

What Would "I" Have Done?

~ An Offering of Repentance and Love to the American Indian Community ~

What would "I" have done?

If "I", the Reader, could have directed and controlled the movement of white Europeans to the American continents, over five hundred years ago, what would "I" have done? Would "I" have engaged in the slaughter of innocents and the ultimate displacement of an entire race?

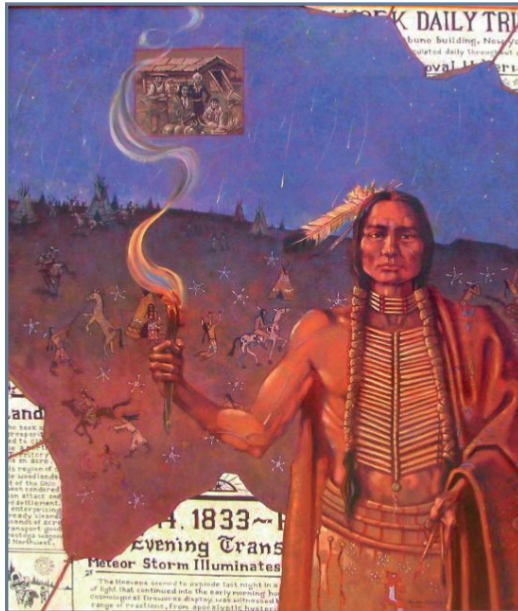
"What have I to do with it?" will not remove the collective pain of millions upon millions of Native Americans who died with bewilderment and rage. The hearts of American Indians both living and dead can only be fully healed by the descendants of their enemies.

We did not find a perfect people when we arrived. Violence existed on both sides of the Atlantic for thousands of years. Yet, as we stepped ashore in North America, our arrival was prefaced with the words, "In the name of God, Amen." Had we truly understood that all humans without exception were God's temples, with God's Spirit dwelling in their hearts and minds, we would have greeted the inhabitants of America with a heart of love. It is central to our shame that we had been taught for fifteen hundred years to love one another as we had been loved. We quibbled, and evaded the reality that Jesus considers all people his friends.

"What would I have done?" can best be answered by asking, "What would God have done?" If we had looked at each Native American with the eyes of God, we would have said, "The God in me greets the God in you."

If we had been met with violence nonetheless, and then continued to serve, our lives laid down for our new friends would have magnified the unstoppable power of love. If we had traveled to every tribe on the continent and offered our service, our technology and our respect to our brothers and sisters under God, we would have gained far more than we gave. The spiritual and nature-centered culture of our new relatives would have fed our souls and enriched our burgeoning civilization. Sharing the land together with our hosts would have created a country that resonated with the joyful spirit of God. If we had treated our African brothers and sisters with the same respect and love, America would have become a multifaceted jewel; a true and admirable city upon a hill.

As white Americans, we have been proud of our Founding Fathers and the laws articulated in our Constitution. We have forgotten that we broke the one law that matters. As Edmund Burke stated in 1794, "There is but one law for all, namely, that law which governs all law, the law of our Creator..." Is it not God's law that every human being was



created to gain joy by giving and receiving love? Is it not His law that our nature inherited from Him calls us to create and multiply beauty in all aspects of our lives?

By violating the human rights of uncounted millions of American Indians and Africans, we have also violated the heart of God, who loves each one of them as His children. If we could hear the sound of the accumulated cry from all the victims who have passed into the spirit world, what would we want to do? If we could hear every story of pain, would we not respond?

Our dear and beloved American Indian brothers and sisters, we know that words alone will never repair the catastrophe that we visited upon you.

The burden of five hundred years will not wash away in a day. Thus, we offer more than words. Our tears, our prayers and our hearts of repentance are given endlessly to you. Our embrace of love, of brotherhood and sisterhood, are offered with our absolute respect and complete commitment.

Our desire for healing and reconciliation also includes our brothers and sisters from Africa and all other races. Yet, it is to you, the original owners of this land, that we bow to now, and offer a greeting that is too long in coming.

The God in us greets the God in you.

May we live together forever in the embrace and love of God.

In the name of God, Amen.

A Note to White Americans: *As citizens of the 21st century, we hope that our attitudes toward race relations have dramatically improved over the last five hundred years. With these new attitudes, what if any one of us could travel back in time and could have thus directed and controlled the movement of white Europeans to the American continents?*

What would each one of us have done? What would "I" have done? What should have happened? Even though the white colonists did not have the wisdom of hindsight, if they had more deeply examined their Christian faith, would they not have followed the examples of Jesus and the saints who loved and lived for the sake of others? They arrived in America on the foundation of fifteen hundred years of religious instruction. They proudly called themselves more civilized than others. Knowing all of this, should we not acknowledge the pain that members of our race inflicted upon millions of Native Americans? What matters now is that we care about what happened. With that heart, these words are offered, with the question, "What Would "I" Have Done?"

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"The Year of the Falling Stars" painting is based on the belief of the Plains Indians that an 1833 meteor shower foreshadowed their apocalypse. "The Year of the Falling Stars"
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