

Devourer of Light, Weaver of Darkness

In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, a story is told of Ungoliant, a monstrous creature of spider form, with an insatiable appetite for light. In the story, Ungoliant sucks up light, consuming it and corrupting it into a palpable darkness from which she spins her treacherous webs. Melkor, the dark Lord, seeks out Ungoliant with a promise to give her whatever her all-consuming lust may demand. And so, Ungoliant weaves a cloak of darkness under which she and the dark Lord may move about unseen and unnoticed. Together, they seek out the light, and finding it, the great spider drinks up the light, belching forth darkness and growing in size and shape "so vast and hideous" that even the dark Lord himself is finally afraid (80-84).

"always learning, but never able to acknowledge the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).

The story of Ungoliant and the Dark Lord may bring to mind the biblical story of the Beast and the False Prophet as written in The Revelation, chapter 13 or the story of the Beast and the Great Prostitute as written in The Revelation, chapter 17. In any case, this story is reminiscent of theologies of conquest serving to cloak colonizing empires with deceptive webs of darkness – tangible darkness woven of light, consumed and corrupted and set to evil purpose.

Who am I to Judge?

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" (Romans 14:4a K.J.V.). So, asks the book.

But, what if the "servant" of "another man" invades your home, robs you of your property, rapes your wife, leads your children away captive and after all that presumes to tell *you* how to live and what to believe?

Maybe it's time to talk with that "other man" about his "servant." Maybe the "servant" has grossly misunderstood and misrepresented the words of the master. Maybe the "servant" stopped listening to the master altogether, a long time ago. Maybe this is not the "servant" of "another man" at all; maybe this "servant" only serves himself. Or, maybe this "servant" serves a *different* master, a deceiver whose intent is anything but good.

"Judge rightly," the master says. "Judge neither by appearance nor by pious words spoken" (John 7:24; Matthew 7:21-23 paraphrases). "By their fruit you will know them. Grapes do not grow on sawbriers; Granny Smith apples do not grow on bois d'arc trees." (Matthew 7:16 paraphrase).

Do I have your attention?

From Conquest to Freedom

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following Jesus in the context
of our Native cultures

© June 25, 2008

a rewrite and expansion of a paper entitled
“From Conquest to Reconciliation”
first shared in

April 2002

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Part 1 “A Good Question”

Theologies of conquest are those theologies that serve to set one people group over and against another, claiming for their own group legitimacy, mandate or destiny to violate the sovereignty, autonomy or self-determination of others.

Theologies of conquest have been and continue to be used time and again to encourage and excuse theft of lands, military and political subjugation and/or wholesale slaughter of human beings, as well as subtler forms of cultural, spiritual, social and economic oppression. It is the nature of theologies of conquest to claim exclusive ownership of universal truth and/or special status as *the* chosen people. Others are alienated and dehumanized as pagan, heathen, unsaved or heretical. Theologies of conquest serve to develop and maintain hierarchical systems of government and church structure, as well as racial and socio-economic caste systems.

Theologies of freedom are those theologies that encourage harmony – the same harmony (unity in diversity) that is the very nature of Creator as mirrored in creation. Theologies of freedom encourage harmony between human beings and other human beings, on both individual and group levels, as well as harmony between human beings and the rest of creation, through loving the other as oneself – giving self in quest of freedom *for all* from bondage and oppression of every sort.

Theologies of freedom encourage recognition of giftedness and chosenness as well as neediness of *all* peoples (one's own as well as others). They encourage the understanding that there is no place where Creator is not already made known through Creator-Offspring, no place where Creator-Spirit does not already move. In regard to the sharing of good news, theologies of freedom encourage an attitude of watching and listening first for the good news already there. They encourage an expectation of seeing Creator-Offspring's presence already evident in every aspect of creation, including each and every human people and culture.

Far from encouraging attempts to recreate others after one's own image, theologies of freedom encourage a humble attitude of seeking, respectfully and with permission, to help with what Creator is already doing in and through others while accepting reciprocal help *from* others. Theologies of freedom yield an understanding that reconciliation and proper relationship with Creator and reconciliation and proper relationship between individuals and groups on earth are interrelated and inseparable, with greatness measured not by ability to control others but by the active giving of self that the people may live.

A Reluctant Theologian

If I theologize in this paper, I do so reluctantly. I am primarily a story teller, not a theologian. Jesus was a story teller, and for the most part, the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life and teachings leave interpretation of the stories Jesus told along with interpretation of the greater story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection – theologizing if you will, up to the reader. Others came along and began turning the teachings of Jesus into a set of beliefs, doctrines or dictates. A religion developed or really many religions which in a variety of ways seem more akin to what the Pharisees had in Jesus' time than they do to the life and teachings of Jesus.

Wherever I move outside of Mid American Indian Fellowships circles, I tell stories, just as I do within the fellowships, purposely attempting to remain theologically ambiguous most of the time. When I finish sharing, there are often those who feel the need, for whatever reason, to ask probing, theologically defining questions. This paper is an attempt to answer some of the theological questions I have been asked over the years. Please keep in mind, when reading this paper, that nothing you will read here is the last word or even *my* last word on any topic. Furthermore, I speak only for myself.

There is a tendency to create theology and then to confuse the theology with the transcendent reality of deity. Theology is *not* God but rather what we say, either as individuals or as groups, *about* God. I recall the late Cherokee elder and healer Elmer Kingfisher saying, "Christians go to Sunday school and talk *about* God; we Indians talk *with* God." There is honestly nothing that may definitively be said about the transcendent reality of deity, because, by definition, transcendence is outside our experience. This is the Great Mystery, the Unknowable, the Unfathomable, the Indescribable and Inexplicable aspect of Creator/Apportioner. This is sometimes described as the Divine Parent, Father/Mother or Grandfather/Grandmother. Of course, the appellation of Divine Parent or Grandparent is metaphorical, yet it may be considered an apt metaphor. In many ways, a parent or grandparent always remains a mystery to a child. Also, one child

may experience the attention or love of a parent or grandparent in ways that seem to differ from the experiences of his or her siblings.

"No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (John 1:18). To me this is descriptive of the Son or in Cherokee "Unelvnvhi Uweji" (Creator-Offspring). This is Creator enfleshed or Creator with Us. My Christian training would have me believe this is Jesus and only Jesus. As a Cherokee traditional, I might interpret this to be Jiya Unega (White Otter). However, I have come to understand this, in the larger sense, as the presence of Creator in all of creation or as the identification with and unity of Creator and creation (Fox). In this way, Creator is known through observation and participation. Similarly or maybe as an alternate way of describing the same Divine presence, Creator is known through the movement or action of Creator-Spirit, the Spirit of Creator, the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Truth. This is the Spirit within which guides in all truth through instinct, intuition, inspiration, dreams, visions, insights or the "still, small voice" (1 Kings 19:12). The Revelation of John speaks of "...the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Revelation 5:6). I see in this a reference to the overarching and indwelling presence of Creator with all of creation, in all seven directions: East, North, West, South, Up, Down and here in the Center. Earlier in the cited verse, the seven spirits are specifically identified with the spiritual power and vision of Creator-Offspring.

The Creator of the Universe, the source of all being, indwells all creation, and makes all creation, not just humankind, in Creator's image. Creator meets us, where we are, walking with us, talking with us, calling all creation into co-creatorship, communing and providing the center of all communion, all community, all life. Far from maintaining complete control, Creator grants freedom to creation, to *all* creation, from the tiniest atomic particle to the largest galaxy. All creation has freedom, even the freedom to make mistakes, to become unbalanced – even to the extent of limiting or denying freedom. Creator is there to help all who seek help in bringing creation from chaos, balance from imbalance and freedom from bondage.

Creator is immanent and known; Creator is with us and in us, with and in all creation. Yet Creator remains transcendent – above and beyond creation, unknowable, unfathomable, the great mystery, outside all attempts at analysis or description. For whatever it may be worth, this is my effort to articulate my own understanding of Creator. However, no theology can encompass the transcendent reality of Creator or even tap the surface of that reality. There remains that which is beyond.

There are those who may read into the statements above some acceptance of Christian Trinitarian doctrine. I cannot deny the Christian influence. I have been, after all, schooled in Christian thought. However, one will please note that I make no mention of "three *persons* of one substance." I am only attempting to articulate the ways I myself have experienced and continue to experience Creator or the Creative Presence. By no means do I understand developed Trinitarianism, or any other theological doctrine as something that should be universalized for all people. The ways Creator may be experienced and the ways those experiences may be shared are infinite.

In August 2007, I wrote an essay entitled "From Bondage to Freedom." In this essay, I spoke of how the healing stories and exorcism stories of the Gospels may be

understood, within their originating context, as stories of decolonization. I went on to pose the question “How do we decolonize?” and to offer a challenge for colonized, indigenous people to move in a direction of decolonization, patiently bringing together the remnants of our indigenous cultures even as our foremothers sewed together seemingly worthless scraps of cloth to make beautiful and useful quilts.

Why is this paper entitled “From Conquest to Freedom”? The title is appropriate, because conquest and freedom stand in diametric opposition just as bondage and freedom stand in diametric opposition. Furthermore, the conqueror is no more free than the one who is conquered. In fact, one may argue that the conqueror is less free than the one who is conquered. To place another in bondage is to place oneself in bondage, and as my sister, Marcia Rainey is fond of saying, “When you free others, you free yourself.”

A word of caution is warranted. The worst conquerors very often refer to themselves as “liberators.” It is important to know what true freedom is.

Two Kinds of Power

James DeMeo asserts that, among other things, patristic or male-dominated societies are “characterized by.... child abuse and spousal abuse; high levels of social hierarchy, with emphasis upon class, castes, and slavery; strong religious authority; a dominant military caste; and emphasis on group superiority and the need for conquest” (137).

Patristic, conquest-driven societies have not always been common in the earth, nor have the authoritarian power structures: ecclesiastical and political hierarchies, nation-states and empires that such societies produce. Available evidence suggests that patristic societies were very rare prior to the desertification of what DeMeo terms the Saharasia region of Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa between 5000 and 4000 BCE which spawned the widespread development and dissemination of patristic societies throughout that area (145). This, in turn, led to the development of the first city-states, nation-states and empires, starting in the as yet then “Fertile Crescent” of Mesopotamia, with patristic and its conquering, controlling, empire-building tendencies spreading east and west from there.

Joseph Campbell quotes Hans Heinrich Schaeder as writing....

.... this development took place not in the way of a gradual evolution, but abruptly, in a brief span, with the coming into being of the earliest form of the state.... It appears in the.... lower Tigris-Euphrates and Nile, after which, likewise, on the rivers Indus, third millennium B.C., and Hwang Ho, second millennium. All of which state foundings derived from one and the same historic process, namely, the overrunning and subjugation of earlier, locally settled tillers of the soil by conquering warrior herdsmen from Central Asia....

Now the exercise of [this kind of] power is governed everywhere by the law of intensification, or as the Greeks would say... ‘greed for more than one’s share.’ There is within it no principle of measure;

measure is brought to it only from without, by counterforces that restrict it.... of which the simplest and most inclusive is love (386).

Present reality is that this greed-driven, controlling, violently authoritarian, empire building and maintaining kind of power has spread itself over all the earth to the extent that many, today, assume power to be, by definition, coercive, controlling, authoritarian and limited only in the sense that the more there is for some the less remains for others (Williamson 11). Such an assumption may be true of the malignant kind of power described above, a power that spreads and grows as a cancer to dominate and consume the earth, until, of course, there is nothing left to consume. However, such an assumption forgets the counterforce to malignant power, namely, the power of love.

At the heart of love is a benevolent concern for the other, tempered by respect. Love without respect is not love at all, but some ill-bred substitute. And, respect precludes coercive, authoritarian control as surely as it precludes conquest. Of a truth, power and control are not one and the same. Rather, power is merely the ability to get things done, and taken this way, the increase of power for some cannot mean a decrease for others (Williamson 12). Within indigenous cultures, in North America and elsewhere, effective action depends on consensus, not coercion (Ibid 11). There is fluidity in indigenous leadership. Non-Indians attending American Indian events are often at a loss to ascertain who is "in charge." Watch the geese flying. You will not see the same goose leading the formation all the time; they switch off. Genuine leadership is exhausting, so it makes sense that human leadership should also be fluid, with each one leading according to her or his own capacity. A person must have followers in order to be considered a leader. With the malignant kind of power, a person is followed, because that person is powerful. With the indigenous kind of power, a person is powerful, because that person is followed (Ibid 13). That person is followed, because that person is loved. That person is loved, because that person loves. This indigenous, non-coercive, non-controlling kind of power *is* the power of love.

During his short life in Palestine, Jesus demonstrated the power of love. He was tempted by the malignant power which prided itself on controlling "all the kingdoms of the [Roman] world," but he rejected that temptation (Matthew 4:8-9). For a few centuries, the majority of those calling themselves Christians, struggling as they did at counter-purposes to the malignant power, may like Jesus, have been recognized as having the demonstrated power of love within their lives and communities. However, during the reign of Constantine (306-337 C.E.), major elements of the organized Christian Church and the Roman Empire entered into an unholy alliance. Under Constantine's rule, Roman persecution of Christians ceased as Constantine himself took to entering battle under a standard bearing the Chi-Rho, a Christian symbol formed from the first two Greek letters of the word "Christ" (Gonzalez 107). For whatever reason, Constantine had clearly come to consider "Christ" or Christianity as an aid to conquest. Constantine, himself, was not actually baptized a Christian until his dying day. However, in the year 325, Constantine called together what was later known as the First Ecumenical Council at Nicea, providing transportation for the bishops of his own choosing (Ibid 123). Among other results of this alliance between the Christian Church and the Roman Empire was the emergence or development of "official theology" that was non-threatening to or non-

critical of Imperial conquest and control (Ibid 124). Later in the reign of Theodosius (379-395), Christianity became the only religion recognized as legitimate within the Roman Empire, and non-Christians lost their protection under the law in Roman society (Ibid 192). Within less than a century, Christians had moved from persecuted minority to persecuting majority. While there is no doubt in my mind that many Christian individuals and groups continue living and walking in the power of love, history written from the time of Constantine until the present suggests that many more Christians and Christian denominations have given themselves most fully to advancing the cause of conquering, controlling, malignant power.

Seen from an indigenous perspective, a major motive of Christian missions has been and continues to be conquest of the land and destruction and/or displacement of the indigenous peoples and cultures of the land. *Theologies of conquest*, rooted more in Joshua than in Jesus, and even more firmly rooted in the Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Greco-Roman imperialistic traditions, created a Doctrine of Christian Discovery giving rise to a sense or conviction of Manifest Destiny which served to very nearly wipe out the indigenous peoples of the lands currently occupied by the United States and continues to threaten indigenous peoples worldwide.

How have theologies of conquest served to build dividing walls between ethnic/racial groups as well as spiritual/religious communities? How do we recognize theologies of conquest that remain with us today? In the Gospel accounts included in the Christian Bible, what do the recorded sayings and acts of Jesus communicate concerning theologies of conquest? How may we work from theologies of conquest to *theologies of freedom*, bringing more wholesome motives for helping one another in the 21st Century?

Cowboys and Canaanites

What do you know about the people commonly called the “Pilgrims”? They were English Separatists, dissenters from the State Church who fled to The Netherlands where they could practice their own brand of Christianity in freedom. But, this was not good enough for them. Fearing their children would learn to speak Netherlands Dutch and cease to be English, they returned to England and later set sail to look for a place where they could not only freely practice their religion but also freely enforce their religion and language and economic system along with the rest of their culture on anyone unlucky enough to live in their vicinity. They came on a ship called the Mayflower and would have shortly died if not for two years of charity and gentle nursing along by the Wampanoag Indians who were their gracious, if imposed upon, hosts.

As wave after wave of Separatists and Puritans washed up on the eastern shore, these “Pilgrims” desired more and more land. In 1636, just 16 years after the Mayflower arrived; the Pilgrims formed an alliance with the Narragansetts, in order to take over the land of the Pequot people. Surrounding the first Pequot town they came to, they promptly set it on fire and killed with the sword all who attempted escape. William Bradford described the slaughter in these words:

It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fire, and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the

stink and stench thereof; but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice and they gave praise thereof to God.



By the way, the original meaning of the word "holocaust" is [a sacrifice consumed by fire]. Do not tell me there has been no holocaust of indigenous peoples in the Americas!

The Narragansetts were mortified at the slaughter, seeing in it a vision of what would shortly happen to their own people and also to the Wampanoags. In fact, as a Wampanoag town was burning, about 40 years later, it is said that one "Pilgrim" soldier, sickened by the stench of burning flesh and horrified by the screams of the dying, asked his commander, "Is burning alive, men, women and children, consistent with the benevolent principles of the Holy Gospel?" That's a good question.

In the 15th chapter of Matthew, verses 1 through 20 are commonly considered one story while verses 21 through 28 are commonly considered a separate story. However, these stories are related or connected; that's why they are next to each other. By their proximity, the reader is invited to play them one off the other. The first story is about the very religious people who have no end of rules about how to wash and what to eat and not eat with the thought that if anyone in the world does not keep these rules, they are simply unclean. It could even be that if a person does not keep these rules, she or he may not even be considered a human being. In reference to these religious people Jesus quotes or paraphrases an oracle of the prophet Isaiah, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men" (Matthew 15:8-9).

The following story is about a Canaanite woman, a woman who would have been considered by many Jews to be the very worst kind of heathen, not even human, a dog. And, this story is in the book of Matthew, considered by many Bible scholars to be the most Jewish of all the stories of Jesus' life. In Mark, the woman is described as "a Greek" (Mark 8:26), just a little more acceptable than a Canaanite. In the story, the woman comes to Jesus, asking him to heal her daughter. Jesus appears to ignore the woman's plea. His disciples urge him to send the woman away, and it looks like Jesus will do just that. He goes so far as to refer to the woman and to her people by a derogatory name. It's a very peculiar story, but it winds up with Jesus saying, "Woman, you have great faith!" just before granting her request (Matthew 15:28). Again, by the very proximity of the stories, the reader is invited to contrast what Jesus says about the Canaanite woman with what he says about the religious leaders of his own people.

When I was a boy, I used to watch all those cowboy shows on TV: *Wagon Train*, *Rawhide*, and *Bonanza*. The *Daniel Boone* series wasn't exactly a cowboy show, but it was something similar. In all those shows, from time to time, an "Indian uprising" would be portrayed. The Indians came out of nowhere to harass and harry the innocent white settlers or worthy white cowboys. In every fight, there were always more Indians than whites, yet miraculously, the Indians pretty much all got killed. This was due, in no small part, to repeating rifles that could fire 475 rounds without needing to be reloaded and the curious fact that two or three Indians would scream and die for every round fired.

Of course, whenever an Indian murdered a white man in one of those shows, the remaining white people would always hunt him down. He would have to face, "White Man's Justice." When a white man murdered maybe 200 Indians, and the Indians sensibly suggested that he should face "Indian justice," the white people considered that proposition ridiculous. The white man, too, would face, "White Man's Justice." In all of those shows I watched as a boy, the sensible Indian, the good Indian was the one who gave way or disappeared, either died or blended into the scenery, in the wake of "superior white civilization." Try as I might, I could not figure any of this out. It seemed odd to me.

Then I went to school and learned about all the great heroes: Christopher Columbus, John Smith, William Bradford, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson and many others. How is it that these men can be called "great" when they did all they could to wipe Indian people from the face of the earth? I couldn't figure this out either. It was as odd as a cowboy movie on T.V.

Then I went to Sunday school, where they taught me about the Israelites and the Canaanites. According to the stories, the Israelites were an oppressed people, slaves in Egypt. They were there for 400 years; then Creator helped them get out of there. So, God was their deliverer. Then God led them to another place, to Canaan and said, "Here, if you'll go into Canaan land, I'll help you kill all the Canaanites: men, women and children. You can have their land! I don't like these Canaanites anymore; I like *you* now." So, God becomes the conqueror, and we witness the birth, in these stories, of conquest theology.

The excuse for the slaughter was that the Canaanites were terrible idolaters. Of course, Moses' brother Aaron was a terrible idolater too, and lied about it to boot, but God made *him* the High Priest of all the people! And, I read about this big, strong hero Samson, the suicide terrorist. His idol was his own personal revenge, and he's supposed to be one of the good guys! Then I read about this fellow Solomon who outdid everyone in the world as far as worshipping idols was concerned, sacrificing children and the whole nine yards. They called him the "wisest king who ever lived," which reveals a thing or two about kings and wisdom!

The Sunday school teachers and the preachers seemed to think Moses and Joshua and the Israelites were well within their rights to kill all the Canaanites they could. There was even some complaint that they didn't kill *enough* Canaanites.... This, even though, by most accounts, the Israelites were no better than the Canaanites, and by some accounts, they were worse! Here was something I couldn't figure out to save my life, except that it was all related, maybe all the same: cowboys and Indians, Israelites and Canaanites.

Then I read the story in Matthew about Jesus and a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28), that made me feel a little better. It seems that even Jesus had a hard time figuring out this whole line of reasoning about some people being better or more deserving than others, just because of a supposedly superior theology or culture. Of course, there are at least two ways or actually three ways to interpret this story about Jesus and the Canaanite woman.

The first way is to take the words of Jesus at face value. This would mean Jesus was a bigot when he met the Canaanite woman. He called her a dog! He dehumanized her in no uncertain terms. It would be like Jesus calling me a... Well, never mind; it was simply not a good or loving means of address. Furthermore, in this way of interpreting the story, Jesus was still just as much a bigot when the woman left. His statement about her faith was basically like saying, "Well, you're not like the rest of your kind." Taken this way, this story may be used to justify every level of religious and ethnic bigotry. After all, the standard Christian understanding is that Jesus was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). The words of Jesus in this story, taken at face value; show Jesus to be an unabashed bigot. Therefore, bigotry is not sin, at least not if you are Jewish or English or European-American. If you are a Canaanite or an Indian, forget it. This Jesus may be for William Bradford, but this Jesus is not for you.

In the second way of interpreting this story, the words of Jesus are also taken at face value. Once again, Jesus was a bigot at the time he met the Canaanite woman, but through his encounter with her, Jesus learned something. Jesus learned this woman was not a dog but a human being. Moreover, she was a human being with a level of faith such as Jesus was not used to seeing among his own people. The Bible says, "Jesus grew in wisdom.... and in favor with God...." (Luke 2:52), which begs the question: Can someone grow in wisdom and in favor with God without first, in some way, lacking wisdom and favor with God? And, can someone be lacking in wisdom and favor with God without in some way missing the mark or committing what might be defined, biblically, as sin? But I digress. Inasmuch as good and evil do not change with the generations, bigotry is, was and will always be sin, and Jesus is supposed to have been without sin. And, what about Jesus as Creator enfleshed? Did Creator order the deaths of all those Canaanite men, women and children, then, enfleshed as Jesus, suddenly change his attitude when one woman gave a witty response to his insult? I don't think this is a Jesus for Canaanites or Indians either.

A third way of looking at this story of Jesus and a Canaanite woman is to understand the insulting words of Jesus as spoken ironically. Jesus was speaking words that would have been expected of him in his role as a Jewish Rabbi of the day, words his disciples would expect and approve of, but there was something in the tone or maybe a glint in his eye that gave this woman hope. So, she played along, became Jesus' co-teacher for his disciples as well as for later followers or others who might hear or read the story. And so, here is what may be learned from this encounter: A Canaanite can be a person of great faith, because a Canaanite is a part of Creator's marvelous creation. She doesn't have to become Jewish in order to be a person of great faith. In the story she doesn't become Jewish. There is not even any indication that she became a Christian. She does not get baptized, does not join the church. She simply goes on her way, leaving Jesus marveling about her to his surprised disciples. It's as if Jesus was saying, "How often I have tried to tell you: Yes, Creator loves you as if there is no one else to love, but

that does not mean there are not others to love. Creator has people in every nation, and Creator never sets one nation above another. Yet, how often you have twisted Creator's words to suit your own whims and fancies."

Jesus and Joshua: You know, they are just two different ways of mispronouncing the same name. It's funny: Jesus never once mentioned Joshua. At least, it's not recorded that he did. But, I see this story about Jesus and the Canaanite woman as Jesus' answer to Joshua. Joshua, the one who said, "God told me to kill all the Canaanites," Jesus, the one who cleanses and heals a little Canaanite girl and calls her mother a woman of great faith (Warrior).

The Bible can be used to justify anything. Jesus was always upset with religious people, because that's exactly what religious people tend to do.... justify theft and violence and rape and murder with religion. Jesus doesn't want anyone to get religious. Jesus wants his followers to be real and to really walk with him and talk with him. Then, we can read the Bible in a good way, perhaps figuring out that much of it is best used for the value of really bad examples. We do not have to follow those bad examples. We do not have to follow theologies of conquest, nor do we have to make heroes of those who do, whoever they may be.

"Is burning alive, men, women and children, consistent with the benevolent principles of the Holy Gospel?" Good question. How do you answer it?

End of Part One

To Be Continued....

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Warrior, Robert Allen. "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today" in *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices On Religious Identity In The United States and Canada*. James Treat, ed. Routledge, New York: 1996. pp. 93-104. While my own thoughts on the subject predate my reading of this excellent essay, Warrior also connects Canaanites and Indians while contrasting Joshua and Jesus.