

Scripture / beliefs –

Inclusion?

Revelation 7:9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes...

1 Cor 9:19 - For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; ²⁰ and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those *who are* under the law, as under the ^[a]law, that I might win those *who are* under the law; ²¹ to those *who are* without law, as without law (not being without ^[b]law toward God, but under ^[c]law toward Christ), that I might win those *who are* without law; ²² to the weak I became ^[d]as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some. ²³ Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with *you*.

1. Understand and discern between doctrine and culture.
2. Discern superstition from spirituality.
3. Discern between values and beliefs.
4. Discern between ignorance, preferences, and convictions.

Rom 1:25 - They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-

What is “sacred” -

Polytheistic –

Totem pole –

Astronomy and Mythology -

Spirit mask -

Dances to invoke spirits and gods-

Communicating with spirits of the dead –

1 cor 10:20 - No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

Matt 12:43 - When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. **44** Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. **45** Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first.

1 Sam 28 - Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had lamented over him and had buried him in Ramah, his hometown. In the meantime Saul had removed the mediums and magicians from the land. ⁴ The Philistines assembled; they came and camped at Shunem. Saul mustered all Israel and camped at Gilboa. ⁵ When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was absolutely terrified. ⁶ So Saul inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him—not by dreams nor by Urim nor by the prophets. So Saul instructed his servants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go to her and inquire of her." His servants replied to him, "There is a woman who is a medium in Endor."⁸ So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothing and left, accompanied by two of his men. They came to the woman at night and said, "Use your ritual pit to conjure up for me the one I tell you."⁹ But the woman said to him, "Look, you are aware of what Saul has done; he has removed the mediums and magicians from the land! Why are you trapping me so you can put me to death?"¹⁰ But Saul swore an oath to her by the LORD, "As surely as the LORD lives, you will not incur guilt in this matter!"¹¹ The woman replied, "Who is it that I should bring up for you?" He said, "Bring up for me Samuel."

¹² When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out loudly. The woman said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!"¹³ The king said to her, "Don't be afraid! What have you seen?" The woman replied to Saul, "I have seen one like a god coming up from the ground!"¹⁴ He said to her, "What about his appearance?" She said, "An old man is coming up! He is wrapped in a robe!" Then Saul realized it was Samuel, and he bowed his face toward the ground and kneeled down.¹⁵ Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Saul replied, "I am terribly troubled!"

Medicine man / holy man –

American Indian basic beliefs / Doctrines –

Creation, sin?, salvation?, afterlife?,

While a Great Spirit constitutes the basis of Indian theory, the [tribes](#) believe in multiple deities, which are surrounded by mythology. In accordance with their views of nature and spirit, they constantly appeal to these powers, at every step of their lives. They hear the great Spirit in every wind; see him in every cloud; fear him in sounds, and adore him in every place that inspires awe. While cultures and customs varied among the tribes, they all believed that the universe was bound together by spirits of natural life, including animals, water, plants, the sky, and the Earth itself.

Astronomy played an important role in early Native American cultures, serving as the basis for governance, agricultural practices and more. And studying the stars also caused tribes to theorize about the beginning of life in the universe.

Pawnee followed a ring of stars known as the council of chiefs - The Council of Chiefs was connected to their “Chief Star,” what is now referred to as Polaris, which represented their primary god Tirawahat.

Navajo Creation of the Sky

A [Navajo](#) legend describes the Four Worlds that had no sun and the Fifth World, which represents Earth. According to the legend, the first people of the Fifth World were given four lights but were dissatisfied with the amount of light they had on Earth. After many attempts to satisfy the people, the First Woman created the sun to bring warmth and light to the land, and the moon to provide coolness and moisture. These were crafted from quartz, and, when there were bits of quartz that were left behind by the carving, they were tossed into the sky to make stars.

In the [Navajo](#) culture, a skinwalker is a type of harmful [witch](#) who has the ability to turn into, possess, or disguise themselves as an animal. This witch is called “yee naaldlooshii” by the Navajo, which translates to “with it, he goes on all fours.” It is just one of several types of Navajo witches and is considered the most volatile and dangerous.

For the Navajo people, witchcraft is just another part of their spirituality and one of the “ways” of their lives. As such, witchcraft has long been part of their culture, history, and traditions. Witches exist alongside humans and are not supernaturals.

Sacrificing of the Toltec in Arizona –

The villagers were returning from the fields, one day when the entire region was smitten by an earthquake. Houses trembled, rumblings were heard, people fell in trying to reach the streets, and reservoirs burst, wasting their contents on the fevered soil. A sacrifice was offered. Then came a second shock, and another mortal was offered to the gods. As the earth still heaved and the earthquake demon muttered underground, the king gave his daughter to the priests, that his people might be spared, though he wrung his hands and beat his brow as he saw her led away and knew that in an hour her blood would stream from the altar.

The girl walked firmly to the cave where the altar was erected — a cave in the Superstition Mountains. She knelt and closed her eyes as the officiating-priest uttered a prayer, and, gripping his knife of jade stone, plunged it into her heart. She fell without a struggle. And now, the end.

Secular / non Christian article for discussion...

(Ethnic Cleansing by the Colonials)

The spiritual problems with Christian / Catholic indoctrination –

Since time immemorial, indigenous people (the “First People”) occupied the land now known as the United States of America. For years, the First People held and practiced a variety of spiritual customs, beliefs, and ceremonies, which varied widely between tribes, clans, and bands. “Dances and religious ceremonies often centered on The Great Spirit, believed by many Native Americans to be the [faceless] creator of life, or the supreme being . . . Festivals and ceremonies included chanting, singing, and dancing. The clothing worn by both males and females of the tribes were extraordinarily detailed.”¹ Tragically, the First Peoples’ free exercise of peaceful religious practices and beliefs did not last forever. The arrival of conquerors and colonizers with weapons in each hand—a gun in their right and a bible in their left—would mean the widespread oppression, persecution, and condemnation of the spiritual beliefs and practices that were so central to the First Peoples’ lives.

From the earliest days of conquest, Protestant Christianity and Catholicism emerged as major influences. After his initial encounter with the First People, Christopher Columbus wrote: “I gave them many beautiful things in order to win their affection, and that they might become Christians . . . they are very ready for conversion to the holy faith in Christ . . . [they] are so naïve and so free with their possession that no one who has not witnessed them would believe it.”² Columbus asked the Crown for more crewmen and supplies for future voyages. In return, Columbus promised to bring back “as much gold as [the Crown] need[s] . . . and as many slaves as [the Crown] asks . . . Thus the eternal God, our Lord, gives victory to those who follow His way over apparent impossibilities.”³ His second expedition was given seventeen ships and more than twelve hundred men.⁴

Columbus paved the way for more religious conquerors and colonizers. “The first enslavement of Africans and conquest of Indian lands were not justified by race, but by religion and national difference.”⁵ Spanish colonizers, relying on Pope Nicholas V’s papal decree, enslaved the First People because they were enemies of Christ. “Indians became the conscripted laborers, forced into the mines and the fields as slaves and *encomenderos*, the property of the Spanish conquistador who had been granted their land.”⁶

Decades of horrific battles, wars, genocide, and diseases decreased the population of the First People by the millions. One major colony leader saw the acquisition of Native American bodies (through death or souls) as gain: “Governor John Winthrop’s letters . . . refer[ed] to smallpox epidemics as the means by which ‘God hath[] . . . cle[a]red our title to this place,’ and a sign that the Lord was ‘pleased with our inheriting these parts . . . taking[] it from a people who had long usurped upon him, and abused his Creatures.’”⁷ Many of the First People were met with two choices: convert or be killed. Physical death or spiritual death.

In the early 1800’s, the remaining First People who did not perish by murder, in battle, or by disease, were forced into reservation boundaries established unilaterally by the U.S. government.⁸ But despite the First Amendment to the United States Constitution guaranteeing the “free exercise” of religion (which was enacted at the time) and despite the fact that many of the colonizers *themselves* fled religious persecution in Europe, the First People were not allowed to freely practice their spiritual beliefs and ceremonies within those reservations.

Religious oppression was codified into law. Between the 1830’s and the late 1970’s, several state and federal laws were enacted—some still on the books today—that called for banning and criminalizing the practice of First People spiritual traditions such as ceremonial hair braiding, dancing, and feasts.⁹ “On a regular basis, the Secretary of the Interior and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs reminded the Indian agents of the need to suppress Indian religions.”¹⁰ For example, on the Hopi Reservation, the assigned Indian Agent forced a number of men to cut their hair, completely disregarding the ceremonial purpose of displaying long hair. One elder

described this forced hair cutting: “Native People walk the Sacred Path of the Creator God, Our Hair, the physical extension of our thoughts, allows for our direction along the Path of Life . . . cutting of hair by oppressors has long representing the submission and defeat of a People, through humiliation.”¹¹

The First People children were taken from their families and forced into boarding schools established by Christian or Catholic missionaries. As a requirement of their education at the boarding schools, the children attended mandatory church services and religious indoctrination classes. These children were either encouraged—or in most cases, forced—to abandon their Native spiritual practices as well as their unique indigenous first and last names.¹² In the name of religious progress, “Native children were forced into government-sponsored denominationally run boarding schools where many were abused physically, sexually, emotionally and spiritually, and where many of them died. The rallying cry to civilize/Christianize Indigenous children was ‘kill the Indian, save the child.’”¹³

It was not until over a century later when many of the laws restricting Native American religious practices were overturned. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 was enacted to return basic civil liberties to the First People (such as access to sacred sites, freedom to worship through ceremonial and traditional rites, and use and possession of sacred objects). However, the Act is loosely worded and does not contain any internal enforcement mechanisms. In *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Association*, the United States Supreme Court held that “the American Indian Religious Freedom Act does not create any enforceable legal right.”¹⁴ While restrictive laws are no longer on the books, First People still experience de-facto spiritual oppression and religious restriction today.

The European colonizers and conquerors did not misinterpret the bible. They did not twist the bible’s words. No, their actions were *truly* supported by biblical commandments, because the bible *is* a violent text and the Abrahamic god *is* “the most unpleasant character in all fiction,” fittingly described by author Dan Barker. The bible calls for, and Jehovah-God advocates for *righteous violence*—precisely what the conquerors and colonizers used as justification to attack the First People.

Just one example: “***If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant, And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; . . . Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die.***”¹⁵ Indeed, puritan missionaries justified their actions with the bible: Psalms 2:8 states “***Ask of me, and I shall give thee, the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.***” Romans 13:2 similarly appealed to the colonizers: “***Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.***”

It is imperative that we thoughtfully and critically examine the role Christianity and Catholicism played in the development of our country. Such an ugly past was fueled by the same bible that so many read and learn from today. That same bible is preached as a book of love, compassion, and forgiveness. How can that be? Of course, there are passages in the bible that *do* advocate for love and compassion, but those *must* be read in contradiction to the passages of violence, rage, and eternal punishment for unbelievers.

I walked away from religion almost four years ago after a decade of questions went unanswered. But many Native Americans—most of whom are descendants of forcefully converted First People—still practice Catholicism or Christianity today. Some Native Americans practice traditional Catholic and Christian beliefs, and some incorporate Native beliefs and practices to create their own religious hybrids. But knowing the depths of degradation Native American people have gone through at the hands of the church and religion, and as a Native woman myself, I have trouble understanding Native Christians and Catholics. Specifically, I have trouble understanding why Native people accept and adhere to a set of beliefs and practices that were forced

upon their ancestors and used as justification to murder and rape their culture. It is the worst and most tragic display of Stockholm Syndrome.

The bible is still used today to inflict widespread oppression and cultural cleansing throughout the world, all in the name of “saving souls.” Churches feel righteously justified to “spread the gospel”—but that will unavoidably mean the cleansing and eradicating of cultural practices that do not align with fundamental biblical doctrines (living in nakedness, matriarchies, and same-sex relationships, to name a few). As a society, we need to talk about the ugly truth behind the world-wide spread of the gospel—a truth that includes genocide, a truth that includes oppression, a truth that includes racism, and a truth that includes silencing. Moving forward, we must question the cultural foundation of religion in America and take steps to untangle its influence on modern law and politics.