

“David P. Hansen captures the first steps that must be taken in a conversation that is far past due for members of mainline Christianity. Hansen’s book illumines the gradual and painstaking actions of the church to recognize the harms inflicted throughout history and, more importantly, harms being inflicted in this present moment. Without recognizing the sinful motivations of a society built on exploitation, true wellness and harmony cannot exist. *Native Americans, the Mainline Church, and the Quest for Interracial Justice* is a vital first step in putting together the pieces necessary for our society to achieve racial justice.”

—Glen Chebon Kernell, Jr., Executive Secretary of Native American & Indigenous Ministries, Justice & Relationships, United Methodist Church

“*Native Americans, the Mainline Church, and the Quest for Interracial Justice* is a stunning achievement! An insider to a mainline church, David Phillips Hansen powerfully blends theological insight, rigorous history, and personal experience to illuminate hard truths about the church’s often repressive interactions with Native Americans in ‘Christianity’s collusion with conquest.’ But his account is far more than critique. It is also a conceptually grounded, pragmatic call to the church to engage with present-day Native Americans around acts of reconstruction (fundamentally remaking relationships) and reparation (repairing persisting cultural, economic, and land-related damage). Moving all toward social healing through justice. Truly an essential read for all concerned about indigenous peoples and social justice.”

—Eric K. Yamamoto, University of Hawaii School of Law

“Churches who seek to become open to others are on the right track, yet in order to make progress they need the guidance provided in this book. Little will change without digging deep into our histories of conflict, exploring genuine forms of non-patronizing relationships, and fundamentally transforming both church and world in the encounter with others. As the mainline begins to reshape its still troubled relationships with Native Americans, many other relationships will be reshaped as well.”

—Joerg Rieger, Vanderbilt University, Author of *Unified We Are a Force*

“David Hansen knows the white mainline church well enough to know that we have some confessing to do. At the top of the list is our shameful treatment of Native Americans, which is inseparable from our understanding of Protestant Christianity. Although our own denomination, the United Church of Christ, has made a formal apology, much more is needed to confront the cultural, economic, and political subjugation of Natives. This book provides both an analysis of our sin, and a way forward to redemption.”

—Robin R. Meyers, Mayflower Congregational UCC Church, and Distinguished Professor of Social Justice, Oklahoma City University

“Having taught and worked cross-culturally in South Dakota for many years, I see clearly that the greatest obstacle to human progress everywhere is the failure to understand historical and contemporary contexts. This exceptional book provides those contexts remarkably well and argues compellingly for right action, speaking to the hearts and minds of people of all faith traditions. It should be required reading in seminaries and university courses and highly recommended to all readers.”

—Charles L. Woodard, South Dakota State University, and Author of *Ancestral Voice: Conversations With N. Scott Momaday*

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The Eagle Butte Learning Center (EBLC) for American Indian pastors and lay leaders is a ministry of the Council for American Indian Ministry of the United Church of Christ. Located in Eagle Butte, South Dakota on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, EBLC is strategically and geographically placed where it is accessible to reservation pastors and lay leaders. The mission is to offer an education that is theologically and culturally relevant to reservation pastors, particularly the Lakota pastors of Dakota Association in South Dakota where the largest concentration of American Indian United Church of Christ churches are located. Educators, theologians, and pastors who come to teach are carefully selected for their cultural competency or their potential for cultural relevancy; most of them have doctorates in their fields of study. Together, all are learners and teachers.

Because of dire finances and complicated family situations, educational events are offered to pastors, lay leaders, and often their families in the form of weekend retreats and workshops. Pastors and lay leaders select the subjects of retreats and workshops that would help them. The staff finds faculty who can address the requested subjects. Small grants, gifts, and memorials are used to provide meals, lodging, and transportation for the students, and the faculty are asked to donate their time and travel.

The Eagle Butte Learning Center is unique in every way!

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Christianity at a Crossroads

The mainline church is at a crossroads. Either it will continue on the road to Justicetown—my metaphor for a future in which treaty obligations with Native Americans are honored, their civil rights restored, and their right to self-governance recognized—or it will return to the (dis)comfort of the status quo, in which case liberal Christians who mean well and who sincerely want to be reconciled with Native Americans will for various reasons be unable or unwilling to stand in deep solidarity with them. The question before the church is whether we are prepared to pay the price of costly discipleship. So this is a defining moment for the church. We must indeed lose our life in order to find it (Mt. 10:39). This is the way of the cross.

In practical terms, losing our life means decoding the cultural creed that legitimized the mission to Christianize Native peoples. As white, relatively prosperous members of the mainline church, we have to ask ourselves how we discern the presence of God as something other than the extension of our own power. To borrow a phrase from *The Predicament of the Prosperous* by Bruce C. Birch and Larry R. Rasmussen, the call to responsibility is a “God-wrestle” akin to Jacob’s “God-wrestle” (Gen. 32).¹ It is a story of pain and transformation, but also of hope for Jacob as he comes to terms with his brother Esau, whom he has cheated and from whom he is estranged. In the course of the nighttime struggle, Jacob comes to realize that destiny is not in his control. The conquest of his image of self-sufficiency forces him to acquire a new identity that allows for deep solidarity.

The Exodus story was the creedal story of the English who settled Jamestown. They believed that England had inherited the mantle of Jews and that they were God’s chosen people. When the Pilgrims and Puritans came to New England, they believed that they were on an “errand in the wilderness.” They likened their journey crossing the Atlantic Ocean to Moses’s parting of the Red Sea. America was their “Promised Land.” By the time of the Revolutionary War, colonial rebels pictured the American colonies as “God’s New Israel.” Over time, Birch

and Rasmussen contend, "The themes of deliverance rooted in Exodus have become totally entwined in the American success story."²

Bruce Feiler proposes in *America's Prophet: Moses and the American Story* that Moses is our nation's "true founding father."³ He suggests that in spite of past mistreatment of blacks, Native Americans, immigrants, women, and gays, the Exodus tradition perpetuates "the idea that the strength of a society comes from its ability to protect its entire population and provide everyone with a path out of pain into promise."⁴ The Exodus narrative, as interpreted in our national mythology, is a story of individual freedom and equality, which are bedrock values of our culture.

Now in the postapology era, the church needs to deconstruct our prevalent understanding of the Exodus story and reinterpret it as a story of liberation *and* conquest. The liberation story is well-rehearsed in the "land of the free and the home of the brave." The conquest story is less well-known outside tribal communities. It is time that we hear the voices of indigenous peoples.

Defining Our Identity Story

The late Marcus Borg, an influential religious scholar and interpreter of scripture in the mainline church, calls the Exodus Israel's "story of sacred origins....It not only told the story of Israel's creation but shaped the world in which she lived."⁵ Memory of the Exodus continues to shape Jewish identity. This story of the flight to freedom is retold annually in the celebration of Passover during which Jews remember the events surrounding the journey to freedom and claim this ancient story as their own. Many mainline Christian congregations enact a symbolic Seder meal during the Christian holy season of Lent. Participating congregations recount Israel's dramatic flight to freedom as they eat bitter herbs and other foods, and in so doing make Israel's birth story part of their own narrative.

Borg identifies the Exodus as Israel's "primal narrative," by "primal" meaning that it is Israel's most important story, its story of origins, and its archetypal story, the story that "narrates the perennial struggle between the world of empire and the liberating will of God, between the lordship of Pharaoh and the lordship of God."⁶ He points out that the exodus is fundamentally a story of promise and fulfillment that has two main parts: conquest of the land of Canaan and the promise of a multitude of generations. The third part is a series of specific threats to the promise.

The drama begins to unfold when God promises Abraham and Sarah: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great

nation" (Gen. 12:1–2a). We soon learn that Israel's matriarchs—Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel—are barren women whose inability to bear children puts the future of Israel at risk. Although there is no virgin birth in these stories, time and again God faithfully intervenes to keep alive the promise of a multitude of generations.

A new threat to the promise looms when the sons of Jacob (the grandson of Abraham and the son of Isaac) sell their brother Joseph to human traffickers who take him to Egypt. After numerous trials, Joseph establishes himself in a key post in the pharaoh's government. When famine in the land of Israel drives Joseph's brothers to Egypt in hopes of finding food, Joseph is there to welcome them. The brothers' betrayal is turned into a life-saving blessing.

The Hebrew people settle in Egypt and prosper. Their population grows. The pharaoh sees what is happening and becomes concerned that the Hebrews are too numerous. In order to control them, he enslaves them. Through this long series of events, the pattern of promise-threat-fulfillment is firmly established, and we are ready for Israel's flight to freedom, which Marcus Borg identifies as "a paradigmatic story of God's character and will," and "Israel's decisive and constitutive 'identity story,'" which unfolds in four episodes: (1) deliverance, (2) rebellion, (3) subjugation, and (4) conquest of the Promised Land.

Deliverance

The story of Israel's deliverance begins with groans of hope rising from the lips of oppressed Hebrew slaves. The deep sighs and anguished cries of this marginalized community reach the ears of God, who is moved by their plea to come to their rescue. Yahweh tells his servant Moses, who grew up in pharaoh's house but later became a fugitive from pharaoh's justice:

I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmaster; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites.... Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt (Ex. 3:7–8, 10).

God promises to liberate Israel "with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment" (Ex. 6:6). Using supernatural power, God rains down destruction and death upon the Egyptians (whose hearts God has hardened) until at last Moses leads the people across the Red Sea into the wilderness and freedom. The first act of the freedom drama is completed.

Rebellion

In the second act of this drama, the liberated slaves follow Moses into the desert where God guides them with a pillar of cloud by day and a column of fire by night. Even here, threats to Israel's survival are present. But in the desert wilderness, God faithfully quenches the people's thirst with water from a rock and mercifully satisfies their hunger with heaven-sent manna and quail. Finally the fugitives arrive at Sinai, where a new chapter in the formation of their identity begins.

Borg notes that "what happens at Sinai is that Israel becomes a people, a nation." "It is here that Israel comes into existence."⁸ As the curtain rises on the second act, we learn that

Moses went up to God, and the Lord called him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:3-5).

When the meeting is over, Moses descends from the mountain and speaks to the waiting people. He gives them the Ten Commandments, the Book of the Covenant and a series of cultic, civil, and criminal laws and basic ethical norms. These law and norms are intended to make Israel a new kind of society—a society that is the antithesis of the pharaoh-dominated world they left behind. Most important, this scene introduces the roles of Moses as mediator of Israel's covenant with Yahweh and bearer of divine law.

There are a number of noteworthy features of the covenant. First, God initiates and sustains the covenant. Second, the covenant is drawn from the life of the people. Two of the most striking laws establish the sabbath year and the jubilee year. Every sabbath (seventh) year, debts owed by Israelites to other Israelites are to be forgiven and slaves are to be set free. Every jubilee (fiftieth) year, lands are to be returned to the original families of ownership. The purpose of these laws is to prevent a return to Egypt-like conditions of oppression and marginalization and to maintain a certain level of economic equality and political freedom.

Richard Horsley, the author of twenty books on the Bible, points out in his study of Israel as a covenant society that "the most striking feature of the Covenant is that it establishes a relationship between the people and Yahweh that is inseparably political-economic and (almost by definition) religious....When Yahweh delivers the Hebrews from bondage in Egypt it is a political liberation from subjection but also an

economic emancipation from such servitude.”⁹ The sabbath year and the jubilee year codify this history.

A third feature of the covenant is that the people’s prime motivation for keeping the law is gratitude. God the liberator makes it possible for the people to live in a very different kind of society—a society in which people are free from perpetual servitude. Fourth, Israel’s proper response to the covenant is obedience. Fifth, the covenant establishes an exclusive relationship between God and Israel, and this relationship is the foundation of their society. The message is clear, “You shall have no other gods before me....For I the Lord your God am a jealous God” (Ex. 20:3, 5). The God of the covenant is Israel’s God, and Israel’s identity is as the people of God.

Once the covenant is ratified, the Israelites are a people of the covenant. They have a clear and distinct identity and a firm foundation. But even in this new context, the overarching pattern of promise and fulfillment with accompanying threats endures. The new identity requires new patterns of behavior, but these patterns are not yet fully engrained in the lives of the people. It is not surprising that the two most immediate threats to Israel’s new identity come from within the community itself.

The first threat, which comes in the form of economic anarchy, challenges Moses’s role as covenant mediator. The second threat, which comes in the form of political anarchy, challenges Moses’s role as lawgiver. If Moses cannot successfully meet these threats and solidly establish his leadership role, God’s experiment will fail, and Israel will sink into a sea of chaos instead of emerging as a model covenant community.

The economic threat is capsulized in the well-known story of the golden calf, found in Exodus 32. The prolonged absence of Moses creates anxiety in the minds of the people and causes them to become concerned for their safety. Looking for some tangible reassurance of God’s presence and favor, they turn to Aaron and demand: “Up, make us gods, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him” (Ex. 32:1).

Under Aaron’s direction, the people melt their jewelry and make a golden calf, which eases the people’s anxiety but violates their covenant with Yahweh and poses a new threat to their survival. The disobedience of the people kindles Yahweh’s anger against them. God calls them “corrupt” (Ex. 32:7) and “a stiff-necked people” (Ex. 32:9). Yahweh instructs his servant Moses: “Let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation” (Ex. 32:10).

Moses responds to God's command with an intercession on behalf of the people. He pleads: "Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people" (Ex. 32:12b). And he challenges the Lord of Hosts to "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou didst swear by thine own self... 'I will multiply your descendants... and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" (Ex. 32:13). Moses's successful intervention confirms his role as covenant mediator.

No sooner is Moses's role as covenant mediator confirmed than his role as law-giver is tested. The author of the book of Exodus reports that "Moses saw that the people had broken loose" (Ex. 32:25). What exactly "broken loose" means is not clear, but we may assume that they are breaking loose from some aspect of the law. In the next sentence we learn that "Moses stood at the gate of the camp and said, 'Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me.' And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves to him" (Ex. 32:26).

Subjugation

Whether this summons marks the beginning of the priesthood is uncertain, but Moses's instructions to the sons of Levi and the consequences are very clear:

Thus says the Lord God of Israel, "Put every man his sword on his side, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor." And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men (Ex. 32:27–28).

Once the mission is accomplished, Moses tells the sons of Levi: "Today you have ordained yourselves for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, that he may bestow a blessing upon you this day" (Ex. 32:29). It is this event that secures Moses's role as the giver and the enforcer of the law.

Much as the English war upon the Irish prefigured the English invasion of America, this event in the wilderness presaged the Hebrew conquest of Canaan. The English brought with them to the New World the lessons learned in their war upon the Irish. In the same way, when the Hebrew people entered the Promised Land, they brought with them the lesson of obedience that they had learned in the wilderness. But there is an important qualification. In the wilderness, the Levites were killing their kindred, and for this reason the slaughter was limited. When they entered the Promised Land, there were no restrictions.

Moses, the unquestioned spiritual and political leader of Israel, now receives a new set of instructions and a new promise. God tells

him, "Depart....And I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites" (Ex. 33:2).

Conquest of the Promised Land

The overarching pattern of promise and fulfillment with attending threats continues after the people leave Sinai. Moses dies before Israel can enter the Promised Land. But God remains faithful to the covenant. In the fourth act of the drama, God calls Joshua to the position of leadership. As Joshua prepares for the days to come, God assures him: "Be strong and of good courage; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them." (Josh. 1:6).

Borg concludes: "The exodus story is about the creation of a world marked by freedom, social justice, and *shalom*, a rich Hebrew word meaning well-being, peace, and wholeness." He assures us: "Both the exodus story and the theme of promise and fulfillment were strikingly relevant to the situation of the Jewish people in the exilic postexilic periods....Indeed, the theme of promise and fulfillment is strikingly relevant to people in *all* times....When birth and rebirth seem impossible, when pharaohs and the powers of empires seem to rule the world, God's faithfulness can be counted on."¹⁰

So interpreted, the Exodus is a powerful and deeply satisfying story of persistent hope and undaunted courage. It is a story of triumph against all odds. It is the assurance that if the people of the covenant remain faithful to the covenant in precarious times, God will faithfully fulfill promises made in the covenant. This is the well-rehearsed identity story. But it is not a story that we can accept uncritically in a postapology world. The Exodus narrative as it has been traditionally interpreted cannot be a primary narrative for the Christian church in a postapology age. Reinventing the mainline church means nothing less than creating a new identity story.

Decoding Our Identity Story

Robert Allen Warrior, a member of the Osage Nation, calls upon white Christians to read the Exodus story from the underside—to read with "Canaanite eyes." In "Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," Warrior contends that "the Exodus is an inappropriate way for Native Americans to think about liberation," yet "where discussion about Christian involvement in Native American activism must begin."¹¹

When we read the Exodus account from below, from the perspective of the Canaanites, this story of promise and fulfillment becomes a story of destruction and death. Warrior insists that for indigenous peoples "Yahweh the deliverer became Yahweh the conqueror."¹² The God who

pledged to Moses, “I will bring you into a land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord” (Ex. 6:8), instructed the Israelites as follows:

When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, and Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than yourselves, and when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them; then you must utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, and show no mercy to them (Deut. 7:1–2).

God is now declaring unconditional war upon the indigenous inhabitants of Canaan. The decimation in the wilderness is about to be repeated on a much grander scale. Indigenous genocide is the order of the day.

In the wilderness, Israelites were killing other Israelites—brother against brother, father against son, neighbor against neighbor. Terrible as it was, the slaughter was limited and purposeful. The death of three thousand confirmed Moses’s role as Israel’s political leader and established discipline in the ranks of the faithful. Faith became associated with obedience. In contrast, the Canaanites were completely external to the Israelites. Their presence posed a threat to the identity of the Israelites as a covenant people. They could be annihilated. Indeed, they had to be destroyed. Warrior says: “One of the most important of Yahweh’s commandments is the prohibition on social relations with Canaanites or participation in their religion.”¹³ This prohibition was used by the Israelites to justify Canaanite genocide. Thus Israel’s theology of liberation for the slave became a theology of death for the native.

Warrior challenges indigenous people to ask themselves if they can trust the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Can they trust the church that the late Floyd Crow Westerman, a renowned Sioux musician, activist, and actor, described as an “ever circling vulture” descending on its prey to “pick the soul to pieces”?¹⁴ Reading the Exodus story with Canaanite eyes, it is hard to see how this story can become a path out of pain for indigenous peoples. This is not to deny that many Native Americans self-identify as Christian, but white Christians for whom the Exodus tradition has been an identity story must neither assume Native Americans share the same interpretation of this tradition nor continue to interpret the Exodus narrative in a one-sided way as a story of freedom. Exodus is a story of liberation *and* conquest. The discussion within Native communities about the Exodus story may offer hope that

we who are white, Christian, and members of the mainline church can learn to interpret the Exodus story from below. But it may also mean that we need to find a new identity story that is fit for the quest for interracial justice with Native Americans.

Warrior offers a number of steps that white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Christians who value the mainline church can take as we revisit this birth-story of liberation that is now also a story of conquest and death.¹⁵ First, he asserts, we must put indigenous peoples at the center of Christian theological reflection and political action. The story of conquest has to be taken seriously. It is a violent story. This “text of terror,” to borrow Phyllis Trible’s descriptive phrase, “refutes all claims to the superiority of a Christian era.”¹⁶ Turning around the charge of barbarism that white Christians have so often leveled against Native Americans, Warrior says: “It is to those who believe in these texts that the barbarism belongs. It is those who act on the basis of these texts who must take responsibility for the terror and violence they can and have engendered.”¹⁷ We must accept the reality that well-meaning missionaries who came to bring civilization and the gospel to indigenous peoples committed barbaric acts, and we must be chastened by this knowledge.

Second, Warrior urges us to become more aware of how themes of conquest have become part of our national consciousness and ideology. He encourages us to study the works of Puritan preachers who referred to Natives as Canaanites—people worthy of annihilation. Preachers like Increase Mather and his son Cotton Mather used the language of “chosen people” to justify domination and genocide. White Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the mainline church must take responsibility for this history, examine our language and metaphors, and disarm our theology.

Third, Warrior asks of the entire Exodus story: “Is it appropriate to the needs of indigenous people seeking justice and deliverance?” Of the God who commanded the slaughter of the natives, he asks, “Do Native Americans and other indigenous people dare trust the same god in their struggle for justice?”¹⁸ Answering his own question, Warrior declares:

We, the wretched of the earth, may be well advised this time not to listen to outsiders with their promises of liberation and deliverance. We will perhaps do better to look elsewhere for our vision of justice, peace, and political sanity—and vision through which we escape not only our oppressors, but our oppression as well. Maybe, for once, we will just have to listen to ourselves, leaving the gods of this continent’s real strangers to do battle among themselves.¹⁹

The Israelite’s vision of the Canaanite’s homeland as a territory divinely ordained for their use blinded them to the humanity of its

inhabitants, who, according to the text, were completely expendable. Warrior suggests that Native people cannot find solace in this story. It offers them neither a path out of pain nor hope for the future. Likewise, I now believe that a church that for centuries relied upon this narrative to justify its participation in Native American genocide cannot now find in this same story a vision of interracial justice.

The conquest of the Promised Land is not a vision of *shalom*. Warrior calls indigenous people to look to their own native traditions for a vision of justice, peace, and political sanity. We who are members of the mainline church likewise must look to our own traditions and either rehabilitate Christian concepts in ways that will lead us out of the colonial mess we are in today or find a new paradigm.²⁰ I believe that the call to read the Exodus story from below means that we must move from dogmatic certitude to creative dialogue.

From Dogma to Dialogue

The difficulty of Warrior's call for the mainline church to put indigenous peoples at the center of its theology is illustrated in William Stolzman's *The Pipe and the Cross: A Christian-Sioux Dialogue*.²¹ The book is based on a series of biweekly Monday conversations between Lakota medicine men, most of whom came from the Rosebud Reservation, and Christian pastors, most of whom were Catholic. The meetings took place over a period of six years, from 1973 to 1979. Stolzman, a Jesuit pastor, was a missionary to the Rosebud Reservation and chairman of the Medicine Men and Pastors' Meetings. During these meetings, participants examined the meaning of sacred Lakota and Christian stories, symbols, rituals, and ceremonies.

Stolzman tells us that these meetings were "directed toward mutual understanding and respect for the Lakota and Christian religions" and were intended to "help individuals understand and appreciate the Lakota religion and how it can be related to the Christian religion."²² The process was a "thick" multilayered conversation. All of the meetings were conducted in both Lakota and English. Time was taken to explain, explore, and examine Lakota and Christian stories, symbols, rituals, and ceremonies to ensure that all the participants felt that they had been heard and that their opinions, differences, and similarities were respected.

The process was consistent with the avowed purpose of helping all participants gain mutual understanding and respect for the Lakota and Christian traditions as these traditions were understood by the participants. Members of the meetings understood that they were speaking for themselves and that there were people outside the meetings who were openly critical of what they were doing.

I admire members of the Medicine Men and Pastors' Meetings circle for their care for each other and their candor. Prolonged and intentional encounters are necessary if we want to move from doctrinal debates to dialogue. However, the second purpose of the meetings seems to run counter to the first purpose. That is, the intent of helping people understand how Lakota religion related to Christian religion implies the Christian tradition is normative, as Stolzman's conclusion suggests: "While the Christian religion welcomes pre-Christian enrichments, the Lakota religion does not welcome them." He adds that both traditions must be grounded in "respect of the Unity of God."²³ Lastly, he approves of "practicing Lakota religion in the Lakota community," and of "practicing the Christian religion in the context of universal needs unto eternal salvation."²⁴ These statements imply a spiritual evolution from religion that responds to the particularity of the Lakota community to the Christian religion which, in Stolzman's words, addresses "universal needs unto eternal salvation." This is a particularly Christian way of interpreting an interfaith dialogue.

To borrow a phrase from Kwok Pui-lan, a Chinese biblical scholar and postcolonial theologian, we have yet to learn how to "read the Bible in a non-biblical world."²⁵ An examination of postcolonial methods of biblical study would take us too far afield from the purpose of this investigation. But we can draw on the insights of some scholars in the field to establish some parameters and general rules.²⁶

First, in a multicultural world, we must approach claims to biblical authority with caution and more than a little suspicion born of our knowledge of past historical abuses and misuses of the Bible. The Bible was and still is for many people a text of terror. Christian people have committed and still commit barbarous acts. Second, we must be aware of our social location, by which I mean the communities to which we belong, the processes we are using to select and interpret certain texts that comprise our primary narrative, the consequences of our choices, and the ways that our choices may project and protect white privilege and power. Third, we must guard against what I call a reverse binary, making the assumption that God has "gone native."

The missionaries of the past were convinced that their mission was to "civilize and Christianize Indians." In this postapology era white Christians tend to assume that nothing good can come from Christianity and that God is on the side of the Natives. Our beginning place, I suggest, is a concern for the well-being of people. We have to wrestle with sometimes conflicting ideas of what constitutes an ethical and good society. This concern identifies a borderland where indigenous peoples and nonnatives can meet and negotiate their differences as we look for common ground.

NOTES

¹Bruce C. Birch and Larry R. Rasmussen, *The Predicament of the Prosperous* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 74–75.

²*Ibid.*, 95.

³Bruce Feiler, *America's Prophet: Moses and the American Story* (New York: HarperCollins, Publishers, 2009), 66.

⁴*Ibid.*, 302.

⁵Marcus J. Borg, *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time: Taking the Bible Seriously but Not Literally* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2001), 86.

⁶*Ibid.*, 92, 93.

⁷*Ibid.*, 103.

⁸*Ibid.*, 99.

⁹Richard A. Horsley, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 23.

¹⁰Borg, *Reading*, italics original, 105, 106.

¹¹Robert Allen Warrior, "A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997). Warrior's essay first appeared in *Christianity and Crisis*, 49 (12, 1989), 278, 282.

¹²*Ibid.*, 279.

¹³*Ibid.*, 281.

¹⁴Floyd Red Crow Westerman, "Missionaries," Copyright 2000–2012, Lyrics Archive. <http://www.thelyricarchive.com/song/1606667-209398/Missionaries>. Accessed 12/13/2015.

¹⁵Warrior, "A Native American Perspective," 283–85.

¹⁶Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 2.

¹⁷Warrior, "A Native American Perspective," 283.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 284.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 285.

²⁰Fernando F. Segovia and R.S. Sugirtharajah, eds., *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament* (London: Clark, 2007) and R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *The Postcolonial Bible* (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

²¹William Stolzman, *The Pipe and the Cross: A Christian-Sioux Dialogue* (Chamberlain, SD: Tipi Press, 2002).

²²*Ibid.*, 13.

²³*Ibid.*, 210.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 218.

²⁵Kwok Pui-lan, "Discovering the Bible in a Non-Biblical World," 289–305. The article is a reprint from *Semeia* 47 (1989).

²⁶Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, eds. *Teaching the Bible: The Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998).

APPENDIX

The Importance of Names

The names that we use to identify each other reflect our cultural practices and entanglements. They may invite dialogue and deepen relationships, or prevent the same. My publisher, editor, and I share a common hope that the title of this book will contribute to what we believe is an urgently needed dialogue and promote the healing of broken relationships. That said, we did not easily agree on the present title on this book.

We questioned if it would be better to use “American Indians” or “Native Americans” in the title and throughout the text. In various drafts of the manuscript I used “Amerindian,” “Indigenous People,” and “aboriginals.” A good friend of mine who is a member of the Muscogee Tribe told me that “Native American” is used more commonly in the academy, while “American Indian” is used more often among themselves. On the other hand, in *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz prefers to speak of “indigenous peoples” because she finds “America” and “American” to be “blatantly imperialistic terms.”¹ The word “Indian” itself is linked to the European invasion of North America.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* that for indigenous peoples naming is how “we put ourselves back together again.”² Eventually indigenous peoples will come to an agreement on how they identify themselves beyond tribal memberships. Hopefully the nonindigenous community will have the grace and wisdom to accept the identities and names indigenous peoples choose for themselves.

Indigenous peoples often used their tribal identity when speaking of themselves or to others. Whenever possible I have tried to follow this practice throughout the book. However, it was not practical to do this for the title of the book or throughout the text. Finally, we felt we had to choose between “American Indian” and “Native American.”

I think for nonindigenous people the present confusion about how best to refer to indigenous peoples is rooted in our colonial history. Since we have not yet come to terms with our own history of anti-Native American attitudes, we do not have the language for a truly multicultural society in which interracial justice is normative.

For example, suppose that “First Nations peoples” is eventually adopted as the most widely accepted way to refer to indigenous peoples.

This name would force nonindigenous people to acknowledge that the people who lived here when the European Christians first arrived lived in communities with functioning governments. They were not barbarians who needed to be civilized. The treaties that the United States made with tribal nations were and are legitimate treaties made between sovereign governments. The implications are rather startling. The Doctrine of Discovery would be no longer valid. The closely related “right of conquest” would cease to be a right. White notions of entitlement would be severely challenged. With the loss of these assumptions, our identity would be compromised. We would have to put ourselves back together.

There are signs that this is beginning to happen. We live in a hyphenated world. We are Afro-Americans, Euro-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Asian-Americans, and so on. I interpret the presence of the hyphen to mean that we are willing to accept the idea that our identities are relational. As Amartya Sen argues in *Identity and Violence*, we are not “inmates incarcerated in little [identity] containers.”³ We can use our identity to deepen relationships and to nurture community. When we acknowledge that our identities are relational and multidimensional, we reduce our propensity for violence against the Other and open up new possibilities for the creation of a people-oriented society in which interracial justice is normative.

This leads back to the title of this book, *Native Americans, the Mainline Church, and the Quest for Interracial Justice*. We settled on this title not because it is the “best one,” but because we wanted to strongly connect the first words in the title “Native American” with the last words in the title “Interracial Justice” and to define the role of the church in this context.

NOTES

¹Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015).

²Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012).

³Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

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