

This book grew out of Hammad Othman's dissertation, so it reads like a scholarly work. Her exhaustive research will benefit anyone seeking to understand the effect of mission efforts intersecting with education. Though it is tempting to skip pages of footnotes in chunks, extra details are hidden here that, for the interested reader, serve as a guide for further knowledge. (For instance, a former student is quoted from what turns out to be her 1939 book on the first 70 years of the Quaker mission in Ramallah—though I was disappointed to realize it's only in Arabic.) The author's sources range from the microfiche of multiple Quaker college libraries to archives at the Friends School in Ramallah to interviews with former teachers and students, as well as their personal papers in private family collections.

Hammad Othman is assistant professor of Arabic Language and cultural studies at Marquette University (Milwaukee, WI), and founder of the Arab and Muslim Women's Research and Resource Institute. The latter uses oral histories and other means to combat stereotypes and raise awareness of the situation of Arab and Muslim women in the United States. I look forward to the work Hammad Othman will continue to produce on these subjects.

*ANDREA E. STONER LEAMAN lives in Bainbridge, Pennsylvania, and attends Blossom Hill Mennonite Church (Lancaster, PA).*

**Vincent W. Lloyd, *Black Natural Law*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2016. 200 pp. \$53.00. ISBN: 9780199362189.**

As a white, male, middle-class ministering person living in the untreated, stolen territory of what is now known as the Fraser Valley of British Columbia, I come to this dynamic text saturated with the influence of my privileged experience. My ministry experience in this Canadian context has required that I encounter people whose social status, gender, sexuality, and/or race are different from mine. And as I encounter these divinely crafted people, I am simultaneously confronted with my morality—that is, my understandings of law and nature, what is “right” and “good” and “ought to be”—and that which informs the performance of my particular morality. Natural law, according to Vincent Lloyd, is a rich and variegated tradition, imagined and practiced by many communities, including Jewish, Christian, and Muslim. But according to Lloyd, it is the black community and black natural law that “gets things right” (ix).

I find Lloyd's claim provocative and persuasive. Black natural law offers a stunning critique of the sociological ideologies that lay the foundation for oppression. It assumes the integrity of all humans—which is the basis for its “normativity”—and asserts that we can know “God's law,” “the dictates of conscience, or simply justice” (5). But, and this is key, it contends that blacks are “in a particularly privileged position with regard to natural law” (xiii). Like liberation theology, with its episte-

mological turn to the poor, Lloyd argues that “because of the oppression faced by blacks, it is especially obvious to blacks that worldly descriptions of human nature never suffice.” Therefore, if we want to understand natural law, what is right and what is good, we “ought to start with the insights of blacks” (xiii).

Yet it is not simply its claim to special insight, and posture of critique toward all ideologies of privilege, that sets black natural law apart. The force of black natural law also lies in its organized, socially engaged way of being. That is, black natural law, animated by the divine law (the moral law), inherently mobilizes for action and justice. This is its necessary and embodied response to ideologies of domination and injustice.

Lloyd brings his conception of black natural law to life by exploring classic figures of the black liberation movement—Frederick Douglass, Anna Julia Cooper, W. E. B. Du Bois and Martin Luther King Jr.—and the diverse ways in which they expressed the law through their words and praxis. As a Canadian, encountering these prophetic witnesses from south of the colonial border was a journey of intrigue and joy. All paint a picture of normativity—what ought to be—which acknowledges all as human. All were compelled into social mobilization in the pursuit of the moral law (justice).

As I read the “ideological critique” of systems of power by these historical figures, as I contemplate the compulsion of black natural law to mobilize in the face of injustice, I am confronted by the ways in which systems of power oppress people here in lands some call Canada. I am reminded of a life-changing experience I had at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Vancouver in the fall of 2013. I attended a sharing circle where I had the distinct privilege of sitting outside the circle on a black chair, with other observers, hearing the traumatic stories of Residential School survivors. I had never experienced the sound of a man weeping so painfully. He reflected on being raped and being taken from his family. This is one of the most haunting experiences I have ever had. I have not heard a man weep in such a way before, nor have I since.

I can hear Lloyd say, “Because of the oppression faced by the Indigenous, it is especially obvious. . . .”

I have not suffered the way Indigenous peoples in this country have. I have not experienced such practical vulnerability by way of the horrid denial of basic human rights. To name them is as simple as it is painful to write: Canada has taken 99.8 percent of the land. Reservations make up .2 percent of traditional Indigenous territory, and they are in disrepair due to inequitable funding. Access to food and clean drinking water is severely limited. Forty percent of children in care in Canada are Indigenous. Ninety-four percent of Indigenous languages are at high risk of extinction.

- Dispossession
- Residential schools
- 60's Scoop
- Missing and murdered Indigenous women
- Intergenerational trauma

The list can go on and on. I have not experienced colonization as Indigenous peoples have. And as such, I acknowledge that I have not experienced the “structures of power” and the totality of human life as the crucified in these lands have. It is here where some of Lloyd’s words find complex depth. It is here that the black experience of oppression and suffering is a form of privilege (thus turning privilege on its head) to a fuller understanding of the moral law and the world of which we’re part. In this way, we might see how the people who have been oppressed are the people who are closest to God’s heart and, as such, have a benefit of divine proportion. What would it mean for my congregation and my church if we truly believed this . . . and acted on it?

I believe it’s a perspective on life and divinity that we must take as key to our formation. It offers us a way to confront ourselves as those who put Jesus on the cross. We are not able to simply read the scripture and seek to identify with the suffering Christ if we indeed are implicated in the suffering of others. Many of us white Canadian Christians, like all people, do not fully understand God. To even begin to do so, we must encounter the suffering of the neighbor, a neighbor whose suffering we very well may be implicated in. The ideological critique must be from the margins and from below. We do well to listen.

Yet the radical edge of black natural law invites even more through its call to organize in the face of injustice. Anabaptist churches often take credit for being radical. I suggest that after reading this book, we need to lay down such claims, for the white Anabaptist church is integrated into systems of power in ways that prevent effective and truly emancipatory action. In Canada, mobilizing against injustice from the divine and normative perspective that all humanity is beautiful and created in God’s image would necessitate a confrontation with colonialism and even the settler state. This is simply not happening enough. And we certainly don’t center the natural law of Indigenous peoples in our efforts.

*CHRIS LENSCHYN is the associate pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, BC, Canada.*