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# Book Reviews

**David A. Hollinger, *When This Mask of Flesh Is Broken: The Story of an American Protestant Faith*, Outskirts Press, Denver, CO, 2019. 89 pp. \$12.95. ISBN 9781977211149.**

The distinguished American intellectual and religious historian David Hollinger describes his family memoir *When This Mask of Flesh Is Broken* as “American gothic.” It’s an apt expression. The story told in this short volume is one of bleak, frigid, subsistence farming on the barren Saskatchewan prairie; mental illness and its generational effects; sectarian Christianity; patriarchal power; and the bonds of persistence and reliance forged in this harsh and unforgiving setting. It’s both a somewhat disturbing and powerful story, and it is also a story worth reflecting on by those who care about Anabaptism and mission.

The story Hollinger tells is that of his father, Albert Hollinger Jr. (referred to as Junior throughout the text), his father’s siblings, and his father’s parents, Albert Hollinger Sr. and Annie Deardorff Hollinger. The elder Albert Hollinger was a prosperous farmer and Church of the Brethren minister from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in the early twentieth century when he accepted a call, in 1921, to serve as pastor of a small, upstart congregation on the Saskatchewan prairie. Accepting the call was, according to Hollinger, relatively easy for the elder Albert but not nearly as seamless for his family.

In Gettysburg, the family—which included the elder Albert’s wife, their seven children, and their live-in housekeeper and aunt—had been somewhat cosmopolitan and upwardly mobile, with access to education, cultural and social connections in the wider community, and stable religious networks. In Saskatchewan, they faced nearly impossible farming conditions, reliance upon faraway Winnipeg bankers for loans, and relative social isolation in the sparsely populated region.

Other traumas also shaped what Hollinger terms the family’s “Canadian sojourn” (55). Their religious community in Canada was more fundamentalist than in Gettysburg, and the children, in particular, were disturbed by the visiting “hell-fire revivalists” and their emphasis on sin and damnation (33). Even more traumatic were the effects of mental illness upon the family. First was Annie Hollinger’s undiagnosed mental illness, which rendered the family matriarch catatonic from 1914 until her death in 1927. During that period, her leg was amputated after she contracted gangrene from an infected toe but was unable to disclose her discomfort to anyone. Eldest son Archie’s similarly undiagnosed “serious emotional problems” (31) resulted in his involuntary institutionalization in 1922 and his untimely death in 1946 at age 52.

In Hollinger's telling, the elder Albert remained relatively aloof from the day-to-day struggles of his children in this unforgiving environment, concentrated as he was on his religious duties and his increasingly prominent position within the national Brethren community. Meanwhile, the younger Albert and his siblings experienced relocation, isolation, and parental absence in visceral ways that fundamentally altered their life journeys, even after the patriarch's sudden death in 1932 and the family's return to the United States, and the sale of the Saskatchewan property after 1941.

One legacy was familial: only a few of the seven siblings married, and only two had children. The siblings worried both about the hereditary inheritance of mental illness and about perpetuating the poor parenting that had been modeled for them by their father. As one of Hollinger's uncles put it: "We were always afraid" (32). A second legacy was communal. Even after the end of the Canadian sojourn, the siblings were bonded together, their lives intertwined. Junior and his wife, Evelyn Steinmeier, opened their homes at different times and in different places to several of Junior's siblings. All of the siblings relied on one another for advice, counsel, and financial and emotional support. In their later years of life, five of the siblings—Junior, Charles, Roland, Annie, and Edith—lived in geographic proximity to each other in La Verne, a Church of the Brethren stronghold nestled in the foothills of Southern California's San Gabriel Mountains. The bonds of reliance and persistence, forged in the harsh conditions of the Saskatchewan prairie, held the siblings together for the rest of their lives.

Hollinger's purpose in *When This Mask of Flesh is Broken* is not primarily one of reflection on mission. But for readers engaged in cross-cultural service and other forms of ministry, Hollinger's family memoir raises issues that warrant serious consideration. In the main, the book offers a potent reminder of the human and familial costs of following a perceived call to Christian service. As Hollinger represents the situation, Albert Sr. was emotionally unavailable to his children during the Canadian sojourn, preoccupied by his religious vocation and by the relentless work required to eke out modest crop yields in the barren environment. We know, of course, that the elder Albert was not unique in this regard; the annals of Mennonite, Brethren in Christ, and Church of the Brethren history are filled with stories of men who prioritized a perceived divine call over the care of their families, or whose religious work placed undue burden on wives, children, and extended family.

In addition, the book shows how Christian mission was often intertwined with manifest destiny. Hollinger repeatedly points out that Anabaptists who settled on the Saskatchewan prairie, including his grandfather, believed in "the great myth of 'Virgin Land'" and mixed capitalist pursuits—the acquisition of land suitable for farming, for example—with their religious mission (12, 15).

Both of these realities deserve serious reflection by those who care about both Anabaptism and mission, and Hollinger's book illustrates them in vivid terms.

There are some factual errors in Hollinger's account, mostly revolving around his grandfather's pastorate in Saskatchewan. Hollinger indicates that Albert Sr. relocated his family to Canada at the invitation of a group of Brethren in Christ—a denomination that was shaped, like the Church of the Brethren, by Anabaptist and Pietist influences—who were looking for a new minister. According to Hollinger, they had split from another group of Brethren in Christ over that latter contingent's "turn toward Pentecostalism" (14). However, according to historian E. Morris Sider, who has written the definitive history of the Brethren in Christ in Canada, the split among Saskatchewan Brethren in Christ was precipitated not by disagreements about Pentecostalism but by disagreements over whether sanctification is a lifelong process (the traditional stance among Anabaptist-oriented groups) or an event, a "second work of grace" similar to justification (the stance taken by many groups in the American holiness tradition). The group that invited Albert Sr. to serve as their minister were the traditionalists, and they believed themselves to be the true Brethren in Christ, even though they had pulled out of the established Brethren in Christ congregation. Hollinger presents these dissidents as forming a "fusion' congregation" (15), an equal-parts mix of Brethren in Christ and Church of the Brethren, but Sider presents the dissidents as having "joined the Church of the Brethren," not blending church traditions.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Hollinger claims that the Brethren in Christ Church named Albert Sr. "bishop of Western Canada" (23–24), but I could find no evidence in the minutes of the General Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church (the denomination's highest governing body) that he ever held that title officially. Perhaps the Brethren in Christ dissidents bestowed the title on Albert Sr., without official authority, as a sign of their gratitude for his leadership, but there's no record of Hollinger's grandfather receiving that honorific through the church hierarchy.

But these are minor factual and interpretive issues in an otherwise valuable story. Hollinger's memoir is not intended as a missiological text, but it is nonetheless worthwhile reading for those who care about Anabaptism and mission.

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<sup>1</sup> Sider's version of this story appears in *Be in Christ: A Canadian Church Engages Heritage and Change* (Oakville, ON: Be in Christ Church of Canada, 2019), 222–27. Quotation from p. 226. The Brethren in Christ in Canada changed their denominational name to "Be in Christ" in 2017.

**Charles E. Moore and Timothy Keiderling, eds., *Bearing Witness: Stories of Martyrdom and Costly Discipleship*, Plough, Walden, NY, 2016. 226 pp. \$14.00. ISBN 978-0874867046.**

What does it cost to follow Jesus? Mark, the earliest Gospel writer, explored this question in his first story of Jesus calling disciples. Mark tells us that Simon Peter “left [his] nets and followed” Jesus (Mk 1:18), but there’s more to it than simply leaving a fishing business behind. At his core, Simon Peter was a fisherman. In a sense, leaving his nets to become a disciple cost Simon Peter everything. A few verses later, John, one of the “Sons of Zebedee,” leaves Zebedee behind to follow Jesus. For a relational person like John, the evangelist who talks so deeply about Christian love, leaving Zebedee in the boat costs him everything. That’s always the metaphorical cost of being Jesus’s disciples—it costs everything.

From the very beginning, the Christian community has discerned a need for stories of costly discipleship and examples of people who traded everything to follow Jesus. Jesus himself encourages an awareness of the cost of discipleship (Mt 13:44; Mk 8:34; Lk 14:25–33). The earliest Christians recognized that stories of costly discipleship help maintain identity, values, and ecclesial trajectory. They developed ascetical movements and circulated numerous martyr stories, describing the various ways God’s people paid the ultimate cost for following Jesus.

In the Anabaptist tradition, our collections of martyr stories are primarily found in the *Martyrs Mirror*, compiled by Dutch Mennonite elder Thieleman J. van Braght, first published in 1660. Van Braght hoped to reawaken complacent and comfortable Anabaptists to the costs of following Jesus. The *Martyrs Mirror* quickly became an indispensable part of Anabaptist identity and education, but its stories conclude in 1660, leaving an ever-widening gap in the accounts of ongoing costly discipleship. *Bearing Witness: Stories of Martyrdom and Costly Discipleship* seeks to address part of that gap by recording stories of costly discipleship that span the globe and the centuries.

*Bearing Witness*, produced by the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism’s Bearing Witness Project at Goshen College, adds to the legacy of the *Martyrs Mirror* in more ways than one. Not only does it contribute stories after the 1660s, it also expands global representation beyond European and early Christian localities. Its thirty-six stories recount the experiences of Christians who—like those in the *Martyrs Mirror*—are (presumably) committed to believers baptism and nonviolence as they embody faithfulness to Christ despite suffering persecution and (often) death. The stories range from Stephen, the earliest Christian Martyr (of Acts 7), to the recent persecutions of the *Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria*, a Church of the Brethren community currently suffering persecution at the hands of the Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Every story recounts the faithfulness of Christians who recognize that following Christ is worth it, even though it costs everything. The short stories fit nicely into more than a month's worth of daily reflection, meditation, or devotional reading. A few minutes a day of immersion into the experiences of our global sisters and brothers provides a wealth of impact. In the words of John D. Roth and Elizabeth Miller's introduction, "Rightly remembered, these stories can challenge Christians everywhere to a deeper understanding of discipleship, to closer relationships with congregations experiencing persecution today, and to greater courage in their own public witness" (xvi).

*Bearing Witness* also reveals a few additional needs for our North American Anabaptist experience. It's not strictly a supplementary update to the *Martyrs Mirror*, which is good since *Bearing Witness* has a slightly broader goal in mind (and it repeats several stories already contained within the *Martyrs Mirror*). While Van Braght's goals might have been similar, recording the global experiences of Christians wasn't nearly as centralized as it is for the Bearing Witness project. Van Braght sought to persuade a specific contextual community toward specific values and actions—namely, how to follow Christ in seventeenth-century Europe.

*Bearing Witness* is a worthwhile contribution to several projects, and it also reminds us that Anabaptists living in the Global North would benefit from a compilation of costly discipleship stories in our contexts to awaken our own imaginations and follow Christ more faithfully. In its valuable pursuit of global stories, *Bearing Witness* leaves a gap for North Americans to add our stories as well (Clarence Jordan is the only US American story from the past century). We, the Anabaptists in the Global North—especially those of us who reside in contexts of militarism, complacency, and institutionalized injustice—must add to the legacy of the *Martyrs Mirror* with our own stories and contextualized examples, as both a testimony and a blueprint for those who will come after us.

In the end, following Jesus is always costly, but it only costs one little thing—that's "all." Following Jesus just costs "all." It always costs us our whole life, whether we summarize it as "nets," family, professions, or our safety. Jesus doesn't even demand we "abandon" these things; we just have to hand over control to him. Peter went fishing again, and Zebedee's name reenters the story a few more times, but the point is always that Jesus now controls and leads the course of life. Sometimes faithfully following Jesus means paying the cost one day at a time, while occasionally it means paying the cost all at once . . . but it always costs the same. It always costs "all."

The beautiful thing about the fact that it only costs "all" is that anyone can afford it (even if it's harder for those of us who have a lot; see Mk 10:23–27). The contribution of *Bearing Witness* is nothing short of the reminder that a continuous string of Christian sisters and brothers have handed all they had—their very

lives—over to Jesus and they resolutely call to us from the other side to remind us that “following Jesus is worth it all.”

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**Lauren Winner, *The Dangers of Christian Practice: On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin*, New Haven, NJ, 2018. 180 pp. \$20.00. ISBN 978-0-300-21582-3.**

Lauren Winner’s new book is a powerful response to the recent turn toward practice in Christian reflection. *The Dangers of Christian Practice* is a slim, elegantly readable account of how Christian baptism, Eucharist, and prayer can carry with them harm along with healing. The author provides this account not to insist that Christian practice is intrinsically or uniquely harmful but as a way of chastening optimism that a more robust set of Christian practices will enable Christians to resist the evils of late capitalism more effectively.

Winner begins with sin and the damage it has wrought. Created things can be damaged, she writes, in “characteristic” or uncharacteristic ways. Characteristic damage tells us something about the kind of thing the damaged object is. It is characteristic of a book, for example, to become yellowed and for its binding to crack. A book might be thrown into a river, but this particular harm would not, in itself, tell us much about the kind of thing a book is. Or, the love of parents for their children is sometimes laced with the parents’ own desire to turn their children into what they wish they themselves had become. This damage is characteristic; it tells us something of what nurturing love is. So too, Winner continues, with novels and sentimentality, shared meals and exclusivity, and friendship and the tendency to consume and feed off one another.

So too, also, with Eucharist, baptism, and prayer. In each of these three cases, Winner highlights historical case studies that reveal the damage that is characteristic of the respective sacrament—and, along the way, she shows us what the sacrament is really about. The Eucharist, she suggests, chiefly accomplishes “Gentile intimacy with Israel’s God” (38). The good of the sacrament is to bring the Jewish flesh of Christ into association with the mostly Gentile church. Through a reading of Medieval host desecration narratives (in which accusations that Jews had stolen the sacrament were used to incite pogroms), Winner suggests that a characteristic damage of the Eucharist is a set of violent and destructive “attitudes toward and practices about living Jewish flesh,” and perhaps, by extension, the need to purify and eliminate elements not seen as fit for this intimacy (35).

To discern the characteristic damage of prayer, Winner presents the diaries of slave mistresses in the antebellum American South, exposing their prayerful

desires for their slaves' submission. Here the damage Winner identifies as characteristic is the tendency of prayer to ratify and reify the evil desires of the one who prays (83). This damage tells us something of the good of prayer, which is friendship with the God who wishes us to desire good for ourselves.

In her final case study, Winner examines nineteenth-century American christening parties. Baptism, she suggests, "rightly operates in the cleft between extracting the baptizand from her locality and affirming that very locality" (150). In putting on Christ, the one who is baptized is both blessed in who they have been and born again into someone new. Baptism goes wrong, Winner suggests, by eliminating this tension in either direction. For most contemporary American audiences, she posits, the reification of the local and familial is the more common kind of damage. In the baptismal parties she examines, "the celebrating family stood around looking not at the sign of regeneration but at itself" (125).

In the final chapter of the book, Winner reflects on the nature of gifts and damage. In an appendix, she situates her work in terms of contemporary Christian theology, noting that for postliberals like Stanley Hauerwas and George Lindbeck, as well as a range of other scholars, including feminist theologians, "practices have been embraced as a way of fixing something in and for the church" (180). Baptism, Eucharist, and prayer are indeed perfect, as gifts from God, "but any gift given by a Giver like that to a recipient like us will be damaged" in the receiving (154). And so, while recent scholars have tended toward a "restitution" of practice, Winner performs a "destitution."

But Winner's book destitutes for the purposes of—if not repair of—endurance and constancy. In closing, she recommends repentance, confession, and lament as necessary to any practice. They too have their own deformations, but they can sometimes help us to receive the gifts of baptism, Eucharist, and prayer more carefully. We pray, we baptize, we celebrate the Lord's Supper, not because we can get them right, she states, but because we hope that in practicing them, "despite the damage, they will return us to one another, and to the Lord" (165).

When I set this book down, I began to think of the many damages proper to Anabaptist life and practice. My mind turned to the prose and poetry of Rudy Wiebe, Miriam Toews, and Julia Kasdorf—to the way that in each, the social regulation that comes with communal discipleship is exposed as suffocating, patriarchal, and authoritarian. My mind turned also to Gerald Schlabach's argument that in an age of mass consumption adult baptism threatens to fetishize individual choice over collective formation; to Steve Dintaman's charge that contemporary Anabaptism tends to reduce the Christian life into an ethical program; and to the way Anabaptist migration and evangelism has been woven from the threads of colonialism.

I thought of these things because it seemed important in this review to give some account of the damages Anabaptist practice has borne. But what Anabaptists ought to take from Winner's book is not, I think, a clear explanation of which of our own practices go wrong in which ways—though such self-investigation is necessary—so much as the more fundamental recognition that our practices do, in fact, go wrong beyond all attempts to repair and purify, and yet they remain indispensable. In other words, what Anabaptists might learn from this book is not a guide for diagnosing and repairing our own particular practices but rather a certain humility about the limits of getting our ecclesiology or missiology “right” at all. We might recognize instead that sometimes all we can do is receive the Lord's gifts with clumsy hands, knowing that we will break them.

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**Joshua Dubler and Vincent W. Lloyd, *Break Every Yoke: Religion, Justice, and the Abolition of Prisons*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2020. 264 pp. \$35.00. ISBN: 978-0190949150.**

I spent the past two years working regularly on a church harassment policy intended to address sexual harassment and abuse between congregational members. A large part of the process was familiarizing myself with existing abuse and harassment policies as well as paying more attention to the stories arising out of the #MeToo movement. Part of these conversations revolved around the sentencing of criminal forms of sexual abuse. As I tried to increase my understanding and support of survivors, it seemed natural to also add my support for increased convictions and prison sentences for those who abuse. I mention my experience because the project of prison abolition touches on a wide range of issues and experiences across the political spectrum that can make abolition easy to dismiss outright because of some sense of justice that we hold to.

In *Break Every Yoke*, Vincent Lloyd and Joshua Dubler give voice to the varied and diverse religious expressions that both gave shape to the modern prison and worked for its abolition. There has been no monopoly on how Americans have understood and practiced “justice.” Prison abolition often emerges from basic principles that reject caging human beings and affirm the potential and value of each human. Tied to, but not fully equated with these convictions, is a deep understanding of the injustices present *within* the current justice system. That is, prison abolitionists will renounce current injustices but will also reject the philosophy that simple reform will render prisons beneficial or just for humanity. This is, however, to put the matter too reductively, and, even with a focus on the *religious* dimensions of prison and prison abolition, *Break Every*



*Yoke* is a reminder of the diverse groups and individuals opposing the prison system in part or in whole.

The book focuses primarily on the period from the 1960s to the present and gives substantial attention to the shift that occurred from the 1950s into the 1960s and then through the 1980s (the period of mass incarceration). The 1960s is singled out for its significance in representing a larger cultural shift that had a massive impact on the future of prisons in the United States. Given the religious history of the United States, it is not surprising that the prison system developed along theological lines, with early prison models speaking of *penitentiary* reform or providing theological justification for punishment. However, by the 1960s, many mainline Protestant groups rejected outright the role and function of the prison system. The problem was that mainline churches were losing their last cultural foothold in mainstream America and being replaced with the seemingly odd couple of secularism and evangelicalism that privileged the individual and the rights of the individual, namely in the form of private property as a right. This lent itself to “law and order” policing and criminalizing poverty.

So while prison reform and abolition voices emerged in the 1960s, dominant cultural values had ensured they would not gain traction. This shift found one culmination in Ronald Reagan, who enshrined in religious language the values of economic individualism whereby the state did not support the individual structurally and economically but rather enforced and defended the practices of the free market and the corporate interests within. This occurred through expanding both the military abroad and prisons, and policing domestically. While these changes initially gained approval from the political right wing in the 1980s, this law and order approach bled over into the center and left, where increased prison and punishment were taken up as the appropriate responses to things like hate crimes and violence against women. While some of the religious language still used by Reagan faded under Clinton, Bush, and Obama, prisons (as well military campaigns overseas) continued to be furnished with the moral language of individual freedom that needed to be defended by capturing and incapacitating those who are a threat to that freedom.

In the midst of the larger social movement toward mass incarceration, and many of the attendant religious connections, there remained religious ferment around prison abolition in the 60s and 70s, both within prisons and from the outside. A major portion of chapter 3 focuses on the work of Mennonites in this period. The authors outline a sustained push among Mennonite leaders and communities to name the injustice of the criminal system and to work actively for alternatives in what most would recognize broadly as *restorative justice*. For a period of time, these were not fringe parachurch concerns but were brought forward in denominational meetings and at Mennonite educational institutions, with Mennonite leaders also making inroads into other groups such as the International Conference on Penal Abolition. While viewing these groups

as offering tools for an abolitionist project, the authors note that most movements such as these eventually get appropriated into a reformist mode, if they have any impact at all.

Chapter 4 tracks moments of the abolitionist spirit inside prisons. Alongside the more familiar movements such as the rise of Black Muslims in prison, the authors explore lesser-known groups like Church of the New Song (CONS). CONS was a religion started in 1970 by prisoners led by a charismatic leader who wrote his own scripture and developed rituals. A key element of their organized expression, like Muslim groups in prison, was demanding rights under the First Amendment regarding the practice of religion. The question of First Amendment rights for these groups became the question of how much space the prison system allowed groups, CONS in particular, whose very agenda was in opposition to the prison system itself. What is interesting with CONS is how it forced the question of what constitutes religion. While CONS won early court victories, those victories were eventually overturned, and CONS, among other groups, was deemed *political* as opposed to religious and therefore not afforded protection.

By the turn of the millennium, many religious expressions were stripped of their political power and reduced to individual reform more in keeping with the overall logic of the prison system. Today, organized responses within the prison system tend to reflect particular injustices or cruelties rather than an overall abolitionist agenda. These groups may have religious connections, but many are not framed and structured as religious movements were in previous decades.

The concluding chapter gathers a vast array of current abolitionist forms. Many forms are coalition-based organizations in which religion may or may not play a part. In addition, any religious framing may or may not take traditional forms; it might reflect ad hoc syncretistic forms or take completely novel expressions such as mainline priests following the lead of LGBTQ atheists, leaders cobbling together forms of ancestral naturalism, activists converting to orthodox Christianity promoting the primitive communism of the Acts church. Whatever role religion may or may not have, there is little consistency or continuity with previous institutional or orthodox forms. Within these crucibles, foundational statements continue to be formed such as that coming from the Oakland Peace Centre, which states simply that “in their goodness, human beings deserve better than to be made to suffer” (204).

This chapter sprawls out like a shotgun blast aimed at the prison system, with image after image of the abolition spirit. Toward the end, the authors finally ask, “In aggregate, are the preceding examples religious or are they secular?” There is, of course, no way to adjudicate this question without doing some interpretive injustice along the way. But the authors also acknowledge that to simply leave “religion” too broad and encompassing is to make it empty and useless.

The hope in this scattershot is that one might sense the spark and powder of human freedom and justice animating these seemingly disparate forms and expressions. But does such a blast, without nuance or aim, dismiss and disable gains in prosecuting and binding the powerful who harm the vulnerable? And, more specifically to this book, does there remain any necessity for seeking out what is religious in all this?

The book began with a sense that one could not speak of abolition and justice in America without speaking of religion. This seems true at least in the sense that one can hardly speak about anything in America's past without speaking of religion. But the authors go further; they wager that "in pushing us to envision the impossible . . . a religious attitude is here an essential component of the abolitionist cause. For the abolitionist, justice cannot be reduced to worldly terms (not the terms of *this* world, anyway)" (17). This is a more suspect move, in my opinion. Although Christianity will be the primary source for my own engagements with and expressions of abolition, such religious commitments seem unnecessary in movements I have encountered and that are given witness within this book.

The underlying agenda of this book in promoting a sort of implied natural theology of justice seems somehow underhanded. Let simple statements like those coming from Oakland Peace Centre be enough, or even from one of the author's own concluding reflections stating that "principled commitment to a cause is one thing; the binds of intimacy are a different order of obligation" (236). Mennonites have ample principles from scripture and our peace tradition to engage abolition work. The question remains: will we forge intimacies with the vulnerable and suffering both outside and inside prison walls, affirming finally and fully that in their goodness human beings deserve better than to be made to suffer?

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**Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully, eds., *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*; University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2018. 369 pp. \$32.62 CDN (paperback). ISBN 978-1-4875-2327-5.**

This impressive volume is one of the most challenging and stimulating books I have read in recent memory. Its purpose and messages are urgently relevant to anyone who calls this land Turtle Island or Canada, especially in light of current conflicts over pipeline development in Indigenous territory. Though these conflicts have faded from headlines in the wake of a global pandemic, the issues that underlie them remain unresolved. I found the book especially useful and instructive in my role as a facilitator of Mennonite Church of Eastern

Canada's work on responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

There is a great deal to digest in this book, which includes chapters by many authors. Happily, I found it well laid out, easy to navigate, and written in exceptionally clear and beautiful language. It calls on readers to “envision the combination of robust resurgence *and* transformative reconciliation” (8, italics added). The authors successfully convey this integrative vision in ways that are both illuminating and inclusive. For instance, Borrows illuminates the limitations and blind spots of frames of reference that many of us take for granted. He asserts that “earth-based relationships reveal environment-based laws over which humans have little control. . . . They help humans see that they are not the jurisprudential center of the universe” (61). When humans realize this, we see that the “rule of law” exists within a much broader, deeper, and older frame of reference—the laws and relationships of earth-based systems. I find this insight constructively provocative in the context of recent discourse on upholding the “rule of law” in the current pipeline disputes. It raises important questions about *which laws* should be doing the ruling.

I appreciate the authors' ability to proffer powerful and timely messages in ways that are inclusive and engaging rather than alienating or off-putting. They do so by communicating on a broad spectrum of frequencies that can resonate across educational, sociocultural, and professional backgrounds. The book employs persuasive legal arguments, passionate calls for environmental justice, and prescient Indigenous teachings, sometimes all within the same chapter. The authors also frame reconciliation around the common link that all humans have with the earth, which sustains us. This quote captures the essence of this vital message: “If we try to reconcile Indigenous and non-Indigenous people with each other without reconciling our way of life with the living earth, we will fail, because the unsustainable, crisis-ridden relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people that we are trying to reconcile has its deepest roots in the unsustainable and crisis-ridden relationship between human beings and the living earth” (84).

The inclusive approach and tone is not warm and fuzzy; it has a sharp edge of implication. Reconciliation involves a reckoning with historical injustice and a recognition of responsibilities moving forward. The message for Settlers and especially Settler governments is direct: *Canada is built on treaties*. Asch (a Settler himself) asserts that “one cannot have Confederation until there is a home on which to build it, and without the treaties we have no home here” (42). The authors make the clear connection between reconciliation and power, calling on Settlers to “suspend power-over relations and engage in dialogue and negotiation as equals.” The “assertion of power-over,” they argue, “renders reconciliation impossible” (21).

In addition to its important insights on reconciliation, the book paints a captivating and vibrant picture of resurgent Indigenous strength. This is very important to hear, especially since headlines still show a tendency to sensationalize deficiencies and defeats. Resurgence is also framed in inclusive terms: the need for resurgence is mutual. To heal relationships with the earth, upon which we all depend, Settler institutions require fundamental reform and renewal as well. The authors argue for “the resurgence of Canadian law, not just Indigenous law. Canadian law could do a much better job of reconciling us with the earth” (65). The most hopeful and challenging message of this book is that the power to foster resurgence and reconciliation does not rest solely in the hands of Supreme Court justices, Grand Chiefs, and cabinet ministers. That power is imbued in each one of us who belong to this land. Borrows and Tully contend that “we the democratic people and peoples of this land, can carry on discussing and enacting practices of reconciliation and/or resurgence in every area of Indigenous and Settler life ways and earth ways without waiting for the Crown to join in” (22).

In my view, this final quote constitutes a direct call to action to each reader to engage in the most important work of our generation—resurgence and reconciliation. While I confess to being nearly overwhelmed by the gravity of this compelling book, I encourage everyone to take on the fruitful and exciting challenge of reading it. I further challenge those who read it to engage with the call to action and to begin building networks of people who learn, build relationships, and mobilize for change.

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**Bob Joseph, *21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a Reality, Indigenous Relations*, Port Coquitlam, BC, 2018. 200 pp. \$19.75. ISBN: 978-0-9952-6652-0.**

Bob Joseph’s book *21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act* took me back to 1972 when I volunteered with Native Enterprises in Winnipeg. There I was introduced to the racist, colonialist, and arbitrary nature of the Act that continues to undermine Indigenous rights and identity. I also witnessed expressions of Indigenous resistance in the rise of voices that no longer can be silenced. Joseph’s book is an articulate expression of the evils of Canadian colonization and maps out a strategy for decolonization that is essential if reconciliation is to become a reality. The Christian settler community in particular, because of

its central role in the incorporation of the Doctrine of Discovery into Canadian law and the disastrous residential school policy, needs to decolonize itself and be an ally to the resurgence of Indigenous identities, cultures, rights, and self-determination.

Joseph documents the twenty-one most egregious sections of the Act that represent the Canadian government's determined efforts to snuff out Indigenous rights: "We should take immediate steps to extinguish Indian title," said Sir John A. Macdonald (25). The Act attempted to weaken Indigenous cultures and identity by banning Indigenous ceremonies, confining Indigenous peoples to reserves, and forcing Indigenous children into residential schools "to kill the Indian in the child" (53). The book documents that the legacy of the Indian Act continues to strain the health, social, and economic fabric of Indigenous communities but is unable to dampen the Indigenous struggle for dignity, self-identity, culture, and self-determination.

In the book's final chapters, Joseph outlines the framework for the elimination of the Indian Act by a recognition of the Indigenous "inherent right" to self-determination and self-government.

While self-government is not a quick fix for the deeply rooted social, health and economic issues that plague Indigenous communities, it is a step towards empowering communities to rebuild and heal from the intergenerational effects of residential schools. (102)

*21 Things* is a call to action for the Christian church, summarized in recommendation #48 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report: "We call upon the church parties to the Settlement Agreement, and all other faith groups and interfaith social justice groups in Canada who have not already done so, to formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms, and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation."<sup>2</sup> As Anabaptist Christians, our faith calls us to respond with prayerful and informed actions of solidarity and reconciliation.

First, we need to embrace Anabaptist values of love, justice, truth, service, and reconciliation, which challenge the forces of injustice, racial prejudice, and privilege at the heart of the Canadian colonial project. Second, Anabaptists need to repent for conscious and unconscious complicity in Canada's oppression of Indigenous peoples, not out of guilt as much as a recognition that our spiritual health and the healing of Indigenous people are intertwined. Third, Anabaptists need to explore ways in which we can be effective allies by trusting and amplifying Indigenous voices that are often marginalized and ignored in Canadian public and political discourse; we engage in redemptive listening,

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<sup>2</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action," 2015, [http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf).

transformative learning, and direct advocacy as a determined and focused practice that is worthy of our identity as followers of the Christ.

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