

Title: Unveiling Girard's "Immemorial Lie," Native Americans, and Positive Reciprocity

Abstract

In her Pulitzer Prize winning work "*A Problem from Hell*": *America and the Age of Genocide*" (2002), Samantha Powers says of genocide what could also be said of many traditional acculturation/assimilation policies with regards to the colonization of Native Americans: "The perpetrators of genocide . . . attempt to destroy the political and social institutions, the culture, language, national feelings, religion, and economic existence of national [tribal] groups."

Historically, "acquisitive mimesis" (desire for tribal lands) was followed by "conflictual mimesis" (violent removal/relocation policies) which resulted in two psychological maladies among Native peoples: *inherited oppression* and *colonially induced despair*. Girard's "immemorial lie" (the belief that it is better for ethnic minorities to be assimilated/destroyed/scapegoated than that the dominant nation fail in her manifest destiny) must be "unveiled" in order for minority groups to heal. The outcome of such healing could be positive reciprocity—the recognition of what the dominant culture has gained from Native peoples in terms of agriculture, medicine, sports, anthropology, sociology, and the arts. Of clear significance is what Native Christian theologians have to offer traditional Christianities.