

A Prayer of Settler Colonial Confession and Indigenous Liberation

By Grant Showalter-Swanson

God of forgiveness and sanctification,
You have urged us to confess our sins
So that we may be cleansed of all unrighteousness.

We confess that we all-too-often individualize this command
And refuse to apply it to our communal lives –
Especially when we benefit from corporate sin.

We are here to acknowledge one such collective evil:
The sin of colonization –
Past and present.

We confess, as residents of the United States,
That unless we are descendants of native tribes of the Americas,
We are beneficiaries of the horrific violences of colonialism.

We live our lives on land that was stolen
Through deception, coercion, and murder –
Justified through the collaboration
Of European legal codes
And twisted theologies
Masked as Christianity.

While we are not the original colonizers of this land,
And we may not even be descended from them,
We still reap the harvest of dehumanization
And the forced removal of Native people.

If we do not confess this sinful reality
How can we ever hope
To be cleansed of our unrighteousness?
How can we ever hope
For the Spirit to transform our lives?
Striving alongside Native people
For tribal sovereignty
And the liberation of our own souls?

God of forgiveness and sanctification,
We confess complicity to past and present colonial violence –

- The realities of missing and murdered Indigenous women
- Paternalistic control by the U.S. government over sovereign reservation lands
- Extractive industries that violate the earth, particularly on tribal lands
- The continuous chipping away of tribal land through Euro-American conceptions of private property rights
- Educational systems that silence and eliminate cultural practices and traditional languages
- Victim blaming drug and alcohol abuse on the disaffected and disenfranchised
- Revisionist history that attempts to whitewash the colonial bedrock of this country
- The ideologies that justified colonialism through blasphemous theologies.

Through this confession, we,
the descendants of settler colonization,
ask for corporate forgiveness
to be cleansed from unrighteousness,
so that we can seek liberation –

- Justice for the crimes of our criminal justice system
- Sovereignty and self-determination for Native people
- Ending the violences of extractive industries
- The repatriation of tribal lands
- Educational systems that center the flourishing of cultural practices and traditional languages
- Holistic supports for the well-being and thriving of the most vulnerable
- Confronting the realities of our countries' sordid past toward co-creating a healing future
- Denouncing death-dealing theologies and proclaiming theologies derived from our God of life and love.

We confess that settler colonial liberation,
Indigenous liberation,
And the liberation of all creation,
Are all wrapped up together.

May our confess
Lead to the corporate conviction
And tangible communal action
Of collaborative courage
For collective liberation.
Amen.