

Welcome to the Imperium's 21st Century

[**Note:** In this essay, I use the words *we*, *us*, and *our* to refer to white Americans (U.S. residents) who benefit from privileges derived from the enslavement of Africans, the theft of land from Native peoples, and their ongoing discrimination. The Imperium denotes the Western empire.]

It began with perceiving our differences as special, a delusion that ultimately festered into the disease of exceptionalism. We came to believe that the Earth and all life have the sole purpose to meet our demands of them and that we can freely do what we want to them without moral or natural constraints. Welcome to the 21st century.

It continued with exalting the specialness of our differences into the deluded belief that the Creator gave us dominion over Creation. We came to believe that our special differences made us the image of god and his promised people with the power to use violence to impose our beliefs and our ways upon others. Eventually, we came to believe that we no longer needed a god as Western science and technology gave us the keys to unlock all the secrets and riches of nature. We relegated the Western god to Sunday morning and eventually secularized all his spaces and meaning.

The spiritual disease of the Imperium spread to all corners of the Earth, enslaving people, taking the land from those who lived upon it, and desanctifying what they held sacred. The racist settler colonies plowed under the cultures in their path, replacing indigenous ways with the exceptional culture of Western white Christians, the Imperial culture. The ongoing corporate colonial project further disconnects us from our responsibilities to one another and to the land. Welcome to the 21st century.

The spiritual disease of exceptionalism infects our beliefs and distorts how we live on Earth with other cultures and beings. Throughout its long history, the Imperium has caused enormous suffering. We turned our species' skills for abstraction, toolmaking, and communication into weapons that today puts Earth and life into great dangers from which we can no longer escape. The spiritual disease morphed into a global omnicidal plague.

Americans live within the heart of the Imperium. Our willingness to harm others for self-benefit and then ignore the suffering caused expresses itself in increasingly nuanced ways within the Imperial culture. As John Mohawk, an elder of the Seneca Nation, said, "There are few people in the [American] culture who are not guilty of directing abuse toward other people – there are no living saints in the West." Privileged white Americans benefit materially from the Imperium's savage past and ongoing racism and colonialism.

Yet, but yet, the disease has a cure! The cure depends upon us restoring our respect for the sacred and by overcoming the belief in our exceptionalism, that which separates us from the sacred Earth, others. As we heal, we can work on life's great purpose, to care for the sacred Earth and all life, the Interbeing. At this point, we may not have the capacity to transform the Imperium before it collapses from within, but we can learn how to live in a different world.

Many Indigenous people have lived in this different world for eons. The Native peoples of Turtle Island (North America), other global indigenous cultures, the diasporic Indigenous African people brought to the Americas, and diverse other life forms can teach us how to restore the harmony and balance of Earth and life if only we can surrender to the wisdom of peoples we have oppressed and learn from them how to live on Earth with other life in ways that benefit all.

To heal ourselves from the highly transmissible and addictive disease of exceptionalism, we first must want to recover our well-being and liberation from complicity with what harms by giving up our exceptionalism and lack of accountability for our consumerism and the privileges that we gain from the spiritual disease. We must stop hiding behind our excuses and take responsibility for our actions. This malady has a long history, and wise people of the past and present have identified different ways to heal, but it will take time, and we have so little time left to stem the tide.

Many of us have dedicated our lives to bend the omniscient direction of the Imperium. We may even have had some small victories, but we see that over the decades the Imperium has only grown stronger and ever more destructive. We despair; we feel powerless. Can we now come to believe that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to live in harmony and balance with other cultures, all life and the Earth? Can we begin to connect lovingly with everyone with care and respect?

I struggled with doing *Meat, Complicity, and Thou* because I feared how others would react to my holding up the sacred as the way to undo the Imperium – from the rolling of the eyes to shunning. My fear of how others would react hindered me. Yet I saw through my complicity with what harms when I realized that it manipulated my deeply rooted, primal fear of shunning to weaken my resolve to share with you what I know. Knowledge without applying it is ignorance.

The Imperium intimidates us to avoid the truth of how it harms as it entangles us in its harmful ways. Complicity with the Imperium give us the deluded sense of social inclusion, of normalcy. Liberating ourselves from complicity resists the Imperium and marginalizes us. At this point, speaking the truth about how we can heal from our complicity with what harms by acting with love in even small ways to care for the sacred Earth and all life trumps my fears.

Christians might take offense from my views on Christianity. I recognize that many Christians have a deep relationship with the sacred and know the sacredness of the Earth and all life. However, we need to open ourselves to understanding the pivotal role the Church as an institution has played within the Imperium. It ruled the Imperium as a theocracy through medieval times and freely exercised its legal monopoly on violence to impose its beliefs upon others and extract their wealth. Later, colonial Christianity destroyed many indigenous cultures through its willingness to harm Indigenous peoples to Christianize them.

Over the next few months, I will share with you more about me, my concerns, my understanding of how the world works, and about the sacred path out of this doomed current trajectory. I will draw upon the wisdom of oppressed people, especially the Black and indigenous people whom we oppress/ed and live among us in the Imperium.

We will use the global corporate food regime as a teaching example and focus on the Meat Paradox. We all have to eat, which necessarily entails the taking of life. Yet changing our relationships with what we consume within this omniscient moment can make all the difference in the world. We will explore the difference between the Western relationship to what we eat and a sacred relationship to food. Traditional indigenous cultures enact reciprocity to receive the consent of other life to be killed and eaten prior to the taking of their life. I have put together [a presentation](#) that covers the many harms caused by industrial meat production.

Before we go any farther, a disclaimer. I have much to learn and remain entangled in the Imperial culture, which knows all my buttons. I get caught in my own complicity on a daily basis. I cannot tell others what they should do because we all have our own paths. Each of us need to do our own needed inner work to overcome our exceptionalism and complicity with the Imperium. However, it takes a community to discern how to heal community. We can learn from Indigenous people how they have lived as communities in ways that care for the Earth and all life for thousands of years.

I do not advocate another religion. We do not need another organization – we need another way of life. The Imperial culture has conditioned us to the willingness to harm others for self-benefit and then ignore the suffering caused. We can undo this conditioning by practicing the ways we learn to care for the sacred Earth and all life. I cannot define your relationship with the sacred, but we can together discern how to act in the world in ways that embody the sacredness of all. I do not know the form of the new culture that can restore the harmony and balance of Creation, but I do know that nonhumans and the Earth would have a voice in that discernment.

May all be well.

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