as a tragic yet hopeful mix who even in his sinfulness asks "the question of his own being and of his relation to Ultimate Reality."[45]

Native peoples have suffered enormously because Christians approached them (and tend still to approach them) through the ordered sequences of classic, deductive theology. That means that the first thing to be said to them is that they are sinners. When that *theological* assessment of their state is uttered in the context of the conviction that they are "primitive" or "savage" and "inferior," it ceases to be a theological assessment and becomes a cultural judgment; it follows at once that they are lazy, dirty, unmotivated, immoral, irresponsible, and no-good.

Walking Buffalo, a chief of the Stonies whose years, 1871-1967, almost matched Canada's, admitted to the first churchman who tried to convert him that his people were "lawless." But, he continued immediately, " . . . we were on plenty good terms with the Great Spirit, creator and ruler of all. You whites assumed we were

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44. Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), pp. 54f.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

savages. You didn't understand our prayers. You didn't try to understand. When we sang our praises to the sun or moon or wind, you said we were worshipping idols. Without understanding, you condemned us as lost souls just because our form of worship was different from yours.

"We saw the Great Spirit's work in almost everything: sun, moon, trees, wind, and mountains. Sometimes we approached him through these things. Was that so bad? I think we have a true belief in the supreme being, a stronger faith than that of the whites who have called us pagans."[46]

Lutherans believe strongly that theology should determine our practices and our mission. We need to become equally sensitive to the fact that even the *way* in which we do theology has prejudiced our approach to and assessment of Native peoples.

(3) Thirdly, the failure to see Native peoples as people suggests we may be having some trouble with what the Augsburg Confession calls "the chief article of the Gospel . . . namely, that we obtain the grace of God through faith in Christ without our merits . . ."[47] For our inability to value their culture and traditions suggests that we are expecting them to demonstrate precisely some merit (namely, to become like us) before we will accept them as people. Our Confessions should guard us from doing that, because they make clear that justification is the *declaration* of righteousness and not the *making* of righteous persons. "Concerning the righteousness of faith before God we believe, teach, and confess . . . that a poor sinner is justified before God (that is, he is absolved and declared utterly free from all his sins, and from the verdict of well deserved damnation, and is adopted as a child of God and an heir of eternal life) without any merit or worthiness on our part, and without any preceding, present, or subsequent works, by sheer grace, solely through the merit of the total obedience, the bitter passion, the death, and the resurrection of Christ, our Lord, whose obedience is reckoned to us as righteousness . . . Accordingly the word 'justify' here means to declare righteous and free from sins and from the eternal punishment of these sins on account of the righteousness of Christ which God reckons to faith (Phil. 3:9)."[48]

The article goes on to distinguish between justification and sanctification: "For good works do not precede justification; rather they follow it, since a person must first be righteous before he can do good works." Therefore sanctification "does not belong in the article or matter of justification before God; it rather follows justification, because in this life sanctification is never wholly pure and perfect on account of our corrupted flesh."[49]

The genius of that distinction should enable Lutherans especially to transcend cultural, racial, and other differences among peoples. Yet we seem to have been duped not only by our own cultural values but also by holiness theologies so that we are unable to get past the common stereotypes of Native persons. We demand that they become "holy" (that is, clean, respectable, work-addicted, sober) before

46. Grant MacEwan, *Tatanga Mani: Walking Buffalo of the Stonies* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1969), p. 181.
47. Augsburg Confession, Article XXVIII, 52, in *The Book of Concord*, Theodore G. Tappert, ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 89.
48. Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article III, 9, 17, *ibid.*, pp. 540-542.
49. *Ibid.*, 27-28, pp. 543f.

we will accept them as people — even as we sing, "Just as I am . . ."

Carl F. Starkloff, a Jesuit who has taught and worked among Native people in Wyoming, observed a great inter-penetration of Native traditions and Christianity, upon which syncretism is a simplistic and premature judgment.[50] As a servant of the gospel, theology, he maintains, must assist liberation and aid "the realization that man *is* being freed by God's intervention." One specific way of doing that, he suggests, "is by finally confessing to the dignity of those traditions from which the oppressed have often been snatched by main force."[51] Such an action would acknowledge Native peoples precisely as a full-fledged people, equal to other peoples, no better and certainly no worse in the sight of God than any other people; and, furthermore, be a profound enactment of our unique perception that man's justification by God's grace is not to be confused with man's spiritual or cultural attainments.

North America, until the latter part of this century, could claim to be a Christian continent — at least in intention. We were able to relegate the Native populations (and other sizable ethnic populations) to the exotic (or nuisance!) fringe of society. But since the 1960s we are being forced to acknowledge the racial and religious pluralism of our society.[52] The first task in that acknowledgment is to see our neighbors as people — especially those who were here long, long before any of us arrived.

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50. See the helpful volume *Religion and Ethnicity* Harold Coward and Leslie Kawamura, ed., The Calgary Institute for the Humanities series (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1978).
51. Carl F. Starkloff, *The People of the Center: American Indian Religion and Christianity* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974), p. 134.
52. For example, there are approximately 100,000 Muslims in Canada; the first mosque was built in Edmonton in 1938 (Yvonne Haddad, "Muslims in Canada: A Preliminary Study," *Religion and Ethnicity*, p. 73). See further articles on Muslims and Buddhists in Canada in the same volume.