

Native American Ministries #10

Thom White Wolf Fassett Giving Away Our Hearts 2008 ibid. p5

The title of this book was inspired by a communication written by Ferdinand Columbus (yes, that guys brother ed.) to his sovereigns on one of his four voyages to the "new world." He wrote that the Natives "...were a kind, gentle and generous people who would give him their hearts if he asked them to do so"(1). At first it wasn't their hearts for which he asked, but their gold. But before Columbus concluded his excursions into the Americas, he set into motion such depravations as would astound modern readers of history by demanding not only gold, but also the hearts and lives of the indigenous peoples. This process continues even in our own times as military forces, sophisticated weaponry and legal actions take the very hearts of Native peoples by claiming their land-the center of Native spiritual reality.

I write unambiguously as a Christian and as a Native American. The apparent contradictions between these two identities will be obvious ... the dispossession of Native Americans by an immigrant population claiming to be God's chosen people who had the right to inherit a virgin land is the central contradictory theme that will be repeated ... in this study. The church's role in this subjugation of America's Native people is palpable. **ONLY AS WE IMMERSE OURSELVES IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE SOCIETIES OF NATIVE AMERICANS WILL WE BE ABLE TO EMERGE WITH A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF OUR OWN IDENTITY AS PEOPLE OF FAITH.** (capitalization added for emphasis ed.). ...We then will have the possibility of gaining a healthy perspective on our responsibility in the challenges to Native American survival. We are, as writer Alice Walker phrased it, "looking backward toward the future."