

THE WAKAN OF THE COYOTE
Practicing the Spirit

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PREFACE

For several years I have sought to interface theology and ecology. I hope for a theology that is understandable and can serve as a reflection and motivator in our Christian religion. Ecology is a fascination for me, too. How do things work? How is it understood? What do scientists say?

These two disciplines lead to a creative discourse that can enable our theology to be described in a more understandable form, informed by the study of ecology. Also, it is possible that a theological vision can give us some better insights into how to observe and interpret natural phenomena.

I am personally interested that the church tell her story, proclaim the gospel, and report to the world clearly her world view. We must be clear about the church's uniqueness, but we must be equally committed to sharing the faith story with people outside the religious community and with people with different religious persuasions.

When we parallel our thinking and contrast it with disciplines and traditions outside of our own we clarify for ourselves and gain new insights into what we believe and understand and develop respect for others and how they believe. This is what this interplay does for me.

THIS NEXT ITEM IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE READER. PLEASE READ CAREFULLY. The general intent of this resource is to create a dialogue using three areas of study: nature, culture, and the Christian tradition. Specifically the three disciplines for the dialogue are animals and their behavior, the spirituality of Native Americans¹, and the meaning of the Third Article of the Creeds (Nicene and Apostles'), i.e., the person of the Holy Spirit.

I have chosen to include Native People's spirituality² for several reasons. First, the United Nations has designated 1993 as the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. Second, the 500 year celebration of Columbus has peaked interest in the cultures of Native People. Third, I am a tad concerned about how this emphasis is being used in today's "search" for spirituality. The conservative side of me raises concerns that we are watering down the Christian religion and the spirituality of Native People with some of the exchanges that have been occurring. This would be to the detriment of both traditions. Fourth, I think Christians need to learn how to live in a pluralistic world. This means respect for the religious/spiritual ideas and practices of others. It also means a better, deeper, more cohesive understanding of one's Christian roots. Articulation of this faith is

¹Hereafter the terminology will be Native People. In most cases, "people" is what the Native People call themselves. (See Glossary in Keepers of the Animals.)

²The Native People refer to their way of life as a spirituality rather than as a religion. For them religion is classical, incorporated, sectarian, and evangelical (Beck et al, 5).

vital. Fifth, the spirituality of Native People has depended upon their interpretation and understanding of the natural world and how the natural world works. There is no book on the subject in the same way Non-Native People have written documents. In specific ways for Native People the natural world is their scripture.

Native People's spirituality is grounded in the soul of the Native People. Gifts are brought which can benefit everyone. We can share in their reasons for celebration. Their insights, thinking, and practices can feed everyone in the same way the Christian religion can feed Native People. For Non-Native People we are reminded that everyone has aboriginal roots. Our ancestors can be traced back thousands of years to societies that lived closely with the Earth (Caduto and Bruchac, 4). This interaction with Native People's spirituality can remind the Non-Native people of the indigenous past.

Respect for Native People's spirituality must be practiced. We cannot abuse the "heart" of their very being. We can be sensitized and develop understanding and appreciation. But we must deeply appreciate that their culture and spirituality are one in the same. This spirituality also differs from tribe to tribe. In this resource caution is being taken to receive and acknowledge the gifts and knowledge Native People give to Non-Native people, especially Non-Native Christian people, and be careful about generalizations.

A word about the learning process of this resource. One idea which I have been contemplating is that one thing that distinguishes humans from non-humans is that humans "fix" consciousness.

What is consciousness? It is the capacity of a species or an individual organism to be aware of itself and aware of and responsive to its environment and to act on this information. Species have the capacity to adapt. Adaptation is the means by which a species enables itself to survive and procreate. The species has the capacity as a species to have a sense of itself and an awareness of and responsiveness to its environment. This I am calling consciousness. In some species this consciousness is identifiable in the individual. It can be the tree roots that do not intersect with each other, shying away from each other's roots, to the complex creatures that can avoid their predators by various adaptations, e.g. camouflage, speed, etc.

Consciousness in one form or another exists in all things. It is kind of ethereal, i.e., it is around us. I am suggesting that humans have the capacity to "sponge it up." We have our own self-consciousness, but we can also be sensitive to the consciousness of other organisms. In fact, we can in a sense draw it unto ourselves, ingest it, and spew it out. Humans can adapt all types of things to themselves. Humans read the past, interact with the present, and plot the future. Humans can anticipate, speculate, and project. It is not that humans have more consciousness. It is just that we can gather more in, i.e. "fix" it, and use and disperse it in many ways for good or ill.

The idea for this metaphor comes from the idea of organisms that fix nitrogen. Nitrogen encompasses 80% of the earth's gas. However, in order for nitrogen to serve the environment it must be capsulated in some way. This is called nitrogen fixation, the conversion of atmospheric nitrogen gas into other chemical forms that are useful to plants.

Humans fix consciousness in this way, converting it into something useful, processing, holding, and releasing it for the good of the creation. This is one gift humanity has for the rest of the world. It can be appropriately applied or abused.

Education is intended to stimulate and guide humans in this role of fixing consciousness, i.e., ingesting it, converting it, and using it for the sake of others. One could call education "culture." Persons are prepared through the educational process to hold and to release not just information, but consciousness, awareness, moral action, and goodness into the world.

This makes the role of educator extremely imposing. The teacher does not simply instruct the learner in facts. The educator is key to the learner's development of values in the light of the facts and actions in the light of the values. The concern of education is what materials are gathered, how they are converted, and the way in which they are used.

In the context of the educator's role I submit the following as a method for thinking through the learning process. It is a play on the word "fix." This resource is designed with this process in mind.

FIXING CONSCIOUSNESS a learning process

Fact -

Any type of learning activity

1. Immerse learner in a complex/interactive activity that engages a person's body, mind, and senses.
2. Learner must view experience as personally meaningful and challenging.

Integrate -

Verbalize

1. Share feelings
2. Articulate in own words

Organize

1. Fit activity into one's own experience.
2. Conceptualize:
 - a. Distinguish parts
 - b. Recognize history
 - c. Organize parts into whole

eXecute -

Generalize

1. Identify learnings
2. Relate learnings to other experiences of the learners

Apply

1. Specify situations to which learnings can apply (future)
2. Decide strategies for action

INTRODUCTION

Until Christians practice living ecologically with the Earth, animals, other human beings, and God, the appropriate expression of the Christian faith will not be accomplished and allies of the Earth will be fewer.

How are we related to the Earth? The word "human" comes from the word "humus," dirt that is composed of decaying material. ("Humus" is derived from a word meaning "death.") Decay, amazingly enough, is the way organisms are broken down and nurture other organisms. Humility also comes from this root.¹

Humans are animals? The word comes from *anima* meaning "breath." Humans are referred to as "human animals." However, organisms in addition to animals breathe. Without breath there is no life.

Humans are also related to God. This could be seen from a mystical perspective. For Christians the perspective of God is grounded in water, word, bread, wine, and community. We are not casually related or just tethered to God. There is an intentional bond with humanity initiated by God. When speaking of this aspect of God we generally use the term "Holy Spirit."

The concept of the Holy Spirit is not easy to grasp, but it is central to our faith. The Christian church claims that the Spirit is the Prime Mover of our personal faith, gives us the ability to say, "Jesus is Lord," and gathers the people into Christian community.

The Spirit is God-near and God-at-work. The Spirit is invested throughout and in all of life. The Spirit is God unseen.

This resource intends to help Christians learn that that which links humans with the Earth, animals, and God is found in the words "spirit" and "spirituality."

The sub theme for this resource is "Practicing the Spirit." Christian spirituality is something we do. As the reader will discover later in this paper, Christian spirituality is living in the mystery of all creation within and beyond the obvious. Thus, this type of spirituality is requires training as it would be for an athlete or an artist.

The practice of Christian spirituality has three parts. First, there is the knowledge of and trust in the Holy Spirit, the one who guides our lives. Second, the Spirit is in competition with other spirits of our time. How do we know which is which? The Bible, the sacred scriptures of the Church, gives us a key for recognizing the Spirit. Third, we practice the Spirit in three specific ways: the ritual/cultic life of the Christian community, life-styles of the Spirit, and the community of faith itself, i.e., the church.

One of the resources for reflecting on Christian spirituality is the spirituality of Native People. Until recently Non-Native people have perpetuated in one form or another the notion that "Indians" are either brutal savages or innocent children of nature (Brown, 7). The Native People, as we shall discover, are very sophisticated. They developed skills and knowledge that enabled them to live with the natural world.

¹In Hebrew "Adam" comes from *adamah* which means "soil."

It is generally accepted that the Native People were immigrants from Asia 15,000 to 20,000 years ago, near the end of the Ice Age (Underhill, 110). Some say 40,000 years ago. The Native People were usually nomads. They owned what they carried. Yet what carried them, the earth, the water, the sky, also belonged to them.

To think we can learn from the Native People may be a bit perplexing and disturbing to some individuals because the Native People do not demonstrate the type of achievement we see blessed and honored in the Non-Native People's cultures. Where is the wealth of the Native People? Where is their power?

Native People have been measured by many Non-Native People according to their material achievement. How can someone who has not known great material wealth be considered worthwhile for us or having something that would be of value to us? The fact is, the wealth of the Native People is found in their mental and spiritual achievements (Brown, 8-9). What they can share is filled with deep meaning and complex understanding.

The method of learning differs between Native People and Non-Native people in its most traditional sense. One could describe the difference between them as knowledge which focuses on the welfare of the tribe and knowledge that focuses on the welfare of the individual. Learning is by listening and relationships rather than books and libraries. An individual in the tribe learns what must be taught. For Native People, information for living is important for the tribe. Each person is a part of the knowledge bank. Non-Native people tend to want to fill the individual with all the culture.

Joseph Brown wrote in a pamphlet in 1967:

If we can understand . . . the truths which the Indian finds in his relationships to nature, and the profound values reflected by his many rites and symbols, then we may become enriched, our understanding will deepen, and we shall be able to give to the American Indian heritage its rightful place among the great spiritual traditions of mankind (Brown, 27).

Native American tribal spirituality cannot be lumped together. However, these six basic concepts are shared by most Native People:

1. A belief in or knowledge of unseen powers, or what some call the Great Mystery, the Great Spirit, the Creator.
2. Knowledge that all things in the universe are dependent upon each other.
3. Personal worship that reinforces the bond between the individual, the community, and the great powers. Worship is a personal commitment to the sources of life.
4. Sacred traditions and persons knowledgeable in sacred traditions responsible for teaching morals and ethics.
5. Trained practitioners who have been given names such as medicine men, priests, shamans, cacques, and other names. These individuals have titles given them by the people which differ from tribe to tribe. They are responsible for specialized, perhaps secret, knowledge. They help pass

knowledge and sacred practices from generation to generation, sharing what they know in their memories.

6. A belief that humor is a necessary part of the sacred and a belief that human beings are often weak. We are not gods - and our weakness leads us to do foolish things. Therefore, clowns and similar figures are needed to show us how we act and why (Beck et al, 8-9).

There are three basic insights that can assist us in the dialogue of Native People's spirituality and the understanding of the Christian faith.

First, students of world religions use the categories of ethnic religions and universal religions. Native People's spirituality could fit under ethnic religion because of its intimacy with Native People cultures and languages. But Native People's spirituality might better fit under the heading of tribal religion, since the variations are more detailed than the term ethnic implies.

Christianity, on the other hand, is a universal religion. It is found in many cultures and has shaped and been shaped by these cultures. Its language and character will reflect the culture, but the centrality of the Christian tradition is very obvious from culture to culture.

Second, Christianity is unique among the religions of the world in that there is belief in the Incarnation, God becoming a human being, and resurrection, i.e., people die completely and are raised to life solely by the activity of God. This distinction complicates the dialogue of Christianity with other world religions.

Third, there is the distinction between doxological and soteriological types of religion. "Doxology" comes from the root words *doxa* - glory and *logo* - word, i.e. words of glory or worship. "Soteriology" means *soter* - deliverance/salvation and *logos* - word, i.e. the word of deliverance or salvation.

Religions have their own self-understanding. They express themselves in worship (doxological) and their understanding of salvation (soteriological). How does one learn the difference? One simply asks the question: how does the religion work? How do its prescribed practices bring its participants into relation with the ultimate reality defined by its doctrines? (Moore, 17-18)

One could say that for the most part Native People's spirituality is doxological and for the most part Christianity is soteriological by the most part. However, there are aspects of soteriology in the beliefs and practices of Native People, e.g. the Buffalo Calf Women of the Lakota. In some instances one might need to distinguish between specific practices.

These categories of doxological and soteriological are presented in this paper to help with interpreting what we experience and practice and not specific definition and universal application.

Though the ways of expression vary, there is a commonality found in that both the Native People's and the Christian church's traditions have a sense of solidarity with all creation, a format of story, liturgy, prayer, devotion, a life style of peace, and an understanding of Creator.

The Native People's spirituality has become popularized in many circles being used in some aspects of the "New Age" movement. There also tends to be a mixing of the Native People's spirituality and Christianity. This is not new because it has been going on for close to 500 years. This can contribute to more confusion.

I do not want to misrepresent the spirituality of Native People nor do I want to simplify it so that it can be palatable, comfortable, and/or similar to the Christian faith.

There are two themes related to the Native People's spirituality that need to be spelled out: what the Lakota people call mystery (wakan) and "nature persons."

The Mystery

Native People's spirituality is the "spirit of wonder," the recognition of life as power, as a mysterious, ever-present concentrated form of non-material energy, of something loose about the world and contained in a more or less condensed degree by every object (Beck et al, 9). The Lakota call it "wakan." A Teton Sioux man put it this way:

We cannot see the thunder, and we say it is wakan, but we see the lightning and we know that the thunder and the lightning are a sign of rain, which does good to the earth. Anything which has similar power is wakan, but above all is the sun, which has the most power of all (Beck et al, 10).

In Lakota wakan (the mystery, the power filled, the extraordinary) is found within the ikceya (the obvious, the profane, the pitiful) in all of life (Stolzman, 152). The Native People's sacred traditions observe these concepts as one. A great part of their tradition is to respect the power, listen silently, and learn (Beck et al, 11). Each individual entity has wakan.

Ruth Underhill quotes La Fleche:

All life is wakan. So also is everything which exhibits power, whether in action, as the winds and drifting clouds, or in passive endurance, as a boulder by the wayside. For even the commonest sticks and stones have a spiritual essence which must be revered as a manifestation of the all-pervading mysterious power that fills the universe (Underhill, 21).

Wakan Tanka is the "Great Mystery" which is far beyond human comprehension (McGaa, 77). This is the supernatural. Some use the words "the Great Spirit"² and "Creator." However, such a being is not referred to in personal terms by the Native People as it is by Non-Native people (Underhill, 5). The Native People deplore exactness in describing Wakan Tanka. It is felt it should be a mystery.

Traditional Indians believe that attempts to describe to another two-legged an overly defined concept of the mysterious vastness of the Great Provider of all are

²The concept of the Great Spirit is more closely allied with the Christian's understanding of the First Article of the Creed, Creator Spirit, rather than the complexity of the Third Article of the Creed which describes the Holy Spirit.

crude and unmannerly and show lack of humility (McGaa, 44).

That which is wakan can be defined as an animating (moving, vitalizing, life-giving) force or vital principle. It is a will that is unseen and intangible (Beck et al, 5). It is not difficult to see how people close to nature can be sensitive to its flow.

Wakan is also the sacred. For Native People the world of nature is their temple and within this sanctuary they show great respect to every form, function, and power. Reverence for nature is central to their spirituality. Each form in the world around them bears such a host of precise values and meanings (Brown, 16).

It is always a source of wonder that the unseen and intangible tie or hold us to the world that is so visible, filled with different life forms. That is what makes the sacred so difficult to discuss. When you wonder, you are silent. There are no words to express this bond to the Great Mystery (Beck et al, 8). Thus, all life is sacred, both being and action.

Nature Persons

The Lakota reverence for nature is the result of their belief that animals, plants, and rocks have their own "wakan." They are commonly referred to as "persons." (Brown, 43)

For the Native People everything in the world is alive, and everything can help or harm. All creatures are "nature persons." They, like human persons, are to be treated appropriately: courteously, not exploited, favors requested, favors returned. Give and take is a basic rule (Underhill, 40-41).

The range of "nature persons," from the animals to the thunder, the winds, and the heavenly bodies, can be found everywhere. The emphasis, however, is very different with some of the hunter-gatherers in the desert area, the animals seem to be almost the only Powers present in man's thought. In the wide open Plains, the animals bring visions, but ceremonial reverence is offered to the directions - to the earth, the sky, and the four quarters of the world or the winds which personate them. Sometimes the sky power is focused in the sun, as one who is able to see all and can be a witness to behavior. Each of these has mana (wakan) in its own sphere. The world is full of distributed power so that man lives constantly among potential companions and helpers (Underhill, 46-47).

In the non-human world animals³ are the most important "nature persons." There are more rituals for them than the humble rocks and plants. This is probably because hunting is more precarious, and hunters need more help (Underhill, 177).

The Native People make this distinction between human persons and animal people: in their stories it is the animal that comes first. In some instances animals create humans. Animals are considered elders to humans as well as teachers. Thus, it is wise for the human to listen to the animals (Caduto and Bruchac, 4).

"Long ago, back when the animals could talk and people could understand them . .

³Most Native people languages do not have a word such as "animal."

." is the way some stories begin. More than likely animals still talk, but people no longer know how to listen (Caduto and Bruchac, 4).

Another subject for discussion in this resource is the study of animals. We will take the opportunity to look into a world that is often perceived as wild and inherently destructive to the human species.

In some ways we may have been misguided by an interpretation that has been put upon Darwin's "survival of the fittest." Contrary to public opinion this does not mean that one species exercises dominion over others. Also, Darwin's statement, "Nature is red in tooth and claw," has elevated the notion of competition within the non-human world and that animals are "complex bundles of survival functions."

Animals, like all species, are in the process of adapting to their environment. (Actually, those species which have the capability to survive are those who are "fit" to reproduce.) Competition, as well, is more the exception than the rule. Mutualism and cooperation are more the order of the day. There is a mystery about the nature of animals that transcends human explanation (Marten, May, and Taylor, 8). This is not true for all animals, but there are behaviors that indicate animals are courting, performing rituals, caring for the young, cooperating, sacrificing, grieving, and so on.

Of all the animals that could be selected why choose the coyote? Could there not be a better animal, one less profane? Or might its ignoble character be the coyote's appeal? A coyote is an awesome and an ambiguous creature. The coyote is a mystery to us (a wakan), unfortunately, a mystery that can be shrouded in fear.

We might need to remythologize the coyote. The coyote is a part of the ecosystem and yet has been declared by the United States Government a nuisance that can be eliminated.

Hope Ryden, in her book God's Dog, says:

. . . studies revealed the coyote to be an animal indeed more wonderful, more beautiful, and more to be admired than all the logical reasons . . . set forth to demonstrate why he is so vitally important to whole biotic communities. An older and wiser culture understood all of this when they spoke of him as "God's Dog." (Ryden, XIII)

In Native North American stories the coyote appears in many forms: trickster, transformer, and fool. He has a unique way of gaining wisdom through spectacular and superhuman experiences. Coyote can change form and is a smooth talker. In some stories coyote dies, only to return to life. Still, coyote is regarded as having a certain malevolent benevolence and many good lessons are learned by those who listen well to coyote's exploits and the outcomes.

In fact and story the Coyote is not as neatly definable as other animals. Barre Toelken, in the Forward to Barry Lopez's book, Giving Birth to Thunder . . ., puts it cleverly:

Say, if you will (and some have), that Coyote is the exponent of all possibilities through whose antics and actions we see ourselves and the moral ramifications of our thoughts; or say that Coyote is the philosophical embodiment of a native world

view of relationships between mankind and nature; or say that Coyote is a freak of the primitive mind - the impulsive and self-destructive character that proves the savage did not "have it all together." Or say simply that Coyote is a Gemini. All these things are true; all these things are false (Lopez, xii).

The Navajo saw the coyote as a god. The Hopi perceived the coyote as a laughable fool.

In Crow mythology Old Man Coyote's position was supreme. The Northwestern tribe not only regarded him as "First Worker," creator of the earth and all living creatures, but also believed him to be the founder of human customs. Yet because life on earth was so obviously full of error, it naturally followed that Old Man Coyote himself must be fallible and though inordinately clever, capable of being duped. The Crows saw no inconsistency in casting the coyote in various roles of transformer, trickster, and fool. They relished stories in which their hero received his come-uppance from lesser animals. Mankind, then as now, delighted in the fall of the mighty. Nevertheless, the coyote was no less venerated for being vulnerable (Ryden, XIII-IX).

For other tribes coyote was not the supreme symbol of the Universal Principle, but coyote was given a special place in their understanding of creation (Ryden, IX).

Stories about Coyotes, a name that cannot be mentioned in the summer by the Navajos⁴, are funny, but they are not intended to be funny. The listener laughs at the way coyote does things and how the story is told. If the listener hears the real meaning of the story the listeners will grow up to be good (Beck et al, 61).

The Creator, one story goes, could not do everything. Some tasks were left to helpers who were bunglers or just plain mischievous. Coyote, being told to place the stars in the sky in geometric order, dropped the sack that contained them, and they scattered every which way (Underhill, 34).

Perhaps only humans are as capable of change, of adapting behavior, food sources, and rhythms for survival's sake, as our close neighbor the coyote. But we have responded to the coyote and to both the gray and red wolf, by declaring war on them - shooting, trapping, snaring, hunting, gassing, and poisoning these wild dogs not to mention leveling, paving, flooding, and developing their habitat (Caduto and Bruchac, 167).

How vicious is the coyote? There are various opinions. They have not attacked humans in packs. They often will roll over belly-up when captured. Some renegade coyotes do kill sheep. Most coyotes living near farms actually help to drive away potential threats to livestock. Their normal food consists of woodchucks, rabbits, mice, and voles, fruit corn, dead animals, and occasionally, a stray pet (Caduto and Bruchac, 167).

The scientific name for the coyote is canis latrans, wolf prairie. This animal is native only to the North American continent (Ryden, VII).

⁴Words have power. They can invoke and provoke. The art of story telling is precise. This, too, is sacred.

Coyotes are known to be territorial. A male will bring food to his mate when she is nursing the pups. Observers have seen coyotes regurgitate food for a mate (Ryden, 18-20).

The coyote may have moved into the niche of meat eater in some habitats because other predators like the bear, badger, weasel, and wolf have vanished.

A coyote's behavior might be strikingly different if other animals with greater strength were in their ecosystem. The competition would create a different type of response from them (Ryden, 25).

In 1937 Adolph Murie, a game biologist, studied coyotes and published information that the coyote was not a beast intending to destroy humans. He also learned that coyote predation was minimal, selective, and more than likely beneficial to the prey species (Ryden, 35-36).

Coyotes themselves are short lived. They are subject to disease. Starvation is a major cause of death. It reminds us that it is the predator species that hangs in the precious balance and not the prey (Ryden, 40).

Coyotes tend to move purposefully, but they are easily sidetracked to chase down a small animal.

Urine is the coyote's signature. It is used for staking out territory, identifying food, and committing to a mate (Ryden, 51-52).

It seems there is a symbiotic relationship between coyotes, magpies, and ravens. In summer the birds will clean up a carcass left by a coyote. In winter the birds can locate the prey. Another benefit is that the birds can warn the coyotes of coming danger (Ryden, 80-81).

One does not discipline a coyote. One simply learns how to cooperate with him (Ryden, 110).

Affectionate, sociable, and cooperative, coyotes mate for life and remain together as a pair year-round.⁵ When the six to eight pups disperse in the fall or late summer, one young pup remains behind with the parents to help raise next year's litter in the spring, in case something happens to one of the parents before the young are old enough to fend for themselves (Caduto and Bruchac, 167).

The characteristics of the coyote being used in this resource are God's Dog (Day 1), the teacher (Day 2), the survivor/transformer (Day 3), the fool and trickster (Day 4), and the indigenous alien (Day 5).

To be helpful to the reader the following chart is presented to outline the interaction between the study of animals, Native People's spirituality, and the Christian tradition.

⁵Canids are endowed with an amazing capacity for attachment to one another, a quality that enabled men to domesticate the dog and bind this innate devotion to himself (Ryden, 82).

Learned from the Animal/Natural World	Native People Spirituality	Teachings of the Christian Faith	Eco-Evangelical Spirituality	Multi-Cultural Multi-Religious Multi-Gender	Coyote Mnemonic Device
Reciprocity, Balance and Harmony	The Circle Wakan (the Mystery) Respect Give and Take	Holy Spirit Creator Spirit Restoring Spirit Forgiving Spirit Sanctifier	Creating, Redeeming, and Sanctifying God Involved in All Creation	Diversity is acknowledging the wakan in each individual	God's Dog
Life in the tension between sustenance and destruction	Necessary knowledge to live in tension learned from "Nature Persons"	The Word for Life First, Event - Jesus Christ Second, the Proclamation Third, the Written Record (Bible)	Knowledge from scripture and natural world considered sacred and viable	Each person and culture is a source of information	Teacher
Intangible necessities for existence: Cleansing (Restoration), Endurance, and Courage	Ritual and Story	Worship (Valuing) Thanksgiving (Taking Pleasure/Being Pleased with) Sacraments Gospel Stories	The Celebration of solidarity with God and all creation (Erdgebundenheit)	Necessities for mutual living: Self-esteem Trust Willingness to Settle Conflicts Communication Skills	Survivor and Transformer
Each Organism has a Profession (Niche)	Vision (the story line for one's life) and The use of stories for instruction and behavior modification	Gifts of the Spirit Fruits of the Spirit Sanctification	The Vision of Ecological Evangelism that gives to a person identity and profession to make the world a better Place	The treatment of others depends upon mental images of them (Stereotyping)	Trickster and Fool
Habitat Requirements	Community Centered (i.e., Tribe and Family) Sacred Circle Healing	Community of Faith Body of Christ	Life in the community of the spirit and all creation healing the Earth	Inclusivity acknowledges, celebrates, and responds to diversity within the whole	The Indigenous Alien

CHAPTER ONE

In the natural world we discover there is reciprocity, give and take, harmony and balance. Creation is intended for the benefit of all equally.

As one studies the ecosystem one understands the interrelatedness and interdependence of all creation. There are various cycles: earth, water, air, etc. The food chain has many links beginning with the simplest forms requiring something to feed it. Though the sun is the source of energy it depends upon various species to transport that energy to other species.

The Native People understand that all life is within a reciprocal circle. At the heart of their spirituality is what the Sioux say in their ceremonies, "Mitakuye oyasin" (we are related to all things) (McGaa, XVII). The world is the property of the One who creates it and holds it together. It does not belong to humans (Caduto and Bruchac, 8).

Everything, though having its own individuality and special place, is dependent on and shares in the growth and work of everything else. This means, for example, that if you take the life of an animal you have to let that animal know why you are doing so and that you take full responsibility for your act. Why? One reason is because it is a way of showing that you understand the balances that exist in all natural systems, or ecology. Another reason (perhaps harder to see) is because human beings and animals have a relationship to one another. Animals, for instance, know why they are in the presence of human beings and they learn to avoid places where one of their own members has been killed. The elders and the oral histories tell us that long ago we once could speak the language of animals and that our survival depends on maintaining the relationship between animals, plants, rivers, feeding grounds, etc. Keeping this in mind, then, the concept of dependency and respect is not difficult to understand (Beck et al, 12).

Vine Deloria, in the introduction to Keepers of the Animals says,

Native North Americans saw themselves as participants in a great natural order of life, related in some fundamental manner to every other living species. It is said that each species had a particular knowledge of the universe and specific skills for living in it. Human beings had a little bit of knowledge and some basic skills, but we could not compare with any other animals as far as speed, strength, cunning, and intelligence (Caduto and Bruchac, XI).

The interconnectedness with nature is the appreciation that in one way or another all things are related to each other, both animate and inanimate. Rocks contain minerals also contained in animals. In a sense the Earth is us. We are all one body. Native People see this within the wonder of the cosmic flow that never ceases (McGaa, XVI). In this way of thinking they do not perceive themselves as passive children of nature, but dynamic personalities of great force, courage, and intelligence who undergo intense suffering and sacrifice in becoming what they are and in preserving what they have (Brown, 21).

Spiritual development for Native People occurs in several ways. First, it is derived from their close contact with nature. Second, the experience of nature is both what is observed and what is mysterious (discussed earlier). Third, Native People rigorously participate in a multitude of rituals and symbols which have for them a

supernatural origin and are very complex (Brown, 20). Fourth, stories are essential. They are used to teach the relationship between people, animals, and the rest of the Earth (Caduto and Bruchac, XVIII).

One could say there are two ways to look at nature, a mechanistic model and a sacred model. What makes Native People's spirituality unique is that life is perceived and interpreted as sacred. For those who choose a mechanistic model it often requires determining what nature is "good for" in order to describe how nature fits into the providence of the Supreme Being. Once that is determined and the ends are beneficial to humans (that is "the bottom line") then it is considered sacred. For the Native People the world is sacred first. In one of his speeches Chief Seattle says, "Every part of this soil is sacred" (Cummings, 3).

For the Christian the word "Spirit" describes the wholeness of God. We meet the Spirit in the first creation story, brooding over the water. The spirit leads the Israelites out of Egypt (Isaiah 53:11-14). The Spirit anoints the prophet (Isaiah 61:1 ff).

The Spirit is God-present and God-at-work. The God of the Hebrews and the Christian is God involved in life.

The Spirit brings into the present God the Creator and Christ the Redeemer. In the Nicene Creed it states that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son." We can understand this idea in four ways.

First, this ties the Spirit closely to the resurrected Christ. (In the New Testament the Spirit and the risen Christ are hard to distinguish from each other.) Second, the Spirit is the principle of relationship and unity (Peters, 251). Third, the Spirit brings the past of history into the present. Fourth, the Spirit makes the future fulfillment of God's realm present to hope. The Spirit collapses time (Peters, 229-230).

Tom Peters identifies the Holy Spirit with what he calls "the three magnificent virtues (that) imbue the life of beatitude: faith, hope, and love."

In faith the Holy Spirit makes Christ present to us; it unifies what is separated by time and space so that the happy exchange can actually take place in our lives. In hope, the Spirit illumines our consciousness with visions of God's future, with the freeing confidence that the divine promises will attain fulfillment. In love, the Spirit actually releases the power that bears effective witness to the ongoing work of reconciliation. These three magnificent virtues imbue the life of beatitude (Peters, 233-234).

Faith, too, is the work of the Holy Spirit and is the very presence of Christ in one's life. This is what makes Christian faith distinctive.

The concept of faith has many facets. 1) Faith is believing what cannot be proved, i.e., intellectual assent. 2) Faith is trust. We put our lives into someone else's hands. 3) Faith is a response to God's act of grace. God initiates, and we respond. 4) Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. In Luther's Explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed we say, "I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel . . ." 5) Faith is ultimately the very presence of the

risen Christ in one's life.

. . . the presence of Christ is absolutely crucial to an understanding of pneumatology and Christian faith. (The Christian faith says nothing more than that we have been called into the immediacy of the mystery of God himself and that this mystery gives itself to us in unmeasurable nearness (Rahner).) So close is the identification of the resurrected Christ with the Holy Spirit that they are almost interchangeable in the New Testament. Whether it be the indwelling of the Spirit (Romans 8:9) or the indwelling of Christ (Romans 8:10), in faith we become united with God and receive new life (Peters, 235-236).

Another approach is to say "Spirit" is the ecological word for God. God is in relationship with all of creation and also is the force of the relationship.

Thus, the name "Spirit" for God deals with the wholeness of God. God is Creator and Redeemer. God forgives and creates a new creation., God gives faith. God in Christ is present in faith and present in hope. Our senses are roused. We name the Spirit. We acknowledge the Spirit, the very presence and power of God.

The human being must realize that life is not found only in the observable. There is a life force which moves within all of creation. The Lakota people call it Wakan Tanka. The Christian calls it the Holy Spirit.

Spirituality is the ability to live in community with both the obvious and the mystery and thereby find one's own humanity. One lives by faith, i.e., trust in the Holy Spirit, and in the knowledge that Christ is present in one's life. One lives within this reality by one's senses, grasping the world as a whole in a conscious and sensitive way.

CHAPTER TWO

All creatures know that they live precariously between being sustenance and destruction. Humans are also aware how close we are to self-destruction. The fetid world not only nourishes the soil, but can be the cause of death. It is like walking a tight rope.

True, we probably do not pay much attention to the possibilities of being destroyed because we seem to always be nurtured. Humans seeks to make that happen. Yet there are times when we are reminded how near the brink we stand: several years ago the salmonella outbreak, recently AIDS and Hepatitis B. What is in the future? We divine sanitary precautions because of the threat of disease, death, and destruction.

The plant and animal realms know precisely what it means to live in this tension of sustenance and destruction. They cooperate and compete. The prey avoids the predator, but for how long? In the animal world species depend upon finding food and protecting themselves to avoid their captors. Yet, they also reach a point of death and destruction. But not a death and destruction that is purposeless.

Humans have known this problem since the beginning of human life and have found ways to maintain and renew health. We also accept death as a part of the natural process.

How does one survive? There is a source of knowledge. For the Native People there is a source of information on how to live within the tension of sustenance and destruction and within the balance and harmony of the world. This information is through the natural world, namely through animals. It reaches deeply into their spirituality.

In animals Indians see actual reflection of the qualities of the Great Spirit which serve the same function as revealed scriptures in other religions. Animals are intermediators or links between humans and God. This explains not only why religious devotions may be directed to the deity through the animals, but it also helps us to understand why contact with, or from, the Great Spirit comes to the Indian almost exclusively through visions involving animal and other natural forms (Brown, 17).

We need to think in mega years. How have people learned? Who could be the teacher? Knowledge was gained through experiences that date back to the Pleistocene Age, two to three million years ago (Caduto and Bruchac, 9). What is noticeable is the use of totems. Animals are depicted. Universally they are the ones who lead humans in terms of how to live and how to behave (Caduto and Bruchac, 32).

The Native People have made a point of observing the other creatures and in modeling their own behavior after them. The technical skills of birds, animals, and reptiles were such that the Native People could take cues from them for their own welfare. For example, when Native People would go on a hunt they would usually return with information they learned from the animals. Often it was a dance (Caduto and Bruchac, 44).

Being guided and learning from nature is not peculiar to the Native People. The story of the Magi visiting Jesus recorded in Matthew reminds us that an event in the natural world guided them to where Jesus lived, namely a star. It was upon this information the Magi trusted.

Not only is there observed information. Stories are purposeful. Oral tradition teaches and passes on the sacred knowledge of the tribe (Beck et al, 57). There are appropriate times to tell stories. Some stories can be told only once a year. There are stories that can be told by only special persons.

Stories are the way the oral traditions are passed on. A story can be abused and mistold. This is an act against the Native People.

For Native People the revelation of how to live is rooted in nature. The observable and mysterious are grounded in their experience of and in the natural world.

I lift this up as a crucial distinction between the Native People's spirituality and the Christian faith. For the latter the revelation is grounded in history (and you thought I was going to say a book). The Bible reports a variety of things, but it essentially tells us of the God and human encounter in the context of specific events.

Christians understand the brink of disaster upon which all creatures walked. The source of knowledge, the information that is conveyed to us, is through the God who reveals the God-self to us.

When Jesus announces that he will go away he promises to send a paraclete, an advocate, a helper (John 15:15-17). It is not possible for Jesus to tell his followers

all they must know. However, someone will come to guide the believers. This is understood as the Holy Spirit.

In John 15 Jesus clearly states that if one loves God, one is obedient to God, and in this relationship God will be revealed. This has been understood throughout the ages that this is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Peters states:

The power of the Holy Spirit makes the words of Jesus effective in our lives. We identify the presence of God through the concept of the spirit. Where the divine breath blows there is comfort, counsel, and truth (Peters, 229).

There is no simple way to describe how the Spirit works in our lives to lead us. The tension is between relying on the Spirit in some mystical way to convey information and trusting in something that conveys the Spirit.

Let me take you through some steps that help me understand the way God's knowledge is conveyed to us. It begins in our experience with faith. We hold that faith comes by the work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the Christian community. Note Luther's Explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed.

This faith, Paul says, comes by hearing (Romans 10:17). Hearing what? We hear the proclamation of the Gospel and respond. This refers particularly to an oral tradition, not a written tradition.

The analogy for me is how the flow of solar energy works in the food chain. This energy that makes life possible is acquired by animals through eating, the use of the mouth. How is the power of God specifically conveyed? It also goes through a chain, a faith chain, from one person of faith to another. Which anatomical part plays a role for the recipient? The ear.

Thus, the proclamation of the Gospel is the way God is conveyed through faith. What empowers us to speak? Paul says that we are able to say Jesus is Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. (See I Corinthians 12:3 and John 3:34)

Our starting point is a dynamic event in time and space where something happens.

The progression of the Word of God goes like this:

First - there is an event. For us it is the event of Jesus Christ.

Second - there is the proclamation of the event. There is discussion of what occurred. One person tells another.

Third - there is the writing down of the proclamation. We call this the Bible.

What is at the heart of all of this? Peters says:

The gospel is the proclamation of the redemptive act in Jesus Christ, an act of divine grace by which sinners are forgiven and incorporated into the eternal life of the risen Savior (Peters, 57).

We have now returned to the beginning. The revelation of God is within the context of history - God's activity particularly in Christ.

How does scripture fit into the picture? We must see it within the context of God's intention that we receive further instruction, as an expression of faith of others so that we can have faith, as an instrument of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit in the same way faith is inspired and our ability to proclaim Christ is inspired, as a touchstone for understanding how the Spirit works in our lives. Luther would describe the Bible as the manger where the Christ-child can be found.

What makes this topic more exciting is that the Bible has two major functions. First, it is the means by which we discern how the Holy Spirit works in the world and particularly in our lives. Second, the Bible is the way God speaks to us.

First, Paul makes it quite clear in Galatians 4 and 5 that the way we discern the Spirit in our lives is that two things have happened in history and these two things become the norm for our discernment: first, God's son was sent into the world in order to bring redemption and, second, in this redemption we are no longer enslaved to the fates of life but set free. "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1a).

The Bible is that source to which we turn to be able to distinguish how God acts in the world. We call the Bible the norm and rule of faith and life. The Bible is the critical source. It is legitimate to ask of our religious life and our theological musings, "Is it Biblical?" (Peters, 52)

Second, God speaks in the Bible. Too often scripture is seen as a law book, as a proof text, as the predictor of the future (God's tarot cards). When scripture is used this way it speaks of human manipulation and human need to have a material idol, to be absolutely right, and to know the future.

Bonhoeffer puts it in a very insightful way. The Bible is where we go to listen to God speak to us. In a letter to Dr. Rüdiger Schleicher, Bonhoeffer's brother-in-law, he says:

This is how I read the Bible now. I ask of each passage: What is God saying to us here? And I ask God that he would help us hear what he wants to say. So, we no longer look for general, eternal truths, which correspond with our own "eternal" nature and are, therefore, somehow self-evident to us. Instead, we seek the will of God, who is altogether strange to us, whose ways are not our ways and whose thoughts are not our thoughts, who hides himself from us under the sign of the cross, in which all our ways and thoughts have an end. God is completely other than the so-called eternal verities. Theirs is an eternity made up of our own thoughts and wishes. But God's Word begins by showing us the cross. And it is to the cross, to death and judgment before God, that our ways and thoughts (even the "eternal" ones) all lead (Bonhoeffer, Meditating on the Word, 45-46).

What is sin? In this instance sin can be described as using the self as the author and authenticator of knowledge. How do we walk the tight rope within the tension of sustenance and destruction? Only arrogance says we know the answers from within ourselves. One thing our genetic codes does not do is relay all knowledge to our brains. Our genes may contain the information, but they do not give us the needed knowledge.

It seems to me that the Christian is called to be attentive to how God has taught the world. There are two essential "documents" as I see them: the Bible and the natural world. In scripture (and by this I mean all the things and processes that go

into making it) we seek out God and how God acts. In the natural world we seek out what God is doing.

This may seem to be an oversimplification, but I think the point must be made. The creation is not God. But it is the arena of God's activity. We need to be attentive to what God is doing.

What has led us to our downfall in the abuse of the environment is that we have neither "read" nor "listened" to the natural world. It is now that we see disastrous results of human behavior and speculate on how this behavior can produce great disasters that suddenly we have prophets of doom and prospects of failure.

One way to say this is that in Christ we are set free to "read" God. This is within the domain of the work of the Spirit in our lives.

One of the positive results of looking at our world this way is that we can realize that in the human community there is a great resource of information. Every once in a while the comment is made that some of the old wives' tales about certain cures are valid. The old folks knew something. They knew a lot.

CHAPTER THREE

Cleansing, endurance, and courage are intangible ingredients for an organism to survive and cooperate. There are struggles with all types of destructive forces and competitive situations. Many organisms are able to cooperate with each other to mutually benefit each other. But others cannot. All eventually succumb.

Every organism that exists has its friends and enemies and needs to develop skills to survive. This process is ongoing; it never stops. The natural world is a dynamic place. Thus, species must constantly adapt to survive or become extinct.

Hope Ryden describes the surviving and transforming qualities of the coyote:

. . . it is to a large extent (the) ability of the coyote to adapt to diverse conditions that makes him so difficult to define. At the same time, this versatility is undoubtedly what has enabled the species to survive man's every effort to extirpate him. For the adaptable coyote not only is capable of bivouacking where he pleases, but seems able to adapt any number of life-styles. He can hunt either by day or night, dine on fresh meat or survive off of carrion, raid town garbage pits or feast on wild fruits and berries, den in burrows or whelp in conduit pipes, run in packs or operate as a loner. Bold coyotes can be observed in the alleyways of Los Angeles. But shy ones may be heard only in the wilderness, where they fill their private haunts with soulful cadenzas. Even the coyote's physical body reflects his protean quality. . . .

It would appear from this that the coyote may still be in the process of becoming, that Nature may not yet have set the successful adaptations the species has made over long ages of natural selection. The advantage to an animal of being in an unfinished state can best be demonstrated by noticing the fates of those North American animals who were better perfected for existence in their special niches. The bison and the wolf were rapidly vanquished when an agricultural and industrial society reshaped their habitats. The coyote, by contrast, met change with change and

survives. Thus, atypical behavior and unique responses, while frustrating to those who . . . look for definitive answers, may in fact be the creative side of the evolutionary process (Ryden, IX-X).

Another characteristic built into the genes of many animals is their ability to perform rituals. They are Oscar candidates for their dramatic courting rituals and luring techniques to protect their young.

For humans, survivability and cooperation are issues as well. We seek ways to make it through the task of living from day to day. In a world with more technological conveniences humans are less dependent upon resources within themselves to eke out life. Of great importance are cleansing, endurance, and courage.

The spirituality of Native People recognizes this need for cleansing, endurance, and courage. There is a constant need to individually and collectively revitalize the emotions and mystical experiences that make up the core of their guiding vision to secure the sacred ways.

Sacred means something special, out of the ordinary. Often it concerns a very personal part of each one of us because it describes our dreams, our changing, and our personal way of seeing the world. The sacred has two sides: the personal and the shared. Sacred ways are inseparable from the "ordinary" (Beck et al, 6).

The purposes of prayer and worship for Native People are:

1. Reinforcement of the bond between individuals and the Great Mystery (as long as it is done in the sacred manner).
2. Making the worshipper receptive to the blessings that are naturally available.
3. A means of giving thanks.
4. The centering of oneself in the world (Beck et al, 22).

Rituals revitalize and put into order the cosmology of a tribe or nation. In it the basic concepts are made possible for everyone to see. The building principles are acted out so everyone can understand (Beck et al, 35).

Ed McGaa says,

Ceremony, to the Indian, is a realization, an experiencing realization of the Spiritual that surrounds all. Ceremony brings both that profound, deeply powerful realization from beyond into the world of the two-legged (McGaa, 47).

Belief in prayer, rituals, and song affirms belief in words (Beck et al, 44). Songs and prayers are articulation of the breath (note connection with animals) and songs are often thoughts sung out with the breath when people are moved and ordinary speech no longer suffices (Beck et al, 42).

Prayer is the way Native People link themselves with the wakan of the world (Beck et al, 42). Tobacco, prayer stocks, feathers, corn meal, and pollen often accompany the prayer offerings. The choices vary from tribe to tribe.

The smoke that emerges from the pipe is breath reaching out in prayer.

The use of pollen as a symbol is significant. Pollen is one way a plant

communicates with another. It is that which makes fruit possible. In prayer that for which is being prayed is thereby also touched. Some of oneself is brought to another (Beck et al, 40).

The contents of prayer are usually requests for health, long life, prosperity, abundant crops, rain, and healthy children.

The objectives of ritual vary with the tribes. The most common denominator is that it is a communal feeling. In this experience the ideals and the practices of the community are strengthened, ties are renewed, and community between Native People and the Wakan Tanka is affirmed.

Rituals are scheduled in terms of important times of the year: solstices, planting, harvesting, distributing food, birth, naming, renaming, puberty, marriage, and death.

Rituals add a dramatic element to worship. They touch the emotions, the imagination, and the intensity of feeling.

Rituals provide two necessary ingredients to the sacred life of Native People:

1. Ordering and systematizing every way human society, the natural world, and the unseen world come together, and
2. Providing a physical expression of mystical experience for the individual and the group. Native People are transported from the ikceya (ordinary) to the wakan (mystery) (Beck et al, 35-37).

Rituals are performed out of necessity, not for entertainment. They help maintain the lives of the people.

According to Standing Bear:

The Indian loved to worship. From birth to death he revered his surroundings. He considered himself born in the luxurious lap of Mother Earth and no place was to him humble. There was nothing between him and the Big Holy. The contact was immediate and personal, and the blessings of Wakan Tanka flowed over the Indian like rain showered from the sky. Wakan Tanka was not aloof, apart, and ever seeking to quell evil forces. He did not punish the animals and birds, and likewise He did not punish man. He was not a punishing God. For there was never a question as to the supremacy of an evil power over the power of good. There was but one religious power, and that was good (Beck et al, 25).

Rituals traditionally involve three parts:

1. Purification - a person makes oneself empty. Sweat baths, smoking, and breathing are methods.
2. Blessing - prayers are offered for power and strength.
3. Sacrifice - a person gives of oneself to acknowledge that all things are interconnected. One suffers momentarily to become aware of self and so someone else will not have to do it (Beck et al, 23).

Central to the Lakota people is the Sacred Calf Pipe. It was brought to the Native People by the White Buffalo Woman. The story has several versions. The essentials of

the story are: Two hunters went out to seek game in a time of famine, and they saw a mysterious woman coming over the horizon. One hunter had evil desires and was reduced to a skeleton. The woman sent the other one back to prepare the people for her coming. The next day she brought the sacred bundle with the Calf Pipe and presented it to the people with instructions. As she left she turned into a buffalo calf from which the original pipe received his name (Steinmetz, 64).¹

The pipe is a portable altar and means of grace. The bowl, or the heat in the bowl, is the sacred center (Brown, 25). Smoke from the pipe represents the visible breath of the participants and stands for truth: truthful words, truthful actions, and a truthful spirit (McGaa, 57).

The pipe is perceived as the mediator between people, the idea of the peace pipe. Some have equated the pipe with Christ (Steinmetz, 37).

The pipe is used with seven traditional rites:

1. The Keeping of the Soul.
2. The Sweat Lodge Ceremony or Rite of Purification.
3. The Vision Quest.
4. The Sun Dance Ceremony.
5. Making Relatives
6. Preparing a Girl for Womanhood
7. Throwing the Ball

What comes as devastating information is that some of the ceremonies were outlawed by the United States Government. The Sun Dance was forbade in the 1800's because of the skewering of the flesh (McGaa, 150). The Keeping of the Soul ceremony was prohibited at the same time due to the influence of missionaries. By law the souls kept by the Sioux had to be released on a certain day (McGaa, 121). This is how the Give Away Ceremony got started.

Through the efforts of missionaries spiritual practices and beliefs of the Sioux were eradicated and outright destroyed. What the missionaries objected to was the reverence for nature and the appearance of the Buffalo Calf Woman. Young Sioux were forced to accept the European Americans' concept of God (McGaa, 126).

One of the significant ritual practices of Native People is based on their understanding of the give and take in the natural world. When a plant or animal is removed from its natural surroundings for use by humans, specific steps are taken to give thanks to the individual, to leave a gift, and not waste or abuse it in its use or in the disposal of it (Underhill, 116).

There is a beautiful story in After Nature's Revolt:

Heavily dressed for the half meter of snow covering the hillside, a small group of people stood quietly around what looked like a perfect, if rather large, Christmas tree. Mostly American Indians from a variety of tribes and all members of an Indian congregation, the people were speaking prayers on behalf of the tree. It could have been most any annual congregational outing to harvest a Christmas tree for their

¹The Sacred Pipe which is venerated as the original one is kept at Green Grass on the Cheyenne River Reservation in northern South Dakota (Steinmetz, 15).

church, except that these prayers were a thorough mixture of Christian prayers and traditional Indian tribal prayers. The two pastors held tobacco in their hands, ready to offer it back to the Creator, to offer it for the life of this tree, to offer it to the four directions, above and below, to offer it in order to maintain the harmony and balance of Creation even in the perpetration of an act of violence. Someone wrapped a string of colorful tobacco tie offerings around the trunk. As four men sang traditional prayer songs around a drum, the people came one by one up to the tree to touch it and say their prayers, some actually speaking to the tree, speaking consoling words of apology, gratitude, purpose, and promise (Tinker, 144).

A very dramatic demonstration of this attitude and practice is in the deer hunt. There are actually several ceremonies involved:

1. The dance - not just imitating the animal, but learned from the animal. The dance was intended to compliment the animal.
2. Hunters were taught animal etiquette from childhood. The first-fruit or the first kill is to be given to the old or needy.
3. Game animals and women were to be separated. The hunter stayed away from his wife before the hunt.
4. The hunter has a vision assuring him of the animal's love especially when hunting a mountain lion or an eagle. It is almost like going to war.
5. Tobacco and prayers are offered for good luck to a sacred object.
6. Songs would be sung. They use the appropriate words which are handed down by tradition.
7. Some use the sweat lodge in advance of the hunt.
8. In some cases, animals showed themselves only if the taboos had been observed.
9. When an animal is caught the Native People apologize to the creature.
10. Parts of the animal were either consumed or disposed of ceremonially (Underhill, 188-123).

The Cree story, "How the People Hunted the Moose," tells of the hunter's cycle as seen from the animal's point of view.²

Circle dances are done to celebrate the gift, to remind Native People of their interconnectedness with all of life, to strengthen the community, and to celebrate the giving circle and the circles of life of which all are a part. Circle dances are important aspects of living in balance with the animals (Caduto and Bruchac, 45).

Involved in the cultic life of Native People's spirituality is the story which is a sacred event. Not only is there observed information. The Native People devised stories about animals and plants that were also sources of information.

Teaching stories does not just tell about physical facts with ordinary events and plots. They also teach abstract notions of behavior, cosmology, and ways of seeing or thinking about things. Sometimes the story is like a code which, the more it is listened to over the years, the more it reveals. . . . This "coding" of knowledge in stories is like asking "why," because you have to listen more closely. Then you also have more of a chance to suddenly discover meanings, concepts, and ideas by yourself. . . . The "coding" has another advantage, the stories appeal to more people (Beck et al, 59-60).

²See Keepers of the Animals, 5.

Memorization is essential for passing on sacred knowledge. It is important for two reasons: 1) it diminishes the possibilities of inconsistencies in retelling stories and information and 2) without this information recorded in memory it may not be conveyed to the future since there was for a long time no written documents (Beck et al, 29-30).

Story tellers receive instruction that stories are meant to be told and not read aloud. They have their specific seasons. Bodies and endings of stories cannot be mixed (Caduto and Bruchac, 61).

There is a story told by the Navajo that highlights the way stories are used. It goes like this: Once there was a Master Slayer which killed all the monsters that preyed on people. However, four of the monsters were allowed to live:

- Poverty - If killed there would be no knowledge of needs. Poverty helps develop compassion for others. It sharpens up one's ability to look for and acquire the things one needs for oneself and what others need.
- Hunger - When your stomach becomes empty you will develop your mind to get food. You will become industrious and stop being lazy.
- Fatigue - Without this there would be a desire to work all the time and not sleep and take time to meditate. One must be replenished both physically and spiritually.
- Body Lice - Without this, one would not bother to be clean. Also, people would not comb each other's hair. This is a time for recreation. Thus, body lice forces people to make an effort to be clean, be sociable, and to play (Beck et al, 26-27).

When we look at ritual, prayer, and stories within the Christian community we must recognize several salient and parallel points.

Worship as expressed in ritual and ceremony identifies a connectedness between the human and God. In fact, one could say that worship is being caught up in the Spirit which is not a static understanding of God, but a dynamic one.

In worship the Christian experiences the Spirit of God in the state of becoming. That may seem disrespectful toward God. By that I mean when we speak in future terms of what God can, would, should, might do. "God is not finished with me, yet," reads one bumper sticker. The Lord's Prayer has several future elements in it, too.

The Spirit acknowledges that God is on the journey with us.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (II Corinthians 3:17).

We even look forward to the fulfillment of creation. (Peters, 233)

Thus, we worship "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). It is these attributes of

worship that bring cleansing and restoration to us, give us endurance and courage to deal with life. We have been freed from bondage and given a new being. We participate in Christ's death and resurrection as well as our own as a daily event. Our hope is in God, and we trust God's promises. Our worship captures these understandings.

Our connection is with a God who is more than a mystery. This is the God who is Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. We celebrate this Spirit who, according to the Nicene Creed, proceeds from the Father and the Son. As Christians we are specific about our source of energy. The Spirit is the Lord and giver of life.

Worship and thanksgiving have specific meanings within the Christian tradition. Worship comes from "worthyship" which has to do with recognizing value in something or someone else. Thanksgiving is rooted in the Latin word that is the same word used for "grace." The basic word means "pleasure."

Thus, worship and thanksgiving are actions of valuing and expressing pleasure with someone or something. We recount how God does this to the world and how the world responds to God reciprocally. We value and find pleasure in God.

In worship time is collapsed, both the past and the future. It is done through the simple act of remembering. What is discovered, however, in Christian worship is that the remembering begins with God remembering the world.

The contents of Christian worship are the proclamation of the Word, celebration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, prayer, and the gathering of the faithful. All of these elements acknowledge connectedness with God.

The stories of the Christian community are a critical part of the church's life. The Gospel is not just good news, stories needing interpretation. They have their own integrity. Stories are not limited to use in worship and Bible study. They can be told as situations develop where the story is appropriate.

Thus, stories are also integral in the Christian community's self-consciousness and self-understanding.

When concerned with cleansing (restoration), endurance, and courage one can be seduced into an egocentric motif or paradigm. Ritual and ceremony can be the thrust of one's life being done for self aggrandizement.

I propose that eco-evangelical spirituality is grounded in ritual and prayer and stories. With them we fix our consciousness of God and our solidarity with all of natural history. Jaroslav Pelikan uses one word to define spirituality, *Erdgebundenheit*, i.e., being bound to the earth. What are elements of valuing and pleasure between God and humanity are also elements that include all of creation. The connectedness must have a focus, and this focus is worship.

In worship we participate in a vision of a world that God redeems, makes new, and creates. It is a vision that begins with God's saving act, restoring gifts. It is grounded in the blood of Christ.

Christian worship follows a series of events in the human life from baptism to burial. These events become opportunities for remembering God's presence in our lives to do something with all creation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Everything that exists has a place in the ecosystem. Ecologists call this a "niche." This words means profession or role. A niche is also often thought of as a space or location. However, niche has to do with what an organism contributes in and of itself for the sake of the whole.

When an organism neglects to perform in an ecosystem for whatever reason, another organism takes its place.

Not all organisms are equal in their profession. Some are more critical for a habitat's survival than others. These are "keystones." Some of these animals are very large, e.g. elephants, rhinoceros, and other big herbivores. Or they can be the tiny army ants.

Native People understand that humanity's niche is complicated because human behavior can work for good and for ill in the ecosystem.

For Native People the way to live is a way of peace, a way that dares to be in balance and harmony with all of creation and an attitude of respect.

There are two ways with which this is dealt: the Vision Quest and stories for instruction and behavior modification.

The Vision Quest is extremely important because it is the experience that gives direction to a Native person in terms of their role and their identity in the tribe and in the world. It is a story that comes to a person from outside of the self and unfolds as the person grows in years. It comes in some type of dream experience. An elder serves as an interpreter of what the story means. The Vision Quest shapes a person's life.

Not all Native People are blessed with a vision. Some seek it, and it never comes. There is acceptance of this difference in experience.

The way one lives is also influenced by stories. They were meant for instruction as well as to modify behavior.

The virtues of animals are emphasized. Children were admonished to be wise, gentle, brave, and cheerful as expressed by certain animals (Deloria, XI).

When misbehavior occurred children would be told a story rather than be punished. The tales usually emphasized that inappropriate behavior would lead to disaster (Underhill, 31). Humor is also characteristic of the stories.

The coyote stories, as discussed in the introduction, remind us of the role of the clown, the sacred fool. The jester deals with ambiguity better than the sober, serious ponderer. For the jester ambiguity is the way it is. For the somber person ambiguity is their bane and held by them in contempt. The coyote image helps us live with the uncertain, the ambivalent, the obscure, yes, even the mystery.

Luther had a sense of this ambiguity when observing how one should deal with the indistinctiveness of the human condition and the ambiguity created by human evil. He said almost whimsically, "Sin boldly! But," he continues in a less humorous fashion

as an affirmation and confession, "trust God's grace more boldly still!"

In the Christian community we understand that the way a person lives has its basis in the Spirit of God. These are outlined in terms of gifts of the Spirit, fruits of the Spirit, and sanctification.

Paul discusses the gifts of the spirit in I Corinthians 12. In this instance Paul mentions the types of talents and innate abilities that determine how a person functions within the life of the church community. Each person has a gift by which one can give something unique.

People have been given abilities to fulfill a role in the world. It is understood that these talents are also gifts of the Spirit.

In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul talks about styles of life in this way: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law." (RSV) It is significant to note Paul's metaphorical use of fruit and Spirit.

In the natural world, in order for fruit to occur, a flower must be pollinated. There are two basic methods of pollination: animals (birds, mammals, and insects) and wind. Animals do most of the pollinating in the Tropics. As we get further away from the equator we see wind pollination more frequently.

Fruit, by the way, is not simply the type we eat. All seeds are fruit.

Just as fruit depends upon an outside source to be pollinated so we can talk about the Spirit of God as an outside source who touches us and causes good to be done through and by us. (The words ruach (Hebrew) and pneuma (Greek) mean wind, breath, and Spirit.)

To practice the Spirit is to live the sanctified life. This is the process by which a person receives new life having been freed from the power of sin and guilt and given the capacity to live most fully and more selflessly. In love the person makes holy and wholly the other. (I prefer to use the word sanctification rather than spirituality.)

Sanctification has four elements: illumination, regeneration and conversion, obedience and good works, and perfection (Peters, 242-243).

1. Illumination is an experience of the mind. There is knowledge that is given by the Spirit. We know about the God who acts in our lives (Acts 26:18) We have discerned the Spirit.

2. Regeneration and Conversion. This has the nature of being cleansed and renewed in experiences of worship. It also has the nature of opening a person for a change of heart - conversion.

Conversion is the rejecting and turning away from the evils of the past and living a just life. Conversion is not a global experience for the individual. By this I mean that there is not just one conversion in a person's life. It is an event that happens frequently as one discovers instance by instance how the past must be regarded and a new way be taken.

3. Obedience and Good Works. The teachings of God, sometimes called the "law," are seen as constructive for how to live not just what to do. There is a joyful appropriation of God's teachings and God's love. Good works are not deeds done to earn favor, but are behaviors done to make things right.

Such behavior practices the unity we have with God and the rest of creation. "We realize that there is a bond of love that unites all things" (Peters, 243).

4. Perfection. This word makes some people frustrated because we claim not to be able to be perfect. Bonhoeffer said the word translated "perfect" in the New Testament really means "complete." We can quibble over words, but what does perfection mean? It is a life of purging sin, restoring the image of God, and living spontaneously in the love of God.

Perfection is actually the practicing of the Spirit. It acknowledges that we work at being this type of person. There are some gifted athletes that do not need to practice their skills. But it does become obvious that even the most gifted athlete cannot neglect to practice if one plans to play with the rest of the team.

What about sin? What sinful behavior corresponds to what is being said? The answer is simple: self-perfection and human superiority. The idea of self-perfection is that I become the center of the world. I train my body and mind so that I can be my deepest me.

Human arrogance has also demonstrated what can happen. It is believed that 1) humans can control the ways of the natural world, 2) humans can continue to exploit certain natural resources indefinitely, and 3) all mysteries, all uncertainties, i.e. the unknown, can be ultimately conquered (Beck et al, 47).

Humans must realize that the human is a part of the created order. We are a part of the natural event. We need to unlearn what we presently practice.

What is the ecologically environmentally spiritual thing to do? First, we must have a vision of evangelical ecology. Forgiveness and faithfulness are redeeming acts for all to experience. Thus, our ecology is the good news, and the good news is for the whole system. This is our vision which encompasses the past story and thrives on hope. This is a vision that unfolds and needs constant interpretation. It is a vision that comes from without. Second, the vision is important in order to see what God is doing. The Native People have a saying, "I wouldn't see it unless I believe it." This stands in contrast to "I wouldn't believe it until I see it." Third, our profession is to make the world a better place. This means acting respectfully toward all creation. We have our own niche.

CHAPTER FIVE

All species require a habitat. This may seem obvious. But do we really know how strategic a habitat is?

A habitat provides food, water, shelter, and available space. All organisms live in some type of interdependent relationship with other organisms. In various ways, by cooperation and competition, the organisms live with and off of each other.

When species are deleted from a habitat we notice how the habitat is affected. Or when a habitat is depleted or destroyed how species either migrate or die.

The study of habitats includes a study of biodiversity. Habitats must be complex. The more simple they are the greater chance there is for destruction. The more diverse they are the greater the opportunity for the habitat to survive.

The health of a habitat is found in the various species living in a balance. Thus, one could say that habitat and the health of species are closely allied. The habitat must be healthy for the sake of its member species. The habitat gives health and wholeness to its members. The habitat must be maintained in its own right so it can be restorable.

Native People understand habitat in the context of the sacred hoop. Black Elk is quoted as saying, ". . . the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round" (Brown, 13-14). And the Native People are a significant part of it.

For the Native People the tribe is the basic form of existence. It is not what an individual knows that is important, it is what the tribe knows collectively. Individualism is not the essence of being complete. Tribalism or community is the state which must be complete. Thus, the tribe is central.

Some Native People also describe the family as all the creation. One is not within simply a human family with the same last name.

This puts life in a massive circle.

In a sense, we have returned to the beginning of this whole discussion with the circle and balance and harmony and reciprocity. However, life is not just found in a circle. The circle is one of healing and wholeness. It is the sacred.

Native People have developed the circle into a sacred symbol with four sacred parts. If one looks deeply into it it becomes a mirror to lead a person to the deepest awareness of mystery.

For the Christian the work of the Holy Spirit is to establish wholeness, wholeness in community and wholeness in the individual, wholeness in relationships and in how one thinks, physical and mental wholeness. It is the Spirit that unifies, integrates, and mends relationships.

In a world where people want to bring death to life in a wanton fashion the Holy Spirit is God-at-work to bring life to death.

For the person, the Holy Spirit treats sin by remembering it no longer (John 31:34), casting sin behind our backs (Isaiah 38:17), and sweeping them away like clouds (Isaiah 44:22). Forgiveness leads to blessedness (Psalm 32:1, see also Romans 5:10, II Corinthians 5:18-19, Colossians 1:20).

Peters says,

The Holy Spirit proceeds from this work of the Father through the Son to effect this ministry of reconciliation within the world. Reconciliation is a process leading eventually to its consummate fulfillment in the unity of all things in their creative

and redemptive ground, God (Peters, 233)

The Holy Spirit calls Christians together in community. As a matter of fact, it is hard to say when a person is called a Christian because being a Christian and being in the community of faith are one in the same.

Like Native People celebrating the sacred circle, the Christian celebrates the habitat of the church. To think the spiritual life of a Christian can exist outside of this community is preposterous.

The church is an event where the Word of God is proclaimed and the Sacraments administered. It is the gathered people of God, the reconciling community.

The church is very complex in its role because it has some distinctive tasks within the habitat of this world. It acts on behalf of God. It names the work of the Spirit. It celebrates God. It brings life and nourishment to all. And it looks foolish in its style of life.

Foolish, you say? Foolish, yes! Even the gospel we proclaim is that, says Paul.

The church is like the coyote. It has a definite place within the ecosystem, but it is treated as a pest (i.e., the indigenous alien). Like God's dog it also seems a fool.

When the church is seen as the healing habitat and within the context of the circle it is obvious that sin is not being different, but is being estranged. When a person pulls oneself away or the individual is ignored there is sin.

For the Christian person eco-evangelical spirituality is a commitment to life in the circle and community of the Spirit and the world acting to heal the Earth. This means making it possible for all to be whole and working at reconciliation.

CONCLUSION

Who is the coyote? We are!

We are the people through whom God works to continue with creating and restoring. We are people chosen to teach. Though we do not have the role of elder we can still be those who pass on the traditions. We live with life, death, and life. We die to sin and are raised to walk in newness of life. We are political, profane, potentially abusive. In some cases we are the joke. And yet God has chosen to work in us as God's people:

Made by God's Spirit,
Molded by God's Spirit,
Filled by God's Spirit, and
Used by God's Spirit.

Christians are indigenous aliens being of the world with a message from elsewhere. This is the way Christians practice the Spirit.

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PREFACE

For several years I have sought to interface theology and ecology. I hope for a theology that is understandable and can serve as a reflection and motivator in our Christian religion. Ecology is a fascination for me, too. How do things work? How is it understood? What do scientists say?

These two disciplines lead to a creative discourse that can enable our theology to be described in a more understandable form, informed by the study of ecology. Also, it is possible that a theological vision can give us some better insights into how to observe and interpret natural phenomena.

I am not trying to make things different. I am only interested in making a difference. I believe our Christian faith has an exciting story. It has influenced people throughout the ages by simply repeating the "Old, Old Story." However, this story also has been dulled in conflict and abused in debate. It may be that some revisions of our thinking need to be done.

I am personally interested that the church tell her story, proclaim the gospel, and report to the world clearly her world view. We must be clear about the church's uniqueness, but we must be equally committed to sharing the faith story with people outside the religious community and with people with different religious persuasions.

When we parallel our thinking and contrast it with disciplines and traditions outside of our own we clarify for ourselves and gain new insights into what we believe and understand and develop respect for others and how they believe. This is what this interplay does for me.

In this resource there is the interaction between Christianity and the study of the natural world (science). I am not interested in demonstrating that science and theology are compatible and using some type of scientific method to prove there is a God or the authority of the Bible. This is assumed. What interests me is when we look in detail at the natural world and the Christian faith. These two disciplines give us greater insights into both.

There is also the interchange between religious/spiritual traditions. The intention of this is not to exhibit Christianity's superiority, but to respect how others believe, to point out distinctions between traditions, to learn from others, and to establish the arena for dialogue.¹

¹I appreciate Ted Peters definition of this word and intend to use this definition throughout this paper.

I offer an etymology of the word *dialogue* to make a point. *Logos* is commonly known to be the Greek word for "word" or "conversation." The prefix *di* attached to words such as *dipolar* means "two," so it might seem obvious that a dialogue is a conversation between two parties. But a closer look will show that the prefix is *dia*, not *di*. *Dia* is the Greek preposition meaning through or throughout. Could we think of a dialogue as a conversation in which we talk a subject through, in which we exhaust its details and nuances and implications and draw out its full significance? (Peters, 340)

Someone once said to me that I am like a hen laying a cubic egg. There is nothing new with the content nor the end results. What is different is the shape of the egg, its cubicness.

Another interest of mine is to investigate the original and root meanings of words and use them, if possible, close to their original intent. In the cultural evolution of words and by sheer carelessness words can drift away from their origins. When words are studied by their roots some exciting discoveries can be made. As one reads this paper this will become evident.

THIS NEXT ITEM IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE READER. PLEASE READ CAREFULLY. The general intent of this resource is to create a dialogue using three areas of study: nature, culture, and the Christian tradition. Specifically the three disciplines for the dialogue are animals and their behavior, the spirituality of Native Americans², and the meaning of the Third Article of the Creeds (Nicene and Apostles'), i.e., the person of the Holy Spirit.

I have chosen to include Native people spirituality³ for several reasons. First, the United Nations has designated 1993 as the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. Second, the 500 year celebration of Columbus has peaked interest in the cultures of Native people. Third, I am a tad concerned about how this emphasis is being used in today's "search" for spirituality. The conservative side of me raises concerns that we are watering down the Christian religion and the spirituality of Native people with some of the exchanges that have been occurring. This would be to the detriment of both traditions. Fourth, I think Christians need to learn how to live in a pluralistic world. This means respect for the religious/spiritual ideas and practices of others. It also means a better, deeper, more cohesive understanding of one's Christian roots. Articulation of this faith is vital. Fifth, the spirituality of Native people has depended upon their interpretation and understanding of the natural world and how the natural world works. There is no book on the subject in the same way that Non-Native People have written documents. In specific ways for Native people the natural world is their scripture.

Native people spirituality is grounded in the soul of the Native people. Gifts are brought which can benefit everyone. We can share in their reasons for celebration. Their insights, thinking, and practices can feed everyone in the same way the Christian religion can feed Native people. For Non-Native people we are reminded that everyone has aboriginal roots. Our ancestors can be traced back thousands of years to societies that lived closely with the Earth (Caduto and Bruchac, 4). This interaction with Native people spiritual-

²Hereafter the terminology will be Native people. In most cases the word "people" is what the Native people call themselves. For example, the Navajo (a Spanish word) call themselves the Diné, their word for "people." (See the Glossary in Keepers of the Animals.)

³The Native people refer to their way of life as a spirituality rather than as a religion. For them a religion is classical, incorporated, sectarian, and evangelical (Beck et al, 5).

ity can remind the Non-Native people of the indigenous past.

Respect for Native people's spirituality must be practiced. We cannot abuse the "heart" of their very being. We can be sensitized and develop understanding and appreciation. But we must deeply appreciate that their culture and spirituality are one in the same. This spirituality also differs from tribe to tribe. In this resource caution is being taken to receive and acknowledge the gifts and knowledge Native people give to Non-Native people, especially Non-Native Christian people, and be careful about generalizations.

A word about the learning process of this resource.

One idea which I have been contemplating is that one thing that distinguishes humans from non-humans is that humans "fix" consciousness.

What is consciousness? It is the capacity of a species or an individual organism to be aware of itself and aware of and responsive to its environment and to act on this information. Species have the capacity to adapt. Adaptation is the means by which a species enables itself to survive and procreate. The species has the capacity as a species to have a sense of itself and an awareness of and responsiveness to its environment. This I am calling consciousness. In some species this consciousness is identifiable in the individual. It can be the tree roots that do not intersect with each other, shying away from each other's roots, to the complex creatures that can avoid their predators by various adaptations, e.g. camouflage, speed, etc.

Consciousness in one form or another exists in all things. It is kind of ethereal, i.e., it is about us. I am suggesting that humans have the capacity to "sponge it up." We have our own self-consciousness, but we can also be sensitive to the consciousness of other organisms. In fact, we can in a sense draw it unto ourselves, ingest it, and spew it out. Humans can adapt all types of things to themselves. Humans read the past, interact with the present, and plot the future. Humans can anticipate, speculate, and project. It is not that humans have more consciousness. It is just that we can gather more in, i.e. "fix" it, and use and disperse it in many ways for good or ill. This might be what it means that humans have dominion over the rest of creation according to the First Creation Story in Genesis. Unlike other organisms, or more so than other organisms, we can absorb consciousness.

The idea for this metaphor comes from the idea of organisms that fix nitrogen. Nitrogen encompasses 80% of the earth's gas. However, in order for nitrogen to serve the environment it must be capsulated in some way. This is called nitrogen fixation, the conversion of atmospheric nitrogen gas into other chemical forms that are useful to plants.

Nitrogen fixation is carried out mostly by cyanobacteria (once known as blue-green algae) and other kinds of bacteria in soil and water and by rhizobium bacteria living in small swellings called nodules on the roots of alfalfa, clover, peas, beans, and other legume plants. Also playing a role in nitrogen fixation, lightning converts nitrogen gas and oxygen dioxide gas. These gases react with water vapor in the atmosphere and are converted to nitrate ions that return to the earth as nitric acid dissolved in

precipitation and as particles of solid nitrate compounds (salts) (Miller, 77).

Humans fix consciousness in this way, converting it into something useful, processing, holding, and releasing it for the good of the creation. This is one gift humanity has for the rest of the world. It can be appropriately applied or abused.

Education is intended to stimulate and guide humans in this role of fixing consciousness, i.e., ingesting it, converting it, and using it for the sake of others. One could call education "culture." Persons are prepared through the educational process to hold and to release not just information, but consciousness, awareness, moral action, and goodness into the world.

This makes the role of educator extremely imposing. The teacher does not simply instruct the learner in facts. The educator is key to the learner's development of values in the light of the facts and actions in the light of the values. The concern of education is what materials are gathered, how they are converted, and the way in which they are used.

In the context of the educator's role I submit the following as a method for thinking through the learning process. It is a play on the word "fix."

FIXING CONSCIOUSNESS
a learning process

- F**_{act} - Any type of learning activity
1. Immerse learner in a complex/interactive activity that engages a person's body, mind, and senses.
 2. Learner must view experience as personally meaningful and challenging.
- I**_{ntegrate} - Verbalize
1. Share feelings
 2. Articulate in own words
- Organize
1. Fit activity into one's own experience.
 2. Conceptualize:
 - a. Distinguish parts
 - b. Recognize history
 - c. Organize parts into whole
- eX**_{ecute} - Generalize
1. Identify learnings
 2. Relate learnings to other experiences of the learners
- Apply
1. Specify situations to which learnings can apply (future)
 2. Decide strategies for action

Chen's Preface?

INTRODUCTION

Until Christians practice living ecologically¹ with the Earth, animals, other human beings, and God, the appropriate expression of the Christian faith will not be accomplished and allies of the Earth will be fewer.

How are we related to the Earth? The word "human" comes from the word "humus," dirt that is composed of decaying material. The word is derived from a word meaning "death." Decay, amazingly enough, is the way organisms are broken down and nurture other organisms. Humility also comes from this root.²

Animals? The word comes from *anima* meaning "breath." Humans have been referred to as "human animals."

We are also related to God. This could be seen from a mystical perspective. In a way it is. For Christians it is grounded in water, word, bread, wine, and community. We are not casually related or just tethered to God. There is an intentional bond with humanity initiated by God. When speaking of this aspect of God we generally use the term "Holy Spirit."

The concept of the Holy Spirit is not easy to grasp, but it is central to our faith. The Christian church claims that the Spirit is the Prime Mover of our personal faith, gives us the ability to say, "Jesus is Lord," and gathers the people into Christian community.

This resource is intended to help Christians learn that that which links humans with the Earth, animals, and God is found in the word "Spirit" and in the practice of spirituality.

The sub theme for this resource is "Practicing the Spirit." Christian spirituality is something we do. It requires training as it would be for an athlete or an artist.

The Spirit is God near and God at work. The Spirit is invested throughout and in all of life. The Spirit is God unseen.

Spirituality has three parts. First, there is the knowledge of and trust in the Holy Spirit, the one who guides our lives. Second, the Spirit is in competition with other spirits of our time. How do we know which is which? The Bible, the sacred scriptures of the Church, gives us a key for recognizing the Spirit. The Bible is like a plant identification book by which we can know who this Spirit is. Within the Bible is also the very person who reveals what God is like, namely, Jesus Christ. Third, we practice the Spirit in three specific ways: the ritual/cultic life of the Christian community, the life style of the Spirit, and the community of faith itself, i.e., the church.

One of the resources for our reflection is the spirituality of Native people. Until recently Non-Native people have perpetuated in one form or

¹Ecology means the study of relationships.

²In Hebrew "Adam" comes from *adamah* which means "soil."

another the notion that "Indians" are either brutal savages or innocent children of nature (Brown, 7). The Native people, as we shall discover, are very sophisticated. They developed skills and knowledge that enabled them to live with the natural world.

It is generally accepted that the Native people were immigrants from Asia 15,000 to 20,000 years ago, near the end of the Ice Age (Underhill, 110). Some say 40,000 years ago. The Native people were nomads in many instances. They owned what they carried. Yet what carried them, the earth, the water, the sky, also belonged to them.

To think we can learn from the Native people may be a bit perplexing and disturbing to some individuals because the Native people do not demonstrate the type of achievement we see blessed and honored in the Non-Native people cultures. Where is the wealth of the Native people? Where is their power?

Native people have been measured by many Non-Native people by their material achievement. How can someone who has not known great material wealth be considered worthwhile for us or having something that would be of value to us? The fact is, the wealth of the Native people is found in their mental and spiritual achievements (Brown, 8-9). What they can share is filled with deep meaning and complex understanding.

The method of learning differs between Native people and Non-Native people in its most traditional sense. One could describe the difference between them as knowledge which focuses on the welfare of the tribe and knowledge that focuses on the welfare of the individual. Learning is by listening and relationships rather than books and libraries. An individual in the tribe learns what must be taught. For Native people, information for living is important for the tribe. Each person is a part of the knowledge bank. Non-Native people tend to want to fill the individual with all the culture.

Joseph Brown wrote in a pamphlet in 1967:

If we can understand . . . the truths which the Indian finds in his relationships to nature, and the profound values reflected by his many rites and symbols, then we may become enriched, our understanding will deepen, and we shall be able to give to the American Indian heritage its rightful place among the great spiritual traditions of mankind (Brown, 27).

Native American tribal spirituality cannot be lumped together. However, these six basic concepts are shared by most Native people:

1. A belief in or knowledge of unseen powers, or what some call the Great Mystery, the Great Spirit, the Creator.
2. Knowledge that all things in the universe are dependent upon each other.
3. Personal worship that reinforces the bond between the individual, the community, and the great powers. Worship is a personal commitment to the sources of life.

4. Sacred traditions and persons knowledgeable in sacred traditions responsible for teaching morals and ethics.
5. Trained practitioners who have been given names such as medicine men, priests, shamans, cacques, and other names. These individuals have titles given them by the people which differ from tribe to tribe. They are responsible for specialized, perhaps secret, knowledge. They help pass knowledge and sacred practices from generation to generation, sharing what they know in their memories.
6. A belief that humor is a necessary part of the sacred and a belief that human beings are often weak. We are not gods - and our weakness leads us to do foolish things. Therefore, clowns and similar figures are needed to show us how we act and why (Beck et al, 8-9).

There are three basic insights that can assist us in the dialogue of Native people's spirituality and the understanding of the Christian faith.

First, students of world religions use the categories of ethnic religions and universal religions. Native people's spirituality could fit under ethnic religion because of its intimacy with Native people cultures and languages. But Native people spirituality might better fit under the heading of tribal religion, since the variations are more detailed than the term ethnic implies.

Christianity, on the other hand, is a universal religion. It is found in many cultures and has shaped and been shaped by these cultures. Its language and character will reflect the culture, but the centrality of the Christian tradition is very obvious from culture to culture.

Second, Christianity is unique among the religions of the world in that there is belief in the Incarnation, God becoming a human being, and resurrection, i.e., people die completely and are raised to life solely by the activity of God. This distinction complicates the dialogue of Christianity with other religions of the world.

Third, there is the distinction between doxological and soteriological types of religion. "Doxology" comes from the root words *doxa* - glory and *logo* - word, i.e. words of glory or worship. "Soteriology" means *soter* - deliverance/salvation and *logos* - word, i.e. the word of deliverance or salvation.

Religions have their own self-understanding. They express themselves in worship (doxological) and their understanding of salvation (soteriological). How does one learn the difference? One simply asks the question: how does the religion work? How do its prescribed practices bring its participants into relation with the ultimate reality defined by its doctrines? (Moore, 17-18)

One could say that for the most part Native people's spirituality is doxological and for the most part Christianity is soteriological by the most part. However, there are aspects of soteriology in the beliefs and practices of Native people, e.g. the Buffalo Calf Women of the Lakota. In some instances one might need to distinguish between specific practices.

These categories of doxological and soteriological are presented in this paper to help with interpreting what we experience and practice and not specific definition and universal application.

Though the ways of expression vary, there is a commonality found in that both the Native people's and the Christian church's traditions a sense of solidarity with all creation, a format of story, liturgy, prayer, devotion, a life style of peace, and an understanding of Creator.

The Native people's spirituality has become popularized in many circles being used in some aspects of the "New Age" movement. There also tends to be a mixing of the Native people's spirituality and Christianity. This is not new because it has been going on for close to 500 years. This can contribute to more confusion.

I do not want to misrepresent the spirituality of Native people nor do I want to simplify it so that it can be palatable, comfortable, and/or similar to the Christian faith.

Joseph Brown has described the problem for the Non-Native people in understanding the Native people:

With our own over-emphasis on mental activity we are apt to think that the Indian, without any written language, lacks something important or necessary in not possessing a scholastic or dialectic type of doctrinal presentation. However such a "lack" may have prevented us from understanding the completeness and depth of his wisdom, it represents in the Indian a very effective type of spiritual participation in which the essential ideas and values, reflected by a world of forms and symbols, are spontaneously and integrally lived (Brown, 8).

There are two themes related to the Native people's spirituality that need to be spelled out: what the Lakota people call mystery (wakan) and "nature persons."

The Mystery

Native people's spirituality is the "spirit of wonder," the recognition of life as power, as a mysterious, ever present concentrated form of non-material energy, of something loose about the world and contained in a more or less condensed degree by every object (Beck et al, 9). The Lakota call it "wakan." We cannot see the thunder, and we say it is wakan, but we see the lightning and we know that the thunder and the lightning are a sign of rain, which does good to the earth. Anything which has similar power is wakan, but above all is the sun, which has the most power of all (Beck et al, 10).

In Lakota there are wakan (the mystery, the power filled, the extraordinary) and ikceya (the obvious, the profane, the pitiful) in all of life (Stolzman, 152). The Native people's sacred traditions observe these as one. A great part of their tradition is to respect the power, listen silently, and learn (Beck et al, 11). Each individual entity has wakan.

Ruth Underhill quotes La Fleche:

All life is wakan. So also is everything which exhibits power, whether in action, as the winds and drifting clouds, or in passive endurance, as a boulder by the wayside. For even the commonest sticks and stones have a spiritual essence which must be revered as a manifestation of the all-pervading mysterious power that fills the universe (Underhill, 21).

Wakan Tanka is the "Great Mystery" which is far beyond human comprehension (McGaa, 77). This is the supernatural. Some use the words "the Great Spirit"³ and "Creator." However, such a being is not referred to in personal terms by the Native people as it is by Non-Native people (Underhill, 5). The Native people deplore exactness in describing Wakan Tanka. It is felt it should be a mystery.

Traditional Indians believe that attempts to describe to another two-legged an overly defined concept of the mysterious vastness of the Great Provider of all are crude and unmannerly and show lack of humility (McGaa, 44).

"Wakan Tanka" are two words that designate a class of gods, and through them all the gods. The word is plural. Originally it meant the totality of existence. "Kan" means aged and "wan", from old age (Steinmetz, 40).

That which is spiritual can be defined as an animating (moving, vitalizing, life-giving) force or vital principle. It is a will that is unseen and intangible (Beck et al, 5). It is not difficult to see how people close to nature can be sensitive to its flow.

Wakan is also the sacred. For Native people the world of nature is their temple and within this sanctuary they show great respect to every form, function, and power. Reverence for nature and for life is central to their spirituality. Each form in the world around them bears such a host of precise values and meanings (Brown, 16).

It is always a source of wonder that the unseen and intangible tie or hold us to the world that is so visible, filled with different life forms. That is what makes the sacred so difficult to discuss. When you wonder, you are silent. There are no words to express this bond to the Great Mystery (Beck et al, 8). Thus, all life is sacred, both being and action.

Nature Persons

The Lakota reverence toward nature is the result of their belief that animals, plants, and rocks have their own "wakan." They are commonly referred to as "persons." (Brown, 43)

³The concept of the Great Spirit is more closely allied with the Christian's understanding of the First Article of the Creed, Creator Spirit, rather than the complexity of the Third Article of the Creed which describes the Holy Spirit. This will be detailed later in this paper.



For the Native people everything in the world is alive, and everything can help or harm. All creatures are "nature persons." They, like human persons, are to be treated appropriately: courteously, not exploited, favors requested, favors returned. Give and take is a basic rule (Underhill, 40-41).

The range of "nature persons," from the animals to the thunder, the winds, and the heavenly bodies, can be found everywhere. The emphasis, however, is very different with some of the hunter-gatherers in the desert area, the animals seem to be almost the only Powers present in man's thought. In the wide open Plains, the animals bring visions, but ceremonial reverence is offered to the directions - to the earth, the sky, and the four quarters of the world or the winds which personate them. Sometimes the sky power is focused in the sun, as one who is able to see all and can be a witness to behavior. Each of these has mana (wakan) in its own sphere. The world is full of distributed power so that man lives constantly among potential companions and helpers (Underhill, 46-47).

For the Navajo the physical world is personified: Mother Earth, Father Sky, etc.

Animals⁴ are the most important "nature persons." There are more rituals for them than the humble rocks and plants. This is probably because hunting is more precarious, and hunters need more help (Underhill, 177).

The Native people make this distinction between human persons and animal people: in their stories it is the animal that comes first. In some instances animals create humans. Animals are considered elders to humans as well as teachers. Therefore, it is wise for the human to listen to the animals (Caduto and Bruchac, 4).

"Long ago, back when the animals could talk and people could understand them . . ." is the way some stories begin. More than likely animals still talk, but people no longer know how to listen (Caduto and Bruchac, 4).

Now you ask: why the coyote? Could there not be a better animal, one less profane? Or might this not be the coyote's appeal? A coyote is an awesome creature. The coyote is a mystery to us (a wakan), unfortunately, a mystery that can be shrouded in fear.

We might need to remythologize the Coyote. The Coyote is a part of the ecosystem and yet has been declared by the United States Government a nuisance that can be eliminated.

Thoreau once said,

This curious world which we inhabit is more wonderful than it is convenient; more beautiful than it is useful; it is more to be admired than used (Ryden, 24).

⁴Most Native people languages do not have a word such as "animal."

Hope Ryden, in her book God's Dog, continues the thought . . .

. . . studies revealed the coyote to be an animal indeed more wonderful, more beautiful, and more to be admired than all the logical reasons . . . set forth to demonstrate why he is so vitally important to whole biotic communities. An older and wiser culture understood all of this when they spoke of him as "God's Dog." (Ryden, XIII)

In Native North American stories the coyote appears in many forms: trickster, transformer, and fool. He has a unique way of gaining wisdom through spectacular and superhuman experiences. Coyote can change form and is a smooth talker. In some stories coyote dies, only to return to life. Still, coyote is regarded as having a certain malevolent benevolence and many good lessons are learned by those who listen well to coyote's exploits and the outcomes.

In fact and story the Coyote is not as neatly definable as other animals.

Barre Toelken, in the Forward to Barry Lopez's book, Giving Birth to Thunder . . ., puts it cleverly:

Say, if you will (and some have), that Coyote is the exponent of all possibilities through whose antics and actions we see ourselves and the moral ramifications of our thoughts; or say that Coyote is the philosophical embodiment of a native world view of relationships between mankind and nature; or say that Coyote is a freak of the primitive mind - the impulsive and self-destructive character that proves the savage did not "have it all together." Or say simply that Coyote is a Gemini. All these things are true; all these things are false (Lopez, xii).

The Navajo saw the coyote as a god. The Hopi perceived the coyote as a laughable fool.

In Crow mythology Old Man Coyote's position was supreme. The Northwestern tribe not only regarded him as "First Worker," creator of the earth and all living creatures, but also believed him to be the founder of human customs. Yet because life on earth was so obviously full of error, it naturally followed that Old Man Coyote himself must be fallible and though inordinately clever, capable of being duped. The Crows saw no inconsistency in casting the coyote in various roles of transformer, trickster, and fool. They relished stories in which their hero received his come-uppance from lesser animals. Mankind, then as now, delighted in the fall of the mighty. Nevertheless, the coyote was no less venerated for being vulnerable (Ryden, XIII-IX).

For other tribes coyote was not the supreme symbol of the Universal Principle, but coyote was given a special place in their understanding of creation (Ryden, IX).

Stories about Coyotes, a name that cannot be mentioned in the summer by

the Navajos,⁵ are funny, but they are not intended to be funny. The listener laughs at the way coyote does things and at the way the story is told. If the listener hears the real meaning of the story the listeners will grow up to be good (Beck et al, 61).

Perhaps only humans are as capable of change, of adapting behavior, food sources, and rhythms for survival's sake, as our close neighbor the coyote. But we have responded to the coyote and to both the gray and red wolf, by declaring war on them - shooting, trapping, snaring, hunting, gassing, and poisoning these wild dogs not to mention leveling, paving, flooding, and developing their habitat (Caduto and Bruchac, 167).

The Creator, one story goes, could not do everything. Some tasks were left to helpers who were bunglers or just plain mischievous. Coyote, being told to place the stars in the sky in geometric order, dropped the sack that contained them, and they scattered every which way (Underhill, 34).

How vicious is the coyote? There are various opinions. They have not attacked humans in packs. They often will roll over belly-up when captured. Some renegade coyotes do kill sheep. Most coyotes living near farms actually help to drive away potential threats to livestock. Their normal food consists of woodchucks, rabbits, mice, and voles, fruit corn, dead animals, and occasionally, a stray pet (Caduto and Bruchac, 167).

The scientific name for the coyote is canis latrans, wolf prairie. This animal is native only to the North American continent (Ryden, VII).

Coyotes are known to be territorial. A male will bring food to his mate when she is nursing the pups. Observers have seen coyotes regurgitate food for a mate (Ryden, 18-20).

The coyote may have moved into the niche of meat eater in some habitats because other predators like the bear, badger, weasel, and wolf have vanished.

A coyote's behavior might be strikingly different if other animals with greater strength were in their ecosystem. The competition would create a different type of response from them (Ryden, 25).

In 1937 Adolph Murie, a game biologist, studied coyotes and published information that the coyote was not a beast intending to destroy humans. He also learned that coyote predation was minimal, selective, and more than likely beneficial to the prey species (Ryden, 35-36).

Coyotes themselves are short lived. They are subject to disease. Starvation is a major cause. It reminds us that it is the predator species that hangs in the precious balance and not the prey (Ryden, 40).

Coyotes tend to move purposefully, but they are easily sidetracked to

⁵Words have power. They can invoke and provoke. The art of story telling is precise. This, too, is sacred.



chase down a small animal.

Urine is the coyote's signature. It is used for staking out territory, identifying food, and committing to a mate (Ryden, 51-52).

It seems there is a symbiotic relationship between coyotes, magpies, and ravens. In summer the birds will clean up a carcass left by a coyote. In winter the birds can locate the prey. Another benefit is that the birds can warn the coyotes of coming danger (Ryden, 80-81).

One does not discipline a coyote. One simply learns how to cooperate with him (Ryden, 110).

Affectionate, sociable, and cooperative, coyotes mate for life and remain together as a pair year-round.⁶ When the six to eight pups disperse in the fall or late summer, one young pup remains behind with the parents to help raise next year's litter in the spring, in case something happens to one of the parents before the young are old enough to fend for themselves (Caduto and Bruchac, 167).

The characteristics of the coyote being used in this resource are God's Dog (Day 1), the teacher (Day 2), the survivor/transformer (Day 3), the fool and trickster (Day 4), and the indigenous alien (Day 5).

To be helpful to the reader the following chart is presented to outline the way the interaction between the study of animals, Native people spirituality, and the Christian tradition interact.

⁶Canids are endowed with an amazing capacity for attachment to one another, a quality that enabled men to domesticate the dog and bind this innate devotion to himself (Ryden, 82).



*Diversity is the uniqueness
of the wakan in + the
name of individual*

Learned from the Animal/Natural World	Native People Spirituality	Teachings of the Christian Faith	Eco-Evangelical Spirituality	Multi-Cultural Multi-Religious Multi-Gender	Coyote Mnemonic Device
Reciprocity, Balance and Harmony	The Circle Wakan (the Mystery) Respect Give and Take	Holy Spirit Creator Spirit Restoring Spirit Forgiving Spirit Sanctifier	Creating, Redeeming, and Sanctifying God Involved in All Creation	Diversity is acknowledging the wakan in each individual	God's Dog
Life in the tension between sustenance and destruction	Necessary knowledge to live in tension learned from "Nature Persons"	The Word for Life First, Event - Jesus Christ Second, the Proclamation Third, the Written Record (Bible)	Knowledge from scripture and natural world considered sacred and viable	Each person and culture is a source of information <i>for the growth of the whole</i>	Teacher
Intangible necessities for existence: Cleansing (Restoration), Endurance, and Courage	Ritual and Story	Worship (Valuing) Thanksgiving (Taking Pleasure/Being Pleased with) Sacraments Gospel Stories	The Celebration of solidarity with God and all creation (Erdegebundenheit)	Necessities for mutual living: Self-esteem Trust Willingness to Settle Conflicts Communication Skills	Survivor and Transformer
Each Organism has a Profession (Niche)	Vision (the story line for one's life) and The use of stories for instruction and behavior modification	Gifts of the Spirit Fruits of the Spirit Sanctification	The Vision of Ecological Evangelism that gives to a person identity and profession to make the world a better Place	The treatment of others depends upon <i>the</i> mental images of them <i>offer</i> (Stereotyping) <i>Re-visioning Stereotypes</i>	Trickster and Fool
Habitat Requirements	Community Centered (i.e., Tribe and Family) Sacred Circle Healing	Community of Faith Body of Christ	Life in the community of the spirit and all creation healing the Earth	Inclusivity acknowledges, celebrates, and responds to diversity within the whole	The Indigenous Alien

CHAPTER ONE

In the natural world we discover there is reciprocity, give and take, harmony and balance. Creation is intended for the benefit of all equally.

As one studies the ecosystem one understands the interrelatedness and interdependence of all creation. There are various cycles: earth, water, air, etc. The food chain has many links beginning with the simplest forms requiring something to feed it. Though the sun is the source of energy it depends upon various species to transport that energy to other species.

The Native people understand that all life is within a reciprocal circle. At the heart of their spirituality is what the Sioux say in their ceremonies, "Mitakuye oyasin" (we are related to all things) (McGaa, XVII). The world is the property of the One who creates it and holds it together. It does not belong to humans (Caduto and Bruchac, 8).

Everything, though having its own individuality and special place, is dependent on and share in the growth and work of everything else. This means, for example, that if you take the life of an animal you have to let that animal know why you are doing so and that you take full responsibility for your act. Why? One reason is because it is a way of showing that you understand the balances that exist in all natural systems, or ecology. Another reason (perhaps harder to see) is because human beings and animals have a relationship to one another. Animals, for instance, know why they are in the presence of human beings and they learn to avoid places where one of their own members has been killed. The elders and the oral histories tell us that long ago we once could speak the language of animals and that our survival depends on maintaining the relationship between animals, plants, rivers, feeding grounds, etc. Keeping this in mind, then, the concept of dependency and respect is not difficult to understand (Beck et al, 12).

Vine Deloria, in the introduction to Keepers of the Animals says,

Native North Americans saw themselves as participants in a great natural order of life, related in some fundamental manner to every other living species. It is said that each species had a particular knowledge of the universe and specific skills for living in it. Human beings had a little bit of knowledge and some basic skills, but we could not compare with any other animals as far as speed, strength, cunning, and intelligence (Caduto and Bruchac, XI).

The interconnectedness with nature is the appreciation that in one way or another all things are relate to each other, both animate and inanimate. Rocks contain minerals also contained in animals. In a sense the Earth is us. We are all one body. Native people see this within the wonder of the cosmic flow that never ceases (McGaa, XVI). In this way of thinking they do not perceive themselves as passive children of nature, but dynamic personalities of great force, courage, and intelligence who undergo intense suffering and sacrifice in becoming what they are and in preserving what they have (Brown, 21).

Spiritual development occurs in several ways. First, it is derived from their close contact with nature. Second, the experience of nature is both what is observed and what is mysterious (discussed earlier). Third, Native people rigorously participate in a multitude of rituals and symbols which have for them

Diversity
Balance
Ehliik

a supernatural origin and are very complex (Brown, 20). Fourth, stories are essential. They are used to teach the relationship between people, animals, and the rest of the Earth (Caduto and Bruchac, XVIII).

One could say there are two ways to look at nature, a mechanistic model and a sacred model. What makes Native people's spirituality unique is that life is perceived and interpreted as sacred. For those who choose a mechanistic model it often requires determining what nature is "good for" in order to describe how nature fits into the providence of the Supreme Being. Once that is determined and the ends are beneficial to humans (that is "the bottom line") then it is considered sacred. For the Native people the world is sacred first. In one of his speeches Chief Seattle says, "Every part of this soil is sacred" (Cummings, 3).

For the Christian the word "Spirit" describes the wholeness of God. We meet the Spirit in the first creation story, brooding over the water. The spirit leads the Israelites out of Egypt (Isaiah 53:11-14). The Spirit anoints the prophet (Isaiah 61:1 ff).

The Spirit is God present and God at work. The God of the Hebrews and the Christian is God involved in life.

The Spirit brings into the present God the Creator and Christ the Redeemer. In the Nicene Creed it states that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son." We can understand this idea in four ways.

First, this ties the Spirit closely to the resurrected Christ. (In the New Testament the Spirit and the risen Christ are hard to distinguish from each other.) Second, the Spirit is the principle of relationship and unity (Peters, 251). Third, the Spirit brings the past of history into the present. Fourth, the Spirit makes the future fulfillment of God's realm present to hope. The Spirit collapses time (Peters, 229-230).

Tom Peters identifies the Holy Spirit with what he calls "the three magnificent virtues (that) imbue the life of beatitude: faith, hope, and love."

In faith the Holy Spirit makes Christ present to us; it unifies what is separated by time and space so that the happy exchange can actually take place in our lives. In hope, the Spirit illumines our consciousness with visions of God's future, with the freeing confidence that the divine promises will attain fulfillment. In love, the Spirit actually releases the power that bears effective witness to the ongoing work of reconciliation. These three magnificent virtues imbue the life of beatitude (Peters, 233-234).

Faith, too, is the work of the Holy Spirit and is the very presence of Christ in one's life. This is what makes Christian faith distinctive.

The concept of faith has many facets. 1) Faith is believing what cannot be proved, i.e., intellectual assent. 2) Faith is trust. We put our lives into someone else's hands. 3) Faith is a response to God's act of grace. God initiates, and we respond. 4) Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. In Luther's Explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed we say, "I believe that



I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel . . ." 5) Faith is ultimately the very presence of the risen Christ in one's life.

The presence of Christ produces two paradoxes of the Christian faith. First, this new life in Christ stands amid old death. In the brokenness of life lies the power of healing and salvation.

Second, we are at the same time justified and sinful (simul justus et peccator). Paul spells it out in Galatians (2:19-20):

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

There are two important theological implications of this. First, the presence of Christ is not simply a matter of experience, empirical or religious. Christ is present to faith even if not experienced. "Our actual experience is one of brokenness, which at the same time the present of the risen Christ promises a healing wholeness."

Second, "Inspiration is not the actualization of a human potential. . . . Our justness is his justness, pure and simple. The Holy Spirit, not our spirit, binds us to Christ."

In summary, the presence of Christ is absolutely crucial to an understanding of pneumatology and Christian faith. (The Christian faith says nothing more than that we have been called into the immediacy of the mystery of God himself and that this mystery gives itself to us in unmeasurable nearness. Rahner.) So close is the identification of the resurrected Christ with the Holy Spirit that they are almost interchangeable in the New Testament. Whether it be the indwelling of the Spirit (Romans 8:9) or the indwelling of Christ (Romans 8:10), in faith we become united with God and receive new life (Peters, 235-236).

Ted Peters discusses Jürgen Moltmann's doctrine of the Holy Spirit:

The Spirit who proceeds from the Father and shines forth in the Son is the very spirit of the universe, its cohesive structure, its source of energy. The Spirit is the principle of creativity operating at all levels of matter and life. It is continually opening up possibilities for new realities. It is also a holistic principle. In addition to being the principle of individuation, the Spirit creates interactions and draws things toward cooperation, community, and harmony. The Spirit that gave life in the first place is now engaged in the task of transforming life, in the task of bringing forth the new creation. The Spirit of God did not just generate life at the beginning but continues to inspire and evoke wisdom within the cosmos as it makes its way through history toward its appointed destiny.

Christian theology needs to affirm with spokes persons of other religions and of postmodern religiosity that the Spirit of God is present throughout the cosmic process. The divine Spirit is not the private possession of the

*sin - designed for what world of values
Need to name it know - who names is important
that we know names is see anonymous below
art by*

historic Christian churches. But in saying that, I must affirm as well that this cosmic presence does not take the form of an immanent or impersonal force. There is no such thing as a spiritual nature that exists parallel to physical nature. Rather, the spirit operates throughout the processes of creation as God's providential activity. As such it is present though hidden in all times and places; yet it is free to surface and enter human experience as a discrete power or identity. Because we understand the work of the Spirit to anticipate proleptically the consummate future by drawing us into the processes of integration and unification in the present, we must recognize and affirm the presence of the Spirit wherever the fruits of the future kingdom are discerned - peace, justice, reconciliation, healing, integrity⁷ - both inside and outside the church (Peters, 253-254).

Another approach is to say that the word "Spirit" is the ecological word for God. God is in relationship with all of creation and also is the force of the relationship.

Thus, the name "Spirit" for God deals with the wholeness of God. God is Creator and Redeemer. God forgives and creates a new creation., God gives faith. God in Christ is present in faith and present in hope. Our senses are roused. We name the Spirit. We acknowledge the Spirit, the very presence and power of God.

Eco-evangelical Spirituality

Henry Baston said,

Nature is part of our humanity, and without some awareness and experience of that divine mystery man cases to be man. When the Pleiades, and the word in the grass, are no longer a part of the human spirit, a part of very flesh and bone, man becomes, as it were a kind of cosmic outlaw, having neither the completeness and integrity of the animal nor the birthright with a true humanity (Ryden, 90).

The human being must realize that life is not found only in the observable. There is a life force which moves within all of creation. The Lakota people call it Wakan Tanka. The Christian calls it the Holy Spirit.

Spirituality is the ability to live in community with both and thereby find one's own humanity. One lives by faith, i.e., trust in the Holy Spirit, and in the knowledge that Christ is present in one's life. One lives within this reality by one's senses, grasping the world as a whole in a conscious and sensitive way.⁸

⁷Dietrich Bonhoeffer would say that these vary fruits have their origin in Jesus Christ (Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 168).

⁸Al Gore in Earth in the Balance, says that:

. . . much of our success in rescuing the global ecological system will depend upon whether we can find a reverence for the environment as a whole - not just

*DISCUSS meaning of anonymity - No name
no value
value + name go
together*

CHAPTER TWO

All creatures know that they live precariously between being sustenance and destruction. Humans are also aware how close we are to self-destruction. The fetid world not only nourishes the soil, but can be the cause of death. It is like walking a tight rope.

True, we probably do not pay much attention to the possibilities of being destroyed because we seem to always be nurtured. Humans seeks to make that happen. Yet there are times when we are reminded how near the brink we stand. Several years ago the salmonella outbreak, recently AIDS and Hepatitis B. What is in the future? We divine sanitary precautions because of the threat of disease, death, and destruction.

The plant and animal realms know precisely what it means to live in this tension of sustenance and destruction. They cooperate and compete. The prey avoids the predator, but for how long? For the animals world species depend upon finding food and protecting themselves to avoid their captors. Yet, they also reach a point of death and destruction. But not a death and destruction that is purposeless.

Humans have known this problem since the beginning of human life and have found ways to maintain and renew health. We also accept death as a part of the

its part.

. . . we have encouraged our best thinkers to concentrate their talents not on understanding the whole but on analyzing smaller and smaller parts.

Despite - or perhaps because of - the so-called information age, what's required now is a Jeffersonian approach to the environment. Thomas Jefferson, like other leading thinkers of his time, aspired to a catholic understanding of the whole of knowledge, and when he and his colleagues in Philadelphia turned to the task of creating the world's first constitutional self-government, they combined an impressive understanding of human nature with a full command of jurisprudence, politics, history, philosophy, and Newtonian physics. The world as a whole has now arrived at a watershed comparable in some ways to the challenge that confronted the founders two hundred years ago. Just as the thirteen colonies faced the task of defining a framework to unite their common interests and identity, the people of all nations have begun to feel that they are part of a truly global civilization, united by common interests and concerns - among the most important of which is the rescue of our environment. If we are to succeed, we must resist being overwhelmed by the flood of information and refuse to consider the natural world as merely a convenient bank of resources and coded information. We must be bold enough to use Jefferson's formula and seek to combine a catholic understanding of the nature of civilization with a comprehensive command of the way in which the environment functions (Gore, 203-204).

This sensitivity of Jefferson may be due to the founding fathers' contacts with the Iroquois form of governance (Mander, 233).

natural process.

How does one survive? There is a source of knowledge. For the Native people there is a source of information on how to live within the tension of sustenance and destruction and within the balance and harmony of the world. This information is through the natural world, namely through animals. It reaches deeply into their spirituality.

In animals Indians see actual reflection of the qualities of the Great Spirit which serve the same function as revealed scriptures in other religions. Animals are intermediators or links between humans and God. This explains not only why religious devotions may be directed to the deity through the animals, but it also helps us to understand why contact with, or from, the Great Spirit comes to the Indian almost exclusively through visions involving animal and other natural forms (Brown, 17).

We need to think in mega years. How have people learned? Who could be the teacher? Knowledge was gained through experiences that date back to the Pleistocene Age, two to three million years ago (Caduto and Bruchac, 9). What is noticeable is the use of totems. Animals are depicted. Universally they are the ones who lead humans in terms of how to live and how to behave (Caduto and Bruchac, 32).

The Native people have made a point of observing the other creatures and in modeling their own behavior after them. The technical skills of birds, animals, and reptiles were such that the Native people could take cues from them for their own welfare. For example, when Native people would go on a hunt they would usually return with information they learned from the animals. Often it was a dance (Caduto and Bruchac, 44).

Being guided and learning from nature is not peculiar to the Native people. The story of the Magi visiting Jesus recorded in Matthew reminds us that an event in the natural world guided them to where Jesus lived, namely a star. It was upon this information the Magi trusted.

Not only is there observed information. Stories are purposeful. Oral tradition teaches and passes on the sacred knowledge of the tribe (Beck et al, 57). There are appropriate times to tell stories. Some stories can be told only once a year. There are stories that can be told by only special persons.

Stories are the way the oral traditions are passed on. A story can be abused and mistold. This is an act against the Native people.

For Native people the revelation of how to live is rooted in nature. The observable and mysterious are grounded in their experience of and in the natural world.

I lift this up as a crucial distinction between the Native people's spirituality and the Christian faith. For the latter the revelation is grounded in history (and you thought I was going to say a book). The Bible reports a variety of things, but it essentially tells us of the God and human encounter in the context of specific events.

*Disadv
Zani
Animal
Fetters*

Christians understand the brink of disaster upon which all creatures walked. The source of knowledge, the information that is conveyed to us, is through the God who reveals the God-self to us.

When Jesus announces that he will go away he promises to send a paraclete, an advocate, a helper (John 15:15-17). It is not possible for Jesus to tell his followers all they must know. However, someone will come to guide the believers. This is understood as the Holy Spirit.

In John 15 Jesus clearly states that if one loves God, one is obedient to God, and in this relationship God will be revealed. This has been understood throughout the ages that this is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Peters states:

The power of the Holy Spirit makes the words of Jesus effective in our lives. We identify the presence of God through the concept of the spirit. Where the divine breath blows there is comfort, counsel, and truth (Peters, 229).

There is no simple way to describe how the Spirit works in our lives to lead us. The tension is between relying on the Spirit in some mystical way to convey information and trusting in something that conveys the Spirit.

Let me take you through some steps that help me understand the way God's knowledge is conveyed to us. It begins in our experience with faith. We hold that faith comes by the work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the Christian community. Note Luther's Explanation to the Third Articles of the Apostles' Creed.

This faith, Paul says, comes by hearing (Romans 10:17). Hearing what? We hear the proclamation of the Gospel and respond. This refers particularly to an oral tradition, not a written tradition.

The analogy for me is how the flow of solar energy works in the food chain. This energy that makes life possible is acquired by animals through eating, the use of the mouth. How is the power of God specifically conveyed? It also goes through a chain, a faith chain, from one person of faith to another. Which anatomical part plays a role for the recipient? The ear.

Thus, the proclamation of the Gospel is the way God is conveyed through faith. What empowers us to speak? Paul says that we are able to say Jesus is Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. (See I Corinthians 12:3 and John 3:34)

Our starting point is a dynamic event in time and space where something happens.

The progression of the Word of God goes like this:

First - there is an event., For us it is the event of Jesus Christ.

Second - there is the proclamation of the event. There is discussion of what occurred. One person tells another.

Third - there is the writing down of the proclamation. We call this the



Bible.

What is at the heart of all of this? Peters says:

The gospel is the proclamation of the redemptive act in Jesus Christ, an act of divine grace by which sinners are forgiven and incorporated into the eternal life of the risen Savior (Peters, 57).

We have now returned to the beginning. The revelation of God is within the context of history - God's activity particularly in Christ.

How does scripture fit into the picture? We must see it within the context of God's intention that we receive further instruction, as an expression of faith of others so that we can have faith, as an instrument of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit in the same way faith is inspired and our ability to proclaim Christ is inspired, as a touchstone for understanding how the Spirit works in our lives. Luther would describe the Bible as the manger where the Christ-child can be found.

What makes this topic more exciting is that the Bible has two major functions. First, it is the means by which we discern how the Holy Spirit works in the world and particularly in our lives. Second, the Bible is the way God speaks to us.

Just imagine how people believed prior to Copernicus and the Enlightenment? They needed some how to explain their world. Thus, there were all types of spirits and gods wandering through their minds. How could one discern the authentic voice of God from all the other voices? Many voices spoke with great credibility. This subject is addressed in Galatians 4.

In spite of our vast scientific knowledge today we are finding a surge again to use various divine images to explain life. Spirituality is on the upswing. This is the driving force of the "new age" movement. Even the popularity of the spirituality of Native people belongs to this hunger. We look for connections.

First, Paul makes it quite clear in Galatians 4 and 5 that the way we discern the Spirit in our lives is that two things have happened in history and these two things become the norm for our discernment: first, God's son was sent into the world in order to bring redemption and, second, in this redemption we are no longer enslaved to the fates of life but set free. "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1a).

Spirituality that invites us to look for fulfillment or freedom in something other than Christ is not Christian spirituality.

However, when one is set free in Christ one is able to see how Christ acts in setting the world free and is able to acknowledge this as it appears in many different ways.

The Bible is that source to which we turn to be able to distinguish how God acts in the world. We call the Bible the norm and rule of faith and life. The Bible is the critical source. It is legitimate to ask of our religious life and

our theological musings, "Is it Biblical?" (Peters, 52)

Second, God speaks in the Bible. Too often scripture is seen as a law book, as a proof text, as the predictor of the future (God's tarot cards). When scripture is used this way it speaks of human manipulation and human need to have a material idol, to be absolutely right, and to know the future.

Bonhoeffer puts it in a very insightful way. The Bible is where we go to listen to God speak to us. In a letter to Dr. Rüdiger Schleicher, Bonhoeffer's brother-in-law, he says:

. . . We have often feuded with each other before and until now it has always come out right. So it will again. I find it helpful to keep reminding myself that the pastor can never satisfy the proper "layman." If I preach faith and grace alone . . . then you ask: What about the Christian life? If I discuss the Sermon on the Mount . . . then you ask: What about real life? If I interpret the very real and sinful life of some person in the Bible, then you ask: What are the eternal verities? And all these questions really express only one concern: How can I live a Christian life in the real world and where are the final authorities for such a life, which alone is worth living?

First, I want to confess quite simply that I believe the Bible alone is the answer to all our questions, and that we only need to ask persistently and with some humility in order to receive the answer from it. One cannot simply read the Bible the way one reads other books. One must be prepared to really question it. Only then will it open itself up. Only when we await the final answer from the Bible will it be given to us. That is because in the Bible it is God who speaks to us. And we cannot simply reach our own conclusions about God; rather, we must ask him. He will only answer us if we are seeking after him. Naturally, one can also read the Bible like any other book - from the perspective of textual criticism. for instance. There is nothing to be said against that. But that will only reveal the surface of the Bible, not what is within it. When a dear friend speaks a word to us, do we subject it to analysis? No, we simply accept it, and then it resonates inside us for days. The word of someone we love opens itself up to us the more we "ponder it in our hearts," as Mary did. In the same way, we should carry the Word of the Bible around with us. We will only be happy in our reading of the Bible when we dare to approach it as the means by which God really speaks to us, the God who loves us and will not leave us with our questions unanswered.

Now, we can only seek for what we already know. If I do not know what I am really looking for, then I am not really looking for anything. So, we must already know which God we seek before we can look for him. If I do not know what, I will just rummage around, and seeking will become my main purpose instead of finding anything at all. So I can only find if I know what I seek. Now, I either know about the God I seek from my own experience and insights, from the meanings which I assign to history or nature - that is, from within myself - or I know about him based on his revelation of his own Word. Either I determine the place in which I will find God, or I allow God to determine the place where he will be found.

If it is I who say where God will be, I will always find there a God who

in some way corresponds to me, is agreeable to me, fits in with my nature. But if it is God who says where he will be, then that will truly be a place which at first is not agreeable to me at all, which does not fit so well with me. That place is the cross of Christ. And whoever will find God there must draw near to the cross in the manner which the Sermon on the Mount requires. That does not correspond to our nature at all; it is, in fact, completely contrary to it. But this is the message of the Bible, not only the New Testament but also the Old. (Is 53!) In any case, Jesus and Paul understand it in this way - that the cross of Jesus fulfills the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The entire Bible, then, is the Word in which God allows himself to be found by us. Not a place which is agreeable to us or makes sense to us *a priori*, but instead a place which is strange to us and contrary to our nature. Yet, the very place in which God has decided to meet us.

This is how I read the Bible now. I ask of each passage: What is God saying to us here? And I ask God that he would help us hear what he wants to say. So, we no longer look for general, eternal truths, which correspond with our own "eternal" nature and are, therefore, somehow self-evident to us. Instead, we seek the will of God, who is altogether strange to us, whose ways are not our ways and whose thoughts are not our thoughts, who hides himself from us under the sign of the cross, in which all our ways and thoughts have an end. God is completely other than the so-called eternal verities. Theirs is an eternity made up of our own thoughts and wishes. But God's Word begins by showing us the cross. And it is to the cross, to death and judgment before God, that our ways and thoughts (even the "eternal" ones) all lead.

Does this perspective somehow make it understandable to you that I do not want to give up the Bible as this strange Word of God at any point, that I intend with all my powers to ask what God wants to say to us here? Any other place outside the Bible has become too uncertain for me. I fear that I will only encounter some divine double of myself there. Does this somehow help you understand why I am prepared for a *sacrificium intellectus* - just in these matters, and only in these matters, with respect to the one, true God! And who does not bring to some passages his sacrifice of the intellect, in the confession that he does not yet understand this or that passage in Scripture, but is certain that even they will be revealed on day as God's own Word? I would rather make that confession than try to say according to my own opinion: this is divine, that is human.

And now let me tell you quite personally that since I learned to read the Bible in this way - and that is not so long ago - it has become daily more wonderful to me. I read it mornings and evenings, often also during the day. And each day I take up a text, which I have before me for the entire week, and I attempt to immerse myself in it completely, in order to really listen to it. I know that without this I could no longer rightly live, let alone believe. And every day more riddles are solved for me, even though I am still moving on the surface.

As I was looking at medieval art again in Hildesheim, it occurred to me how much more they understood about the Bible in those times. I am also struck by the fact that our ancestors in their battles for the faith had nothing, and wanted nothing, but the Bible, and that by means of the Bible

they became strong and free for a real life of faith. It would be simply superficial, I think, to say that everything has changed since then. Human beings and their needs have remained the same. And the Bible answers those needs today no less than then. It may be that this sounds very primitive. But you have no idea how happy one can be to find one's way back from the false tracks of so much theology to these primitive things. And I believe that in matters of faith we are always equally primitive.

In a few days it will be Easter. That makes me very happy. But do you think that either of us by ourselves could believe or would want to believe these impossible things which are reported in the gospels, if the Bible did not support us in our belief? Simply the Word, as God's truth, which he vouches for himself. Resurrection - that is not a self-evident idea, an eternal verity. I mean, of course, resurrection as the Bible means it - as a rising up from real death (not sleep) to real life, from life without God to new life with Christ in God. God has said (and we know this through the Bible): "Behold I make all things new." He made that come true at Easter. Must not this message appear much more impossible, distant, unreal than the whole story of King David, which, by comparison, is quite harmless?

There remains, then, only the decision whether we will trust the Bible or not, whether we will allow ourselves to be supported by it as by no other word, in life and death. I believe that we can only be happy and at peace when we have made that decision (Bonhoeffer, Meditating on the Word, 43-48).

What is sin? In this instance sin can be described as using the self as the author and authenticator of knowledge. How do we walk the tight rope within the tension of sustenance and destruction? Only arrogance says we know the answers from within ourselves. One thing our genetic codes does not do is relay all knowledge to our brains. Our genes may contain the information, but they do not give us the needed knowledge.

It seems to me that the Christian is called to be attentive to how God has taught the world. There are two essential "documents" as I see them: the Bible and the natural world. In scripture (and by this I mean all the things and processes that go into making it) we seek out God and how God acts. In the natural world we seek out what God is doing.

This may seem to be an oversimplification, but I think the point must be made. The creation is not God. But it is the arena of God's activity. We need to be attentive to what God is doing.

What has led us to our downfall in the abuse of the environment is that we have not "read" nor "listened" to the natural world. It is now that we see disastrous results of human behavior and speculate on how this behavior can produce great disasters that suddenly we have prophets of doom and prospects of failure.

Why did we not read the natural world better? There are several answers, each with a little different weight. First, humans are not all-knowing. We are not God. Second, as humans we interact with the rest of the world. These cause and effect encounters provide some information. In many instances the

information is born out of sinful, rebellious encounters rather than friendly ones. Thus, our actions, our sinful actions, produce information. Third, we are bound to myopic states of consciousness. One that we deal with most often is technology. We have baffled ourselves with the wonder of our minds and hands and often let these achievements rule the day. Maybe they sue the day now. Fourth, we have become so masterful at controlling our environment we have become complacent about the tension between sustenance and destruction. Fifth (and this is an insight that needs to be studied all on its own), we want to be cheap. Wherever we can cut corners in terms of expense we will do it. People want "cheap" rates for services. Who cares what others need for their survival? Who cares if we pay a decent wage? When it comes to the resources of the Earth there have not been advocates. We do not need to "pay" the full price. Being "cheap" and being "frugal" are contradictions in terms. If the natural world does not pay the full price it cannot be fruitful (the meaning of "frugal"). The natural world must pay the full price.

Thus, we did not need to pay attention to what the natural world is telling us. We have gone beyond that sphere. However, we can learn something from the Native people. They, like all indigenous people throughout the world, have read the natural world and lived at its expense. If they did not, how does one think the human species would have survived until now? Indigenous people have existed for a much longer period of time than people of the technological age. And look who is taking about behaviors that can bring the death to birth and death?

In my mind there are two sacred sources of knowledge upon which to reflect: the Bible (again with all the history of its development) and the natural world. Eco-evangelical spirituality listens to both.

One way to say this is that in Christ we are set free to "read" God. This is within the domain of the work of the Spirit in our lives.

One of the positive results of looking at our world this way is that we can realize that in the human community there is a great resource of information. Every once in a while the comment is made that some of the old wives tales about certain cures are valid. The old folks knew something. The knew alot.

CHAPTER THREE

Cleansing, endurance, and courage are intangible ingredients for an organism to survive. There are struggles with all types of destructive forces and competitive situations. Many organisms are able to cooperate with each other to mutually benefit each other. But others cannot. All eventually succumb.

Every organism that exists has its friends and enemies and needs to develop skills to survive. This process is ongoing; it never stops. The natural world is a dynamic place. Thus, species must constantly adapt to survive or become extinct.

Hope Ryden describes the surviving and transforming qualities of the coyote this way:



. . . it is to a large extent (the) ability of the coyote to adapt to diverse conditions that makes him so difficult to define. At the same time, this versatility is undoubtedly what has enabled the species to survive man's every effort to extirpate him. For the adaptable coyote not only is capable of bivvacking where he pleases, but seems able to adapt any number of lifestyles. He can hunt either by day or night, dine on fresh meat or survive off of carrion, raid town garbage pits or feast on wild fruits and berries, den in burrows or whelp in conduit pipes, run in packs or operate as a loner. Bold coyotes can be observed in the alleyways of Los Angeles. But shy ones may be heard only in the wilderness, where they fill their private haunts with soulful cadenzas. Even the coyotes physical body reflects his protean quality. . . .

It would appear from this that the coyote may still be in the process of becoming, that Nature may not yet have set the successful adaptations the species has made over long ages of natural selection. The advantage to an animal of being in an unfinished state can best be demonstrated by noticing the fates of those North American animals who were better perfected for existence in their special niches. The bison and the wolf were rapidly vanquished when an agricultural and industrial society reshaped their habits. The coyote, by contrast, met change with change and survives. Thus, atypical behavior and unique responses, while frustrating to those who . . . look for definitive answers, may in fact be the creative side of the evolutionary process (Ryden, IX-X).

Another characteristic built into the genes of many animals is their ability to perform rituals. They are Oscar candidates for their dramatic courting rituals and luring techniques to protect their young.

For humans survivability is an issue as well. We seek ways to make it through the task of living from day to day. In a world with more or less technological conveniences we can imagine how dependent the humans are upon resources within themselves to eke out life. Of great importance are cleansing, endurance, and courage.

The spirituality of Native people recognizes this need for cleansing, endurance, and courage. There is a constant need to individually and collectively revitalize the emotions and mystical experiences that make up the core of their guiding vision to secure the sacred ways.

Sacred means something special, out of the ordinary, and often it concerns a very personal part of each one of us because it describes our dreams, our changing, and our personal way of seeing the world. The sacred is shared or collective to keep the oral tradition and sacred ways vital. The sacred has two sides: the personal and the shared. Sacred ways are felt to be inseparable from the "ordinary" (Beck et al, 6).

The purposes of prayer and worship for Native people are:

1. Reinforcement of the bond between individuals and the Great Mystery (as long as it is done in the sacred manner).
2. Making the worshipper receptive to the blessings that are naturally



available.

3. A means of giving thanks.
4. The centering of oneself in the world (Beck et al, 22).

Rituals revitalize and put into order the cosmology of a tribe or nation. In it the basic concepts are made possible for everyone to see. The building principles are acted out so everyone can understand (Beck et al, 35).

Ed McGaa says,

Ceremony, to the Indian, is a realization, an experiencing realization of the Spiritual that surrounds all. Ceremony brings both that profound, deeply powerful realization from beyond into the world of the two-legged (McGaa, 47).

Belief in prayer, rituals, and song affirms belief in words (Beck et al, 44). Songs and prayers are articulation of the breath (note connection with animals) and songs are often thoughts sung out with the breath when people are moved and ordinary speech no longer suffices (Beck et al, 42).

Prayer is the way Native people link themselves with the wakan of the world (Beck et al, 42). Tobacco, prayer sticks, feathers, corn meal, and pollen often accompany the prayer offerings. The choices vary from tribe to tribe.

The smoke that emerges from the pipe is breath reaching out in prayer.

The use of pollen as a symbol is significant. Pollen is one way a plant communicates with another. It is that which makes fruit possible. In prayer that for which is being prayed is thereby also touched. Some of oneself is brought to another (Beck et al, 40).

The contents of prayer are usually requests for health, long life, prosperity, abundant crops, rain, and healthy children.

The objectives of ritual vary with the tribes. The most common denominator is that it is a communal feeling. In this experience the ideals and the practices of the community are strengthened, ties are renewed, and community between Native people and the Wakan Tanka is affirmed.

Rituals are scheduled in terms of important times of the year: solstices, planting, harvesting, distributing food, birth, naming, renaming, puberty, marriage, and death.

Rituals add a dramatic element to worship. They touch the emotions, the imagination, and the intensity of feeling.

Rituals provide two necessary ingredients to the sacred life of Native people:

1. Ordering and systematizing every way human society, the natural world, and the unseen world come together, and
2. Providing a physical expression of mystical experience for the individual and the group. Native people are transported from the ikceya (ordinary)



to the wakan (mystery) (Beck et al, 35-37).

Rituals are performed out of necessity, not for entertainment. They help maintain the lives of the people.

According to Standing Bear:

The Indian loved to worship. From birth to death he revered his surroundings. He considered himself born in the luxurious lap of Mother Earth and no place was to him humble. There was nothing between him and the Big Holy. The contact was immediate and personal, and the blessings of Wakan Tanka flowed over the Indian like rain showered from the sky. Wakan Tanka was not aloof, apart, and every seeking to quell evil forces. He did not punish the animals and birds, and likewise He did not punish man. He was not a punishing God. For there was never a question as to the supremacy of an evil power over the power of good. There was but one religious power, and that was good (Beck et al, 25).

Celebrating of the sacred is a common devotional experience for many Native people. Someone has said,

When I was a kid I remember everything we did was religious. My parents used to get up in the morning, they'd take sacred cornmeal, they'd blow their breath on it so that God;s would know who they are and they would feed the Gods and they would ask for rain, and they would ask for good fortune for everybody, not only people of the Pueblo, but everybody in the world. Now that is beautiful (Beck et al, 24).

Rituals traditionally involve three parts:

1. Purification - a person makes oneself empty. Sweat baths, smoking, and breathing are methods.
2. Blessing - prayers are offered for power and strength.
3. Sacrifice - a person gives of oneself to acknowledge that all things are interconnected. One suffers momentarily to become aware of self and so someone else will not have to do it (Beck et al, 23).

Central to the Lakota people is the Sacred Calf Pipe. It was brought to the Native people by the White Buffalo Woman. The story has several versions. The essentials of the story are: Two hunters went out to seek game in a time of famine, and they saw a mysterious woman coming over the horizon. One hunter had evil desires and was reduced to a skeleton. The woman sent the other one back to prepare the people for her coming. The next day she brought the sacred bundle with the Calf Pipe and presented it to the people with instructions. As she left she turned into a buffalo calf from which the original pipe received his name (Steinmetz, 64).⁹

The pipe is a portable altar and means of grace. The bowl, or the heat in

⁹The Sacred Pipe which is venerated as the original one is kept at Green Grass on the Cheyenne River Reservation in northern South Dakota (Steinmetz, 15).



the bowl, is the sacred center (Brown, 25). Smoke from the pipe represents the visible breath of the participants and stands for truth: truthful words, truthful actions, and a truthful spirit (McGaa, 57).

The pipe is perceived as the mediator between people, the idea of the peace pipe. Some have equated the pipe with Christ (Steinmetz, 37).

The pipe is used with seven traditional rites:

1. The Keeping of the Soul.

The early idea was that in death a person's being returned to the Great Mystery. The current version involves giving away the deceased person's personal belongings on the first anniversary of their death. It is now called the Give Away Ceremony.

2. The Sweat Lodge Ceremony or Rite of Purification.

This is a cleansing and preparation ceremony for other ceremonies. In it one's own life blood (sweat) commingles with the life blood of the Earth. The lodge itself represents the universe with the pit at the center the navel in which the Great Mystery dwells with power. This is represented by fire (Brown, 22).

3. The Vision Quest.

This is performed by a person in isolation. It is the source of knowledge and strength for the individual throughout life. It is not performed to make a person feel important or interesting, but to realize the vastness of the universe and humanities' oneness with it (McGaa, 75).

4. The Sun Dance Ceremony.

This is a ritual of thanksgiving. It exists for tribal unity, peace, and strength through the honor and thanksgiving given to the Great Mystery. Life, this dance celebrates, springs from fire, the sun. This dance, which dates back to the 1700's, is participated in for several reasons: a) completing a vow, b) seeking a vision, c) coming to an awareness of one's self-identity, d) sacrifice for the healing of a loved one, and e) for the life and health of others (Stolzman, 158).

Participants are carefully selected. Preparations are made one year in advance (Stolzman, 161).

A cottonwood tree is felled through an elaborate ceremony and placed in the middle of an open area. Leather thongs are fastened to the tree and skewered to the dancers backs. During the dance the dancer pulls on the thong to cause it to break loose. Some dancers skewer buffalo skulls to their backs and drag them.

The dances are unrehearsed. They are to be a spontaneous ceremonial prayer.



For the Lakota this dance represents how humans live in the raw with animal life. Physical struggle is a reality. When involved in such a dance one touches the depth of the reality of existence with all animals and the groaning of the earth. This also binds the dancers together with a common experience (Stolzman, 161-162).

Women are excluded from the Sun Dance because they have already been involved in pain for Native people and with the animal world by giving birth (McGaa, 93).

5. Making Relatives

This ceremony creates a blood bond between two people that is closer than a kinship tie. Ritual for adopting another person into a new relationship. There are three ideals: 1) peace for those who realize their relationship with the universe and Wakan Tanka, 2) peace between two people recognizing the kinship of all people, and 3) peace between nations recognizing the kinship of all nations (McGaa, 79).

6. Preparing a Girl for Womanhood

The girl is like Mother Earth who will bear children (McGaa, 79).

7. Throwing the Ball

The ball is a symbol of Wakan Tanka and the universe. The ritual establishes the relationship of the people to the universe (McGaa, 79).

One very common ceremony for the Lakota that does not involve a pipe is the Yuwipi ceremony. The word means "they tie him up." A medicine man or shaman is wrapped with a blanket and tied with rope. This ceremony is performed to bring healing, find a lost object, express thanksgiving for healing, or to receive answers to prayers (Steinmitz, 18). An alternative ceremony is the Lowandi which is less severe (Stolzman, 131-132).

What comes as devastating information is that some of the ceremonies were outlawed by the United States Government. The Sun Dance was forbade in the 1800's because of the skewering of the flesh (McGaa, 150). The Keeping of the Soul ceremony was prohibited at the same time due to the influence of missionaries. By law the souls kept by the Sioux had to be released on a certain day (McGaa, 121). This is how the Give Away Ceremony got started.

Through the efforts of missionaries spiritual practices and beliefs of the Sioux were eradicated and outright destroyed. What the missionaries objected to was the reverence for nature and the appearance of the Buffalo Calf Woman. Young Sioux were forced to accept the European Americans' concept of God (McGaa, 126).¹⁰

¹⁰It was acknowledgement of this type of behavior that led to the Apology to Native Congregations which was submitted by the United Church of Canada General Council to Native Elders and accepted by them on August 15, 1986.



I find this to be significant for several reasons. First, it is unfortunate that the government became involved in dictating religious practice. The Native people see it this way. Second, the reading of the Native people's spirituality was not a fair reading. The Non-Native interpretation was not appropriate. Third, in effect the suppression of spirituality was the demeaning of a culture. Fourth, in the process there was a strong influence of various expressions of Christianity on Native people's spirituality.

One of the significant ritual practices of Native people is based on their understanding of the give and take in the natural world. When a plant or animal is removed from its natural surroundings for use by humans, specific steps are taken to give thanks to the individual, to leave a gift, and not waste or abuse it in its use or in the disposal of it (Underhill, 116).

There is a beautiful story in After Nature's Revolt:

Heavily dressed for the half meter of snow covering the hillside, a small group of people stood quietly around what looked like a perfect, if rather large, Christmas tree. Mostly American Indians from a variety of tribes and all members of an Indian congregation, the people were speaking prayers on behalf of the tree. It could have been most any annual congregational outing to harvest a Christmas tree for their church, except that these prayers were a thorough mixture of Christian prayers and traditional Indian tribal prayers. The two pastors held tobacco in their hands, ready to offer it back to the Creator, to offer it for the life of this tree, to offer it to the four directions, above and below, to offer it in order to maintain the harmony and balance of Creation even in the perpetration of an act of violence. Someone wrapped a string of colorful tobacco tie offerings around the trunk. As four men sang traditional prayer songs around a drum, the people came one by one up to the tree to touch it and say their prayers, some actually speaking to the tree, speaking consoling words of apology, gratitude, purpose, and promise (Tinker, 144).

Long before my people journeyed to this land your people were here,
and you received from your elders an understanding of creation,
and of the Mystery that surrounds us all,
that was deep, and rich and to be treasured.
We did not hear you when you shared your vision.
In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ
we were closed to the value of your spirituality.
We confused western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and
height of the gospel of Christ.
We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting the Gospel.
We tried to make you be like us and in so doing
we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were.
As a result you, and we, are poorer
and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred
and we are not what we are meant by God to be.
We ask you to forgive us and we ask you to walk with us in the Spirit of
Christ so that our peoples may be blessed and God's creation healed (From
Logos Productions, 16).

A very dramatic demonstration of this attitude and practice is in the deer hunt. There are actually several ceremonies involved:

1. The dance - not just imitating the animal, but learned from the animal. The dance was intended to compliment the animal.
2. Hunters were taught animal etiquette from childhood. The first-fruit or the first kill is to be given to the old or needy.
3. Game animals and women were to be separated. The hunter stayed away from his wife before the hunt.
4. The hunter has a vision assuring him of the animal's love especially when hunting a mountain lion or an eagle. It is almost like going to war.
5. Tobacco and prayers are offered for good luck to a sacred object.
6. Songs would be sung. They use the appropriate words which are handed down by tradition.
7. Some use the sweat lodge in advance of the hunt.
8. In some cases, animals showed themselves only if the taboos had been observed.
9. When an animal is caught the Native people apologize to the creature.
10. Parts of the animal were either consumed or disposed of ceremonially (Underhill, 188-123).

The Cree story, "How the People Hunted the Moose" tells of the hunter's cycle as seen from the animals point of view.¹¹

The Koyukon-Athabascan Indians of central Alaska believe that animals allow themselves to be captured by the hunter who is respectful. This favor of the animals is called "luck."

Luck is more than fortune; it is a state of grace that is won and maintained by attitudes of reverence and humility toward nature, and constant gratitude for nature's bounty. A successful hunter will attribute his achievement to luck not to his own skill in setting snares for beaver under the ice or his ability to locate the snow-covered den of a black bear. He will say, "I'm not a good hunter, just lucky." By his humility the hunter pleases the animals and keeps up his good luck. (Cummings, 137-138)

Circle dances are done to celebrate the gift, to remind Native people of their interconnectedness with all of life, to strengthen the community, and to celebrate the giving circle and the circles of life of which all are a part. Circle dances are important aspects of living in balance with the animals (Caduto and Bruchac, 45).

Involved in the cultic life of Native people's spirituality is the story which is a sacred event. Not only is there observed information. The Native people devised stories about animals and plants that were also sources of information.

Ruth Underhill puts the making of the stories into a helpful perspective:

¹¹See Keepers of the Animals, 5.



After the disk of earth was in order, we might expect the next episode to be the creation of mankind. With many hunter-gatherer groups, however, that was the final event that closed the genesis story. At least it is so with the creation or the coming of the present-day man. Sometimes there were earlier, unsatisfactory populations destroyed by a flood. The inhabitants who fill the greatest part of the tale are not human, or only partly so. Nor are they animal. They may be called man-animals for they had the speech and behavior of humans, though in animal bodies. In some tales, they were not created. They simply appeared on earth, as of right. If the Creator fashioned them, he did it long before he made men. They were man's predecessors and sometimes ancestors, not servants and inferiors.

With them began the great age of myth, from which has gushed an almost endless series of tales. Some are part of the sacred story of beginnings, but most are incidents with almost the character of today's comic strip. They are colorful, comic, instructive - also obscene, in the matter-of-fact way of a child. They could be told when the sacred stories cannot, and often they formed the whole intellectual schooling of the Indian young.

In many tales, the man-animals not only shaped the world and formed its hills and valleys, they also decided on the length of the days and nights and of the seasons. (Navahos say this was done by a gambling game.) More often the transformation was left to a fantastic figure who was the very focus of the mythical age. This was the man-animal whose powers rose sometimes to the height of creation. In some tales he transformed the world from a wilderness to a fit habitation. In others, he played clownish tricks. He is known to students of myth as the Trickster-Transformer.

In size and general behavior, this Being ranges all the way from the greedy little mink of the Plateau to the noble Nanaboxho of the Great Lakes who was Longfellow's model for Hiawatha. Generally, he was the most intelligent animal of his area. In the Northwest, that meant mink, raven, or blue jay; in the Plains, coyote or Old Man Spider; in the Northeast, the white arctic hare. Some tribes have humanized and ennobled him, but the enthralling figure for students of man's past is the earthy, greedy, sensual child-animal who believes everything, tries everything, finds nothing unnatural. Carl Jung compared him with man's own subconscious. Yet he has the powers of a Supernatural. He goes about the world making rivers and hills, inventing artifacts, even stealing the sun; but all at his own whim, for he knows nothing of good or evil. When he does something particularly stupid, it results in his death, but he immediately comes to life again as witless as before. Whether the human race profits from his actions or whether it suffers is a matter of chance.

This all-too-human figure must have been cherished by many primitive peoples. We know of Tricksters in southern Asia, in India and Indonesia, and in Africa, with moralized echoes in Aesop and La Fontaine. Even the later European Till Eulenspiegel and Merry Andrew may belong to the Trickster family. But these latter clowns always get their deserts. They have been smoothed and dimmed out of the primeval state where no right or wrong existed. Perhaps in the American Trickster we have one of the most vivid remaining examples of early thinking.



His place in the myth varied. Sometimes he was one of the man-animals who kept his place long after the Creator had vanished. Sometimes he slid into the place of helper and brother to the Creator. Then he may not have been simply careless or mischievous: he had his own plans for the world and became a genuine precursor of the Devil, though with more humor and less grandeur. In a Maidu myth, the world was created from nothing by Earth Initiate whose plan was to make life pleasant and comfortable for the future human race. Food he made easy to get. The women simply put out their baskets at night and in the morning they were filled with cooked food. Coyote told the people, "That's not the way to do"; so it was stopped, and now women work to fill their baskets. Earth Initiate had wanted no sickness or death, but Coyote said it was better for people to get sick and die. Then there could be big funeral ceremonies which he would arrange. So it was decided that way and the first person to die was Coyote's own son. Coyote was sorry now, for he is not portrayed as wicked, only thoughtless and impulsive like human beings themselves. He tried to get things changed but it was too late. "Coyote began to cry. And," say the Maidu, 'these were the first tears."

This may look like an early picture of good and evil, God and the Devil, and so some early missionaries tried to interpret it. It is a subdued and humanized picture, however, and Coyote's arguments on the desirability of work might be approved by modern thinking. In these hunter-gatherer myths, the incompetent partner is never wholly bad. Sometimes he is merely careless or victimized, as human beings may be. In any case, the whole affair happened in the mythical era, before the advent of humankind. So death and the other misfortunes of life are not man's fault. Indians who accepted these myths did not believe in original sin nor in a fallen race needing redemption. Their requests to the spirits were for long life and plenty, not for pardon.

Mankind finally enters the scene. He may be a second creation, after the first has been destroyed for misbehavior. In that case, we have the Earth Diver all over again, perhaps with a man commanding the divers. As for the man-animals, they give up their position as masters of the earth and retire to the woods and streams. In some tales, a few of the more important turn into human beings. Others resume their fur, scales, or feathers, to be laid aside only occasionally when they appear in visions to favored human beings.

Human beings, in their early days, are pictured as almost helpless. They had to be taught how to make dwellings and pots, spears, arrows, or fish traps. Sometimes even their bodies were incomplete. Fingers had to be cut apart and mouths opened. The protagonist of this period was the Culture Hero. Perhaps he came from nowhere, like the other Supernaturals. Perhaps he was born of a human and an animal. He carried out the work of teaching and cherishing left undone by the Vanishing Creator, and it is on him that stories center, rather than the mysterious First Cause (Underhill, 35-37).

Teaching stories does not just tell about physical facts with ordinary events and plots. They also teach abstract notions of behavior, cosmology, and ways of seeing or thinking about things. Sometimes the story is like a code which, the more it is listened to over the years, the more it reveals. . . . This "coding" of knowledge in stories is like asking "why," because you have to listen more closely. Then you also have more of a chance to suddenly



discover meanings, concepts, and ideas by yourself. . . . The "coding" has another advantage, the stories appeal to more people (Beck et al, 59-60).

Memorization is essential for passing on sacred knowledge. It is important for two reasons: 1) it diminishes the possibilities of inconsistencies in retelling stories and information and 2) without this information recorded in memory it may not be conveyed to the future since there was for a long time no written documents (Beck et al, 29-30).

Story tellers receive instruction that stories are meant to be told and not read aloud. They have their specific seasons. Bodies and endings of stories cannot be mixed (Caduto and Bruchac, 61).

There is a story told by the Navajo that highlights the way stories are used. It goes like this: Once there was a Master Slyer which killed all the monsters that preyed on people. However, four of the monsters were allowed to live:

Poverty - If killed there would be no knowledge of needs. Poverty helps develop compassion for others. I sharpens up one's ability to look for and acquire the things one needs for oneself and what others need.

Hunger - When your stomach becomes empty you will develop you mind to get food. You will become industrious and stop being lazy.

Fatigue - Without this there would be a desire to work all the time and not sleep and take time to meditate. One must be replenished both physically and spiritually.

Body Lice - Without this, one would not bother to be clean. Also, people would not comb each other's hair. This is a time for recreation. Thus, body lice forces people to make an effort to be clean, be sociable, and to play (Beck et al, 26-27).

When we look at ritual, prayer, and stories within the Christian community we must recognize several salient and parallel points.

Worship as expressed in ritual and ceremony identifies a connectedness between the human and God. In fact, one could say that worship is being caught up in the Spirit which is not a static understanding of God, but a dynamic one.

In worship the Christian experiences the Spirit of God in the state of becoming. That may seem disrespectful toward God. By that I mean when we speak in future terms of what God can, would, showed, might do. "God is not finished with me, yet," reads one bumper sticker. The Lord's Prayer has several future elements in it, too.

The Spirit acknowledges that God is on the journey with us.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (II Corinthians 3:17).

We even look forward to the fulfillment of creation. (Peters, 233)

Thus, we worship in Spirit and truth. It is these attributes of worship that bring cleansing and restoration to us, give us endurance and courage to deal with life. We have been freed from bondage and given a new being. We participate in Christ's death and resurrection as well as our own as a daily event. Our hope is in God (Peters, 236-237), and we trust God's promises. Our worship captures these understandings.

Our connection is with a God who is more than a mystery. This is the God who is Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. We celebrate this Spirit who, according to the Nicene Creed, proceeds from the Father and the Son. As Christians we are specific about our source of energy. The Spirit is the Lord and giver of life.

Worship and thanksgiving have specific meanings within the Christian tradition. Worship comes from "worthyship" which has to do with recognizing value in something or someone else. Thanksgiving is rooted in the Latin word that is the same word used for "grace." The basic word means "pleasure."

Thus, worship and thanksgiving are actions of valuing and expressing pleasure, i.e. being pleased, with someone or something. We recount how God does this to the world and how the world responds to God reciprocally. We value and find pleasure in God.

In worship time is collapsed, both the past and the future. It is done through the simple act of remembering. What is discovered, however, in Christian worship is that the remembering begins with God remembering the world.

The contents of Christian worship are the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, prayer, and the gathering of the faithful. All of these elements acknowledge the connectedness with God.

Jürgen Moltmann in The Church in the Power of the Spirit helps us see the place of the practice of worship, the ritual, in life.

Human life - like animal life too, incidentally - is to a great extent ritually ordered and constituted. A functional analysis shows that ritual has four fundamental purposes:

(a) Every ritual creates historical *continuity*. It regulates the course of the year, as well as the course of the individual life and society, by relating particular seasons and turning points to the past, by means of anniversaries, birthdays, days of remembrance, jubilees, and so forth. In this way it also orders the future by mediating values and patterns of behavior that have been handed down by tradition. The presupposition for historical continuity is the repeatability of the past through rites. Without ritual there is no tradition. The participant in the ritual does not find the repetition in any way boring; it is solemn and of decisive importance for his

life, and he associates it with personal commitment.

(b) Every ritual has an *indicative* character. Through the binding together of the different levels, the sign and the thing denoted, ritual becomes the symbol that points beyond itself, expresses something different and invites us to remembrance, to hope, or to a new page in life. Through the ritual representation, the thing represented becomes present in an accentuated way.

(c) Every ritual stands in a *framework of social coherences* and also establishes social coherences. Through ritual a group assures itself of its own character, integrates itself and portrays itself. Because rituals socialize, they are also joined with sanctions against outsiders and against deviating behavior. Common rituals and symbolic interactions give a group form. Taboos protect it against others, and against intrusions.

(d) If, then, ritual has the function of temporal integration through the formation of tradition; of spatial integration through the forming of a social group; and of an overriding indicative character, it follows that the functions of ritual are primarily *ordering functions*. Rituals regulate the group in the face of the chaos of diverging interests and anti-social behavior. They establish stable patterns of thinking and behavior for constitutionally unstable man. They are necessary for the building up of individual and collective identity. Free, spontaneous and creative life, whose effect is not destructive, only becomes possible out of the security ritual confers.

It is not difficult to see that Christian worship and ecclesiastical 'rites' fulfil these ritual functions, and in what way, and how they are consequently related to the ritual constitution of human existence. A special functional analysis of the church's feasts and celebrations can show this in its anthropological necessity. But any other religious and ideological content can invade these functions and fulfil them. Initiation rites, maturity ceremonies, wedding and burial rites, rituals of tradition and integration are to be found everywhere. They can be religious, but they do not have to be. They can be Christian, but they are not necessarily so (Moltmann, 263-264).

The stories of the Christian community are a critical part of the church's life. The Gospel is not just good news, and stories are not passages of Scripture needing interpretation. They have their own integrity. Stories are not limited to use in worship and Bible study. They can be told as situations develop where the story is appropriate.

Where one sees the use of stories as inappropriate is where they contradict their very meaning. The Christmas story is often tied into the commercial story of gift giving. Or, as in the case of a school administrator stating that we are not our brother's keeper in relationship to the demise of a next door school district, invokes the story of the Good Samaritan. This story, I understand, talks about being a neighbor not being a non-neighbor.

Thus, stories are also integral in the Christian communities self-con-

sciousness and self-understanding.

When concerned with cleansing (restoration), endurance, and courage one can be seduced into an egocentric motif or paradigm. Ritual and ceremony can be the thrust of one's life being done for self aggrandizement.

I propose that eco-evangelical spirituality is grounded in ritual and prayer and stories. With them we fix our consciousness of God and our solidarity with all of natural history. Jaroslav Pelikan uses one word to define spirituality, *Erdgebundensheit*, i.e., being bound to the earth. What are elements of valuing and pleasure between God and humanity are also elements that include all of creation. The connectedness must have a focus, and this focus is worship.

In worship we participate in a vision of a world that God redeems, makes new, and creates. It is a vision that begins with God's saving act, restoring gifts. It is grounded in the blood of Christ.

Christian worship follows a series of events in the human life from baptism to burial. These events become opportunities for remembering God's presence in our lives to do something with all creation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Everything that exists has a place in the ecosystem. Ecologists call this a "niche." This word means profession or role. A niche is often thought of as a space or location. In some ways this also applies. However, niche has to do with what an organism contributes in and of itself for the sake of the whole.

When an organism neglects to perform in an ecosystem for whatever reason, another organism takes its place.

Not all organisms are equal in their profession. Some are more critical for a habitat's survival than others. These are "keystones." Some of these animals are very large, e.g. elephants, rhinoceros, and other big herbivores. Or they can be the tiny army ants.

E. O. Wilson says,

The most potent keystone species known in the world may be the sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*). This wonderful animal, large and supple in body, cousin to the weasel, whiskered like a cat, staring with languorously deadpan expression, once thrived among the kelp beds close to shore from Alaska to Southern California. It was hunted by European explorers and settlers for its fur, so that by the end of the nineteenth century it was close to extinction. In places where sea otters disappeared completely, an unexpected sequence of events unfolded. Sea urchins, normally among the prey of the otters, exploded in numbers and proceeded to consume large portions of the kelp and other inshore seaweeds. In other times, the heavy kelp growth, anchored on the sea bottom and reaching to the surface, was a veritable forest. Now it was mostly gone, literally eaten away. Large stretches of the shallow ocean floor were reduced to a desert-like terrain, called sea-urchin barrens.



With strong public support, conservationists were able to restore the sea otter and with it the original habitat and biodiversity. A small number of the animals had managed to survive at far opposite ends of the range, in the outer Aleutian Islands to the north and a few localities along the southern California coast. Some of these were now transported to scattered intermediate sites in the United States and Canada, and strict measures were taken to protect the species throughout its range. The otters waxed and the sea urchins waned. The kelp forests grew back to their original luxuriance. A host of lesser algal species moved in, along with crustaceans, squid, fishes, and other organisms. Gray whales migrated closer to shore to park their young in breaks along the kelp edge while feeding on the dense concentrations of animal plankton (Wilson 164-165).

There are keystone species at the grassroots level, too.

Where big mammals control the vegetation structure, a colony of driver ants . . . captures millions of victims each day and alters the nature of the community of small animals. Viewed a few meters away, a driver-ant raiding column seems a living thing, a giant pseudopodium reaching out to engulf its prey. The victims are snared with hook-shaped jaws, stung to death, and carried to the bivouac, a labyrinth of underground tunnels and chambers housing the queen and immature forms. Each expeditionary force comprises several million workers who flow out of this retreat. The hungry legions emerging from the bivouac are like an expanding sheet that lengthens into a treelike formation. The trunk grows from the nest, the crown expands as an advancing front, and numerous branches pout back and forth between the two. The swarm is shaped but leaderless. Excited workers rush back and forth throughout its length at an average speed of a centimeter per second. Those in the van press forward for a short distance and then fall back to yield their front position to other runners. The feeder columns resemble thick black ropes laid along the ground, slowly writhing from side to side. The front, advancing at 20 meters an hour, blankets all the ground and low vegetation in its path. The columns expand into it like a river entering a delta, where the workers race back and forth in a feeding frenzy, consuming most of the insects, spiders, and other invertebrates in their path, attacking snakes and other large animals unable to move away.

Day after day the driver ants scythe through the animal life around their bivouac. They reduce its biomass and change the proportions of species. The most active flying insects escape. So do invertebrate animals too small to be noticed by the ants, particularly roundworms, mites, and springtails. Other insects and invertebrates are hit hard. One driver-ant colony, comprising as many as 20 million workers - all daughters of a single mother queen - is a heavy burden for the ecosystem to bear. Even the insectivorous birds must fly to a different spot to find enough food (Wilson, 168-169).

Native people understand that humanity's niche is much more complicated than other organisms since a person's behavior can work for good and for ill in the ecosystem.

For Native people the way to live is a way of peace, a way that dares to be in balance and harmony with all of creation and an attitude of respect.



There are two ways with which this is dealt: the Vision Quest and stories for instruction and behavior modification.

The Vision Quest is extremely important because it is the experience that gives direction to a Native person in terms of their role and their identity in the tribe and in the world. It is a story that comes to a person from outside of the self and unfolds as the person grows in years. It comes in some type of dream experience. An elder serves as an interpreter of what the story means.

Not all Native people are blessed with a vision. Some seek it, and it never comes¹² There is acceptance of this difference in experience in the Native community.

The Vision Quest shapes a person's life.¹³

The way one lives is also influenced by stories. They were meant for instruction as well as to modify behavior.

The virtues of animals were emphasized. Children were admonished to be wise, gentle, brave, and lead cheerful lives as expressed by certain animals (Deloria, XI).

When misbehavior occurred children would be told a story rather than be punished. The tales usually emphasized that inappropriate behavior would lead to disaster (Underhill, 31). Humor is also characteristic of the stories.

In the Christian community we understand that the way a person lives has its basis in the Spirit of God. These are outlined in terms of gifts of the Spirit, fruits of the Spirit, and sanctification.

Paul discusses the gifts of the spirit in I Corinthians 12. In this instance Paul mentions the types of talents and innate abilities that determine how a person functions within the life of the church community. Each person has a gift by which one can give something unique.

People have been given abilities to fulfill a role in the world. It is understood that these talents are also gifts of the Spirit.

In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul talks about styles of life in this way: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law." (RSV) It is significant to note Paul's metaphorical use of fruit and Spirit.

In the natural world, in order for fruit to occur, a flower must be pollinated. There are two basic methods of pollination: animals (birds, mammals, and insects) and wind. Animals do most of the pollinating in the Tropics. As we get

¹²See Erdos.

¹³See Black Elk Speaks and comments on the vision by Ed McGaa in Mother Earth Spirituality.

further away from the equator we see wind pollination more frequently.

Fruit, by the way, is not simply the type we eat. All seeds are fruit, some being more edible than others.

Just as fruit depends upon an outside source to be pollinated so we can talk about the Spirit of God as an outside source who touches us and causes good to be done through and by us.¹⁴

What are these fruits the Spirit creates?

HUMILITY/KINDNESS/JOY - Humility is not the putting down of the self, but the lifting up of the "other". It is not that one is lesser or considers oneself lesser. Humility is the capacity to make others great!

The context and tension within which humility is best discussed is that of human limitation and sin, on the one hand, and human potential, on the other. Humility as limitation drives us to depend upon the righteousness of Christ and the forgiveness of sins, and not to depend upon our own goodness. We are unworthy in the sense of sin. On the other hand, we are worthy as we are gifted by the Spirit to enable others.

Humility is the opposite of arrogance and pride which finds itself centered in the ego. The Greek words for "humility" are praus and praotes. These words are also translated as "gentle". When translating Galatians 5:22 the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible uses "gentle." The Today's English Version, i.e. Good News for Modern Man (TEV), uses "humble."

Additional words in Galatians 5 which can deepen our understanding of "humility" are "kindness" (the treatment of others as kin, brothers and sisters) and "joy" (a word in the Greek that has the same root as "love.")

If humility is the act of making others great, both human and non-human by the way, it means to treat "others" with celebration and gentleness, with the "sense of caresses," as William Barclay puts it (Barclay, 103-104).

SELF-CONTROL - If there is one lifestyle of the Spirit that could be misinterpreted as a moralistic statement, it is this one. More than likely this is due to the fact that a person is often advised, "If you would have controlled yourself you would not have gotten yourself into this predicament," or words to that effect.

Self-control as a lifestyle of the Spirit must be understood as one being a steward of oneself.

This gift of the Spirit builds upon humility. In order to make others great we need to be someone. Self-care is not borne out of self-centeredness, but out of love of the neighbor. Personal choices are made regarding our own habits out of respect for the welfare of our sisters and brothers. (Note how Paul handles

¹⁴The words ruach (Hebrew) and pneuma (Greek) mean wind, breath, and Spirit.

eating meat in I Corinthians 8:1-13.)

To practice self-control is to treat ourselves as God-created good, as worthy, not worthless. In addition, by Christ's alien righteousness, we are made good. We are to treat ourselves as we would treat all of creation, all that is redeemed, and all that hopes for redemption.

Self-control can be focused upon from three different perspectives: how we respond to others, how we deal with our "inner being," and how we deal with our bodies.

We respond to stimuli, both human and non-human, out of our own wills. We choose what the response will be. Psychologists may explain how we do this. It may even be helpful to know something about psychological systems. But the fact of the matter is that we have the ability to decide what the response will be.

Our "inner being" is another matter. Here we are in the area of the "secret" resources of ourselves which we sometimes do not understand ourselves. We sense those things that well up in us. They are not always discernible.

The care of our bodies is related to self-control. This subject is very popular today: fitness programs, wellness discussions, stress management, diet workshops, etc. The topic of chemical use, abuse, and misuse fits here, too.

There are many tapes, books, programs, clinics, and workshops available to deal with these areas of self-control. Anything you would like to change in your very being has an advisor of some type somewhere. What is the advice? The suggestions are usually that a change of heart (or attitude) is necessary.

Paul is helpful in another passage with regard to self-control and our bodies. In this case he identifies the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, I Corinthians 6:19-20. As total beings we are instruments of the Holy Spirit (one of Luther's favorite metaphors), and the Holy Spirit is in our very physical beings. Earlier in I Corinthians 3:16-17 the body in which the Holy Spirit dwells is the Church.

A life that is to deal gently and humbly with others cannot at the same time be void of self-control, the management of self. In Romans 12 Paul lays on us his expectations of the Christian person. There is no way one can fulfill such expectations without being able to handle oneself. The will to do this and the power to make this happen can only come from the Spirit of God.

PEACE/PATIENCE - There are conflicting views over what peace is and how peace is accomplished. Is peace a commodity achievable by the power of the sword or is it a condition achievable by the power of the cross of Christ? Is peace the end or the means to an end or both?

It is the understanding of the New Testament that peace is a result of the cross. From this historical event peace emerges, and toward the final days (the eschatological event) the Spirit directs peace.



What is peace? I prefer the Hebrew word "shalom." It means wholeness, health, restoration into community, and the presence of justice.

The Spirit's gift of peace is God leading us to restore that which is and has been alienated back into community.

Peace builds on the other gifts of the Spirit: humility, self-control, and patience. Peace seeks to make others great. Peace is something that evolves from within. Peace also benefits from patience. The Greek word for patience, "makrothumia," is translated by Chrysostom as the ability to take revenge against another, but utterly refusing to do so (Barclay, 84).

Peace is not the opposite of war or the avoidance of conflict. Peace is involvement in bridging the gaps and mending breaches.

In addition to the fruits of the Spirit, another characteristic of the Christian life is the willingness to give oneself up for the sake of others. In the non-human world this is called the food chain. In the human world this is sacrifice. We are here for the mutual benefit of others.

In Ephesians we find these words:

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." (5:1-2)

The writer then proceeds to identify behaviors that do not contribute to mutuality: fornication, impurity, covetousness, filthiness, silly talk, and levity. The alternative is to walk as children of light "for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true" (5:9). The admonition follows that Christians look carefully at how they walk, be filled with the Spirit, and always give thanks.

As in the food chain the prey determines the destiny of the predator, so with a sacrificial style of life one is not consumed and overwhelmed by the other. Rather, one affects the destiny of the other.¹⁵

To practice the Spirit is what is to live the sanctified life. This is the process by which a person receives new life having been freed from the power of sin and guilt and given the capacity to live most fully and more selflessly. In love the person makes holy and wholly the other.

I prefer to use the word sanctification rather than spirituality. The sanctified life is the way one lives out one's spirituality.

Sanctification has four elements: illumination, regeneration and conversion, obedience and good works, and perfection (Peters, 242-243).

1. Illumination is an experience of the mind. There is knowledge that is

¹⁵Think what this means in terms of Holy Communion and Christ's presence.



*Perfection: the spiritual life
desires of the imperfect
of the imperfect of creation.*

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given by the Spirit. We know about the God who acts in our lives (Acts 26:18) We have discerned the Spirit.

2. Regeneration and Conversion. This has the nature of being cleansed and renewed in experiences of worship. It also has the nature of opening a person for a change of heart - conversion.

Conversion is the rejecting and turning away from the evils of the past and living a just life. Conversion is not a global experience for the individual. By this I mean that there is not just one conversion in a person's life. It is an event that happens frequently as one discovers instance by instance how the past must be regarded and a new way be taken.

3. Obedience and Good Works. The teachings of God, sometimes called the "law," are seen as constructive for how to live not just what to do. There is a joyful appropriation of God's teachings and God's love.

Good works are not deeds done to earn favor, but are behaviors done to make things right.

Such behavior practices the unity we have with God and the rest of creation. "We realize that there is a bond of love that unites all things" (Peters, 243).

4. Perfection. This word makes some people frustrated because we claim not to be able to be perfect. Bonhoeffer said the word translated "perfect" in the New Testament really means "complete." We can quibble over words, but what does perfection mean? It is a life of purging sin, restoring the image of God, and living spontaneously in the love of God.

Perfection is actually the practicing of the Spirit. It acknowledge that we work at being this type of person. There are some gifted athletes that do not need to practice their skills. But it does become obvious that even the most gifted athlete cannot neglect to practice if one plans to play with the rest of the team.

Sanctification can be summarized this way:

God's salvation is aimed ultimately at the whole of creation, not just individual parts. . . . It is this sense of belonging to something greater than ourselves that the Holy Spirit communicates to us in the event of illumination, and our conversion consists primarily in a degree of self-denial . . . combined with an affirmation that we belong to someone else. Obedience consists in yielding to God's work, a will that aims to place our own destiny in harmony with everyone else's destiny. Love is stimulated by the whelming sense of belonging to the other, to the one who is the object of our loving work. Hence, the regenerated life cannot have as its end the attainment of ever more holiness for the individual and the achievement of perfection in isolation from the grand design for salvation that encompasses the cosmos (Peters, 247).

There are three additional themes that need to be developed: our bodies as



the temples of the Holy Spirit, leisure, and sacrifice.

What about sin? What sinful behavior corresponds to what is being said? The answer is simple: self-perfection and human superiority. The idea of self-perfection is that I become the center of the world. I train my body and mind so that I can be my deepest me.

Human arrogance has also demonstrated what can happen. It is believed that 1) humans can control the ways of the natural world, 2) humans can continue to exploit certain natural resources indefinitely, and 3) all mysteries, all uncertainties, i.e. the unknown, can be ultimately conquered (Beck et al, 47).

Humans must realize that the human is a part of the created order. We are a part of the natural event. We need to unlearn what we presently practice.

We have set ourselves apart from nature and, in so doing, have tried to dominate, control, and manipulate the natural world to our ends in ways that have prove to be self-defeating and unsustainable. In fact, human beings, too, are governed by natural laws, along with every other form of life with which we share this Earth home. Despite the hubris of Western Society and our greatest efforts to subdue nature, the ecological events of today prove that we are inextricably linked to the natural world (Caduto and Bruchac, 8).

What is the ecologically environmentally spiritual thing to do? First, we must have a vision of evangelical ecology. Forgiveness and faithfulness are redeeming acts for all to experience. Thus, our ecology is the good news, and the good news is for the whole system. This is our vision which encompasses the past story and thrives on hope. This is a vision that unfolds and needs constant interpretation. It is a vision that comes from without. Second, the vision is important in order to see what God is doing. The Native people have a saying, "I wouldn't see it unless I believe it." This stands in contrast to "I wouldn't believe it until I see it." Third, our profession is to make the world a better place. This means acting respectfully toward all creation. We have our own niche.

Philip Hefner in "Nature's History as Our History, A Proposal for Spirituality, states it this way:

The criterion for our spirituality of creation or nature is that it weave together the information of Christian myth and ritual into a vision of the ultimate ground and possibilities of nature that (1) expresses the integrity of the myth and ritual, while at the same time (2) relating its information to the best of contemporary knowledge about nature and human life. (3) It should always convey the intrinsic necessity of praxis, without which the vision of nature is incomplete, and (4) it should motivate without the church communities both individual and group action that is continuous with the spiritual vision (Hefner, 177).

CHAPTER FIVE

All species require a habitat. This may seem obvious. But do we really know how strategic a habitat is?

A habitat provides food, water, shelter, and available space. All organisms live in some type of interdependent relationship with other organisms. In various and sundry ways, by cooperation and competition, the organisms live with and off of each other.

When species are deleted from a habitat we notice how the habitat is affected. Or when a habitat is depleted or destroyed how species either migrate or die.

The study of habitats includes a study of biodiversity. Habitats need to be complex. The more simple they become the greater chance there is for destruction. The more diverse the greater opportunity for the habitat and the species within it to survive.

The health of a habitat is found in the various species living in a balance. Thus, one could say that habitat and the health of species are closely allied.

Native people understand habitat or ecosystem. Black Elk is quoted as saying, ". . . the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round" (Brown, 13-14). And the Native people are a significant part of it.

For the Native people the tribe is the basic form of existence. It is not what an individual knows that is important, it is what the tribe knows collectively. Individualism is not the essence of being complete. Tribalism or community is the state which must be complete. Thus, the tribe is central.

Some Native people also describe the family as all the creation. One is not within simply a human family with the last name.

This puts life in a massive circle.

In a sense, we have returned to the beginning of this whole discussion with the circle and balance and harmony and reciprocity. However, life is not just found in a circle. The circle is one of healing and wholeness. It is the sacred.

Native people have developed the circle into a sacred symbol and four sacred parts. If one looks deeply into it becomes a mirror to lead a person to the deepest awareness of mystery.

For the Christian the work of the Holy Spirit is to establish wholeness, wholeness in community and wholeness in the individual, wholeness in relationships and in how one thinks, physical and mental wholeness. It is the Spirit that unifies, integrates, and mends relationships.

The Holy Spirit is God at work to bring life to death in a world that wants



to bring death to life in a wanton fashion.

For the person, the Holy Spirit treats sin by remembering it no longer (John 31:34), casting sin behind our backs (Isaiah 38:17), and sweeping them away like clouds (Isaiah 44:22). Forgiveness leads to blessedness (Psalm 32:1, see also Romans 5:10, II Corinthians 5:18-19, Colossians 1:20).

Peters says,

The Holy Spirit proceeds from this work of the Father through the Son to effect this ministry of reconciliation within the world. Reconciliation is a process leading eventually to its consummate fulfillment in the unity of all things in their creative and redemptive ground, God (Peters, 233)

The Holy Spirit calls Christians together in community. As a matter of fact, it is hard to say when a person is called a Christian because being a Christian and being in the community of faith are one in the same.

Like Native people celebrating the sacred circle the Christian celebrates the habitat of the church. To think the spiritual life of a Christian can exist outside of this community is preposterous.

The church is an event. It is where the word of God is proclaimed and the Sacraments administered. It is the gathered people of God. It is the restored and reconciling community.

The church is very complex in its role because it has some distinctive tasks within the habitat of this world. It acts on behalf of God. It names the work of the Spirit. It celebrates God. It brings life and nourishment to all. And it looks foolish in its style of life.

Foolish, you say? Foolish, yes! Even the gospel we proclaim is that, says Paul.

The church is like the coyote. It has a definite place within the ecosystem, but it is treated as a pest. Like God's dog it also seems a fool.

When the church is seen as the healing habitat and within the context of the circle it is obvious that sin is not being different, but is being estranged. When a person pulls oneself away or the individual is ignored there is sin.

For the Christian person eco-evangelical spirituality is a commitment to life in the circle and community of the Spirit and the world acting to heal the Earth. This means making it possible for all to be whole and working at reconciliation.

CONCLUSION

Who is the coyote? We are!

We are the people through whom God works to continue with creating and

restoring. We are people chosen to teach. Though we do not have the role of elder we can still be those who pass on the traditions. We live with life, death, and life. We die to sin and are raised to walk in newness of life. We are political, profane, potentially abusive. In some cases we are the joke. And yet God has chosen to work in us as God's people:

Made by God's Spirit,
Molded by God's Spirit,
Filled by God's Spirit, and
Used by God's Spirit.

In another sense we are the indigenous aliens being of the world with a message from elsewhere.

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BLASPHEMY

(Supplement to Chapter I)

*See
Glad Stone
Carmichael
The Synoptic Gospels*

In Mark 3:29 we are told that the only unforgivable sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The passage appears in a context where people are attributing Christ's power to Baal and the power of evil rather than to the work of God. This is blasphemy against God and God's acts of salvation. The word "blasphemy" originally implied irreverence toward the gods and enmity against human beings. The Jewish and Christian communities extended the meaning of the word to the arrogant defiance of God (Mark, 256).

When one looks at this idea from the perspective of the root word in its indigenous meaning the activity that is condemned is not simply a rejection of God, an ignoring of God. It is living contrary to the very moving power and essence of life. The fact that such behavior is unforgivable simply means that a person's actions have made restoration impossible. The idea of a pagan god is that they influence the processes of nature. When one disrupts these processes there are natural consequences.

This passage in Mark might be better interpreted from a doxological and an ecological perspective. We will attest in our day to human behavior that affects the environment in such a way that the process of destruction might be irreversible, and we might be close to it. Forgiveness is rendered impossible.

Can these two points of view be harmonized - the idea that God does not hold our sin against us, i.e. forgives, and the idea that there can be the actions that do not allow the natural order to be restorable, i.e. forgiven.

One could say that the only way to deal with this theme is on the ethereal plane. In heaven, in the afterlife, there is forgiveness. Is this not a cop out? What about the present life?

One could say there are limitations to forgiveness. This contradicts our understanding of God, however. We could say that we are still within the period of grace.

Another option is to claim that with the end of forgiveness comes the eschaton - the end of the world. I happen to believe that this is so. But there is one problem. Can humans cause the end of the world? Or does God bring that about? It is the faith of the church that this is God's action, not humanity's.

From a soteriological motif maybe we are looking at this whole idea from the wrong direction. Could it be that the future is pulling us into it rather than the past pushing us? Creation is not yet fulfilled. It is moving in the direction of fulfillment.¹

¹Note Peters' Proleptictheism.



From a theological understanding of our relationship with the earth there is the element of work righteousness and reciprocity. To me spirituality is something that we do. We practice it. We make mistakes, and we correct them. It is a dynamic interaction with all the world around us and with God.

The wakan and ikceya distinctions are helpful in the understanding of our Christian spirituality. What is faith? Some things about it are observable to others and experienced by ourselves. But the mystery of faith is that it is the risen Lord in our lives.

And what is the God experience? This knowledge of God that we have, as fleeting as it may be, is not some abstract notion but the very interaction of all of time and all of God. Peters calls it the collapsing of time (past and future) and the collapsing of God's actions in our lives of forgiveness and being made a new creature.

I want to hesitate for a moment and point out that the evangel, the good news of the spirituality we practice is that forgiveness does occur. We do not need to wallow in the guilt of our past. AS wrong as it is, the past is past. We are given a new life and a new creation with which to begin.

As indicated above, this could change because lurking in the background is that notion that those who misappropriate the life force will not be forgiven. We could reach that point.

It seems to me that the idea of blasphemy can help us understand this idea from the back door. The way I understand Mark 3:29, what is being said from a more original source is that those who fail to respect or who, in fact, misinterpret, transvalue or abuse the life force, the wakan, the mysterious power, can act in such a way that restoration of an environment is not possible.

We have seen this happen when rain forest have been depleted which have literally destroyed indigenous people, plants, and animal life. They cannot be restored. They are gone. This was not a natural process of extinction. This was forced.

When native prairie is ripped out of the ground by the plow prairie plants will not return on their own. They can be reintroduced by human action. Once they are gone, their gone.

What is the fear of nuclear power. It can cause a chain reaction that can destroy not only life, but birth and death. The crisis is that everything would be sterile.²

What the scientists say to us about acid rain, the depletion of the ozone layer, etc. is that we could go for and destroy our world by continuing practices that create the problems.

²See Fate of the Earth.



In other words, we can go beyond the capabilities of the natural world to forgiven.

But, you say, I thought God always forgave? Is it possible there are limits? In my mind God has created a world that can forgive. Life destructive aspects of nature can be reformed. That God-given capacity may have limits, and the consequences are no forgiveness.

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THE WAKAN OF THE COYOTE
Practicing the Spirit

John E. Swanson

PREFACE

For several years I have sought to interface theology and ecology. I hope for a theology that is understandable and can serve as a reflection and motivator in our Christian religion. Ecology is a fascination for me, too. How do things work? How is it understood? What do scientists say?

These two disciplines lead to a creative discourse that can enable our theology to be described in a more understandable form, informed by the study of ecology. Also, it is possible that a theological vision can give us some better insights into how to observe and interpret natural phenomena.

I am personally interested that the church tell her story, proclaim the gospel, and report to the world clearly her world view. We must be clear about the church's uniqueness, but we must be equally committed to sharing the faith story with people outside the religious community and with people with different religious persuasions.

When we parallel our thinking and contrast it with disciplines and traditions outside of our own we clarify for ourselves and gain new insights into what we believe and understand and develop respect for others and how they believe. This is what this interplay does for me.

THIS NEXT ITEM IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE READER. PLEASE READ CAREFULLY. The general intent of this resource is to create a dialogue using three areas of study: nature, culture, and the Christian tradition. Specifically the three disciplines for the dialogue are animals and their behavior, the spirituality of Native Americans¹, and the meaning of the Third Article of the Creeds (Nicene and Apostles'), i.e., the person of the Holy Spirit.

I have chosen to include Native People's spirituality² for several reasons. First, the United Nations has designated 1993 as the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. Second, the 500 year celebration of Columbus has peaked interest in the cultures of Native People. Third, I am a tad concerned about how this emphasis is being used in today's "search" for spirituality. The conservative side of me raises concerns that we are watering down the Christian religion and the spirituality of Native People with some of the exchanges that have been occurring. This would be to the detriment of both traditions. Fourth, I think Christians need to learn how to live in a pluralistic world. This means respect for the religious/spiritual ideas and practices of others. It also means a better, deeper, more cohesive understanding of one's Christian roots. Articulation of this faith is

¹Hereafter the terminology will be Native People. In most cases, "people" is what the Native People call themselves. (See Glossary in Keepers of the Animals.)

²The Native People refer to their way of life as a spirituality rather than as a religion. For them religion is classical, incorporated, sectarian, and evangelical (Beck et al, 5).

vital. Fifth, the spirituality of Native People has depended upon their interpretation and understanding of the natural world and how the natural world works. There is no book on the subject in the same way Non-Native People have written documents. In specific ways for Native People the natural world is their scripture.

Native People's spirituality is grounded in the soul of the Native People. Gifts are brought which can benefit everyone. We can share in their reasons for celebration. Their insights, thinking, and practices can feed everyone in the same way the Christian religion can feed Native People. For Non-Native People we are reminded that everyone has aboriginal roots. Our ancestors can be traced back thousands of years to societies that lived closely with the Earth (Caduto and Bruchac, 4). This interaction with Native People's spirituality can remind the Non-Native people of the indigenous past.

Respect for Native People's spirituality must be practiced. We cannot abuse the "heart" of their very being. We can be sensitized and develop understanding and appreciation. But we must deeply appreciate that their culture and spirituality are one in the same. This spirituality also differs from tribe to tribe. In this resource caution is being taken to receive and acknowledge the gifts and knowledge Native People give to Non-Native people, especially Non-Native Christian people, and be careful about generalizations.

A word about the learning process of this resource. One idea which I have been contemplating is that one thing that distinguishes humans from non-humans is that humans "fix" consciousness.

What is consciousness? It is the capacity of a species or an individual organism to be aware of itself and aware of and responsive to its environment and to act on this information. Species have the capacity to adapt. Adaptation is the means by which a species enables itself to survive and procreate. The species has the capacity as a species to have a sense of itself and an awareness of and responsiveness to its environment. This I am calling consciousness. In some species this consciousness is identifiable in the individual. It can be the tree roots that do not intersect with each other, shying away from each other's roots, to the complex creatures that can avoid their predators by various adaptations, e.g. camouflage, speed, etc.

Consciousness in one form or another exists in all things. It is kind of ethereal, i.e., it is around us. I am suggesting that humans have the capacity to "sponge it up." We have our own self-consciousness, but we can also be sensitive to the consciousness of other organisms. In fact, we can in a sense draw it unto ourselves, ingest it, and spew it out. Humans can adapt all types of things to themselves. Humans read the past, interact with the present, and plot the future. Humans can anticipate, speculate, and project. It is not that humans have more consciousness. It is just that we can gather more in, i.e. "fix" it, and use and disperse it in many ways for good or ill.

The idea for this metaphor comes from the idea of organisms that fix nitrogen. Nitrogen encompasses 80% of the earth's gas. However, in order for nitrogen to serve the environment it must be capsulated in some way. This is called nitrogen fixation, the conversion of atmospheric nitrogen gas into other chemical forms that are useful to plants.

Humans fix consciousness in this way, converting it into something useful, processing, holding, and releasing it for the good of the creation. This is one gift humanity has for the rest of the world. It can be appropriately applied or abused.

Education is intended to stimulate and guide humans in this role of fixing consciousness, i.e., ingesting it, converting it, and using it for the sake of others. One could call education "culture." Persons are prepared through the educational process to hold and to release not just information, but consciousness, awareness, moral action, and goodness into the world.

This makes the role of educator extremely imposing. The teacher does not simply instruct the learner in facts. The educator is key to the learner's development of values in the light of the facts and actions in the light of the values. The concern of education is what materials are gathered, how they are converted, and the way in which they are used.

In the context of the educator's role I submit the following as a method for thinking through the learning process. It is a play on the word "fix." This resource is designed with this process in mind.

FIXING CONSCIOUSNESS a learning process

Fact -

Any type of learning activity

1. Immerse learner in a complex/interactive activity that engages a person's body, mind, and senses.
2. Learner must view experience as personally meaningful and challenging.

Integrate -

Verbalize

1. Share feelings
2. Articulate in own words

Organize

1. Fit activity into one's own experience.
2. Conceptualize:
 - a. Distinguish parts
 - b. Recognize history
 - c. Organize parts into whole

eXecute -

Generalize

1. Identify learnings
2. Relate learnings to other experiences of the learners

Apply

1. Specify situations to which learnings can apply (future)
2. Decide strategies for action

Without breath there is no life.

Humans are also related to God. This could be seen from a mystical perspective. For Christians the perspective of God is grounded in water, word, bread, wine, and community. We are not casually related or just tethered to God. There is an intentional bond with humanity initiated by God. When speaking of this aspect of God we generally use the term "Holy Spirit."

The concept of the Holy Spirit is not easy to grasp, but it is central to our faith. The Christian church claims that the Spirit is the Prime Mover of our personal faith, gives us the ability to say, "Jesus is Lord," and gathers the people into Christian community.

The Spirit is God-near and God-at-work. The Spirit is invested throughout and in all of life. The Spirit is God unseen.

This resource intends to help Christians learn that that which links humans with the Earth, animals, and God is found in the words "spirit" and "spirituality."

The sub theme for this resource is "Practicing the Spirit." Christian spirituality is something we do. As the reader will discover later in this paper, Christian spirituality is living in the mystery of all creation within and beyond the obvious. Thus, this type of spirituality ~~is~~ requires training as it would be for an athlete or an artist.

The practice of Christian spirituality has three parts. First, there is the knowledge of and trust in the Holy Spirit, the one who guides our lives. Second, the Spirit is in competition with other spirits of our time. How do we know which is which? The Bible, the sacred scriptures of the Church, gives us a key for recognizing the Spirit. Third, we practice the Spirit in three specific ways: the ritual/cultic life of the Christian community, life-styles of the Spirit, and the community of faith itself, i.e., the church.

One of the resources for reflecting on Christian spirituality is the spirituality of Native People. Until recently Non-Native people have perpetuated in one form or another the notion that "Indians" are either brutal savages or innocent children of nature (Brown, 7). The Native People, as we shall discover, are very sophisticated. They developed skills and knowledge that enabled them to live with the natural world.

¹In Hebrew "Adam" comes from *adamah* which means "soil."

nals, other
lth will not be

word "humus,"
a word meaning
own and nurture

Humans are
imals breathe.

Expand idea of practice: We can define only so much about the Spirit. The essence of the idea is from adamah which means "soil." That we live w/ it, we capture it in our way of living.

It is generally accepted that the Native People were immigrants from Asia 15,000 to 20,000 years ago, near the end of the Ice Age (Underhill, 110). Some say 40,000 years ago. The Native People were usually nomads. They owned what they carried. Yet what carried them, the earth, the water, the sky, also belonged to them.

To think we can learn from the Native People may be a bit perplexing and disturbing to some individuals because the Native People do not demonstrate the type of achievement we see blessed and honored in the Non-Native People's cultures. Where is the wealth of the Native People? Where is their power?

Native People have been measured by many Non-Native People according to their material achievement. How can someone who has not known great material wealth be considered worthwhile for us or having something that would be of value to us? The fact is, the wealth of the Native People is found in their mental and spiritual achievements (Brown, 8-9). What they can share is filled with deep meaning and complex understanding.

The method of learning differs between Native People and Non-Native people in its most traditional sense. One could describe the difference between them as knowledge which focuses on the welfare of the tribe and knowledge that focuses on the welfare of the individual. Learning is by listening and relationships rather than books and libraries. An individual in the tribe learns what must be taught. For Native People, information for living is important for the tribe. Each person is a part of the knowledge bank. Non-Native people tend to want to fill the individual with all the culture.

Joseph Brown wrote in a pamphlet in 1967:

If we can understand . . . the truths which the Indian finds in his relationships to nature, and the profound values reflected by his many rites and symbols, then we may become enriched, our understanding will deepen, and we shall be able to give to the American Indian heritage its rightful place among the great spiritual traditions of mankind (Brown, 27).

Native American tribal spirituality cannot be lumped together. However, these six basic concepts are shared by most Native People:

1. A belief in or knowledge of unseen powers, or what some call the Great Mystery, the Great Spirit, the Creator.
2. Knowledge that all things in the universe are dependent upon each other.
3. Personal worship that reinforces the bond between the individual, the community, and the great powers. Worship is a personal commitment to the sources of life.
4. Sacred traditions and persons knowledgeable in sacred traditions responsible for teaching morals and ethics.
5. Trained practitioners who have been given names such as medicine men, priests, shamans, cacques, and other names. These individuals have titles given them by the people which differ from tribe to tribe. They are responsible for specialized, perhaps secret, knowledge. They help pass

knowledge and sacred practices from generation to generation, sharing what they know in their memories.

6. A belief that humor is a necessary part of the sacred and a belief that human beings are often weak. We are not gods - and our weakness leads us to do foolish things. Therefore, clowns and similar figures are needed to show us how we act and why (Beck et al, 8-9).

There are three basic insights that can assist us in the dialogue of Native People's spirituality and the understanding of the Christian faith.

First, students of world religions use the categories of ethnic religions and universal religions. Native People's spirituality could fit under ethnic religion because of its intimacy with Native People cultures and languages. But Native People's spirituality might better fit under the heading of tribal religion, since the variations are more detailed than the term ethnic implies.

Christianity, on the other hand, is a universal religion. It is found in many cultures and has shaped and been shaped by these cultures. Its language and character will reflect the culture, but the centrality of the Christian tradition is very obvious from culture to culture.

Second, Christianity is unique among the religions of the world in that there is belief in the Incarnation, God becoming a human being, and resurrection, i.e., people die completely and are raised to life solely by the activity of God. This distinction complicates the dialogue of Christianity with other world religions.

Third, there is the distinction between doxological and soteriological types of religion. "Doxology" comes from the root words *doxa* - glory and *logo* - word, i.e. words of glory or worship. "Soteriology" means *soter* - deliverance/salvation and *logos* - word, i.e. the word of deliverance or salvation.

Religions have their own self-understanding. They express themselves in worship (doxological) and their understanding of salvation (soteriological). How does one learn the difference? One simply asks the question: how does the religion work? How do its prescribed practices bring its participants into relation with the ultimate reality defined by its doctrines? (Moore, 17-18)

One could say that for the most part Native People's spirituality is doxological and for the most part Christianity is soteriological by the most part. However, there are aspects of soteriology in the beliefs and practices of Native People, e.g. the Buffalo Calf Women of the Lakota. In some instances one might need to distinguish between specific practices.

These categories of doxological and soteriological are presented in this paper to help with interpreting what we experience and practice and not specific definition and universal application.

Though the ways of expression vary, there is a commonality found in that both the Native People's and the Christian church's traditions have a sense of solidarity with all creation, a format of story, liturgy, prayer, devotion, a life style of peace, and an understanding of Creator.

The Native People's spirituality has become popularized in many circles being used in some aspects of the "New Age" movement. There also tends to be a mixing of the Native People's spirituality and Christianity. This is not new because it has been going on for close to 500 years. This can contribute to more confusion.

I do not want to misrepresent the spirituality of Native People nor do I want to simplify it so that it can be palatable, comfortable, and/or similar to the Christian faith.

There are two themes related to the Native People's spirituality that need to be spelled out: what the Lakota people call mystery (wakan) and "nature persons."

The Mystery

Native People's spirituality is the "spirit of wonder," the recognition of life as power, as a mysterious, ever-present concentrated form of non-material energy, of something loose about the world and contained in a more or less condensed degree by every object (Beck et al, 9). The Lakota call it "wakan." A Teton Sioux man put it this way:

We cannot see the thunder, and we say it is wakan, but we see the lightning and we know that the thunder and the lightning are a sign of rain, which does good to the earth. Anything which has similar power is wakan, but above all is the sun, which has the most power of all (Beck et al, 10).

In Lakota wakan (the mystery, the power filled, the extraordinary) is found within the ikceya (the obvious, the profane, the pitiful) in all of life (Stolzman, 152). The Native People's sacred traditions observe these concepts as one. A great part of their tradition is to respect the power, listen silently, and learn (Beck et al, 11). Each individual entity has wakan.

Ruth Underhill quotes La Fleche:

All life is wakan. So also is everything which exhibits power, whether in action, as the winds and drifting clouds, or in passive endurance, as a boulder by the wayside. For even the commonest sticks and stones have a spiritual essence which must be revered as a manifestation of the all-pervading mysterious power that fills the universe (Underhill, 21).

Wakan Tanka is the "Great Mystery" which is far beyond human comprehension (McGaa, 77). This is the supernatural. Some use the words "the Great Spirit"² and "Creator." However, such a being is not referred to in personal terms by the Native People as it is by Non-Native people (Underhill, 5). The Native People deplore exactness in describing Wakan Tanka. It is felt it should be a mystery.

Traditional Indians believe that attempts to describe to another two-legged an overly defined concept of the mysterious vastness of the Great Provider of all are

²The concept of the Great Spirit is more closely allied with the Christian's understanding of the First Article of the Creed, Creator Spirit, rather than the complexity of the Third Article of the Creed which describes the Holy Spirit.

crude and unmannerly and show lack of humility (McGaa, 44).

That which is wakan can be defined as an animating (moving, vitalizing, life-giving) force or vital principle. It is a will that is unseen and intangible (Beck et al, 5). It is not difficult to see how people close to nature can be sensitive to its flow.

Wakan is also the sacred. For Native People the world of nature is their temple and within this sanctuary they show great respect to every form, function, and power. Reverence for nature is central to their spirituality. Each form in the world around them bears such a host of precise values and meanings (Brown, 16).

It is always a source of wonder that the unseen and intangible tie or hold us to the world that is so visible, filled with different life forms. That is what makes the sacred so difficult to discuss. When you wonder, you are silent. There are no words to express this bond to the Great Mystery (Beck et al, 8). Thus, all life is sacred, both being and action.

Nature Persons

The Lakota reverence for nature is the result of their belief that animals, plants, and rocks have their own "wakan." They are commonly referred to as "persons." (Brown, 43)

For the Native People everything in the world is alive, and everything can help or harm. All creatures are "nature persons." They, like human persons, are to be treated appropriately: courteously, not exploited, favors requested, favors returned. Give and take is a basic rule (Underhill, 40-41).

The range of "nature persons," from the animals to the thunder, the winds, and the heavenly bodies, can be found everywhere. The emphasis, however, is very different with some of the hunter-gatherers in the desert area, the animals seem to be almost the only Powers present in man's thought. In the wide open Plains, the animals bring visions, but ceremonial reverence is offered to the directions - to the earth, the sky, and the four quarters of the world or the winds which personate them. Sometimes the sky power is focused in the sun, as one who is able to see all and can be a witness to behavior. Each of these has mana (wakan) in its own sphere. The world is full of distributed power so that man lives constantly among potential companions and helpers (Underhill, 46-47).

In the non-human world animals³ are the most important "nature persons." There are more rituals for them than the humble rocks and plants. This is probably because hunting is more precarious, and hunters need more help (Underhill, 177).

The Native People make this distinction between human persons and animal people: in their stories it is the animal that comes first. In some instances animals create humans. Animals are considered elders to humans as well as teachers. Thus, it is wise for the human to listen to the animals (Caduto and Bruchac, 4).

"Long ago, back when the animals could talk and people could understand them . .

³Most Native people languages do not have a word such as "animal."

." is the way some stories begin. More than likely animals still talk, but people no longer know how to listen (Caduto and Bruchac, 4).

Another subject for discussion in this resource is the study of animals. We will take the opportunity to look into a world that is often perceived as wild and inherently destructive to the human species.

In some ways we may have been misguided by an interpretation that has been put upon Darwin's "survival of the fittest." Contrary to public opinion this does not mean that one species exercises dominion over others. Also, Darwin's statement, "Nature is red in tooth and claw," has elevated the notion of competition within the non-human world and that animals are "complex bundles of survival functions."

Animals, like all species, are in the process of adapting to their environment. (Actually, those species which have the capability to survive are those who are "fit" to reproduce.) Competition, as well, is more the exception than the rule. Mutualism and cooperation are more the order of the day. There is a mystery about the nature of animals that transcends human explanation (Marten, May, and Taylor, 8). This is not true for all animals, but there are behaviors that indicate animals are courting, performing rituals, caring for the young, cooperating, sacrificing, grieving, and so on.

Of all the animals that could be selected why choose the coyote? Could there not be a better animal, one less profane? Or might its ignoble character be the coyote's appeal? A coyote is an awesome and an ambiguous creature. The coyote is a mystery to us (a wakan), unfortunately, a mystery that can be shrouded in fear.

We might need to remythologize the coyote. The coyote is a part of the ecosystem and yet has been declared by the United States Government a nuisance that can be eliminated.

Hope Ryden, in her book God's Dog, says:

. . . studies revealed the coyote to be an animal indeed more wonderful, more beautiful, and more to be admired than all the logical reasons . . . set forth to demonstrate why he is so vitally important to whole biotic communities. An older and wiser culture understood all of this when they spoke of him as "God's Dog." (Ryden, XIII)

In Native North American stories the coyote appears in many forms: trickster, transformer, and fool. He has a unique way of gaining wisdom through spectacular and superhuman experiences. Coyote can change form and is a smooth talker. In some stories coyote dies, only to return to life. Still, coyote is regarded as having a certain malevolent benevolence and many good lessons are learned by those who listen well to coyote's exploits and the outcomes.

In fact and story the Coyote is not as neatly definable as other animals. Barre Toelken, in the Forward to Barry Lopez's book, Giving Birth to Thunder . . ., puts it cleverly:

Say, if you will (and some have), that Coyote is the exponent of all possibilities through whose antics and actions we see ourselves and the moral ramifications of our thoughts; or say that Coyote is the philosophical embodiment of a native world

view of relationships between mankind and nature; or say that Coyote is a freak of the primitive mind - the impulsive and self-destructive character that proves the savage did not "have it all together." Or say simply that Coyote is a Gemini. All these things are true; all these things are false (Lopez, xii).

The Navajo saw the coyote as a god. The Hopi perceived the coyote as a laughable fool.

In Crow mythology Old Man Coyote's position was supreme. The Northwestern tribe not only regarded him as "First Worker," creator of the earth and all living creatures, but also believed him to be the founder of human customs. Yet because life on earth was so obviously full of error, it naturally followed that Old Man Coyote himself must be fallible and though inordinately clever, capable of being duped. The Crows saw no inconsistency in casting the coyote in various roles of transformer, trickster, and fool. They relished stories in which their hero received his come-uppance from lesser animals. Mankind, then as now, delighted in the fall of the mighty. Nevertheless, the coyote was no less venerated for being vulnerable (Ryden, XIII-IX).

For other tribes coyote was not the supreme symbol of the Universal Principle, but coyote was given a special place in their understanding of creation (Ryden, IX).

Stories about Coyotes, a name that cannot be mentioned in the summer by the Navajos⁴, are funny, but they are not intended to be funny. The listener laughs at the way coyote does things and how the story is told. If the listener hears the real meaning of the story the listeners will grow up to be good (Beck et al, 61).

The Creator, one story goes, could not do everything. Some tasks were left to helpers who were bunglers or just plain mischievous. Coyote, being told to place the stars in the sky in geometric order, dropped the sack that contained them, and they scattered every which way (Underhill, 34).

Perhaps only humans are as capable of change, of adapting behavior, food sources, and rhythms for survival's sake, as our close neighbor the coyote. But we have responded to the coyote and to both the gray and red wolf, by declaring war on them - shooting, trapping, snaring, hunting, gassing, and poisoning these wild dogs not to mention leveling, paving, flooding, and developing their habitat (Caduto and Bruchac, 167).

How vicious is the coyote? There are various opinions. They have not attacked humans in packs. They often will roll over belly-up when captured. Some renegade coyotes do kill sheep. Most coyotes living near farms actually help to drive away potential threats to livestock. Their normal food consists of woodchucks, rabbits, mice, and voles, fruit corn, dead animals, and occasionally, a stray pet (Caduto and Bruchac, 167).

The scientific name for the coyote is canis latrans, wolf prairie. This animal is native only to the North American continent (Ryden, VII).

⁴Words have power. They can invoke and provoke. The art of story telling is precise. This, too, is sacred.

Coyotes are known to be territorial. A male will bring food to his mate when she is nursing the pups. Observers have seen coyotes regurgitate food for a mate (Ryden, 18-20).

The coyote may have moved into the niche of meat eater in some habitats because other predators like the bear, badger, weasel, and wolf have vanished.

A coyote's behavior might be strikingly different if other animals with greater strength were in their ecosystem. The competition would create a different type of response from them (Ryden, 25).

In 1937 Adolph Murie, a game biologist, studied coyotes and published information that the coyote was not a beast intending to destroy humans. He also learned that coyote predation was minimal, selective, and more than likely beneficial to the prey species (Ryden, 35-36).

Coyotes themselves are short lived. They are subject to disease. Starvation is a major cause of death. It reminds us that it is the predator species that hangs in the precious balance and not the prey (Ryden, 40).

Coyotes tend to move purposefully, but they are easily sidetracked to chase down a small animal.

Urine is the coyote's signature. It is used for staking out territory, identifying food, and committing to a mate (Ryden, 51-52).

It seems there is a symbiotic relationship between coyotes, magpies, and ravens. In summer the birds will clean up a carcass left by a coyote. In winter the birds can locate the prey. Another benefit is that the birds can warn the coyotes of coming danger (Ryden, 80-81).

One does not discipline a coyote. One simply learns how to cooperate with him (Ryden, 110).

Affectionate, sociable, and cooperative, coyotes mate for life and remain together as a pair year-round.⁵ When the six to eight pups disperse in the fall or late summer, one young pup remains behind with the parents to help raise next year's litter in the spring, in case something happens to one of the parents before the young are old enough to fend for themselves (Caduto and Bruchac, 167).

The characteristics of the coyote being used in this resource are God's Dog (Day 1), the teacher (Day 2), the survivor/transformer (Day 3), the fool and trickster (Day 4), and the indigenous alien (Day 5).

To be helpful to the reader the following chart is presented to outline the interaction between the study of animals, Native People's spirituality, and the Christian tradition.

⁵Canids are endowed with an amazing capacity for attachment to one another, a quality that enabled men to domesticate the dog and bind this innate devotion to himself (Ryden, 82).

Learned from the Animal/Natural World	Native People Spirituality	Teachings of the Christian Faith	Eco-Evangelical Spirituality	Multi-Cultural Multi-Religious Multi-Gender	Coyote Mnemonic Device
Reciprocity, Balance and Harmony	The Circle Wakan (the Mystery) Respect Give and Take	Holy Spirit Creator Spirit Restoring Spirit Forgiving Spirit Sanctifier	Creating, Redeeming, and Sanctifying God Involved in All Creation	Diversity is acknowledging the wakan in each individual	God's Dog
Life in the tension between sustenance and destruction	Necessary knowledge to live in tension learned from "Nature Persons"	The Word for Life First, Event - Jesus Christ Second, the Proclamation Third, the Written Record (Bible)	Knowledge from scripture and natural world considered sacred and viable	Each person and culture is a source of information	Teacher
Intangible necessities for existence: Cleansing (Restoration), Endurance, and Courage	Ritual and Story	Worship (Valuing) Thanksgiving (Taking Pleasure/Being Pleased with) Sacraments Gospel Stories	The Celebration of solidarity with God and all creation (Erdbundenheit)	Necessities for mutual living: Self-esteem Trust Willingness to Settle Conflicts Communication Skills	Survivor and Transformer
Each Organism has a Profession (Niche)	Vision (the story line for one's life) and The use of stories for instruction and behavior modification	Gifts of the Spirit Fruits of the Spirit Sanctification	The Vision of Ecological Evangelism that gives to a person identity and profession to make the world a better Place	The treatment of others depends upon mental images of them (Stereotyping)	Trickster and Fool
Habitat Requirements	Community Centered (i.e., Tribe and Family) Sacred Circle Healing	Community of Faith Body of Christ	Life in the community of the spirit and all creation healing the Earth	Inclusivity acknowledges, celebrates, and responds to diversity within the whole	The Indigenous Alien

CHAPTER ONE

In the natural world we discover there is reciprocity, give and take, harmony and balance. Creation is intended for the benefit of all equally.

As one studies the ecosystem one understands the interrelatedness and interdependence of all creation. There are various cycles: earth, water, air, etc. The food chain has many links beginning with the simplest forms requiring something to feed it. Though the sun is the source of energy it depends upon various species to transport that energy to other species.

The Native People understand that all life is within a reciprocal circle. At the heart of their spirituality is what the Sioux say in their ceremonies, "Mitakuye oyasin" (we are related to all things) (McGaa, XVII). The world is the property of the One who creates it and holds it together. It does not belong to humans (Caduto and Bruchac, 8).

Everything, though having its own individuality and special place, is dependent on and shares in the growth and work of everything else. This means, for example, that if you take the life of an animal you have to let that animal know why you are doing so and that you take full responsibility for your act. Why? One reason is because it is a way of showing that you understand the balances that exist in all natural systems, or ecology. Another reason (perhaps harder to see) is because human beings and animals have a relationship to one another. Animals, for instance, know why they are in the presence of human beings and they learn to avoid places where one of their own members has been killed. The elders and the oral histories tell us that long ago we once could speak the language of animals and that our survival depends on maintaining the relationship between animals, plants, rivers, feeding grounds, etc. Keeping this in mind, then, the concept of dependency and respect is not difficult to understand (Beck et al, 12).

Vine Deloria, in the introduction to Keepers of the Animals says,

Native North Americans saw themselves as participants in a great natural order of life, related in some fundamental manner to every other living species. It is said that each species had a particular knowledge of the universe and specific skills for living in it. Human beings had a little bit of knowledge and some basic skills, but we could not compare with any other animals as far as speed, strength, cunning, and intelligence (Caduto and Bruchac, XI).

The interconnectedness with nature is the appreciation that in one way or another all things are related to each other, both animate and inanimate. Rocks contain minerals also contained in animals. In a sense the Earth is us. We are all one body. Native People see this within the wonder of the cosmic flow that never ceases (McGaa, XVI). In this way of thinking they do not perceive themselves as passive children of nature, but dynamic personalities of great force, courage, and intelligence who undergo intense suffering and sacrifice in becoming what they are and in preserving what they have (Brown, 21).

Spiritual development for Native People occurs in several ways. First, it is derived from their close contact with nature. Second, the experience of nature is both what is observed and what is mysterious (discussed earlier). Third, Native People rigorously participate in a multitude of rituals and symbols which have for them a

supernatural origin and are very complex (Brown, 20). Fourth, stories are essential. They are used to teach the relationship between people, animals, and the rest of the Earth (Caduto and Bruchac, XVIII).

One could say there are two ways to look at nature, a mechanistic model and a sacred model. What makes Native People's spirituality unique is that life is perceived and interpreted as sacred. For those who choose a mechanistic model it often requires determining what nature is "good for" in order to describe how nature fits into the providence of the Supreme Being. Once that is determined and the ends are beneficial to humans (that is "the bottom line") then it is considered sacred. For the Native People the world is sacred first. In one of his speeches Chief Seattle says, "Every part of this soil is sacred" (Cummings, 3).

For the Christian the word "Spirit" describes the wholeness of God. We meet the Spirit in the first creation story, brooding over the water. The spirit leads the Israelites out of Egypt (Isaiah 53:11-14). The Spirit anoints the prophet (Isaiah 61:1 ff).

The Spirit is God-present and God-at-work. The God of the Hebrews and the Christian is God involved in life.

The Spirit brings into the present God the Creator and Christ the Redeemer. In the Nicene Creed it states that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son." We can understand this idea in four ways.

First, this ties the Spirit closely to the resurrected Christ. (In the New Testament the Spirit and the risen Christ are hard to distinguish from each other.) Second, the Spirit is the principle of relationship and unity (Peters, 251). Third, the Spirit brings the past of history into the present. Fourth, the Spirit makes the future fulfillment of God's realm present to hope. The Spirit collapses time (Peters, 229-230).

Tom Peters identifies the Holy Spirit with what he calls "the three magnificent virtues (that) imbue the life of beatitude: faith, hope, and love."

In faith the Holy Spirit makes Christ present to us; it unifies what is separated by time and space so that the happy exchange can actually take place in our lives. In hope, the Spirit illumines our consciousness with visions of God's future, with the freeing confidence that the divine promises will attain fulfillment. In love, the Spirit actually releases the power that bears effective witness to the ongoing work of reconciliation. These three magnificent virtues imbue the life of beatitude (Peters, 233-234).

Faith, too, is the work of the Holy Spirit and is the very presence of Christ in one's life. This is what makes Christian faith distinctive.

The concept of faith has many facets. 1) Faith is believing what cannot be proved, i.e., intellectual assent. 2) Faith is trust. We put our lives into someone else's hands. 3) Faith is a response to God's act of grace. God initiates, and we respond. 4) Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. In Luther's Explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed we say, "I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel . . ." 5) Faith is ultimately the very presence of the

risen Christ in one's life.

. . . the presence of Christ is absolutely crucial to an understanding of pneumatology and Christian faith. (The Christian faith says nothing more than that we have been called into the immediacy of the mystery of God himself and that this mystery gives itself to us in unmeasurable nearness (Rahner).) So close is the identification of the resurrected Christ with the Holy Spirit that they are almost interchangeable in the New Testament. Whether it be the indwelling of the Spirit (Romans 8:9) or the indwelling of Christ (Romans 8:10), in faith we become united with God and receive new life (Peters, 235-236).

Another approach is to say "Spirit" is the ecological word for God. God is in relationship with all of creation and also is the force of the relationship.

Thus, the name "Spirit" for God deals with the wholeness of God. God is Creator and Redeemer. God forgives and creates a new creation., God gives faith. God in Christ is present in faith and present in hope. Our senses are roused. We name the Spirit. We acknowledge the Spirit, the very presence and power of God.

The human being must realize that life is not found only in the observable. There is a life force which moves within all of creation. The Lakota people call it Wakan Tanka. The Christian calls it the Holy Spirit.

Spirituality is the ability to live in community with both the obvious and the mystery and thereby find one's own humanity. One lives by faith, i.e., trust in the Holy Spirit, and in the knowledge that Christ is present in one's life. One lives within this reality by one's senses, grasping the world as a whole in a conscious and sensitive way.

CHAPTER TWO

All creatures know that they live precariously between being sustenance and destruction. Humans are also aware how close we are to self-destruction. The fetid world not only nourishes the soil, but can be the cause of death. It is like walking a tight rope.

True, we probably do not pay much attention to the possibilities of being destroyed because we seem to always be nurtured. Humans seeks to make that happen. Yet there are times when we are reminded how near the brink we stand: several years ago the salmonella outbreak, recently AIDS and Hepatitis B. What is in the future? We divine sanitary precautions because of the threat of disease, death, and destruction.

The plant and animal realms know precisely what it means to live in this tension of sustenance and destruction. They cooperate and compete. The prey avoids the predator, but for how long? In the animal world species depend upon finding food and protecting themselves to avoid their captors. Yet, they also reach a point of death and destruction. But not a death and destruction that is purposeless.

Humans have known this problem since the beginning of human life and have found ways to maintain and renew health. We also accept death as a part of the natural process.

How does one survive? There is a source of knowledge. For the Native People there is a source of information on how to live within the tension of sustenance and destruction and within the balance and harmony of the world. This information is through the natural world, namely through animals. It reaches deeply into their spirituality.

In animals Indians see actual reflection of the qualities of the Great Spirit which serve the same function as revealed scriptures in other religions. Animals are intermediators or links between humans and God. This explains not only why religious devotions may be directed to the deity through the animals, but it also helps us to understand why contact with, or from, the Great Spirit comes to the Indian almost exclusively through visions involving animal and other natural forms (Brown, 17).

We need to think in mega years. How have people learned? Who could be the teacher? Knowledge was gained through experiences that date back to the Pleistocene Age, two to three million years ago (Caduto and Bruchac, 9). What is noticeable is the use of totems. Animals are depicted. Universally they are the ones who lead humans in terms of how to live and how to behave (Caduto and Bruchac, 32).

The Native People have made a point of observing the other creatures and in modeling their own behavior after them. The technical skills of birds, animals, and reptiles were such that the Native People could take cues from them for their own welfare. For example, when Native People would go on a hunt they would usually return with information they learned from the animals. Often it was a dance (Caduto and Bruchac, 44).

Being guided and learning from nature is not peculiar to the Native People. The story of the Magi visiting Jesus recorded in Matthew reminds us that an event in the natural world guided them to where Jesus lived, namely a star. It was upon this information the Magi trusted.

Not only is there observed information. Stories are purposeful. Oral tradition teaches and passes on the sacred knowledge of the tribe (Beck et al, 57). There are appropriate times to tell stories. Some stories can be told only once a year. There are stories that can be told by only special persons.

Stories are the way the oral traditions are passed on. A story can be abused and mistold. This is an act against the Native People.

For Native People the revelation of how to live is rooted in nature. The observable and mysterious are grounded in their experience of and in the natural world.

I lift this up as a crucial distinction between the Native People's spirituality and the Christian faith. For the latter the revelation is grounded in history (and you thought I was going to say a book). The Bible reports a variety of things, but it essentially tells us of the God and human encounter in the context of specific events.

Christians understand the brink of disaster upon which all creatures walked. The source of knowledge, the information that is conveyed to us, is through the God who reveals the God-self to us.

When Jesus announces that he will go away he promises to send a paraclete, an advocate, a helper (John 15:15-17). It is not possible for Jesus to tell his followers

all they must know. However, someone will come to guide the believers. This is understood as the Holy Spirit.

In John 15 Jesus clearly states that if one loves God, one is obedient to God, and in this relationship God will be revealed. This has been understood throughout the ages that this is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Peters states:

The power of the Holy Spirit makes the words of Jesus effective in our lives. We identify the presence of God through the concept of the spirit. Where the divine breath blows there is comfort, counsel, and truth (Peters, 229).

There is no simple way to describe how the Spirit works in our lives to lead us. The tension is between relying on the Spirit in some mystical way to convey information and trusting in something that conveys the Spirit.

Let me take you through some steps that help me understand the way God's knowledge is conveyed to us. It begins in our experience with faith. We hold that faith comes by the work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the Christian community. Note Luther's Explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed.

This faith, Paul says, comes by hearing (Romans 10:17). Hearing what? We hear the proclamation of the Gospel and respond. This refers particularly to an oral tradition, not a written tradition.

The analogy for me is how the flow of solar energy works in the food chain. This energy that makes life possible is acquired by animals through eating, the use of the mouth. How is the power of God specifically conveyed? It also goes through a chain, a faith chain, from one person of faith to another. Which anatomical part plays a role for the recipient? The ear.

Thus, the proclamation of the Gospel is the way God is conveyed through faith. What empowers us to speak? Paul says that we are able to say Jesus is Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. (See I Corinthians 12:3 and John 3:34)

Our starting point is a dynamic event in time and space where something happens.

The progression of the Word of God goes like this:

First - there is an event. For us it is the event of Jesus Christ.

Second - there is the proclamation of the event. There is discussion of what occurred. One person tells another.

Third - there is the writing down of the proclamation. We call this the Bible.

What is at the heart of all of this? Peters says:

The gospel is the proclamation of the redemptive act in Jesus Christ, an act of divine grace by which sinners are forgiven and incorporated into the eternal life of the risen Savior (Peters, 57).

We have now returned to the beginning. The revelation of God is within the context of history - God's activity particularly in Christ.

How does scripture fit into the picture? We must see it within the context of God's intention that we receive further instruction, as an expression of faith of others so that we can have faith, as an instrument of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit in the same way faith is inspired and our ability to proclaim Christ is inspired, as a touchstone for understanding how the Spirit works in our lives. Luther would describe the Bible as the manger where the Christ-child can be found.

What makes this topic more exciting is that the Bible has two major functions. First, it is the means by which we discern how the Holy Spirit works in the world and particularly in our lives. Second, the Bible is the way God speaks to us.

First, Paul makes it quite clear in Galatians 4 and 5 that the way we discern the Spirit in our lives is that two things have happened in history and these two things become the norm for our discernment: first, God's son was sent into the world in order to bring redemption and, second, in this redemption we are no longer enslaved to the fates of life but set free. "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1a).

The Bible is that source to which we turn to be able to distinguish how God acts in the world. We call the Bible the norm and rule of faith and life. The Bible is the critical source. It is legitimate to ask of our religious life and our theological musings, "Is it Biblical?" (Peters, 52)

Second, God speaks in the Bible. Too often scripture is seen as a law book, as a proof text, as the predictor of the future (God's tarot cards). When scripture is used this way it speaks of human manipulation and human need to have a material idol, to be absolutely right, and to know the future.

Bonhoeffer puts it in a very insightful way. The Bible is where we go to listen to God speak to us. In a letter to Dr. Rüdiger Schleicher, Bonhoeffer's brother-in-law, he says:

This is how I read the Bible now. I ask of each passage: What is God saying to us here? And I ask God that he would help us hear what he wants to say. So, we no longer look for general, eternal truths, which correspond with our own "eternal" nature and are, therefore, somehow self-evident to us. Instead, we seek the will of God, who is altogether strange to us, whose ways are not our ways and whose thoughts are not our thoughts, who hides himself from us under the sign of the cross, in which all our ways and thoughts have an end. God is completely other than the so-called eternal verities. Theirs is an eternity made up of our own thoughts and wishes. But God's Word begins by showing us the cross. And it is to the cross, to death and judgment before God, that our ways and thoughts (even the "eternal" ones) all lead (Bonhoeffer, Meditating on the Word, 45-46).

What is sin? In this instance sin can be described as using the self as the author and authenticator of knowledge. How do we walk the tight rope within the tension of sustenance and destruction? Only arrogance says we know the answers from within ourselves. One thing our genetic codes does not do is relay all knowledge to our brains. Our genes may contain the information, but they do not give us the needed knowledge.

It seems to me that the Christian is called to be attentive to how God has taught the world. There are two essential "documents" as I see them: the Bible and the natural world. In scripture (and by this I mean all the things and processes that go

into making it) we seek out God and how God acts. In the natural world we seek out what God is doing.

This may seem to be an oversimplification, but I think the point must be made. The creation is not God. But it is the arena of God's activity. We need to be attentive to what God is doing.

What has led us to our downfall in the abuse of the environment is that we have neither "read" nor "listened" to the natural world. It is now that we see disastrous results of human behavior and speculate on how this behavior can produce great disasters that suddenly we have prophets of doom and prospects of failure.

One way to say this is that in Christ we are set free to "read" God. This is within the domain of the work of the Spirit in our lives.

One of the positive results of looking at our world this way is that we can realize that in the human community there is a great resource of information. Every once in a while the comment is made that some of the old wives' tales about certain cures are valid. The old folks knew something. They knew a lot.

CHAPTER THREE

Cleansing, endurance, and courage are intangible ingredients for an organism to survive and cooperate. There are struggles with all types of destructive forces and competitive situations. Many organisms are able to cooperate with each other to mutually benefit each other. But others cannot. All eventually succumb.

Every organism that exists has its friends and enemies and needs to develop skills to survive. This process is ongoing; it never stops. The natural world is a dynamic place. Thus, species must constantly adapt to survive or become extinct.

Hope Ryden describes the surviving and transforming qualities of the coyote:

. . . it is to a large extent (the) ability of the coyote to adapt to diverse conditions that makes him so difficult to define. At the same time, this versatility is undoubtedly what has enabled the species to survive man's every effort to extirpate him. For the adaptable coyote not only is capable of bivouacking where he pleases, but seems able to adapt any number of life-styles. He can hunt either by day or night, dine on fresh meat or survive off of carrion, raid town garbage pits or feast on wild fruits and berries, den in burrows or whelp in conduit pipes, run in packs or operate as a loner. Bold coyotes can be observed in the alleyways of Los Angeles. But shy ones may be heard only in the wilderness, where they fill their private haunts with soulful cadenzas. Even the coyote's physical body reflects his protean quality. . . .

It would appear from this that the coyote may still be in the process of becoming, that Nature may not yet have set the successful adaptations the species has made over long ages of natural selection. The advantage to an animal of being in an unfinished state can best be demonstrated by noticing the fates of those North American animals who were better perfected for existence in their special niches. The bison and the wolf were rapidly vanquished when an agricultural and industrial society reshaped their habitats. The coyote, by contrast, met change with change and

survives. Thus, atypical behavior and unique responses, while frustrating to those who . . . look for definitive answers, may in fact be the creative side of the evolutionary process (Ryden, IX-X).

Another characteristic built into the genes of many animals is their ability to perform rituals. They are Oscar candidates for their dramatic courting rituals and luring techniques to protect their young.

For humans, survivability and cooperation are issues as well. We seek ways to make it through the task of living from day to day. In a world with more technological conveniences humans are less dependent upon resources within themselves to eke out life. Of great importance are cleansing, endurance, and courage.

The spirituality of Native People recognizes this need for cleansing, endurance, and courage. There is a constant need to individually and collectively revitalize the emotions and mystical experiences that make up the core of their guiding vision to secure the sacred ways.

Sacred means something special, out of the ordinary. Often it concerns a very personal part of each one of us because it describes our dreams, our changing, and our personal way of seeing the world. The sacred has two sides: the personal and the shared. Sacred ways are inseparable from the "ordinary" (Beck et al, 6).

The purposes of prayer and worship for Native People are:

1. Reinforcement of the bond between individuals and the Great Mystery (as long as it is done in the sacred manner).
2. Making the worshipper receptive to the blessings that are naturally available.
3. A means of giving thanks.
4. The centering of oneself in the world (Beck et al, 22).

Rituals revitalize and put into order the cosmology of a tribe or nation. In it the basic concepts are made possible for everyone to see. The building principles are acted out so everyone can understand (Beck et al, 35).

Ed McGaa says,

Ceremony, to the Indian, is a realization, an experiencing realization of the Spiritual that surrounds all. Ceremony brings both that profound, deeply powerful realization from beyond into the world of the two-legged (McGaa, 47).

Belief in prayer, rituals, and song affirms belief in words (Beck et al, 44). Songs and prayers are articulation of the breath (note connection with animals) and songs are often thoughts sung out with the breath when people are moved and ordinary speech no longer suffices (Beck et al, 42).

Prayer is the way Native People link themselves with the wakan of the world (Beck et al, 42). Tobacco, prayer stocks, feathers, corn meal, and pollen often accompany the prayer offerings. The choices vary from tribe to tribe.

The smoke that emerges from the pipe is breath reaching out in prayer.

The use of pollen as a symbol is significant. Pollen is one way a plant

communicates with another. It is that which makes fruit possible. In prayer that for which is being prayed is thereby also touched. Some of oneself is brought to another (Beck et al, 40).

The contents of prayer are usually requests for health, long life, prosperity, abundant crops, rain, and healthy children.

The objectives of ritual vary with the tribes. The most common denominator is that it is a communal feeling. In this experience the ideals and the practices of the community are strengthened, ties are renewed, and community between Native People and the Wakan Tanka is affirmed.

Rituals are scheduled in terms of important times of the year: solstices, planting, harvesting, distributing food, birth, naming, renaming, puberty, marriage, and death.

Rituals add a dramatic element to worship. They touch the emotions, the imagination, and the intensity of feeling.

Rituals provide two necessary ingredients to the sacred life of Native People:

1. Ordering and systematizing every way human society, the natural world, and the unseen world come together, and
2. Providing a physical expression of mystical experience for the individual and the group. Native People are transported from the ikceya (ordinary) to the wakan (mystery) (Beck et al, 35-37).

Rituals are performed out of necessity, not for entertainment. They help maintain the lives of the people.

According to Standing Bear:

The Indian loved to worship. From birth to death he revered his surroundings. He considered himself born in the luxurious lap of Mother Earth and no place was to him humble. There was nothing between him and the Big Holy. The contact was immediate and personal, and the blessings of Wakan Tanka flowed over the Indian like rain showered from the sky. Wakan Tanka was not aloof, apart, and ever seeking to quell evil forces. He did not punish the animals and birds, and likewise He did not punish man. He was not a punishing God. For there was never a question as to the supremacy of an evil power over the power of good. There was but one religious power, and that was good (Beck et al, 25).

Rituals traditionally involve three parts:

1. Purification - a person makes oneself empty. Sweat baths, smoking, and breathing are methods.
2. Blessing - prayers are offered for power and strength.
3. Sacrifice - a person gives of oneself to acknowledge that all things are interconnected. One suffers momentarily to become aware of self and so someone else will not have to do it (Beck et al, 23).

Central to the Lakota people is the Sacred Calf Pipe. It was brought to the Native People by the White Buffalo Woman. The story has several versions. The essentials of

the story are: Two hunters went out to seek game in a time of famine, and they saw a mysterious woman coming over the horizon. One hunter had evil desires and was reduced to a skeleton. The woman sent the other one back to prepare the people for her coming. The next day she brought the sacred bundle with the Calf Pipe and presented it to the people with instructions. As she left she turned into a buffalo calf from which the original pipe received his name (Steinmetz, 64).¹

The pipe is a portable altar and means of grace. The bowl, or the heat in the bowl, is the sacred center (Brown, 25). Smoke from the pipe represents the visible breath of the participants and stands for truth: truthful words, truthful actions, and a truthful spirit (McGaa, 57).

The pipe is perceived as the mediator between people, the idea of the peace pipe. Some have equated the pipe with Christ (Steinmetz, 37).

The pipe is used with seven traditional rites:

1. The Keeping of the Soul.
2. The Sweat Lodge Ceremony or Rite of Purification.
3. The Vision Quest.
4. The Sun Dance Ceremony.
5. Making Relatives
6. Preparing a Girl for Womanhood
7. Throwing the Ball

What comes as devastating information is that some of the ceremonies were outlawed by the United States Government. The Sun Dance was forbade in the 1800's because of the skewering of the flesh (McGaa, 150). The Keeping of the Soul ceremony was prohibited at the same time due to the influence of missionaries. By law the souls kept by the Sioux had to be released on a certain day (McGaa, 121). This is how the Give Away Ceremony got started.

Through the efforts of missionaries spiritual practices and beliefs of the Sioux were eradicated and outright destroyed. What the missionaries objected to was the reverence for nature and the appearance of the Buffalo Calf Woman. Young Sioux were forced to accept the European Americans' concept of God (McGaa, 126).

One of the significant ritual practices of Native People is based on their understanding of the give and take in the natural world. When a plant or animal is removed from its natural surroundings for use by humans, specific steps are taken to give thanks to the individual, to leave a gift, and not waste or abuse it in its use or in the disposal of it (Underhill, 116).

There is a beautiful story in After Nature's Revolt:

Heavily dressed for the half meter of snow covering the hillside, a small group of people stood quietly around what looked like a perfect, if rather large, Christmas tree. Mostly American Indians from a variety of tribes and all members of an Indian congregation, the people were speaking prayers on behalf of the tree. It could have been most any annual congregational outing to harvest a Christmas tree for their

¹The Sacred Pipe which is venerated as the original one is kept at Green Grass on the Cheyenne River Reservation in northern South Dakota (Steinmetz, 15).

church, except that these prayers were a thorough mixture of Christian prayers and traditional Indian tribal prayers. The two pastors held tobacco in their hands, ready to offer it back to the Creator, to offer it for the life of this tree, to offer it to the four directions, above and below, to offer it in order to maintain the harmony and balance of Creation even in the perpetration of an act of violence. Someone wrapped a string of colorful tobacco tie offerings around the trunk. As four men sang traditional prayer songs around a drum, the people came one by one up to the tree to touch it and say their prayers, some actually speaking to the tree, speaking consoling words of apology, gratitude, purpose, and promise (Tinker, 144).

A very dramatic demonstration of this attitude and practice is in the deer hunt. There are actually several ceremonies involved:

1. The dance - not just imitating the animal, but learned from the animal. The dance was intended to compliment the animal.
2. Hunters were taught animal etiquette from childhood. The first-fruit or the first kill is to be given to the old or needy.
3. Game animals and women were to be separated. The hunter stayed away from his wife before the hunt.
4. The hunter has a vision assuring him of the animal's love especially when hunting a mountain lion or an eagle. It is almost like going to war.
5. Tobacco and prayers are offered for good luck to a sacred object.
6. Songs would be sung. They use the appropriate words which are handed down by tradition.
7. Some use the sweat lodge in advance of the hunt.
8. In some cases, animals showed themselves only if the taboos had been observed.
9. When an animal is caught the Native People apologize to the creature.
10. Parts of the animal were either consumed or disposed of ceremonially (Underhill, 188-123).

The Cree story, "How the People Hunted the Moose," tells of the hunter's cycle as seen from the animal's point of view.²

Circle dances are done to celebrate the gift, to remind Native People of their interconnectedness with all of life, to strengthen the community, and to celebrate the giving circle and the circles of life of which all are a part. Circle dances are important aspects of living in balance with the animals (Caduto and Bruchac, 45).

Involved in the cultic life of Native People's spirituality is the story which is a sacred event. Not only is there observed information. The Native People devised stories about animals and plants that were also sources of information.

Teaching stories does not just tell about physical facts with ordinary events and plots. They also teach abstract notions of behavior, cosmology, and ways of seeing or thinking about things. Sometimes the story is like a code which, the more it is listened to over the years, the more it reveals. . . . This "coding" of knowledge in stories is like asking "why," because you have to listen more closely. Then you also have more of a chance to suddenly discover meanings, concepts, and ideas by yourself. . . . The "coding" has another advantage, the stories appeal to more people (Beck et al, 59-60).

²See Keepers of the Animals, 5.

Memorization is essential for passing on sacred knowledge. It is important for two reasons: 1) it diminishes the possibilities of inconsistencies in retelling stories and information and 2) without this information recorded in memory it may not be conveyed to the future since there was for a long time no written documents (Beck et al, 29-30).

Story tellers receive instruction that stories are meant to be told and not read aloud. They have their specific seasons. Bodies and endings of stories cannot be mixed (Caduto and Bruchac, 61).

There is a story told by the Navajo that highlights the way stories are used. It goes like this: Once there was a Master Slayer which killed all the monsters that preyed on people. However, four of the monsters were allowed to live:

- Poverty - If killed there would be no knowledge of needs. Poverty helps develop compassion for others. It sharpens up one's ability to look for and acquire the things one needs for oneself and what others need.
- Hunger - When your stomach becomes empty you will develop your mind to get food. You will become industrious and stop being lazy.
- Fatigue - Without this there would be a desire to work all the time and not sleep and take time to meditate. One must be replenished both physically and spiritually.
- Body Lice - Without this, one would not bother to be clean. Also, people would not comb each other's hair. This is a time for recreation. Thus, body lice forces people to make an effort to be clean, be sociable, and to play (Beck et al, 26-27).

When we look at ritual, prayer, and stories within the Christian community we must recognize several salient and parallel points.

Worship as expressed in ritual and ceremony identifies a connectedness between the human and God. In fact, one could say that worship is being caught up in the Spirit which is not a static understanding of God, but a dynamic one.

In worship the Christian experiences the Spirit of God in the state of becoming. That may seem disrespectful toward God. By that I mean when we speak in future terms of what God can, would, should, might do. "God is not finished with me, yet," reads one bumper sticker. The Lord's Prayer has several future elements in it, too.

The Spirit acknowledges that God is on the journey with us.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (II Corinthians 3:17).

We even look forward to the fulfillment of creation. (Peters, 233)

Thus, we worship "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). It is these attributes of

worship that bring cleansing and restoration to us, give us endurance and courage to deal with life. We have been freed from bondage and given a new being. We participate in Christ's death and resurrection as well as our own as a daily event. Our hope is in God, and we trust God's promises. Our worship captures these understandings.

Our connection is with a God who is more than a mystery. This is the God who is Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. We celebrate this Spirit who, according to the Nicene Creed, proceeds from the Father and the Son. As Christians we are specific about our source of energy. The Spirit is the Lord and giver of life.

Worship and thanksgiving have specific meanings within the Christian tradition. Worship comes from "worthyship" which has to do with recognizing value in something or someone else. Thanksgiving is rooted in the Latin word that is the same word used for "grace." The basic word means "pleasure."

Thus, worship and thanksgiving are actions of valuing and expressing pleasure with someone or something. We recount how God does this to the world and how the world responds to God reciprocally. We value and find pleasure in God.

In worship time is collapsed, both the past and the future. It is done through the simple act of remembering. What is discovered, however, in Christian worship is that the remembering begins with God remembering the world.

The contents of Christian worship are the proclamation of the Word, celebration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, prayer, and the gathering of the faithful. All of these elements acknowledge connectedness with God.

The stories of the Christian community are a critical part of the church's life. The Gospel is not just good news, stories needing interpretation. They have their own integrity. Stories are not limited to use in worship and Bible study. They can be told as situations develop where the story is appropriate.

Thus, stories are also integral in the Christian community's self-consciousness and self-understanding.

When concerned with cleansing (restoration), endurance, and courage one can be seduced into an egocentric motif or paradigm. Ritual and ceremony can be the thrust of one's life being done for self aggrandizement.

I propose that eco-evangelical spirituality is grounded in ritual and prayer and stories. With them we fix our consciousness of God and our solidarity with all of natural history. Jaroslav Pelikan uses one word to define spirituality, *Erdgebundenheit*, i.e., being bound to the earth. What are elements of valuing and pleasure between God and humanity are also elements that include all of creation. The connectedness must have a focus, and this focus is worship.

In worship we participate in a vision of a world that God redeems, makes new, and creates. It is a vision that begins with God's saving act, restoring gifts. It is grounded in the blood of Christ.

Christian worship follows a series of events in the human life from baptism to burial. These events become opportunities for remembering God's presence in our lives to do something with all creation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Everything that exists has a place in the ecosystem. Ecologists call this a "niche." This words means profession or role. A niche is also often thought of as a space or location. However, niche has to do with what an organism contributes in and of itself for the sake of the whole.

When an organism neglects to perform in an ecosystem for whatever reason, another organism takes its place.

Not all organisms are equal in their profession. Some are more critical for a habitat's survival than others. These are "keystones." Some of these animals are very large, e.g. elephants, rhinoceros, and other big herbivores. Or they can be the tiny army ants.

Native People understand that humanity's niche is complicated because human behavior can work for good and for ill in the ecosystem.

For Native People the way to live is a way of peace, a way that dares to be in balance and harmony with all of creation and an attitude of respect.

There are two ways with which this is dealt: the Vision Quest and stories for instruction and behavior modification.

The Vision Quest is extremely important because it is the experience that gives direction to a Native person in terms of their role and their identity in the tribe and in the world. It is a story that comes to a person from outside of the self and unfolds as the person grows in years. It comes in some type of dream experience. An elder serves as an interpreter of what the story means. The Vision Quest shapes a person's life.

Not all Native People are blessed with a vision. Some seek it, and it never comes. There is acceptance of this difference in experience.

The way one lives is also influenced by stories. They were meant for instruction as well as to modify behavior.

The virtues of animals are emphasized. Children were admonished to be wise, gentle, brave, and cheerful as expressed by certain animals (Deloria, XI).

When misbehavior occurred children would be told a story rather than be punished. The tales usually emphasized that inappropriate behavior would lead to disaster (Underhill, 31). Humor is also characteristic of the stories.

The coyote stories, as discussed in the introduction, remind us of the role of the clown, the sacred fool. The jester deals with ambiguity better than the sober, serious ponderer. For the jester ambiguity is the way it is. For the somber person ambiguity is their bane and held by them in contempt. The coyote image helps us live with the uncertain, the ambivalent, the obscure, yes, even the mystery.

Luther had a sense of this ambiguity when observing how one should deal with the indistinctiveness of the human condition and the ambiguity created by human evil. He said almost whimsically, "Sin boldly! But," he continues in a less humorous fashion

as an affirmation and confession, "trust God's grace more boldly still!"

In the Christian community we understand that the way a person lives has its basis in the Spirit of God. These are outlined in terms of gifts of the Spirit, fruits of the Spirit, and sanctification.

Paul discusses the gifts of the spirit in I Corinthians 12. In this instance Paul mentions the types of talents and innate abilities that determine how a person functions within the life of the church community. Each person has a gift by which one can give something unique.

People have been given abilities to fulfill a role in the world. It is understood that these talents are also gifts of the Spirit.

In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul talks about styles of life in this way: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law." (RSV) It is significant to note Paul's metaphorical use of fruit and Spirit.

In the natural world, in order for fruit to occur, a flower must be pollinated. There are two basic methods of pollination: animals (birds, mammals, and insects) and wind. Animals do most of the pollinating in the Tropics. As we get further away from the equator we see wind pollination more frequently.

Fruit, by the way, is not simply the type we eat. All seeds are fruit.

Just as fruit depends upon an outside source to be pollinated so we can talk about the Spirit of God as an outside source who touches us and causes good to be done through and by us. (The words ruach (Hebrew) and pneuma (Greek) mean wind, breath, and Spirit.)

To practice the Spirit is to live the sanctified life. This is the process by which a person receives new life having been freed from the power of sin and guilt and given the capacity to live most fully and more selflessly. In love the person makes holy and wholly the other. (I prefer to use the word sanctification rather than spirituality.)

Sanctification has four elements: illumination, regeneration and conversion, obedience and good works, and perfection (Peters, 242-243).

1. Illumination is an experience of the mind. There is knowledge that is given by the Spirit. We know about the God who acts in our lives (Acts 26:18) We have discerned the Spirit.

2. Regeneration and Conversion. This has the nature of being cleansed and renewed in experiences of worship. It also has the nature of opening a person for a change of heart - conversion.

Conversion is the rejecting and turning away from the evils of the past and living a just life. Conversion is not a global experience for the individual. By this I mean that there is not just one conversion in a person's life. It is an event that happens frequently as one discovers instance by instance how the past must be regarded and a new way be taken.

3. Obedience and Good Works. The teachings of God, sometimes called the "law," are seen as constructive for how to live not just what to do. There is a joyful appropriation of God's teachings and God's love. Good works are not deeds done to earn favor, but are behaviors done to make things right.

Such behavior practices the unity we have with God and the rest of creation. "We realize that there is a bond of love that unites all things" (Peters, 243).

4. Perfection. This word makes some people frustrated because we claim not to be able to be perfect. Bonhoeffer said the word translated "perfect" in the New Testament really means "complete." We can quibble over words, but what does perfection mean? It is a life of purging sin, restoring the image of God, and living spontaneously in the love of God.

Perfection is actually the practicing of the Spirit. It acknowledges that we work at being this type of person. There are some gifted athletes that do not need to practice their skills. But it does become obvious that even the most gifted athlete cannot neglect to practice if one plans to play with the rest of the team.

What about sin? What sinful behavior corresponds to what is being said? The answer is simple: self-perfection and human superiority. The idea of self-perfection is that I become the center of the world. I train my body and mind so that I can be my deepest me.

Human arrogance has also demonstrated what can happen. It is believed that 1) humans can control the ways of the natural world, 2) humans can continue to exploit certain natural resources indefinitely, and 3) all mysteries, all uncertainties, i.e. the unknown, can be ultimately conquered (Beck et al, 47).

Humans must realize that the human is a part of the created order. We are a part of the natural event. We need to unlearn what we presently practice.

What is the ecologically environmentally spiritual thing to do? First, we must have a vision of evangelical ecology. Forgiveness and faithfulness are redeeming acts for all to experience. Thus, our ecology is the good news, and the good news is for the whole system. This is our vision which encompasses the past story and thrives on hope. This is a vision that unfolds and needs constant interpretation. It is a vision that comes from without. Second, the vision is important in order to see what God is doing. The Native People have a saying, "I wouldn't see it unless I believe it." This stands in contrast to "I wouldn't believe it until I see it." Third, our profession is to make the world a better place. This means acting respectfully toward all creation. We have our own niche.

CHAPTER FIVE

All species require a habitat. This may seem obvious. But do we really know how strategic a habitat is?

A habitat provides food, water, shelter, and available space. All organisms live in some type of interdependent relationship with other organisms. In various ways, by cooperation and competition, the organisms live with and off of each other.

When species are deleted from a habitat we notice how the habitat is affected. Or when a habitat is depleted or destroyed how species either migrate or die.

The study of habitats includes a study of biodiversity. Habitats must be complex. The more simple they are the greater chance there is for destruction. The more diverse they are the greater the opportunity for the habitat to survive.

The health of a habitat is found in the various species living in a balance. Thus, one could say that habitat and the health of species are closely allied. The habitat must be healthy for the sake of its member species. The habitat gives health and wholeness to its members. The habitat must be maintained in its own right so it can be restorable.

Native People understand habitat in the context of the sacred hoop. Black Elk is quoted as saying, ". . . the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round" (Brown, 13-14). And the Native People are a significant part of it.

For the Native People the tribe is the basic form of existence. It is not what an individual knows that is important, it is what the tribe knows collectively. Individualism is not the essence of being complete. Tribalism or community is the state which must be complete. Thus, the tribe is central.

Some Native People also describe the family as all the creation. One is not within simply a human family with the same last name.

This puts life in a massive circle.

In a sense, we have returned to the beginning of this whole discussion with the circle and balance and harmony and reciprocity. However, life is not just found in a circle. The circle is one of healing and wholeness. It is the sacred.

Native People have developed the circle into a sacred symbol with four sacred parts. If one looks deeply into it it becomes a mirror to lead a person to the deepest awareness of mystery.

For the Christian the work of the Holy Spirit is to establish wholeness, wholeness in community and wholeness in the individual, wholeness in relationships and in how one thinks, physical and mental wholeness. It is the Spirit that unifies, integrates, and mends relationships.

In a world where people want to bring death to life in a wanton fashion the Holy Spirit is God-at-work to bring life to death.

For the person, the Holy Spirit treats sin by remembering it no longer (John 31:34), casting sin behind our backs (Isaiah 38:17), and sweeping them away like clouds (Isaiah 44:22). Forgiveness leads to blessedness (Psalm 32:1, see also Romans 5:10, II Corinthians 5:18-19, Colossians 1:20).

Peters says,

The Holy Spirit proceeds from this work of the Father through the Son to effect this ministry of reconciliation within the world. Reconciliation is a process leading eventually to its consummate fulfillment in the unity of all things in their creative

and redemptive ground, God (Peters, 233)

The Holy Spirit calls Christians together in community. As a matter of fact, it is hard to say when a person is called a Christian because being a Christian and being in the community of faith are one in the same.

Like Native People celebrating the sacred circle, the Christian celebrates the habitat of the church. To think the spiritual life of a Christian can exist outside of this community is preposterous.

The church is an event where the Word of God is proclaimed and the Sacraments administered. It is the gathered people of God, the reconciling community.

The church is very complex in its role because it has some distinctive tasks within the habitat of this world. It acts on behalf of God. It names the work of the Spirit. It celebrates God. It brings life and nourishment to all. And it looks foolish in its style of life.

Foolish, you say? Foolish, yes! Even the gospel we proclaim is that, says Paul.

The church is like the coyote. It has a definite place within the ecosystem, but it is treated as a pest (i.e., the indigenous alien). Like God's dog it also seems a fool.

When the church is seen as the healing habitat and within the context of the circle it is obvious that sin is not being different, but is being estranged. When a person pulls oneself away or the individual is ignored there is sin.

For the Christian person eco-evangelical spirituality is a commitment to life in the circle and community of the Spirit and the world acting to heal the Earth. This means making it possible for all to be whole and working at reconciliation.

CONCLUSION

Who is the coyote? We are!

We are the people through whom God works to continue with creating and restoring. We are people chosen to teach. Though we do not have the role of elder we can still be those who pass on the traditions. We live with life, death, and life. We die to sin and are raised to walk in newness of life. We are political, profane, potentially abusive. In some cases we are the joke. And yet God has chosen to work in us as God's people:

Made by God's Spirit,
Molded by God's Spirit,
Filled by God's Spirit, and
Used by God's Spirit.

Christians are indigenous aliens being of the world with a message from elsewhere. This is the way Christians practice the Spirit.

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