Journal of North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies

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- Re-Contextualization: Restoring the Biblical Message to a Jewish Israeli Context
- Black Elk Speaks
- Of Steeples and Stories: A Selective Overview of Mission Contact with Aboriginal Peoples of Canada
- A View of the Native North American Contextual Movement and Its Undecided Future
- A History of Slaughter: Embracing our Martyrdom on the Margins of Encounter
- The Gospel Comes to North America
- “Professor Whiteowl, This Classroom Hurts”: Contextualization of the Indigenous Leadership Formation
- Indigenous Expressions of Biblical Faith to a Jewish Israeli Context
ABOUT NAIITS

Vision Statement
NAIITS exists to address topics of present concern in Native North American ministry and mission. These topics range from evangelism to discipleship to leadership development as they relate to Native Christian ministry and worship. Through symposiums, publishing and dialogue, the Institute seeks to bring together men and women of varied experiences and backgrounds in mission and ministry from within the mainstream of orthodox evangelical Christian faith, intentionally providing a forum for biblical and theological thought from within Native North American points of view. NAIITS seeks to partner with the emerging coalition, the Indigenous Christian Alliance, as an excellent way to create dynamic partnerships in Native North American ministry.

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GUIDELINES for SUBMISSION

An important component of the ongoing work of NAIITS includes publication. To this end NAIITS editors gladly accept the submission of articles for consideration. NAIITS is interested in publishing papers and book reviews that reflect an Aboriginal perspective on doing theology within an Aboriginal environment and related subjects. Ideas for papers and/or completed materials may be submitted under the following guidelines:

- Length should not exceed 3000 words for papers, 5000 for specifically requested feature articles.
- Book reviews are to be of relevant recent publications and should not exceed 800 words.
- Submissions must include footnotes and a bibliography.
- Submissions are required by October 31 of each year.
- Email submissions to naiits@shaw.ca

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Backing into the Future
In recent decades efforts have been made to reinterpret the historical experience and outcome of mission within the Native North American context. Alternative explanations of often very destructive outcomes are suggested in newly proffered definitions of indigenity and new measures of mission success.

As we listen or read, we are told that we must judge the historical context — both social and theological — on its own, then contemporary merit and wisdom if we are to truly understand what took place in the mission field. This is intriguing given the drive of historical mission (even much in present-day mission) seemed triumphalistic, productivity and “future other-world destination” oriented.

Even when mission was indisputably about “… [civilizing Indians] so that they might then become fit receptacles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,”¹ mission was often focused on various interpretations of a bright future for the Western world, one which Indians might ostensibly share if they were appropriately changed. If then, the historical social context has changed — with this I am sure we would all agree — but the drives of mission have varied little up to the present day, what does that say to us about this way of reinterpreting history?

Indigenous people are prone to using the past as a marker, an informant which allows for a more thorough understanding of the present course of life. Traditionally, such a way of understanding has given them a more faithful path into the unknown.

In this issue we explore several historical efforts at contextual theology, missiology and the practice of church. On the one hand we have Damian Costello’s challenging re-interpretation of Nicholas Black Elk’s contextualization of the Christian Gospel in Catholic form, offering a new and refreshing perspective of the conversion of Black Elk. In the presentation of Adrian Jacobs, a piece in which we feel deeply the impact of life lived in the aftermath of cultural loss, community displacement and social devastation, we are confronted with the real effect of non-contextualization of the gospel.

A hopeful balance is offered in Mark MacDonald’s paper as he paints a masterful picture of the days which lie ahead — days which, in his words, are clearly post-colonial but equally importantly, post-denominational. Other presentations fill out our exploration.

The papers and conversations reflected in this issue of the NAIITS Journal, offer us history as a lens through which time is viewed differently and a course for the future set. In this issue, we are clearly walking backward into the future. It is our hope that through observing the past in such an Indigenous way, we might set a more positive course!

Terry LeBlanc, 
Chair
SECTION I

The biblical message tells us of the brokenness of creation. It shows us of our need to be restored as part of creation in right relationship with our Creator. It invites us to be co-laborers in bringing wholeness, complete healing, proper balance, and the restoration of all things. Scripture teaches us this message through and within the context of the Creator in covenant relationship with the nation of Israel.

The uniqueness of this relationship between Israel and the Almighty is partially found in its being an exemplary relationship through which other nations would see a reflection of themselves and of their own brokenness. More than this, the uniqueness of this relationship with Israel is in that she was being groomed as the nation through which Creator would send the Anointed One. This Messiah (anointed one in Hebrew) came to restore humanity in right relationship with one another and in right relationship with the Creator Himself. In so doing, the Anointed One empowers us as co-laborers in restoring creation.

The Messiah was born a son of Israel and lived among my people as one of us. He so lived out the message of restored creation that we say He was the message made flesh. He gave life to that message in Jewish flesh, as a son of the tribe of Judah. The actualization of creation being restored came to humanity first through the history, language, traditions, land, and very flesh of Israel. Israel was chosen as a nation of messengers, called first to live out the message within our own land and then to take the message to all nations. The biblical message was first consummated in the Jewish Israeli context.

The Anointed One was first received in the Jewish Israeli context, as of course both He Himself and also His first followers were Jewish Israelis. The Anointed One was also first rejected in the Jewish Israeli context by many of those He was sent to, as of course they were also Jewish Israelis. The Jewish
Israeli dimension here is so much a part of the story, that it is almost inseparable from it. Even so, only a minority of my people received the Messiah, and very few took His message to the nations. Only a remnant of Jewish Israelis followed Him who came to us as one of us.

The first Jewish followers of Yeshua the Messiah soon began hearing of Gentiles embracing faith in the same Messiah. They heard that these non-Jews were claiming to be Messiah's servants, yet remained uncircumcised and unconverted to Judaism. How could this be? How could Gentiles possibly follow the Messiah who is one of us, without also becoming one of us? What we did not yet understand was that Creator was calling forth servants from the nations to follow His Anointed One as one with us and not as one of us. He was calling us into unity, and not uniformity. He expected us to remain distinct and diverse, but to become of one heart.

Within a few short generations, the vast majority of the followers and messengers of Yeshua the Anointed One were from among the nations. As it was meant to be, these new communities of the faith did not adopt the expressions of Israel's land and history. Yet, a problem arose later when these non-Jewish communities eventually went so far as to forbid the expressions of Israel and severed all relations with the Jewish people. Israel's Creator-given traditions came to be declared forbidden not only for non-Jews but even for Jewish Believers living in their midst. This was done as an attempt to invalidate Israel's heritage as an expression of New Covenant faith. By de-legitimizing Israel's traditions, the nations violated the oneness of heart that Creator intended for there to be between Israel and the nations.

The emissary (Apostle) Paul taught clearly against the need for Gentiles to embrace Israel's traditions. Yet, he never taught Jews to violate their own heritage. Those who sought to impose Jewish traditions on Gentiles were called Judaizers. Early Church leaders inferred from this that teaching Jewish traditions is inherently wrong. Yet, Jews who teach other Jews to uphold their own heritage are not Judaizers. They are honorable in faithfulness to their own heritage and teach others to also be faithful to what is already theirs.
Exile

My people were exiled from our Land by the Romans. Although there always remained a Jewish remnant in the Land of Israel, the Jewish Israeli context of life lost its national dimension and soon became regarded as a relic of the past. We were deemed as only a footnote of history and no-longer relevant. Yet, we never lost hope. There remained many promises recorded in our sacred text (the Bible) of what Creator would do among us in the Land He covenanted to us. This assured us of a return to and restoration of the Land.

As our captors continued in their attempts to steal our heritage from us, they came to believe that they had replaced us. They thought they were the new Israel. They missed that they were called to be heirs together with us, and not instead of us. They took our book as their own, and then turned around and told us that we were no longer allowed to do what the book told us to do. These new teachers of our book in the nations soon came to acknowledge that the promises to us in our Land had not yet been fulfilled. They put this understanding together with their teaching that they had replaced us, and then attempted to bring these promises to fulfillment by force. They orchestrated the Crusades and attempted to steal our inheritance of the Land by conquering and occupying it. They sought to restore the Israeli context, but without the Jewish people.

Most of the history of our exile was among European Christians. Over time, the theology and practice of both Judaism and Christianity developed each in reaction against the other community. The difference was that we, the Jews, were always a small minority who suffered violence as a result of the Church's anti-Semitic teachings. Aside from the Crusades, there were many other attempts to annihilate us as a people: the Spanish Inquisition, the Holocaust, and untold numbers of pogroms. All of these massacres were carried out falsely in the name of Jesus — of Yeshua the Anointed One who Himself was one of us.

Missions to the Jews

Two hundred years ago, Protestants in England began teaching of an eschatological (End Times) need for the restoration of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel. They believed that the
Messiah could not return until the Jewish people were back in their homeland. As this teaching spread, organizations of Protestant missions to the Jews were founded across Europe. Before long, they began establishing local churches specifically for Jewish converts to Christianity. The new converts were still required to leave behind most of their Jewish heritage and separate themselves from their communities. But, now at least they were assembled in quasi-Jewish communities of converted Jews. They had fellowship with others of similar background, yet lived with limited expressions of Jewish life and were severed for the most part from relationship with their families and the larger Jewish community.

It was only near the end of the 1800s that we as Jewish followers of Yeshua began establishing our own indigenous autonomous communities. In the 1880s, Joseph Rabinowitz in Kishinev, Moldova, erected the first synagogue built specifically for Believers in Jesus. Over the course of the next two generations, there were efforts to create a broader cohesive movement of Jewish Believers, but these resulted in little more than isolated individual congregations, with nearly all of them still under the oversight of Protestant denominations. Even so, there began to be a greater public affirmation of Jewish heritage among those Jews in churches. They began calling themselves by names such as Israelite Sons of the New Covenant, Christian Jews, Christ-Believing Jews, and Hebrew Christians. The Christ-Believing Jews were a group in Hungary that refused baptism because they did not want to change their registration with the State government from Jewish to Christian.

Historic research has shown that more than 200,000 European Jews embraced faith in Yeshua between the first and second world wars. In Hungary alone, there were 90,000. Tragically, most of the 200,000 were killed in the Holocaust. This put an end to what was on the brink of becoming the indigenous autonomous movement that so many had been seeking to establish. Most European missions to the Jews ceased operating. Some organizations no longer existed because everyone including the missionaries had been killed. Others closed down out of shame over the Holocaust.
Nation of Israel Re-born
Following WWII, the State of Israel was established in 1948. A few leaders from the emerging Hebrew Christian movement in Europe had survived the Holocaust and escaped to Israel. They worked to establish a community of Jewish Israeli followers of Yeshua, but those early years were a long, hard, lonely road. Six million Jews had been exterminated by the Germans, a full one-third of the Jewish people. In the aftermath of this tragedy, belief in the G-d of Israel became more difficult for many Jews. Many asked the question, "Where was G-d?" Even just the thought of accepting Jesus was out of the question. He was the one so many Germans claimed to believe in. Many Jews began defining themselves not by what they were but by what they were not, "Whatever we are, we are not Christians. There may or may not be a G-d, but one thing we know is that Jews do not believe in Jesus."

Modern Messianic Jewish Movement
The United States then had the largest Jewish community in the world. A few American Protestant missions to the Jews continued to operate, but with little success. In the 1960s, masses of American youth rose up across the United States in what came to be known as the hippie movement. They led a revolution of counter-culture in defiance of mainstream American society. Equally ripe for this uprising, the Jewish youth of that generation played a prominent role as instigators and organizers. Out of that hippie movement came the Jesus movement in which vast numbers of young people embraced faith in Jesus. Among those who accepted Jesus were also many thousands of Jewish youth. This critical mass of new Jewish Believers became the nucleus of a new indigenous autonomous movement of Jewish followers of Yeshua. The common designation for Jewish Believers at that time was Hebrew Christians. In this new modern movement, the term Hebrew Christian was soon replaced with the designation Messianic Jew. We have since developed into a comprehensive, worldwide movement of Jewish followers of Yeshua called the Messianic Jewish movement. Messianic Judaism exists not only to allow Jewish followers of Yeshua to remain Jewish and part of
the Jewish community, but also to allow other followers of Yeshua to be "other" and to remain part of their communities.

There are now approximately 14 million Jews in the world. There are just-under six million Jews in Israel and just-under six million in the United States. In fact, the number of Jews in Israel only recently surpassed the number of Jews in the U.S. This marks the first time since the destruction of the first temple and the Babylonian exile that there are more Jews in the Land of Israel than any other place in the world. Most of the remaining two million Jews reside in only half a dozen other countries.

The Messianic Jewish movement is divided mostly between Israel and the U.S. The American movement is, for the most part, attempting to create a Jewish context for New Covenant faith. In Israel, there are two streams. The older and larger group is seeking to establish congregations of New Covenant faith within an Israeli context, but with less emphasis on Jewish tradition. In fact some are even hostile to Jewish tradition. A growing number of these congregations are beginning to call themselves Messianic Israeli congregations, dropping the designation of Jewish. They seek to affirm a nationalist political Israeli identity, but not a Jewish one. There is now also a smaller emerging segment of the Messianic Jewish community in Israel that is becoming established within the wider, traditional Jewish Israeli context.

The American Movement
Most of the American Jewish youth who accepted Yeshua during the Jesus Movement initially joined churches. Before long, Jewish Believers began seeking fellowship with other Jewish Believers. We gathered in houses, while remaining members of churches. Eventually, many of these fellowship groups grew and came to separate as self-standing congregations of Messianic Jews. As the movement developed, we introduced more and more Jewish traditions into our gatherings. Yet, there were two missing elements. One was relationship with the larger Jewish community and the other was fluent knowledge of our tradition.

We were trying to create our own Jewish context, divorced from relationship with the larger Jewish community. Also, we were
beginning to celebrate some of our tradition, but without any contact with those who actually live it out as a way of life on a daily basis. We were creating an artificial Jewish context.

In ignorance, we began appropriating Jewish symbols and customs and using them however we liked, often making a mockery of the tradition. We dishonored our heritage and deeply offended the traditional community. We were not seeking to be faithful in covenant relationship with our people and our G-d. Rather, we were using Jewish things for the sake of missionary expediency, underhandedly seeking to convert more Jews out of the traditional community.

Many Messianic Jewish congregations outside Israel today begin their services on Shabbat (Saturday) by lighting a seven-branched menorah (candelabra) and blowing a shofar (ram's horn). These are two things that Jewish tradition actually forbids on Shabbat. We thought this made a service more Jewish, when it actually just made it more offensive to traditional Jews.

**Messianic Jewish Theology**

In 1979, the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations was founded. Although a number of Messianic Jewish organizations existed before this, it was within the UMJC that the Messianic Jewish movement truly began shifting from a movement of individuals to a movement of congregations. Other associations of congregations were later also founded. Within a few years, the leaders of the UMJC began talking about doing Messianic Jewish theology. It soon became popular for congregations and organizations throughout the movement to write their own statements of doctrine and theology. Yet, nearly all of these documents were simply evangelical Protestant statements rewritten with Jewish terminology to look and sound Jewish. It was more of an exercise in semantics or creative writing than actually doing theology.

There is now a group of about fifty leaders, mostly from within the UMJC, who are just beginning to seriously do Messianic Jewish theology. This was initiated by Stuart Dauermann through an organization he founded called *Hashivenu*. A theological forum is convened every January behind closed
doors in Pasadena, California. The presentations are neither recorded nor published. Also, everyone is committed not to quote each other outside that circle of people. It is a safe-zone for the exchange of controversial theological ideas and discussions of challenging issues. It is always an inspiring time and a forum long-overdue for our community.

**Conversion**

A number of the Hashivenu leaders are also involved in another forum of leadership dealing with issues of congregational life. Over the last few years, they have been discussing the controversial topic of conversion to Judaism. In our tradition, there are covenantal expressions of life that members of the community share. To fully participate publicly in these expressions, one is expected to have entered the community through a life-long covenantal relationship. These leaders desire to uphold some semblance of credibility for those partaking in Jewish life-cycle ceremonies in their congregations. Thus, they have begun discussing the possibility of establishing an official process for non-Jewish Believers to covenantally give their lives to the Jewish community in a way that includes upholding the basic guidelines of traditional Jewish conversion.

Evangelically-minded leaders who know of these developments are up-in-arms and see blood. They are irate over the possibility of Christians converting to Judaism. They are making accusations of heresy and apostasy.

Those leaders considering the issue of conversion are facing real-life issues involving families of mixed marriages who want to fully participate. The pressing matter at hand is finding a traditionally acceptable way to welcome non-Jewish spouses to fully engage in Jewish life on an equal level, and to better give their children a clear distinct communal identity among the Jewish people. It is intended to solidify family identity and relationship with the wider Jewish community.

Non-Jewish members of Jewish families would be encouraged to convert. Non-Jews without any Jewish family would initially be turned away, as is the Jewish tradition. One would have to show evidence of serious personal commitment to life-long covenantal
relationship with the Jewish people in order to be considered for this process of conversion, which is a process of physical adoption into a physical family.

**Postmissionary Messianic Judaism**

One of the prominent leaders in Hashivenu is Mark Kinzer. Mark is also the president of the Messianic Jewish Theological Institute which is being developed into the rabbinical seminary of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations. This last year, Mark wrote a book called *Post-missionary Messianic Judaism*. It is a controversial work that many in our movement are taking a strong stand against. Mark Kinzer advocates a form of Messianic Judaism that will no longer serve as the agent of a foreign community into the Jewish community — missionaries of the Church — but will naturally be part of the Jewish people. Following is an excerpt from the new book:

*Postmissionary Messianic Judaism embraces the Jewish people and its religious tradition, and discovers God and Messiah in the midst of Israel. Messianic Jews with this orientation discern the hidden sanctifying reality of Yeshua already residing at the center of Jewish life and religious tradition. They understand their inner mission as the call to be a visible sign of this hidden Messianic presence. Postmissionary Messianic Judaism does bear witness, but not to a reality external to Jewish life. It testifies to a reality already internal to Jewish life, existing independent of its witness, but manifested and confirmed through its witness. It believes that the mysterious Messianic reality at the heart of Israel's life will one day be acknowledged by the community as a whole, and that this acknowledgement—set within the context of a national movement of revived fidelity to the ancestral covenant—will prepare the way for the final redemption. Because it discovers God and Yeshua within the Jewish people and its tradition, postmissionary Messianic Judaism feels at home in the Jewish world.*

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As messengers of Yeshua living within our heritage, we do not need to win more of our people to Yeshua than outside missionaries in order to validate living in our heritage. It is already valid to begin with. The greater issue should be one of faithfulness in relationship with our people rather than missionary effectiveness. It is more important to be true living witnesses of the message ourselves than it is only to convince others to have correct belief. If, in giving the message, we teach others to violate their heritage, we have not actually given them the message.

Messianic Gentiles
By the late 1980s, Messianic Judaism began growing in popularity within the Church, in particular among Evangelical, Charismatic, free-churches. Up until that point, most growth in our movement had come from Jewish Christians joining the movement out of Evangelical churches and from new Jewish Believers entering the movement directly. Throughout the 1990s, most growth came from non-Jewish Christians entering our movement. With this came a new problematic dimension.

Most members of the Messianic Jewish movement today are non-Jews. One real problem is that many of them left the last church they were members of on bad terms. They have broken relationships there that have still not been restored. They now somehow feel that participation in the Messianic movement validates them and excuses how they left the last place. They think they have found the "true" church in the Messianic movement and that the place they left is full of "pagan" Christians. To them, Israel's traditions are now "God's" expressions and the only "biblical" ones.

As a side-note, with this influx of non-Jews into the movement, more and more of them call it the Messianic movement, leaving out the designation Jewish.

As leaders in indigenous ministry, we would do well to uphold a standard of insisting that those participating in our communities do so on the basis of having left the last community they were part of on good terms. In cases where people have not done so, we should encourage them to at least attempt to restore the
broken relationships and offer to accompany them when they do so. In cases where they may have behaved poorly and divisively on their way out, we should counsel them to return and ask forgiveness. Again, this is something we should offer to accompany them on.

It is true that there are leaders out there who are so opposed to even the very concept of indigenous ministry that they will turn down the offer of reconciliation. Yet, it is important for us to expect the members of our communities to at least seek restoration and to help guard their hearts from any unforgiveness. We cannot build healthy communities that consist of bitter, broken, and unforgiving people.

The latest trend in the Messianic Jewish movement is for non-Jewish members to leave our congregations and set-up what some of them call Hebraic communities. These are congregations of non-Jews teaching and practicing their own versions of Jewish tradition. They call it "biblical" tradition, implying that the traditions of other people are inherently unbiblical and ungodly. They refer to their interpretations as true Torah, and teach what some of them call all Torah for all people — recently dubbed the one law teaching.

**Continuum of Covenantally Commanded Culture**

Torah was given to a specific people in a specific land. Most of the commandments of Torah are culture-specific. They are cultural, yet simultaneously commanded of Israel in a national covenant relationship. The expressions of Torah are covenantally commanded culture. Jewish traditions that developed later, as a result of this covenantal relationship, could be called covenantally spawned culture, expressive of a particular covenantal history with G-d.

The culture of each people in the world includes covenantal expressions of shared life with their people and their land. When you separate those traditions from the community they come from — when you separate them from the people and land that they represent — they lose their meaning. When someone appropriates a tradition belonging to another people from
another place and uses it in their own way, separate from that people and their land, it no longer has the same meaning. In other words, it is uniquely pleasing to G-d when any people in the world uphold those expressions of life from their own tradition which acknowledge the Creator as having brought them to their land, and that honor His hand in their history. Faithfully maintaining Creator-given expressions that are history-specific and land-specific is to uphold a covenantal dimension of relationship existing uniquely between G-d and that people.

The Christian Bible is divided into what are called the Old and New Testaments. This gives the impression that the Old Testament is an old covenant that has now been replaced by a new covenant, the New Testament. But, this is not the case. The Old Testament is a collection of books that include many covenants. Most of these covenants were made by the L-rd with Israel. Some of them are between the L-rd and other peoples in the Middle East. Most of these covenants are related to national purpose and calling, and have little or no bearing on issues of "personal salvation".

The many covenants made with Israel are progressive, and the New Covenant adds to and builds upon them. Each new covenant is made in addition to the previous covenants. It does not replace what came before, but is added to it.

There is in fact a New Covenant, and it is indeed a better covenant. Yet, it does not replace the numerous previous national covenants that were made with Israel. It adds to and builds upon them. The New Covenant does not cancel G-d's covenantal promises to our people, nor our national callings or distinct expressions. The New Testament criticizes Israel's lack of faithfulness to the covenants, and then welcomes her into an additional covenant of relationship with the Messiah and all other nations. It is a covenant that connects us in relationship to one another as different peoples while enabling us to remain faithful to our distinct callings.

As a Messianic Jew, I see the coming of Yeshua as part of a continuum of our Jewish heritage. His arrival did not cancel who we are. He brings fullness and completes us. In a similar way,
the coming of Yeshua to each people must be recognized as part of a continuum of who they already are. His arrival must bring wholeness to their heritage, not replace it. Yeshua completes a relational history already existing with that people and the Creator.

**Emissaries to the Nations**

As a young teenage boy, I became convinced that there was a calling on my life to go to many nations with the message of Yeshua. Shortly after arriving in Israel as a new immigrant, I realized that missions from Israel to the nations had not yet been re-born. I soon recognized the calling to be not only one of going to the nations myself, but of raising-up a whole movement of Israeli emissaries.

In 1999, that vision was born with the establishment of Keren HaShlichut, an Israeli association of Messianic Jewish emissaries. Since then, we have consistently sent Israeli emissaries with the message of Yeshua to more than twenty nations each year.

On my own journeys, I have focused mostly on going to indigenous peoples. My experiences of ministering to indigenous peoples within their own cultures have inspired me to embrace more of my own traditional Jewish heritage. Also, the more I have embraced my own heritage and lived more naturally within the traditional community of my people, the more I have learned about ministry to indigenous peoples. When I am with indigenous people, I am inspired to be more faithful to the heritage of my own community. When I am at home among the religious Jewish community, I am inspired as to how I may more effectively reach other peoples, through affirming who they already are. These parallel walks in my life are synergistic, each one propelling the other forward.

This is the beauty of indigenous ministry. We must first embrace who we and our people are, and live within it, before we are able to competently release others to do the same. If we have no respect for our own heritage, we will not be able to fully respect another. So, faithfulness to our own tradition is not only for the sake of our own people, but for the sake of the nations.
New Jewish Israeli Context
At the beginning of this paper, I mentioned two of the unique dimensions of Israel's covenantal relationship with the Creator. I then said that the Jewish Israeli context of the biblical message is so much a part of the story, that it is almost inseparable from it. There is, though, a third aspect that touches on the inseparable dimension. This is the fact that when the biblical message is delivered to each new people, the original context of Jewish Israel invariably enters the telling of the story. The Bible is, of course, the document of historic record of that original context. This sacred book served to preserve us as a people throughout our exile. It was not only because we never lost hope in its message, but also because even our sworn enemies never lost hope in its message. Both in hope and hate, they never let us forget who we were. Today, the biblical message as recorded within its original context is the most known message to humankind.

We then must ask the question, "Can the original Jewish Israeli context be restored?" No, it cannot. Far too much has happened since then. To restore the biblical message today to a Jewish Israeli context is to restore it to a new and different Jewish Israeli context. It is part of a continuum of the heritage of that original context, but with an understanding that history has changed our people and the world around us irreversibly. The human condition is the same, but our people's collective memory is not. We have suffered far too much. Our traditions have also changed immensely, aside from the fact that we no longer have the Temple. To read ancient manuscripts detailing our tradition is to be amazed at the degree to which it has been preserved. Yet, it is also the case that our tradition has been heavily influenced by 1900 years of exile.

Personal Journey
The most effective way for me to conclude the last third of this paper, is to give you part of my own story of rediscovery.

I am a Messianic Jewish Israeli. This means that I am Jewish by birth and Messianic by re-birth in the Messiah. I am Israeli but was born in the United States.
As a young boy, my family was part of the American hippie movement. We lived on one of the more radical hippie communes in the mountains of northern California. In 1973, many members of our commune suddenly began coming to faith in Yeshua as the Messiah. Well, back then we knew him as Jesus Christ. In quick succession, one person after the other professed faith in Jesus and left the commune to live in Palo Alto and join churches. This included my parents, aunt and uncle, and most of the Jewish residents of the commune. It was a modern-day revival of wandering Jews converting to Christianity.

My grandparents were not very happy about our newfound faith, to say the least. Even so, Grampa tried very hard to be supportive and finally told Dad, "If Jesus got you off drugs, then I'm for Jesus." Another Jewish friend of ours who came to faith at the same time was told by his parents, "We'd rather have you back on drugs." As with many of our friends, this was the beginning of our journey as Jewish followers of Yeshua stuck between Christianity and our Jewish families and friends.

Over the next ten years, our family celebrated Jewish and Christian holidays sporadically, attempting to navigate our way through a maze of community and family relationships. One year we would celebrate Christmas, and the next year Hanukka. One year both, and one year neither. One year Christmas would be accompanied by a Christmas tree, and the next year by a Nativity scene. The same was the case in our alternate celebrations of Easter and Pesach. Each year, we somehow felt that we had finally arrived and had found the proper "balance". We were still misguided in attempting to balance our Jewish identity against something else.

Some of this came to an end for us in 1983 when we immigrated back to Israel as a family. As we became Jewish Israelis living back in the Land among our own people, some things were suddenly no longer issues. The rest of it has taken many more years.

An early stage in this journey included five months in the Arava desert at Kibbutz Ir Ovot. During that time, our family became completely observant of Shabbat (Sabbath), Kashruth (dietary
guidelines), and many other Jewish traditions for the first time in our lives. The traditional experiences that we lived through during this period were very fulfilling. On the other hand, the relational things that we lived through with the leader and his family were cult-like and very troubling.

In 1986, as a student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, I began celebrating Erev Shabbat (Sabbath Eve) meals in the homes of different Orthodox families each Friday night. This was arranged by one of the Orthodox Jewish outreach organizations working on campus. Through that same outreach, I also began to study in the afternoons in the Old City at Aish HaTorah Yeshiva, which is primarily for ba'alei tshuvah (those who have returned to religious Jewish life). This led to studies at Ohr Someach Yeshiva, a more serious place of rabbinic study.

During this time, I went one night with my roommate Evan to hear a lecture by Meir Kahane, a member of the Knesset, founder of the radical Kach party, and founder of The Jewish Defense League in the United States. Rav Kahane gave a very moving presentation that night of his extreme and racist views, which included a proposal that Israel become a Torah-based state. He spoke of a theocracy where Jewish tradition would be the law of the state.

At the end of his lecture, he received questions from the audience. A Christian tourist stood up and asked what he would do in his Torah-based state with Messianic Jews. He responded that he didn't really care who Jews believed the Messiah is, as long as they lived as Jews. I laughed to myself and said, "Yeah, right!"

Afterwards, I accompanied Evan to the front to speak to Kahane personally. When he heard we were students at Hebrew U., he immediately asked for our help. He said that, even though he was a Knesset member, the Hebrew University had recently banned him and his party from campus. He was now looking for students who would start a new student party on campus to promote his causes. Evan quickly agreed to help him. I hesitated
and said that I didn't support some of his views but that I might be willing to participate on a cause-by-cause basis.

In the following months, I became embroiled in militant nationalist politics. It was a very misguided time in my life that ended with the need for much soul-searching. Yet, one thing of value comes back to me from that time. During my five months of association with Meir Kahane it became thoroughly evident to me that he was honestly far more concerned with whether or not I lived as an observant Jew than he was with my belief that Yeshua is our Messiah. For me, it put a crack in the myth that the broader Jewish community will always reject us as Messianic Jews no matter what we do, simply because of Yeshua.

Following this, I walked away from much of my traditional Jewish observance. This was part of the soul-searching I went through upon leaving behind militant politics. During this time, I met my wife Tzofia. The following year we were married and began the slow process together of taking up Jewish tradition as a couple.

Raising Jewish Children
The first major crossroads in this process came when our son David was born in 1990. Within a day of his birth, we began talking about the heritage that we would give our children. We were in complete agreement that the only tradition in our home would be Jewish tradition. This was not to take a stand against the tradition of any other people or community, but simply to affirm what was our own and that of our children.

We decided that this would also include raising our children completely within Jewish community, both Messianic and non-Messianic Jewish community. This meant that we would invest our lives in the lives of our Jewish friends and neighbors.

This decision on our part was a social and cultural one. Understand that Jerusalem is an international city. There is an overwhelming Jewish majority, yet there are also many other religious and ethnic communities including a large ex-patriot Evangelical Christian community. We had already clearly seen
many Messianic Jewish youth who had grown up in Israel and yet were socially and culturally foreigners in the very land of their birth. Therefore, over the years we have chosen to socially and culturally invest the life of our family in the lives of other families living within a completely Jewish Israeli framework.

**Secular and Religious**

Allow me to divert here and interject that there is not just one Jewish community in Jerusalem, but many very different Jewish communities. These sometimes divide along the lines of the national origins of immigrant Jewish communities, along linguistic backgrounds, economic status, levels of education, and various levels of rabbinic observance. Among all of the various ways that Jewish communities in Israel can be defined, the two most common designations today are secular and religious (meaning Orthodox).

Twenty years ago, a good percentage of Israelis could have been called traditional — meaning not-exactly secular nor Orthodox but somewhere in-between. They were people who lived their lives throughout the week without much religious tradition on a daily basis, but who were still respectful of tradition and regularly upheld much of it. Today this is not so much the case. Most Israelis can now be defined as being either secular or religious. And, there continues to be a widening of the gulf between these two communities, with a growing suspicion and mistrust of each other.

As the gulf between secular and religious continues widening, the Messianic Jewish community in Israel has shifted for the most part with the culturally secular divide. As a result, we now have the oxymoron secular Believer.

Some of you may be hearing reports that excite you of hundreds of Israelis coming to faith in Yeshua within the last year or two. Personally, I am less excited about the hundreds of Israelis professing faith in Yeshua than I am concerned for the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who are turning their backs on the faith of our Fathers. The observant Jewish community in Israel is still growing faster than the secular Jewish community. Yet, it is
saddening to see those who turn away from our heritage to seek meaning and fulfillment in other things.

**Shabbat**

A milestone for Tzofia and me in our spiritual journey was embracing Shabbat (the Sabbath). We had always begun Shabbat by lighting candles at sunset and beginning our meal with Kiddush and Hamotzi (Jewish tradition of blessing the L-rd over a cup of wine and bread). What would then happen after dinner was not very consistent. Occasionally, we would observe Shabbat all the way through to the following evening, but most of the time we didn't. We were still so willing to make exceptions to keeping Shabbat that it was yet unable to become part of who we were.

Only nine years ago, we finally crossed the line of committing to keep Shabbat in a credible way. During those first few months, making this possible included needing to unplug our phone. It was the only way to break the cycle of constant interruptions serving to draw us away from that day. We now keep the phone plugged-in, but our friends and family have come to understand not to call us on that day unless it is urgent.

The process of lifestyle change, of internalizing Shabbat observance as an integral part of who we are, took a few months. Within a year, it was so much a part of us that we simply could not imagine ever going back. Even just the thought itself became foreign.

Over the years, many comments have been made to us about the observance of things like Shabbat bringing us under "the curse of the law". Shabbat is not a curse or even a burden, it is a blessing. It is a precious gift that we cherish and look forward to each week. As a family, it is our favorite day of the week that we all anticipate and long for. We never think of it as a day on which there are so many things we are forbidden to do. For us it is a day on which there are so many things we are freed from having to do. It is a day of liberation, not of bondage. On the very rare occasion that we allow ourselves to be prevented from keeping it, we do not feel the weight of condemnation. We feel rather a
sense of loss and sorrow over a gift that slipped through our hands.

I recall a Messianic Jewish friend who was confronted by a Christian with those same condemning words that he was bringing himself under a curse for keeping Shabbat. He responded to the accusation by asking if he thought that G-d would forgive him even if he broke Shabbat. The Christian replied, "Of course." My friend answered, "I somehow think that I will also be forgiven even if I should happen to keep Shabbat."

**Prayer**

Six years ago, the dynamic of my participation in prayer with the traditional Jewish community was transformed. For years, I had regularly visited synagogues throughout Jerusalem, especially on holidays. I floated around from place to place visiting a different one each time. When attending a prayer service, I would follow along with some of the prayers, but not consistently. I was very liberal in my habit of interjecting my own Messianic prayers under by breath.

One Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), I was praying in the Great Synagogue. In the midst of what is a long day of fasting and prayers of repentance, I found myself drifting into one of my own spontaneous Messianic prayers. I caught myself praying under my breath, "O G-d, forgive them. L-rd open their eyes to see Yeshua. Lift the veil of blindness that they might see their redemption." It suddenly struck me as arrogant. Who did I think I was to separate and exalt myself above the assembled and pray down at them? Did they need Yeshua? Yes. Did I hope that they would come to know Him? Yes. Was there something wrong with the content of what I was praying for the others? No. On the other hand, was there something wrong with the content of what the assembled were praying? No. So, why not pray repentance together with my people? Why the need for distance? Why not cry as well, "G-d forgive us! We have sinned."?

My perspective on Messianic Jewish prayer changed that day. When I go to the Orthodox synagogue in my neighborhood today, I no longer go to pray for my people, but to pray with my people.
And yes, I still hope that each one will come to know Yeshua our Messiah.

Five years ago, shortly after our son David turned ten, I began thinking about the process of him becoming a Bar Mitzvah. It was clear to me that David could not learn the traditions within the Messianic Jewish community in Israel, or anywhere else in our movement. The few groups of Messianic Jews pursuing traditional Jewish life were all far from able to show him the tradition in a living way. The observances were sporadic, without fluency, and in a somewhat artificial way. I understood that David was growing up too fast for our movement to teach him. I would have to take him to a traditional synagogue for him to learn the tradition in a natural environment.

I began taking David to visit Orthodox synagogues at least once a week, every week. We moved around a bit for the first year, until we fell in love with a particular congregation. We have been there ever since and are active, paying members of the community to this day. Some members know we are Messianic and some don't. Those who know us personally all do, and sometimes still view us with suspicion. But, for the most part they have come to understand through our years of active participation that when we come to pray we are there to pray with them and not for them.

Kashrut
Around the time that David and I began going weekly to a synagogue, Tzofia began going to the park in front of our house every day. As our kids would play with the neighbor kids, she would talk with the other mothers, some of whom were modern Orthodox. After a few months of this, Tzofia and these modern Orthodox mothers began a routine of going home to each other's houses for lunch. The only problem was that when they would come over to our house, they couldn't eat from our dishes.

For all of our marriage, we had had an almost-kosher kitchen. We had come to love that Messianic Jewish line about having a "biblically" kosher kitchen. All of the ingredients in our cupboards and refrigerator were actually kosher, an easy feat in Israel. We also never directly mixed meat and dairy in the same
meal. But, we didn't actually have completely separate sets of dishes. So, we couldn't rightly say that we had a kosher kitchen, because we didn't.

As Tzofia began bringing her newfound friends home, she had to feed them out of packages and on paper plates. If the neighbor kids stayed with us for the remainder of the afternoon, they couldn't join us for dinner. While we ate, they either kept playing in one of the bedrooms or they went home.

One day Tzofia announced that she could no longer continue. She said that she absolutely had to have an open table and be able to freely host people for meals in our home. We talked about it for a few days until we were in full agreement to make the plunge. We decided to completely kasher (make kosher) the house, replacing, purifying, and duplicating anything we had to. We made a one-year commitment to go all the way and then reassess it at the end of that year.

The next day Tzofia went to her Orthodox friends in the park and asked if they would be willing to help her kasher our kitchen. They were ecstatic. Would they be willing? They couldn't wait to begin.

This experience solidified those relationships and opened up a whole new set of others. It made us a living part of the community in a way that we had never been before. Within a couple of months, we knew that we would never go back to the way it was. As with Shabbat, it had now became part of who we are.

When we kasher-ed our kitchen, many Messianic Jewish friends made comments to us against it. They said, "It won't make any difference. Religious Jews won't eat with you any way, because you're Messianic. Don't you understand? They reject you because of Yeshua. He is a stone of stumbling, and there is nothing you can do about it." I am happy to say that we shattered the myth. No, it is all too often not Yeshua that our people reject, but us. It is our self-righteous, foreign, non-Jewish attitudes and mannerisms that separate us from our people.
Acceptance

Some friends have accused us of compromising our Messianic faith and seeking the approval of man in order to gain acceptance by the traditional community. No, it is not acceptance of me that I seek. If anything, I seek rather to extend a hand of acceptance to the traditional people of my community, expressing my appreciation for their faithfulness to our G-d-given heritage. It is a welcome I wish to one-day give observant Jews into the Messianic community, not a welcome I seek for myself. More than this, I seek to be faithful in covenant relationship both with my people and with our G-d.

A few years ago, I attended a lecture at a prominent rabbinic institution in Jerusalem. The topic was on boundary issues and on identifying those individual issues that throughout history have singularly put a Jew outside the Jewish community. One of these was intermarriage, which was covered in-depth in the lecture. Another boundary issue was Messianic Judaism and belief in Yeshua. The lecturer made a bold prediction that within twenty years, believing in Yeshua as the Messiah would no longer be a boundary issue that put someone outside the traditional community. The issue then would be whether or not the person sincerely lived within the community and the tradition or not. This comment received a hardy round of applause from the audience. It also served as a reminder to me that it is all too often we in the Messianic Jewish movement who put up our defenses and pre-emptively reject our people assuming that they will inevitably reject us. In living our lives outside of covenant relationship with our people, we reject them before they reject us.

My journey thus far inspires me to continue extending acceptance to the traditional community of my people, and I long for the day when there will be a comprehensive Messianic Jewish community ready to do the same.
Black Elk and his vision of the Sacred Tree are well known, primarily through John G. Neihardt, a poet who journeyed to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in the dust of the Great Depression drought of 1931. Neihardt was looking for Native American history, tradition, and tragedy. He found these in Nicholas Black Elk, a Lakota elder, cousin of the famous Crazy Horse and witness of the Sioux Wars. After a few weeks of interviews, Neihardt went home where he wrote *Black Elk Speaks*, a sweeping dramatic tragedy of a people living in harmony with the Earth and Great Spirit, of their great battles with an invading army, and of a strong warrior defeated in the snows of the Wounded Knee Massacre, all told in the poetic English of a Native American elder.

The story of *Black Elk Speaks* consisted of two main parts. The first was a great vision Black Elk had when he was nine years old. He fell sick and saw two men descend from the sky. They brought him to the clouds where they showed him the spirit horses of the four directions and the sacred tipi of the Six Grandfathers. The Grandfathers gave him the power to heal and the power to destroy, and called him to lead the Lakota down the good red road to the sacred hoop. At the end of the journey a Sacred Tree would bloom at center of the hoop and the people would live in peace and harmony. For Black Elk, the vision was a call to be a *wicasa wakan* (holy man), a calling he struggled to live up to through the rest of the story.

The second aspect of the book addressed Black Elk’s memories of the Sioux Wars, a military conflict between the U.S. military and the Lakota that lasted from about 1855 to 1890. As a

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1 See Damian Costello, *Black Elk: Colonialism and Lakota Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005) for the complete argument. I have time in this paper only to present the conclusions, not to argue many of the points. I will footnote the more important points in need of clarification.
thirteen-year old boy Black Elk killed an American soldier at the Battle of Little Big Horn, where the Lakota wiped out Custer and his whole division. As is well known and perhaps unnecessary to repeat, this victory was short lived. The U.S. Army eventually defeated the Lakota and settled them on reservations in present day North and South Dakota. On the reservations, the government attempted to rid Native Americans of their traditional economy and culture and adopt American culture and farming, a process missionaries aided. Black Elk settled on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, which became his home for the remainder of his life.

In the midst of this cultural repression and poverty, a movement called the Ghost Dance arrived in Pine Ridge. Black Elk joined. He remembered putting on holy paint and dancing the ghost dance, praying for the Messiah to come and crush out the whites, and bringing a promised land just for Native Americans.²

The Ghost Dance movement caused mass hysteria among the white population near the reservations and led to the largest military operation since the Civil War. The presence of American troops culminated in the Battle of Wounded Knee, where in the December snows of 1890 the U.S. military killed around 260 Lakota, mostly women and children. Black Elk fought in the battles afterward, and *Black Elk Speaks* ends with his memory of the Wounded Knee battlefield:

> I did not know then how much was ended. When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people’s dream died there. It was a beautiful dream.

> And I, to whom so great a vision was given in my youth, - you see me now a pitiful old man who has done nothing,

for the nation’s hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.³

This passage, known as the “death of a dream,” became the most quoted passage from the book and the enduring image of Black Elk.⁴ The book was ignored when it was published in 1932, and remained on the dusty shelves until the1960s, when its melodic prose was rediscovered by young Native Americans looking for traditions taken away by English language schools, mission churches, government assimilation programs and the encroaching American society. Black Elk’s vision of the Sacred Tree became both a major inspiration and source for revitalization of traditional religious practices as well as political action, epitomized by the Siege at Wounded Knee in 1973. The American counter-culture also discovered Black Elk’s vision, helping to fuel the critique of Vietnam War, racism, and pollution while inspiring many non-Natives to explore Native religious traditions. Black Elk Speaks remains an essential text for educators looking to introduce their students to Native America. The native intellectual and activist Vine Deloria, Jr., called Black Elk Speaks a “North American bible of all tribes” in the introduction of the 1979 edition.⁵

Catholic Black Elk
Because Black Elk became such an important symbol of Native resistance to Christianity, ⁶ many readers were shocked to

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⁴ DeMallie, The Sixth Grandfather, 55.
⁵ Vine Deloria, Jr., Introduction to Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks, xiii.
⁶ I cannot present the details of the Catholic missions to the Lakota because of a lack of time. The problems caused by missionaries among Native Americans are well known and are assumed for this paper. Less well known are the often tolerant practices of the early missionaries. What is interesting among the Lakota is that the experience of early Lakota converts was generally better than later generations. It appears that the worst of missionary problems occurred with the mission schools, the failure of the church to develop a Native clergy, clergy less committed to learning the Lakota language, and increasing social problems on the reservation. It might be helpful to think of Richard Twiss’ presentation of the Spokane Garry, his role in spreading a vibrant Native Christianity and subsequent negative changes as white
discover that the real Black Elk was very different from Neihardt’s portrayal in *Black Elk Speaks*. First, a scholar of the Lakota, Raymond J. DeMallie, published the transcripts of the original interview and demonstrated that the picture of Black Elk the ‘defeated old man’ was largely a creation of Neihardt. The book accurately describes the events of Black Elk’s life but shapes them in a way to emphasize the victim hood and powerlessness of Native Americans as a whole. For example, the “death of the dream” speech, was not even spoken by Black Elk.

The second surprise focused on the omission from *Black Elk Speaks* of Black Elk’s life after Wounded Knee. While working in Pine Ridge, Michael J. Steltenkamp, S.J., met and interviewed Black Elk’s daughter, Lucy Looks Twice. Lucy, along with the testimony of Lakota elders, of Frank Fools Crow (the noted Lakota holy man and ceremonial chief of the Lakota nation), and Jesuit records have filled in Black Elk’s missing years. Unlike the defeated old man in *Black Elk Speaks*, an active, positive Black Elk emerged. During his reservation life he became a participant in the new economy and by reservation standards was successful. DeMallie calls him “one of the most successful old-time, uneducated Indians in adapting to the exigencies of life in the Pine Ridge Reservation.” Most surprisingly, Black Elk lived as a practicing Catholic for 46 years, many of which he worked as a catechist.

Black Elk’s conversion began in the late 1880s. The end of the wars brought reservation confinement, encouraging many young restless Lakota to join traveling Wild West Shows which dramatized Native American cultures for non-Native audiences. Black Elk seized this opportunity in order to exercise the holy man’s call to search for new religious power, investigating the white world to see whether any of its ways were worth adopting.


7 DeMallie, *The Sixth Grandfather*, 57.
After two years in the cities of East Coast America and Europe he wrote to his people that the only good thing about the White world is its Christianity:

Of the white man’s customs, only his faith, the white man’s beliefs about God’s will, and how they act according to it, I wanted to understand.... Now along I trust in God. I work honestly and it is good; I hope the people will do likewise. . . . Across the big ocean is where they killed Jesus; again I wished to see it but it was four days on the ocean and there was no railroad... [It would require] much money for me to be able to go over there to tell about it myself.  

Black Elk’s assessment was not unique; his contemporary, Tipi Sapa, the grandfather of Vine Deloria, Jr., is remembered saying that the “whites brought the worst and the best with them. The best was Jesus, and his message of love.”

After returning from Europe, Black Elk joined the Ghost Dance after a period of cautious investigation. He left the Ghost Dance after Wounded Knee, but not before having a vision of what he called the “Son of God.” For over a decade he practiced healing as yuwipi man during which Christian influence continued. Some of his friends urged him to give up his practice and accept baptism. His wife and two children did, but it wasn’t until an altercation with a Catholic priest in 1904 that Black Elk converted. Within a few years, Black Elk’s zeal for the faith caught the missionaries’ attention. Despite having impaired vision, Black Elk had learned to read a Dakota translation of the Bible. A friend and fellow Catholic, John Lone Goose, remembered Black Elk’s dedication to study: “Nick said he wanted to teach God’s word to the people. So he kept on learning, learning, learning. Pretty soon, he learned what the

8 Black Elk, letter to Iapi Oaye, found in DeMallie, The Sixth Grandfather, 10.
10 DeMallie, The Sixth Grandfather, 266.
Bible meant, and it was good.... All he talked about was the Bible and Christ.”¹¹

His daughter, Lucy Looks Twice, described how pervasive the Bible was to Black Elk’s life:

He related Scripture passages to things around him, and he used examples from nature — making comparison of things in the Bible with flowers, animals, even trees. And when he talked to us about things in creation, he brought up stories in the Bible. That’s why he was a pretty strong Catholic — by reading the Bible.¹²

For Black Elk, the Word of God was an integral of Lakota life. Black Elk also had the ability — rare among contemporary Catholics but not early Lakota converts — to quote Scripture. In his discussion of Black Elk, Pat Red Elk emphasizes the ability of the early converts to remember and quote the Bible.

Even though they didn’t have any formal education, those old converts were really trained to preach. They’d say that Saint John says this here and there, and when I’d get the Bible and read it — they were right! That’s what was written. I read Scripture, but I can’t remember the right words like they used to be able to do.¹³

Because of his knowledge of the Bible and Catholic tradition, and his dedication to the faith, Black Elk was appointed to the position of catechist. Catechists were much like modern day deacons; they assisted the priests, conducting certain services when the priests were not available, and above all, preached in Lakota. Pat Red Elk remembered Black Elk’s oratory skills: “when he got up he really preached. People sat there and just listened to him. They could picture what he was talking about.”¹⁴ Black Elk’s skill was not without effect as he was

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¹¹ Ibid., 54.
¹² Ibid., 47.
¹³ Ibid., 120.
credited with at least four hundred conversions.\textsuperscript{15} He also went to other Native American tribes to preach and witness to the gospel. He spent a short time on the Sisseton Reservation, a month on the Winnebago Reservation in Nebraska, and two months on the Wind River Reservation.

Black Elk’s Christian faith remained until the end. Pat Red Elk remembers seeing Nick [Black Elk] walking the two to three miles to Manderson to go to Mass: “He was so old, so he got an early start and wouldn’t catch a ride. And every Sunday, he’d join up with John Lone Goose right around where the store is now, and they’d say the rosary together. . . . By the time they got to church, they had said the whole thing.”\textsuperscript{16} On August 19, 1950, Black Elk received last rites for the fourth time and died at his home in Manderson, S.D.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Vision}

For those accustomed to the image of Black Elk portrayed in \textit{Black Elk Speaks}, the new image of a Christian preacher did not mesh easily with that of a militant traditionalist.\textsuperscript{18} What could

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\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{17} It is important to emphasize there is universal agreement among Black Elk’s Lakota contemporaries. All portray him as a sincere Christian, even detractors. John (Fire) Lame Deer, dismisses Black Elk as a “catechism teacher” and a “cigar-store Indian,” but recognizes his life as a Catholic. There is no evidence that they see Black Elk’s Christianity as anything but a typical manifestation of Lakota culture of the early reservation period. Reference for Lame Deer is Peter Matthiessen, \textit{In the Spirit of Crazy Horse} (New York: Viking Press, 1983), xxxvii.
\textsuperscript{18} Again, for the sake of time I cannot present the work of two broad movements on which my work depends: postcolonialism and post-Western Christianity. Postcolonialism emphasizes the multiple ways that colonized peoples made use of European culture and technology to counter the challenges of European colonialism. In particular, Asian and African Christians emphasize the use of Christianity and the Bible in this process. Post-Western Christianity highlights the way that Christianity itself is changing. Currently the majority of Christians are found among non-European peoples and this trend is only increasing. In addition, these thinkers highlight both the use of indigenous cultures in church life and the more traditional theologies that come out of these contexts. Two excellent sources are R. S. Sugirtharajah, \textit{The Bible and}
be more opposed? For many, the staleness of Christianity could never match the beauty of Black Elk’s Lakota vision. Despite the presence of some direct quotations from the Bible in the transcripts from Black Elk’s interview, most commentators assume that his great vision was completely separate and opposed to Christianity. It was as if Black Elk lived two separate, distinct lives: one traditional, hidden from the view of his own community and only revealed to a strange white man; the other Christian, public, and insincere. That is certainly possible for nominal believers, but it struck me as very odd for missionary preachers, especially given the frequency that biblical references appear in sources attributed to Black Elk.

A biblical theme found in diverse Black Elk sources, as an example, is “Love your neighbor as yourself,”19 During the 1944 interviews, Black Elk described a talk given during the mourning period after a death where the people are reminded to “love your neighbors.”20 He also used this language to describe the defeat of the Lakota in the 1931 interviews. “Here’s where the Indians made their mistake. We should treat our fellowmen all alike – the Great Spirit made men all alike. Therefore, we made a mistake when we tried to get along with the whites. We tried to love them as we did ourselves.”21 Black Elk takes up this theme in one of the many letters he wrote to the Lakota

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20 DeMallie, The Sixth Grandfather, 382.
21 Ibid., 290. While Black Elk’s statement may seem to be a negative judgment against this Christian teaching, it must be read in context. On the preceding page Black Elk clearly states his faith in the Great Spirit and his just judgment. “Now, when I look ahead, we are nothing but prisoners of war, but the Great Spirit has protected us so far, and this Great Spirit takes care of us. . . . [I]t is up to the Great Spirit to look upon the white man and they will be sorry and this great thing that happens might be just among themselves.” See also page 127.
Catholic newspaper *Sinasapa Wocekiye Taeyanpaha*. Black Elk wrote:

> In the Bible, Jesus told us that “You should love your neighbor as you love Me.” So remember if you get in trouble with your neighbor, remember that God has said, “Love your neighbor.” So whatever you have said or if you have done some bad thing to them, go over there and please tell them you are sorry.²²

Black Elk did not only preach this theme to the Lakota community. Lucy remembers Black Elk using this theme to preach to whites about the guilt of their participation in colonialism on a trip east with some missionaries:

> At one place he said he was up there talking and saying to the audience: ‘You white people, you come to our country. You came to this country, which was ours in the first place. We were the only inhabitants. After we listened to you, we got settled down. But you’re not doing what you’re supposed to do — what our religion and our Bible tells us. I know this. Christ himself preached that we love our neighbors as ourself. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.’²³

For Black Elk, American colonialism was a violation of the biblical commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself.” In summary, we find the biblical theme “love your neighbor” in four of the Black Elk sources, three of which scholars usually

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²² Black Elk, Letter to friends and relatives and the Lakota Catholic community, no date, published in *Sinasapa Wocekiye Taeyanpaha*, date unknown, ca. 1907-1908. Translated from Lakota to English under Michael F. Steltenkamp, S.J., in Ivan M. Timonin, *Black Elk's Synthesis: Catholic theology and Oglala Tradition in The Sacred Pipe*, Dissertation Proposal. Accessed approximately 11/1/02 from http://www.ustpaul.ca/. See also Matthew 5:23-24: “Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

interpret as having no relation to his life as a Catholic. These are not accidental or insignificant; rather, Black Elk uses this important Biblical idea to address important issues. The diversity and number of sources, as well as its use to discuss key topics such as relationships in the Lakota community and American colonialism suggests that if we re-examine these sources we will find that scriptural themes and passages permeate all aspects of Black Elk’s life and discourse.

Based on the Lakota testimony and the natural tendency for sincere believers to interpret everything in light of God’s Word, I thought there should be continuity between the vision and the Bible. There is some precedent to this view as Looks Twice claimed that Black Elk viewed the Sacred Tree as the Christian life of all people. Steltenkamp also highlighted the similarity between his vision and the Two Roads Map, which was an illustrated map of the Christian story used in evangelization. So I started to map out the direct quotations, the allusions, parallels between the two. I was fortunate to have the help of Jan Ullrich, a Lakota linguist and one of the coordinators of the Lakota language revitalization project. I started with the Sacred Tree, which has a direct quotation that all commentators accept. From there I searched the Bible, Lakota tradition, Christian tradition and mission history for further clues connecting the Sacred Tree to Christianity. The results are found on pages 43-50 in Appendix 1. It became clear that the Sacred Tree had a strong connection to Christ and the cross.

After proceeding through all the symbols and events of the whole vision, I produced a chart of the whole vision, found on in Appendix 2. Please refer to the whole chart, but here are a few examples. The two men who brought Black Elk to the clouds connect to the two men that appear to the disciples after Jesus was lifted up to the clouds (Acts 1:9-11). The sacred tipi with rainbow door correlates to the heavenly temple in the book of Revelation, which is translated as sacred tipi and also has a rainbow. Both are located on a mountain. Black Elk's vision is monotheistic as he said that the Fifth Grandfather represents the Great Spirit. The red road correlates with Jesus as both are ha•kú. The red road ends in the promised-land where there is no suffering and even whites are redeemed.
Putting these examples and all the rest of the evidence together seems to vindicate Looks Twice’s claim and my hypothesis: there is no contradiction between the vision and Bible. Rather, there is a strong correlation between the symbols of the vision - particularly the Sacred Tree - the plot of the vision, and biblical tradition. The more I looked at the chart, the correlations between the vision and the Bible seemed less like random parallels and more like one unified whole. The number and depth of connections to Catholic tradition permeate every facet of the vision. In light of the claims of the Lakota community discussed at the beginning of this chapter — that Black Elk knew Christian biblical texts very well, connected the biblical text to the world he experienced especially the natural world, and had the ability to accurately quote specific passages — the connections between his vision and biblical tradition must be intentional. Black Elk intended to talk about the Lakota Catholic tradition. In other words, Black Elk was not presenting fragments of Catholic allusions to describe a pure Lakota whole. Rather, he intentionally shaped one whole story of the real Lakota Catholic world in which he lived.

The vision’s Christological emphasis, historical character and dependence on the book of Revelation point to it being a Lakota telling of what Catholics call salvation history. Overall, the vision is the record of Lakota reception of Christ and their struggle with colonialism with a heavy use of the book of

24 An important issue that I do not have time to address is Black Elk’s discussion of and possible involvement in Lakota religious tradition. The evidence seems to indicate that Black Elk and other early converts attempted to sanctify Lakota culture in the way that Adrian Jacobs describes. I have argued that Black Elk eliminated the aspects of Lakota tradition contrary to the Gospel and re-interpreted Lakota tradition in light of the saving action of Christ. For example, the Sun Dance is no longer conducted for personal power in war but for the well-being of all people and creation and seen as a re-enactment of Christ’s passion. I understand the important objections to this approach and that this may strike many Christians as too syncretic. Ultimately, it seems to be an issue for contemporary Native Christians who attempt to sanctify their culture in light of the Gospel.
Revelation. I put the pieces together and came up with the second chart, which is in Appendix 3.  

**Theology, Colonialism and History**  
So Black Elk’s vision is in fact a dynamic Lakota telling of the Gospel, which read all things — his life, Lakota history, and colonial politics — in light of Christ. In other words, his critique of American colonialism in *Black Elk Speaks* was an integral part of his faith. While this may seem to be a radical claim, it wasn’t even new in Black Elk’s time. There were numerous precedents; one of the most famous and important given the location of this conference was the example of William Apess. Apess was a Pequot from New England. In addition to the struggle and misery inherent in all human existence, Apess suffered from the added suffering of colonialism. Displaced as a Native American, orphaned, he turned to alcohol as he searched for work and meaning throughout New England and Eastern Canada. During the Second Great Awakening the longings of his heart long wounded by sin and the injustices of society were healed by the love of Christ. In his autobiography *Son of the Forest*, Apess describes his conversion:

> I felt convinced that Christ died for all mankind — that age, sect, color, country, or situation made no difference. I felt an assurance that I was included in the plan of redemption with all my brethren. No one can conceive with what joy I hailed this new doctrine, as it was called…. [M]y soul was filled with love — love to God, and love to all mankind. Oh, how my poor heart swelled with joy — and I could cry from my very soul, Glory to God in the highest!!! There was not only a change in my heart but in everything around me. The scene was entirely altered. The works of God praised him, and I

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25 More than a year after writing the book, I realize that one of the major limitations of my work is its exclusive emphasis on the Christian aspects of Black Elk’s vision. What does the Lakota content of the vision say? I am not really qualified to address this issue, but it seems like it would be similar to what Richard Twiss argues in chapter 4, “A Native Worldview” in Twiss, *One Church, Many Tribes: Following Jesus the Way God Made You*, 138-157.
saw him in everything that he made. My love now embraced the whole human family.  

Along with healing his soul, the love of Christ gave him a new understanding of the colonial society around him. He now reread Native American history in light of Christ, excoriating white Americans to repent of their un-Christian domination of Natives and Africans, calling them back to the love of God, who was always ready to forgive. In the context of his church, a Native American community in Mashpee, he worked to embody this ideal with his congregation, leading the community to resist the imposition of white control and create Native leadership. In 1834, the Mashpee tribe, under the leadership of Apess, staged the peaceful as well as successful “Mashpee Revolt.” In it the Mashpee gained the same rights of township self-governance as all the citizens of Massachusetts as well as control over church leadership. According to his biographer Barry O’Connell, “it is not fanciful to see him as one of the earliest indigenous leaders of an Indian rights movement.” In other words, the love of Christ was not an abstract but transforming power for one integral new life which saved his soul and empowered his community. The love of Christ gave him the vision to critique

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27 An example of condemnation: “It is with shame, I acknowledge, that I have to notice so much corruption of a people calling themselves Christians. If they were like my people, professing no purity at all, then their crimes would not appear to have such magnitude. But while they appear to be profession more virtuous, their crimes still blacken. It makes them truly to appear to be like mountains filled with smoke, and thick darkness covering them all around.” An example of the call for repentance and reconciliation: “You and I have to rejoice that we have not to answer for our fathers’ crimes; neither shall we do right to charge them one to another. We can only regret it, and flee from it; and from henceforth, let peace and righteousness be written upon our hearts and hands forever, is the wish of a poor Indian.” Apess, “Eulogy on King Philip” in On Our Own Ground, 300, 310.  
28 O’Connell, On Our Own Ground, xxxvii.  
29 Ibid., 163.
colonial oppression, forgive his enemies, and see the possibility of a just society.

I would argue that the evidence we have indicates that Christianity gave Black Elk the same powers. His initial investigation into the white world led him to the love of Christ, citing Paul’s famous passage on love in First Corinthians. It was the same love that brought missionaries to the Lakota, fallen and imperfect as they were, to preach the Gospel and minister to them during the worst of colonial oppression. This love called the Lakota to form a community that shared resources, called the young away from the new poison of alcohol, and to a shared fellowship of the Lord. Black Elk taught the Lakota that the whites suffered as well, all the while calling whites to repentance for denying Christ. His vision was of the love of Christ that healed all suffering and brought all together.

To me, that is why the church and the world are so in need of Native American Christian witnesses, those that have run the race — Black Elk, Tipi Sapa, William Apess — and those who still run it, you who are all here today. I think of Richard Twiss ministering to Native Christians who were given bad haircuts and taught to reject their music, while he is calling the United States to honor the covenants it made before God. I think of Ross Maracle teaching young Native Americans that the love of Christ calls them out of the despair which leads to suicide, while teaching whites to reject syncretism with materialism. I think of Adrian Jacobs struggling in Caledonia to reclaim Six Nations land in the non-violent way of Christ. You show those who reject the Gospel (because they think the love of Christ caused the colonial world) that the love of Christ is the answer. You teach those who embrace the Gospel to reject the temptation to conquer with arms and instead embrace all peoples in the fellowship of Christ. The whole world is groaning for the love of Christ that Black Elk shows us in his vision.
APPENDIX 1: Flowering Stick

The most important symbol in Black Elk’s vision is the flowering stick, also called the Sacred Tree. The fourth grandfather gives it to Black Elk and says, “Behold this, with this to the nation’s center of the earth, many shall you save.” The action of the journey down the sacred road culminates in establishment of the sacred stick at the center of the sacred hoop.

They put the sacred stick into the center of the hoop and you could hear birds singing all kinds of songs by this flowering stick and the people and animals all rejoiced and hollered. The women were sending up their tremolos. The men said: “Behold it; for it is the greatest of the greatest sticks.” This stick will take care of the people at the same time it will multiply. We live under it like chickens under the wing. We live under the flowering stick like under the wing of a hen. Depending on the sacred stick we shall walk and it will be with us always.

As the centerpiece of the Sun Dance, the tree has been an important symbol in Lakota tradition. However, Lucy claims that this tree is also a Christian symbol. Evidence for this is in the previous section, where the red man that Black Elk interprets as the Son of God is portrayed with outstretched hand in front of a blooming tree. Black Elk’s description of the sacred stick directly supports Lucy’s claim as he uses two biblical references where Jesus is the subject: Matt 23:37 (see also Luke 13:34) and Matt 28:20.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, but you were unwilling.

30 Ibid., 118.
31 Ibid., 129-130.
32 Matt 23:37.
In this passage, Jesus is the one who gathers his children under his wing like a mother hen. In Matt 28:32, Jesus is also the subject, and assures his disciples that “I am with you always, until the end of the age.” Like the flowering stick of Black Elk’s vision, Jesus will be with his disciples always. Both references explicitly connect the flowering stick with Christ.

Black Elk continues by stating that this sacred stick is the cottonwood tree. The Sacred Pipe and a prayer given during the 1931 Neihardt interviews give more detailed description of the cottonwood tree used in the Sun Dance. They both contain many biblical allusions that connect the tree to Jesus.

. . . The weak will lean upon you, and for all the people you will be a support.

Oh Great Spirit, Great Spirit, my Grandfather, may my people be likened unto the flowering stick. Your stick of sticks, tree of trees, forest of forests, tree of trees of the earth, trees of all kinds of the earth. Oh, flowering tree, here on earth trees are like unto you; your trees of all kinds are likened unto you, but yet they have chosen you. Oh tree, you are mild, you are likened to the one above. My nation shall depend on you. My nation on you shall bloom.

These two passages taken together describe the tree as mild, likened to the one above, and a support for all peoples, especially the weak. The same concepts are found in a passage from Matthew: “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.” Like Black Elk’s description of the cottonwood, Jesus is meek and supports those who are burdened or weak.

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33 Matt 28:20.
34 Brown, The Sacred Pipe, 74.
35 DeMallie, The Sixth Grandfather, 287.
Black Elk calls the flowering stick “tree of trees and forest of forests.” He used this construction in the first passage from this section, when he referred to the flowering stick as “the greatest of the greatest sticks.”37 This construct is identical to a Christological refrain used in the New Testament. In the book of Revelation, Christ is depicted riding a white horse and is called “King of kings and Lord of lords.”38

Black Elk’s description of the cottonwood highlights the shelter it provides for birds: “You are a kind and a good-looking tree; upon you the winged peoples have raised their families; from the tip of your lofty branches down to your roots, the winged and four-legged peoples have made their homes.”39

This description echoes Ezekiel’s passage on the messianic king, a tree that God will plant: “On the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it. It shall put forth branches and bear fruit, and become a majestic cedar. Birds of every kind shall dwell beneath it, every winged thing in the shade of its boughs.”40

In both Black Elk’s description and the passage from Ezekiel, the tree is described as good or kind, sheltering the creatures of the earth. According to Black Elk, the cottonwood will stand at the center of all peoples.

. . . May we two-leggeds always follow your sacred example, for we see that you are always looking upwards into the heavens.

Of all the many standing peoples, you O rustling cottonwood have been chosen in a sacred manner; you are about to go to the center of the people’s sacred hoop, and there you will represent the people and will help us fulfill the will of Wakan-Tanka.... Soon, and with all the

37 Ibid., 129-130.
38 Rev 19:16; see also Rev 17:14 and 1 Tim 6:15.
39 Brown, The Sacred Pipe, 74.
40 Ez 17:23.
peoples of the world, you will stand at the center; for all beings and all things you will bring that which is good.\textsuperscript{41}

This description evokes the tree of life that God establishes in the New Jerusalem found in Revelation. “On either side of the river grew the tree of life that produces fruit twelve times a year, once each month; the leaves of the trees serve as medicine for the nations.”\textsuperscript{42} In both Black Elk’s vision and the book of Revelation, the tree is a symbol of unity. It is established in the center and brings goodness to all peoples.

The cottonwood tree and the Sun Dance are linked to the cross in the Black Elk tradition. Fools Crow compares the tree to Jesus on the cross: “So the tree ... becomes a living thing for us. It becomes human, and it dies for us like Jesus on the cross for everyone.”\textsuperscript{43} He also compares the Sun Dance sacrifice to Jesus’ sacrifice.

The Sioux received the Sun Dance from \textit{Wakan-Tanka}, and we honor him by doing it as he told us to. Since the white man has come to us and explained how God sent his own son to be sacrificed, we realize that our sacrifice is similar to Jesus’ own. As to how the white man feels about what we do, there was a far more terrible thing done by Jesus Christ. He endured more suffering and more pain. He was even stabbed on his side, and he died.

The Indian tribes must speak for themselves, but the Sioux feel a special closeness to God in the dance and in the piercing and flesh offerings. We even duplicate Christ’s crown of thorns in the sage head wreath the pledgers wear.\textsuperscript{44}

According to Fools Crow, the Sun Dance brings a special closeness to God (we have already seen that Fools Crow equates

\textsuperscript{41} Brown, \textit{The Sacred Pipe}, 74. This passage also develops Black Elk’s understanding of will and connects it to the sacrifice of Jesus. See page 11 of this chapter for a discussion of will as a Christian theme.

\textsuperscript{42} Rev 22:2.

\textsuperscript{43} Mails, \textit{Fools Crow}, 133.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 136.
Wakan-Tanka and the Christian God) and is similar to the passion of Christ, even to the point that the dancers replicate Christ’s crown of thorns. Other Lakota agree with Fools Crow. Stephen Feraca, writing in 1963, reports that one of his informants, Gilbert Bad Wound, considers the Sun Dance a Christian ceremony. Feraca states that “he is by no means alone in this belief.”

Lucy remembers Black Elk viewing the Sun Dance in the same way.

They pray and say to the Great Spirit, ‘Without any sinful thoughts or actions, we’re going to do this for you.’ That’s the way they feel when they do these Sun Dance ceremonies. They purify themselves – that’s why they wear the sage crown, which resembles the crown our Lord wore – and they start dancing. So the Indian, early before sunrise, had to stand there and had to go with the sun – watching it until it went down. That’s the suffering, you see. And some of them even shed their blood. Christ did that too, before he died on the cross. That was the way he suffered.

According to Lucy, Black Elk ascribes the same Christian interpretation to the Sun Dance.

Black Elk uses the language of the passion to describe the Sun Dance in his description in The Sacred Pipe. In preparing for the dance, the dancer echoes the ambivalence of Jesus in the agony in the garden. “All this may be difficult to do, yet for the good of the people it must be done. Help me, O Grandfather, and give to me the courage and strength to stand the sufferings which I am about to undergo!” Later, the dancer says: “I shall offer up my body and soul that my people may live,” as Jesus says in John 6:51: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread

45 Holler, Black Elk’s Religion, 154.
46 Steltenkamp, Holy Man of the Oglala, 103.
47 Brown, The Sacred Pipe, 79.
48 Black Elk uses this in a universal sense.
that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” Both Black Elk’s sun dancer and Jesus offer their body for the life of the world.

The culmination of the passion is Jesus’ death on the cross, where he says in the Gospel of John, “it is finished.”

When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, ‘It is finished.’
And bowing his head, he handed over his spirit.

This is a major theme in Black Elk’s vision and the Sun Dance. When Black Elk completes his vision, the western grandfather tells him, “all over the universe you have finished.” At the end of the Sun Dance, Kablaya says: “O Wakan Tanka, this sacred place [the Sun Dance grounds] is Yours. Upon it all has been finished. We rejoice.” Holler agrees with this reading, and states that Kablaya’s words echo Jesus’ words on the cross in the Gospel of John.

The connection between the Sun Dance sacrifice and the passion of Christ was concretely embodied by communal practice. During the summer Catholic conferences, a Sun Dance pole was erected. An altar was constructed underneath it and Mass was then said. Like the summer conferences, Black Elk’s account of the Sun Dance has an altar next to the Sun Dance pole.

In addition, missionaries explicitly compared the Sun Dance to the sacrifice of Christ. Ross Enochs cites Florentine Dingman, S.J., who wrote in 1907,

The late Bishop Martin Marty, O.S.B., then Abbot of St. Meinrad’s was one of the first who preached to the Sioux, taking occasion, from the cruelties they practiced at the Sun Dance to appease the Great Spirit, to point out to

49 John 6:51.
50 John 19:30.
51 DeMallie, *The Sixth Grandfather*, 132.
52 Brown, *The Sacred Pipe*, 100.
them our divine Savior hanging from the tree to atone for our sins.  

Marty demonstrates that from the beginning, Lakota Catholicism cultivated the association between the Sun Dance and the crucifixion.

Black Elk also uses the image of “root” to describe the sacred tree. In Black Elk’s final prayer, he refers to the sacred tree as a root. “There may be a root that is still alive, and give this root strength and moisture of your good things... I prayed that you may set the tree to bloom again.” Lucy also remembers her father saying, “the Great Spirit has promised one day that the tree of my father’s vision was to root.” The symbol of root is another biblical symbol. Jesse’s stump, or the root of Jesse, was a messianic prophecy which foretold the lineage of the messiah.

But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.... On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out, for his dwelling shall be glorious.

According to Isaiah, a branch will grow from the root of Jesse, and will stand as a sign for what the Dakota Bible translates Ikcewicasta, Common people, or Indians. Christians interpret this passage as a prophecy for Jesus. This image is taken up in Revelation, where Jesus is called the “the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star.”

The most important biblical passages for this comparison are those that refer to the cross as a tree. In Acts, Peter tells Cornelius that Jesus was put “to death by hanging him on a tree.” The first letter of Peter depicts Jesus as a sun dancer:

55 Enoch, Jesuit Mission, 60.
56 DeMallie, The Sixth Grandfather, 295-6.
58 Isaiah 11:1,11.
59 Jan Ullrich, personal communication.
60 Rev 22:16.
“Jesus bore our sins in his body upon the cross [in the Dakota Bible can — tree], so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness [wóowotha•na]. By his wounds you have been healed.”

This important passage unites all the previous themes of the flowering stick, the red man in front of the tree, and Black Elk’s portrayal of the Sun Dance in *The Sacred Pipe*. Jesus is pierced and hung from the tree, whose wounds are for the healing and life of all the world.

In summary, the evidence supports the hypothesis that Black Elk’s sacred tree is a Christian symbol. Black Elk’s description mirrors biblical imagery on many levels: the tree of life, the messianic root, the Sun Dance and the Passion, the use of Christological language, the description of Jesus dying on the tree in the Dakota Bible, and the vision of the Son of God in front of the blooming tree. Missionaries preached this, communal practice embodied it, and Fools Crow and others attested to its persistence in Lakota tradition. Lucy Looks Twice’s claim must be taken seriously.

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APPENDIX 2: Events in Black Elk’s Vision with Biblical References

<table>
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<th>Events in Black Elk’s Vision (DeMallie)</th>
<th>Biblical References and Parallels</th>
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<td>Ascension of Jesus (Acts); call of John (Rv 4:1)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BLACK ELK IS SHOWN THE HORSES OF THE FOUR DIRECTIONS</strong></td>
<td>Kingdom of Heaven translated as “Kingdom of the Clouds”</td>
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<td><strong>THE BAY HORSE LEADS BLACK ELK TO CLOUD TIPI OF THE SIX GRANDFATHERS</strong></td>
<td>Zec 6:1-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Do not fear</td>
<td>- four horseman of Rv</td>
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<td>- Willpower of myself</td>
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<td>- Nations shall tremble</td>
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<td>- Cloud Tipi</td>
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<td><strong>GRANDFATHERS</strong></td>
<td>Vision of Temple (Rv 4:2-6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Represent him</td>
<td>- both have rainbow doors</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Powerful in medicines and other powers</td>
<td>- multiple references: Rv. 1, Jgs 6, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- He is your spirit</td>
<td>Our Father in Mt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- You are his body</td>
<td>Ex 15:14, Ps 99:1, Rv 1:7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eagle Wing stretches</strong></td>
<td>Temple translated as <em>tipi wakan</em> and is in clouds</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Grandfathers give sacred relics</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Morning Star</td>
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<td>- Wind</td>
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<td><strong>BLACK ELK WALKS THE BLACK SACRED ROAD FROM WEST TO</strong></td>
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EAST AND VANQUISHES THE
SPIRIT IN THE WATER
- called as a rider

BLACK ELK WALKS THE RED
SACRED ROAD FROM SOUTH TO
NORTH

FIRST ASCENT
- Nation starts journey
- People will multiply,
increase, and prosper
- They will walk to the land of
plenty with no suffering

SECOND ASCENT
THIRD ASCENT – people
become like animals, all with
their own visions and rules

BLACK ELK RECEIVES THE
HEALING HERB OF THE NORTH,
AND THE SACRED TREE IS
ESTABLISHED AT THE CENTER OF
THE NATION’S HOOP

- Red Man, follow him
- Wind revives dead
- “The cloud christened them
with water. They all hollered:
‘Eagle Wing Stretches, A-ha-
hey!’ (meaning ‘Thanks to
Eagle Wing Stretches’).”

earth” (Rv 11:18); dragon, two
beasts; wormwood poisons
water (Rv 8:10-11)
Rv 6:1-2

Exodus Story, Jesus as road (Jn
14:5-6)

FIRST ASCENT
Gn 1-3
Rv 7:15-17, 21:3-4

SECOND ASCENT
THIRD ASCENT (Is 53:6)

Mt 23:37, Mt 28:20
Crucifixion; tree of life of
Ezekiel, Revelation
(Rv 19:16, 17:14 Ez 17:23, Rv
22:2, Jn 19:30)
Trunk is Chief=Lord

Jesus calls disciples, call to
carry cross Mk. 8:34
Ez 37:9-10

Baptism and response “Thanks
be to God”
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<td>Mk 13:7-8, Mt 24:68, Lk 21:10-11</td>
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<td>- “dispute of nations”</td>
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<td>- “world will tremble”</td>
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<tr>
<td>- “dispute of four ascents means war in the four quarters”</td>
<td>Zec 9:14, Hb 3:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK ELK KILLS THE DOG IN THE FLAMES AND RECEIVES THE HEALING HERB OF THE WEST</td>
<td>Satan(dragon) and pool of fire in Rv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “all over the universe you have finished”</td>
<td>Final battle, King of Kings Rv. 19-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK ELK IS TAKEN TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH &amp; RECEIVES THE DAYBREAK STAR HERB</td>
<td>Vision of heavenly worship (Rv 4:6-5:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- at this point he has defeated two beasts, spirit in water and dog</td>
<td>Lightning, thunder (Rv 13: 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- bow and arrow, spear are lightning</td>
<td>Living creatures (Rv 4:6-9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK ELK RECEIVES THE SOLDIER WEED OF DESTRUCTION</td>
<td>Root of David has triumphed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- flaming man, with horns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “some day you shall depend on him. There will be a dispute all over the universe”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- four riders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK ELK RETURNS TO THE SIX GRANDFATHERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- lightning, thunder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- animals, birds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Black Elk has triumphed,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eagle Wing Stretches, myself sixth grandfather, Spirit of mankind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- millions of faces; different tribes of the earth; people happy, even whites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- hundreds sacred, hundred flames</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- his tribes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- temple is where the sun shines continually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- another vision of renewed creation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE SPOTTED EAGLE GUIDES BLACK ELK HOME</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- sees mountain where <em>tipi</em> was</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Black Elk tells his vision so that it is written</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Rv 5:5)

Countless voices of angels; every creature in heaven and on earth (Rv 5:11-13)
Judgment, book of life, pool of fire (Rv 20:11-15)
Tribes of Israel (Rv 21:12, 7:5-8)
God will be light (21:23)

Make new (21:5, 24-27; also Isaiah, Psalms)

John’s Vision ends (Rv 22:6-21)

City on a mountain (Rv 21:5)
Rv 1:19, 21:5, also Hb
APPENDIX 3: Black Elk’s Vision of Lakota Catholic Salvation History

Black Elk Called to Heaven [114-115]
Like John of Revelation, Black Elk is called to Heaven (Rv 4:1). The two men that the apostles see after Jesus ascended to the clouds (Acts) return to get Black Elk. On the way, he sees the horses of the four directions (Zec 6:1-5).

Theophany in Throne Room [115-119]
The two men take Black Elk to God’s throne room, the tipi wakan of Revelation (Rv 4:2-6). There Black Elk sees God in the form of Six Grandfathers, like the seven spirits of God from Revelation (Rv 4:5). The Six Grandfathers tell Black Elk not to fear (Rev 1:17-18), for he will know their will (Mt 6:10). Black Elk will represent them on earth (Exodus 3:10, 15) and create a new nation. They give Black Elk sacred relics, including the Morning Star (Rv 2:28, 22:16) and wind (Acts 2). God will be his spirit (Gal 2:20) and Black Elk will be his body (1 Cor 12:13, 12:27, 1 Jn 3:24). In other words, God calls Black Elk into the Christian story and sends him to guide the Lakota as they walk through salvation history.

Beginning of Salvation History: Primordial Battle [119-122]
God sends Black Elk into salvation history. The first stage is the primordial battle of the fallen angels. In Black Elk’s version he vanquishes the man standing amid flames.

Journey of the New Nation: Four Ascents [122-137]
First Ascent: After the battle of the fallen angels, Black Elk is sent to the Lakota. The people will multiply, increase, and prosper (Gn 1-3). Like the Exodus, the Lakota start the journey down the good red road and will walk to the promised land where there is no suffering (Rv 7:15-17, 21: 3-4).

Second Ascent: The Lakota continue the journey.

Third Ascent: The Lakota begin to walk in difficulty. The people become like animals, everyone with their own visions and rules (Is
In addition, white people arrive and colonize the Lakota, putting them in reservations. The Lakota are very poor and many people are dying.

Before the Lakota enter the fourth ascent, Christ appears in the form of the Red Man and the sacred tree. In addition, the wind revives the dead (Ez 37:9-10). The Lakota are christened, or baptized, and they say “Thanks be to Eagle Wing Stretches!” — a reference to God (Dt 32:10-12, Psalm 36:7).

**Fourth Ascent:** This is the time that is yet to come. While the Lakota remain in the third ascent, Black Elk journeys ahead and sees the apocalypse (Rv 6-19).

**Returns to Throne Room, Vision of Promised Land:** After seeing the salvation history of the Lakota, Black Elk returns to God’s throne room. Eagle Wing Stretches, the Sixth Grandfather and spirit of mankind, or Jesus, has triumphed (Rv 5:5). There Black Elk sees the final judgment where hundreds will be sacred and hundreds will be flames (Rv 20:11-15), the renewal of all creation (Rv 5:11-13, 21:5, 21:24-27), and the heavenly worship in the throne room (Rv 4:6 – 5:10) where the sun shines always (Rv 21:23).

**Returns to Earth:** Black Elk is brought back to earth to the Lakota who are between the third ascent (death and resurrection of Christ) and the fourth ascent (the apocalypse and second coming of Christ). As the spotted eagle guides Black Elk home (Rv 8:13), he looks back to see the mountain of the *tipi wakan* (Rv 21:10). Later, Black Elk tells his vision like John so that it may be written down (Rv 1:19, 21:5).
As early as the 1600s French Jesuits developed villages for the purpose of converting and assimilating the First Nations people, mistakenly named Indians, into their ways and faith. Flash forward four hundred years to 2006. With no sense of the ironic twist, the CBC interviewed a person teaching meditation techniques from India on Native reserves, with the good intention of reducing substance dependency.\(^1\) Finally, I thought, real Indian religion has come to the reserves! Or, is this an unintended travesty in the on-going attempt to turn Canada’s indigenous peoples into anyone but themselves?

The intent of contextualization of the Gospel message is the consequent living out of the good news of salvation and relationship found in the Lord Jesus Christ within the host culture. It is based on the presupposition that the Creator — the God of diversity — never called all animals, plants, planets, or peoples, to divest their diversity and conform to some ‘ideal’ mould. Nor has he called all people to live as Christians in the exact same cultural mould. A few very early missionaries understood this, at least to a degree. Most, along with the immigrant settlers, did not. Even those who had some understanding found it impossible to divest themselves of European ways and values. After all, a church is not a church without a steeple. This paper will present a broad picture of missionary contact with the Aboriginal people in order to glean some sense of the extent of contextualization of the Gospel in the formation of this country known as Canada. It is recognized this serves as a mere introduction to the topic.\(^2\)

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1 Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, CBC Radio One, “Morningside” interview (Feb. 21, 2006), speaker unknown.
2 See also Adrian Jacobs’ paper, *A History of Slaughter* in this journal for his emphasis on selected historical markers, and the positive contributions of selected early missionaries.
This paper was initially intended as a Canadian companion paper to Randy Woodley’s American perspective (also in this journal). In spite of the commonalities of cultural clashes, the Northern experiences of colonization forced many diversions. Randy more nearly ends up at the destination we were both headed; I digressed greatly. I have relied on E. Palmer Patterson (1972) for the historical skeleton.\(^3\) His aim is primarily to correct the 400 year omission of “Indian history” (in opposition to Euro-centric or Colonial history written from the dominant point of view), with his focus on political structure not missionary impact. He says virtually nothing directly about contextualization, but he does reveal the impossibility of talking missions/Gospel without talking State/politics.

The terminology of this paper, which differs from ‘American Indian’, will reflect both the language of the period under discussion, i.e. Indian, and the self-identifications of resurgency: Native, Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, the people—without concern for anachronisms.

The written records discussing missions to Aboriginal peoples tend to extreme views of missionary contributions, either all negative or totally upbeat. I will attempt to present the best of both, recognizing the advantage of seeing outcomes does colour one’s perspective. I will frequently use stories with a minimum of comment to communicate the ethos of the times. Some make us smile; most make us wince or weep.

Faith, the Christian faith in its European expressions, played a prominent role in the history of Canada.

Canada’s story is a story of challenge. Our predecessors battled the wilderness and braved raging rivers to discover, settle, and master this land, ‘from sea to sea’. They subdued its forest, climbed its mountains and mined its depths. Some were driven by greed or personal dreams, but as Prime Minister Trudeau stated … “The golden thread of faith is woven throughout the history of

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Canada from its earliest beginnings to the present time. Faith was more important than commerce in the minds of many of the European explorers and settlers.” [Furthermore] many Canadian explorers endured the hardships and dangers because they shared a vision for a land peopled by Christians whose society would truly be under the dominion of their Creator.4

This quote originates in an upbeat coffee-table book about Canada’s Christian heritage. Yet its Introduction, with references to famous Canadians and deeds, contains only one reference to indigenous peoples. That reads, “Early settlements were blessed by prayer, encouraged by pastors and priests, and often established with the specific intent of sharing the gospel with Canada’s native people.”5 And so, when it comes to faith, Native peoples are not contributors, but receivers. The body of the text supplies many references to early Aboriginal experiences, almost always as the recipients of European mission. The learning/giving is mono-directional, illustrating the typical role of indigenous peoples in relationship to Canadian governance, religion, literature, education, media— in other words, daily life in Canada.

In 1946 Arnold Toynbee wrote: “When we Westerners call people ‘natives’ we implicitly take the cultural colour of our perception of them. We see them as wild animals infesting the country in which we happen to come across them, as part of the local flora and fauna and not as men of like passions with ourselves. So long as we think of them as ‘natives,’ [I might add, or ‘Indians’] we may exterminate them or, as is more likely today, domesticate them and honestly ... believe that we are improving the breed, but we do not begin to understand them.”6

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5 Ibid., 11.
6 Arnold Toynbee, A Study of History (London: Oxford University Press, 1946) as quoted in E. Palmer Patterson, The Canadian Indian: A History Since 1500 (Don Mills, Ontario: Collier-MacMillan Canada, 1972). Also see Peter Erasmus who writes about his experience as the Métis guide for a party of Englishmen documenting plant specimens in the late 1800s. Erasmus concludes that if he accepted their invitation to
This concept of Native as ‘other’ has changed little in my lifetime. In Canada, “the Indian problem” is that they cost us money. As I prepared this paper, I read an article by Tanis Fiss entitled “Is Change in store for Aboriginal Policy?” in *The Taxpayer*, a small newsprint quality magazine published by a non-profit organization dedicated to tax reform.\(^7\) I stared at Fiss’s picture. Following her name are the words: Centre for Aboriginal Policy Change. She doesn’t look Native (nor do I, so I can’t speak to her experience or heritage). I thought, she looks intelligent. She writes articulately. And yet, she writes as though her simplistic economic approach is the solution to over 500 years of attitudinal fallout. She acknowledges that “native Canadians living on Indian reserves are the most disadvantaged of all Canadian citizens.”\(^8\) Her diagnose: “the main flaw in the aboriginal affairs system—native reserves.” Her solution: private ownership of land equals pride of ownership equals “the mindset and habits of a true property owner.”\(^9\) How does a true property owner behave? Like the majority culture. Her perspective persists in spite of the cultural insight gleaned (and bemoaned) at least 150 years ago of a ‘cultural flaw’ that has not been successfully colonized out: the propensity for many Indians to hold “everything in common”.\(^10\) She is not the first to equate the value of Indian-ness to money. It’s a Canadian tradition. Lord Grey commented to Elgin in 1850,

England “I would be a curiosity to their associates and would probably be viewed in the same way as the specimens so carefully preserved by the party. Most Englishmen of my acquaintance considered themselves made of superior cloth; even the most ignorant and pitifully helpless individuals faced with the ways of living in the West all looked down on the native inhabitants as inferior beings, even though they knew their very lives were dependent on … our people.” In Peter Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights*, as told to Henry Thompson (Calgary, AB: Fifth House Ltd., 1999; reprinted from ca. 1920), 112.

\(^7\) Tanis Fiss, “Is Change in store for Aboriginal Policy?” in *The Taxpayer* (Regina, SK: Canadian Taxpayers Federation, May/June 2006).

\(^8\) Ibid.

\(^9\) Ibid. Emphasis added. In fairness to Fiss, this is the primary, but not the only solution she offers; all are economic.

\(^10\) This is not to say private ownership is wrong for all Aboriginals. It is meant to say Aboriginal peoples are quite capable of deciding for each individual community what the needs are.
“[L]ess has been accomplished towards the civilization and improvements of Indians in Canada in proportion to the expenses incurred than has been done for the native tribes in any other colonies.”

Missions and denominations have weighed the worth of continuing work with ‘natives’ on the basis of how much money was being ‘wasted’. One needs to search the records to see if and when these questions were asked, “Is our approach wrong? What message is actually being received? Do they not hear because we do not speak to their hearts?”

Pre-European History

It is normative to speak of time before the written word as pre-history. It is wrong. The people knew what had come before, and honoured their history using it to inform the ‘now’ and the future, as well as to instruct life lessons. The following quote from Rev. Ahanekew, Cree, is inserted to honour oral tradition and the role of the Elders in preserving their history:

The Old Men of the Reserves are a institution [sic.]. The fact that there used to be no written language among the Indians forced them to depend entirely upon memory for things of the far past, as well as for those of more recent date. Because of this the accuracy of the memory of the old men of the race is surprising. The minutest details regarding events that took place in childhood he remembered and it is most interesting to hear two or more old men comparing notes as to the surface markings and points of a horse which may have lived some forty or fifty years before.

Historical Markers

The periods will be divided into Historical Markers and Missions & Contextual Markers. I am being intentionally inclusive across geographical regions, employing both oral and book knowledge. Of course, history is not that cleanly

11 Lord Grey as quoted in Patterson, The Canadian Indian, 26.
12 Canon Edward Ahanekew as quoted in Ruth M. Buck, “The Story of the Ahenakews” in Saskatchewan History (vol. 17, no. 1: Winter 1964), 22, as referenced in E. Palmer Patterson, The Canadian Indian, 128. The spelling is as in Patterson, but it is likely Ahenakew.
categorized. Below are selected markers of time from both recent archaeological studies and the people’s history:

- Burmese clans migrated to this continent and are ancestors of the Inuit.\(^{13}\)
- The so-called “Mongolian spot” is common to people groups in Asian and amongst Aboriginals in Canada.\(^{14}\)
- In spite of early American folk religions, the Book of Mormon story of Jewish migration, and opinions to the contrary, recent DNA studies tie over 99% of Aboriginal peoples studied with Asian DNA.\(^{15}\)
- 5700 BC burial site in Labrador indicates the use of copper and slate tools; also social distinctions and ranks.\(^{16}\)
- 3700 BC Head-Smashed-In (Alberta) used for buffalo hunts.
- 2000 BC Small tools, petroglyphs, art made of bone, ivory and wood originate in Dorset area. Trade networks along northwest coast with Chinook Jargon language in use.\(^{17}\)
- 1000-500 BC The tradition of rock paintings/carvings began in North-eastern Ontario. Named petroglyphs, these can be clearly seen today. On remote islands one comes across ribbons of cloth tied to trees overhanging the paintings and bundles of tobacco recently respectfully placed nearby.\(^{18}\)

\(^{13}\) Saboie, a Burmese (now Mayamar) student at Providence Theological Seminary (mid 1990s), in personal conversation shared his desire to go to Churchill, Manitoba, to meet Inuit people as his oral tradition spoke of this migration. He physically resembles Inuit people of my acquaintance.

\(^{14}\) Our youngest son, Saulteaux, adopted at the age of 6 months, bore this mark of his heritage. It is a blue ‘birth mark’ of various sizes on the buttocks or back, usually fading away within a few years.

\(^{15}\) This has created a spiritual crisis for some CJCLDS (Mormons) whose own sacred written history says Indians are direct descendants from Jewish migration before Jesus Christ. Their skin became “dark” due to sin. Until 1981, the Book of Mormon promised they would become “white and delightsome” by adhering to the B0M/LDS teachings.


\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.
500 AD Aboriginais had “developed extensive social and economic trade links”. ¹⁹

Pre-colonial Canadian territory consisted of 12 major language groups with 50 plus different languages; 50 major tribal groupings; at least 6 distinctive cultural geographic areas with numerous subdivisions; anywhere from 500,000 to 2 million inhabitants; 7 diverse forms of housing; with no single culture, lifestyle or governance. ²⁰

There are two substantial reasons to date indigenous contact with Europeans earlier than Columbus:

- 1000 AD is the likely date of the Norsemen/Vikings, the first known white men, to establish a short-lived settlement in what is now Newfoundland.
- 1100 AD is the date assigned to an Inuit carving of a Norseman found in an excavation on Baffin Island. This amazing carving has a large Christian cross etched predominately into its chest. ²¹

**Missions & Contextual Markers**

One may assume the foundation of a common belief/religious heritage in those who initially inhabited the North American continent. A subsequent cross-pollination of beliefs was inevitable as trade and continued migration brought clans and tribes into contact with one another. As people moved apart, differences developed, adapting to varied life experiences. The interpretations applied to these resulted from necessary coping/survival skills and developed into pragmatic rituals for healing/harmony. Details of the evolution/devolution of religions are often lost to both oral and written culture.

**1400s to 1700s: First Contact**

Europe’s appetite for adventure, economic advancement, natural resources and land spelled doom to indigenous peoples worldwide. The role of the indigenous person was to co-operate,

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¹⁹ Ibid.,1.
²⁰ Ibid.,1f. See p.3 for the 2001 Canadian Census which lists 983,090 Aboriginals, including 298,480 Métis, 45,165 Inuit and the rest First Nations.
²¹ Knowles, Canada, 13.
assimilate or get out of the way. Alternatively, if resistant, Europeans dealt with them in ways common to colonial values. While French and British lost people to Indian ‘cruelty and savagery’—interpreted martyrdom—deaths of Natives, the scalp bounties placed on Beothuks and Mi’kmaq for example, are frequently ignored in the retelling of early contact.  

The history of Canada cannot be discussed without acknowledging the tremendous impact made by two rival fur trading companies: the North West Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company. Many books have been written on their histories and significance. The contextualization movement would be well served by a concentrated study on their impact on the Christianization of Aboriginal peoples, as they both helped and impeded missions. Examples of aid include housing missionaries in their Outposts and trying to stop trade in alcohol. Examples of impediment include housing missionaries in their Outposts, and their officers and traders who robbed the people, used and discarded the women and subsequent children, and created alcohol and material dependencies.

**Historical Markers**

Initial contact in northern North America led to the First Nations participating in war efforts between the English and the French, and at times against the Americans. Alliances formed and reformed including the Ojibways with the French, and later the English; the Hurons and Ottawas with the French; Iroquois with British, and the British using the Mohawks against the Mi’kmaqs. Through trade, time and alliance, the people developed dependencies upon the newcomers, leading to lose of freedom. Eventually indigenous peoples were overshadowed by European technology and overwhelmed by the sheer number of immigrants. As the newcomers lost their usefulness for the Aboriginals, quality of life and status deteriorated.

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23 They later merged as the Hudson’s Bay Company [HBC], diversified and developed major Canadian department stores, changed their name to The Bay, and to the chagrin of many Canadians, were very recently sold to Americans. See Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights*, 134 for a high opinion of Hudson’s Bay by a Métis man.
1497 brought the “uninterrupted presence of European settlement” with the arrival of the English John Cabot (who named it New Fondue Lande) and Erasmus Stourton, the first known clergyman to arrive.\textsuperscript{24}

1534 saw the arrival of French Jacques Cartier to New Brunswick, portrayed in an undated picture with a crowd of Indians and seamen at the foot of a large cross raised on the beach.\textsuperscript{25} Another portrays him “guided by Indians” who are clothed in fur loin cloths which extend over one shoulder, adorned with necklaces, earrings, sea shells, beaded sandals, and a single feather adorning various hair styles.\textsuperscript{26}

1608 witnessed the founding of Quebec City by Samuel de Champlain who claimed the Indians had “no knowledge of God” yet hoped the “clergy who have been sent here...will be able in a few years to make great progress in the conversion of these peoples”.\textsuperscript{27} He believed “That they would soon be converted to Christianity if some people would settle among them, cultivate their soil, which is what most of them wish.”\textsuperscript{28} He is depicted as having “eased the threat [of European occupation] to many Indian tribes through his commitment to share Christianity with them.”\textsuperscript{29}

1731 The arrival of explorer La Verendrye to Manitoba and priests, one of whom would be killed by Natives in La Pas.

1743 Records contain a lament over the introduction of brandy and other types of liquor to Indian women by traders, causing the “Ruing of a Great many Indians, and the Chief cause of their Ludness [sic.]”.\textsuperscript{30}

1759 The watershed British vs. French Battle of the Plains of Abraham, on which hung “the fate of a continent”,\textsuperscript{31} utilized

\textsuperscript{24} Knowles,\textit{ Canada}, 13.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 54.
alliances with Indians. Their utility was not necessarily based upon respect:

Three nations lived together at the Lake of Two Mountains: the Nipissings, the Algonquins and the Iroquois, each with its own cluster of dwellings. They shared a church and a large council house which, on the night of July 9, 1757, was jammed with war chiefs, women and warriors, all eager to hear Montcalm’s message from the king and all sitting on the floor arranged in tribes. At the centre of the building, large kettles of meat hung at intervals, simmering in preparation for the evening meal. The room was hot and airless and lighted by flickering candles, but the Indians seemed oblivious to discomfort. Colonel Bougainville, ever the student of people and exotic places, compared the meeting to a witches’ coven. Among the crowd were many warriors with faces painted vermilion, white, green, yellow and black, their heads shaved, leaving only a tuft on top stuck with feathers and beads. Every young man was naked except for a breechclout [sic.], a large knife dangling on his bare chest and a collection of silver bracelets jingling on his arms. Montcalm had come to invite them to join him on the warpath and to spy for and guide the French in their fight against the hated English. Governor Vaudreuill insisted Montcalm woo mission Indians, who professed to be Christians, because they were more dependable than their wilder brothers. Montcalm, remembering the cruelties at Osewego a year before, doubted that religion made much difference to Indian behaviour once their passions were stirred up. Yet...his army couldn’t travel safely through the unmapped wilderness without Indian guides.  

- 1763 Proclamation turned French control over to the English. One-third of the document focused on indigenous people, their status and how they were to be treated.

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32 Ibid., 70f.
Missions & Contextual Markers

• 1578 Northwest Territories experienced one of the first Christian services in Canada. It would not be for some 350 years that concentrated serious missionary endeavours reached this part of Canada, since “One must make up one’s mind to endure and suffer more than can be imagined from hunger, from sleeping always on bare ground in the open country...all the evils the season and weather can conflict, and from being bitten from countless swarms of mosquitoes and midges, together with difficulties in language....” Later this area was to become the largest geographical Anglican diocese in the world.

• 1605 French colony founded at Port Royal, Nova Scotia, “became the headquarters for Christian missionary endeavour...among the French settlers and with the Indians, including the Micmacs [sic].” The British conquest in 1710 introduced the Church of England, followed by the Congregationalists and the Baptists.

• 1614 Four Jesuit priests arrived with 5 more joining them by 1622, composing the first missionary team to Canadian shores. While praised for their courage and methodology in making converts, they met with criticism for “civilizing and elevating the Indian;” for perpetuating the imagery of ‘savage Indians,’ and criticized for not imposing more European customs on their converts (the Mi’kmaqs).

• 1635 a major drought led the Jesuit Brébeuf to have the Indians form a procession. He prayed for rain. Dramatically, rain came, but there was still “no perceptible religious progress”. By 1648, however, in some of the dozen mission stations, “Christians actually outnumbered pagans.” One year later Iroquois killed Brébeuf and Huron converts.

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33 See Adrian Jacob’s paper in this issue, “A History of Slaughter” under the heading “Pioneer Mission” for a more detailed account of some of the more positive contributions of the earliest missionaries.
34 Knowles, Canada, 117.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., 33.
38 Knowles, Canada, 65.
39 Ibid.
In colonial times, it was not uncommon for missionaries to create land tracts as havens for indigenous peoples, oft-times in a vain attempt to protect the people from or slow down the inevitable impact of colonization. The Jesuits did this for/to the Hurons. Later, the Methodists for/to the Cree and Anglicans for/to peoples in British Columbia. An example comes from 1651 when the Anglican missionary, John Eliot, experienced the joy of baptizing his first Indian converts. In order to aid their faltering transformation, he copied the Catholics and established “Praying Farms”. By 1671, he had established 14, convincing 3600 Christian Indians to move to them and to make covenants to God, selecting and training 24 as preachers.  

1667 Jesuit priest performs first mass in Fort William, Ontario. This community demonstrated the ecumenical spirit witnessed in the earliest settlements where Christians attended services inter-denominationally. Soon Presbyterian services were held and attended by Swedish Lutherans, British Baptists, Methodists and Roman Catholics.

1731 a Huron-constructed church north of Quebec City looks remarkably like a European church, including white siding, pitched roof, Gothic windows, steeple and bell.

1752 Moravian missionaries from London to Labrador. They were likely murdered.

Late 1700s to 1880s
Whereas the Indian was deemed necessary to the 1763 Proclamation which turned French control over to the English, Aboriginal status continued to deteriorate as their utilization in developing the new Nation was clearly irrelevant. Culturally and numerically, the Indian assumed the status of stranger in his and her own land. The white man became the norm, and the indigenous person the ‘other’. In what is now Ontario, 1781 to 1857 witnessed the signing of Formal Treaties with 11 major people groups and some clans. The dominant culture’s presupposition expressed itself in diverse ways remaining

40 Patterson, The Canadian Indian, 125.
41 Knowles, Canada, 75.
42 Ibid., 55. My observations from a drawing.
43 Ibid., 18.
44 Patterson, The Canadian Indian, 5 and 25f.
unwavering: acculturation into the dominant ways-of-being-and-living equalled both Civilized and Christian. Yes, accommodation may be made for some ‘quaint’ dress or actions, but the Indian needed to let the old ways pass away, and be created anew in the image of the European.

The three issues from a governing perspective continued to be land, civilization and assimilation. Resistance to adopt European ways persisted. In spite of the desires of Father Lacombe for Indians “to live there in pastoral contentment and certainty of food,” they were not making good farmers. (Of course the issuing of poor quality seed, scrub land and old cattle didn’t help.) One analysis of the ‘Indian problem’ concluded that the cultural blunder made was mistakenly assigning the work to men, who by nature are attracted to tasks that are “more spectacular”; whereas women, quite used to performing “the least humdrum”, would have been more successful at farming. As pointed out by Shewell, “clearly…the problem was reduced to gendered role division... [rather than recognizing]... sustenance gardening was probably not a viable proposition for any culture on the shores of James Bay.”

**Historical Markers**

In this period settlers had spread across the continent. Church steeples visible from afar indicated that a settled community existed. As the size and number of governing bodies increased with the population, as the country solidified as The Dominion of Canada, as more policies developed to ‘deal with the Indian problem’, the separation of state and religion slowly inserts itself into the ethos of governance.

- Perhaps an 1835 letter best expresses the colonial consequences by the nineteenth century: “The general question of contact between whites and natives, was also reviewed. It was a melancholy and humiliating, but an indisputable, truth that the contiguity of the subjects of the

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natives of Christendom with uncivilized tribes had invariably produced the wretchedness and decay, and not seldom the utter extermination of the weaker party.”

- Sir Francis, 1830’s, expressed a similar sentiment in magnanimous terms “The fate of the red inhabitants of America, the real proprietors of its soil, is without any exception, the most sinful story recorded in the history of the human race.” Ironically, his peers (including the Wesleyan Methodists) exposed Sir Francis’ true motive for writing this: he desired to herd the Indians of Upper Canada to a group of rock islands to free up their land for development. The ensuing argument amongst the whites involved the question of whether or not Indians were “capable of being civilized”. Some responded in the affirmative as witnessed by “the charming and family scenes among improved Indians mingled with the white ... [who] give an earnest of what the mass of them would soon become if their good tendencies were duly fostered.”


- 1860 Early on women had served as missionary wives (read “unacknowledged hardship with no status”), and Salvation Army officers in their own right, dispensers of medical care, and organizers of missions societies. The first woman homesteader in Alberta, Mrs. George McDowell, taught “Indian women Christian concepts”, and cooking and sewing, and homesteaded after her husband’s death.

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48 Letter of Lord Gleneg, Colonial Secretary to Governor D’Urban at Capetown (26 December 1835) as quoted in Patterson, op. cit., 6.
49 Patterson, The Canadian Indian, 119f.
50 Ibid., 120 quoting a report by Wesleyen Methodists.
51 Knowles, Canada, 10.
52 Patterson, The Canadian Indian, 104.
53 Knowles, Canada, 113 makes special note of “The Hallelujah Lassies” and their impact in 1887 Vancouver.
54 Ibid., 107.
• 1867 Birth of the Dominion of Canada.
• 1870s Mennonites begin to arrive in Manitoba. A number of Mennonite denominations; including very traditional ones where the women today still require a head-covering, no makeup or jewellery, and wear only dark dresses; involved themselves in ministry to Natives, attempting to convert them not just to Jesus, but to their particular values. A typical comment I hear is “Why don’t the Indians just get over the past. We did.” To the discomfort of some Mennonites, in recent years it has been revealed that a portion of Métis reserved land in Southeastern Manitoba was given to Mennonites by the government.
• As noted above, the “Old Men” played an essential role in community life. Some Native communities were patriarchal (to the extent of plural wives), some egalitarian. In the latter older women fulfilled the same or parallel roles. The responsibilities of these Elders included more than communication of the past to inform the present. As Rev. Ahanekew (1885-1961), Cree, stated: “The Old Man had a responsible and important position to fill in the band. In a sense he supplied our moral code, he took the place of legal advisor, and of written history. His also was the task of firing the spirits of the young men with stories of daring deeds done in times past. ... [I]t was the old men who were the influence for good.... By moral suasion alone they sought to right wrongs and to settle disputes.”

But times had changed. Two primary factors that caused the demotion of Elders were the confusion created by the rapid pace of change, and the role played by missionaries sincerely seeking to protect “their Indians” from the greater evil of their fellow white-man. They provided medical care, acted as judges in disputes, preached, taught basic schooling, set moral codes, issued advice, and acted as arbitrators with the government. The missionary thus replaced/usurped the role of the Elder in many communities. This aided in the loss of important cultural touchstones.

55 Canon Edward Ahanekew, op. cit., 128.
Missions & Contextual Markers

The perplexing problem of why Indians would not, did not, act like white folks was dissected in each century from both political and religious vantage points. The 1844 *Report on the Affairs of Indians in Canada*, discussing the non-compliance of the indigenous peoples with the plans to convert and transform them, contained this explanation: “The chief obstacle to their conversion is a joint determination on the part of certain of their chiefs to persevere in their rejection of Christianity.... The glaring inconsistency, which they cannot fail to discover, between the profession and practice of the nominal Christians among the white people who have settled around them, and who are generally of very bad character, has furnished them with a plausible objection to the Christian religion.”

Further they steadfast refused to opt for a settled agrarian lifestyle.

- 1763 Great Awakening “revival fires swept Nova Scotia.”
- 1776 saw the construction of the first Anglican Church by Mohawk chief Joseph Brant (Tyendinaga).
- 1784 forward saw David Thompson exploring British Columbia’s splendid but difficult interior. He records this interaction with Indians with whom he is sharing a fire while marvelling at an unusually spectacular rainbow:

  Joy was now on every face...I had now been twenty two years among them, and never before heard the name of the Mark of Life given to the rainbow (peemah tisoo nan oo Chegun) nor have I ever heard it since; upon inquiring of the old Men why they kept this name secret from me, they gave me the usual reply. You white men always laugh and treat with contempt what we have heard and learned from our fathers, and why should we expose ourselves to be laughed at; I replied I have never done so, our books also call the Rainbow the mark of life; what the white sometimes despise you for, is how you one day, make prayers to the Good Spirit for all you want; and another, shut yourselves up, making speeches with ceremonies and offerings to the Evil Spirit; it is for the

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56 Patterson, *The Canadian Indian*, 84.
57 Ibid., 114.
58 Knowles, *Canada*, 117.
worship of the Evil Spirit that we despise you, you fear him because he is wicked, and the more you worship him, the more power he will have over you. Worship the Good Spirit only and the bad spirit will have no power over you. Ah, they said; he is strong, we fear for ourselves. Our wives and our children. Christianity alone can eradicate these sad superstitions, and who will teach them? [Punctuation as in original.]\(^59\)

- 1792 Methodist Church built still stands 300 years later near Kingston. Methodist circuit riders established a reputation for intensive and extensive work in the far-flung communities that make up the huge province of Ontario.
- 1818 Catholic Bishop Provencher (and later Taché) arrived in Red River area from Quebec, and is credited with easing the transition of Métis and Indians from “a nomadic lifestyle made difficult by the passing of the buffalo, to a more settled agricultural existence”.\(^60\)
- 1832 William McMurray began mission work in Sault Ste. Marie, the Ojibway chief’s son Buckwujean was baptized first. A picture of him reveals an amazing head dress, with European style jacket, shirt, pendant and large dangling pearl earrings. His features are strikingly European. “The change in his life was so apparent, that he was able to bring his father, Chief Little Pine, to share his faith in Jesus!”\(^61\)
- 1832 Indian pastor Rev. Peter Jones goes to England to invite Methodist missionaries. James Evans responds. He eventually creates the 50 symbol Cree alphabet, still used, “which any normal adult could learn in less than an hour”.\(^62\)
- Rationale for the failure rate of conversion/transformation of Indians was now attributed in part to social conflict created by missionary competition (for example, Methodist and Roman Catholic over Ojibway converts in 1830s), ignorance of and insensitivity to cultural nuances. Missionaries had made selfless sacrifices, had laboured at learning the

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 109.
\(^{60}\) Ibid., 83.
\(^{61}\) Ibid., 70.
\(^{62}\) Ibid., 85-7.
languages, lived on reserves, yet usually managed to ‘live apart’ even while living with the people. [See 1855 below.]

- Undated picture of Christian Indians on their way to an Anglican church in Newfoundland\(^{63}\) shows women and men dressed in tailored buckskin and blankets, European footwear, men with four feathers adorning long hair.

- 1842 the Indian pastor Rev. Henry Budd baptized 85 converts in La Pas. “The most effective Indian pastor of these early years...established the first Canadian mission in the interior of Manitoba.”\(^{64}\)

- 1852 Roman Catholic priest Albert Lacombe arrives in Edmonton. He is attributed with “revolutioniz[ing] mission work by living in the Indian lifestyle, among the Indians” and “identify[ing] closely with the native peoples”.\(^{65}\) This is perhaps the closest parallel to contextualization. However, pictures shown him dressed in the black robe of his order.

- ca. 1855 Erasmus, Métis, recounts an incident that provides insight into the Europeanization of those who earned accreditation and ordination as clergy. He recounts an anecdote concerning the Ojibway Steinhauer (who took the surname of his benefactor) participating in a hunting party. “Mr. Steinhauer, a fully ordained minister of the church, had shed the dignity of his position and joined in the laughter and stories at the evening fires with the freedom of companionship that would have set my Bishop back staggering in scornful disgust and disapproval. Yet I noticed there were none of the borderline stories associated with indecency, so often the theme in many campfire stories.”\(^{66}\)

- 1867 witnessed the birth of Small Eyes, who grew up to be a tough young man, indifferent to pain. Having endured the self-torture ritual of the Sun Dance, his flesh buried at the base of the center pole, he clung to it in his weakness holding in his hand the ashes given to him. “This he held aloft to the Sun spirit and cried, ‘My promise has come true and I give

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\(^{63}\) Ibid., 19.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., 85.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 102.

\(^{66}\) Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights*, 34.
you my body and flesh to eat.””

He laid in agony for four days, then rose, healed, and dressed in his finest clothes. This graphic analogy to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was outlawed 50 years later. Small Eyes grew in stature in his clan, participating in the religious rituals, belonging to four secret warrior societies and possessing many sacred objects, and praying for healing in others. But in 1898 all that changed when the Creator God spoke to him in a dream or a vision, he wasn’t sure. He had attended a Christian church out of curiosity and walked away confused and disturbed. He sought solace in a prayer ritual to a sacred marten skin, then laid down. He dreamt of entering a church on a Saturday night, being welcomed by the Anglican minister, but somehow Small Eyes exited above the church. Next, he was standing on a suspended platform conversing with the minister who said that Our Father, God, had sent him. The minister morphed into another man with long blond hair, shining eyes, dressed in a long white robe with a breechcloth under it. This man declared that he wanted Small Eyes to work for him. Small Eyes, who had never turned away from work, agreed. The next morning, a Sunday, he attended the church and told the minister of his desire to be a Christian. He was baptized as Paul Little-Walker (after the apostle and his mother), and spent the rest of his days as an unswerving servant (some said, a rather annoying zealot) and evangelist for the Lord.

The 1870s brought the completion of the transcontinental railroad, and the inevitable influx of white migrants. The buffalo, friend and provider of prairie Aboriginal life, were gone, hunted almost to extinction. Deliberately, some would say, in order to force the Indians onto reserve lands. A dreadful famine followed. Signed treaties seemed the only way out of starvation, out of joining the buffalo in extinction.

68 Ibid., 210-233.
69 Technically bison, the ‘buffalo’ has suffered the fate of technical and political correctness. Buffalo suits better the cadence, as in “where the deer and the buffalo roam”.
Missionaries often played significant roles in convincing the people to sign these treaties.

- 1876 The signing of Treaty Six was assisted by the Indian’s Métis interpreter Peter Erasmus (a learned man educated at Seminary level by the Anglican Church and conversant in 5 languages, if one doesn’t count reading biblical Greek and Hebrew). Erasmus remarks: “Our approach to the Governor’s tent was delayed by certain [Indian] ceremonial proceedings…. [C]eremonial practices had a deep significance to the tribes and can only be explained as a solemn approach to a vital serious issue for discussion. Few people realize that so-called savages were far more deeply affected and influenced by their religious beliefs and convictions than any comparable group of white people, whose lip service to their religions goes no deeper….”

- 1884f Peter Erasmus tells a compelling story of his adopted son (from the Peigan people, a polygamous tribe that shunned the white man’s clothes and religion, and believed in dreams). He had adopted Peter Shirt when he was too young to know about his people. The young man, now married, shared a vivid dream with Erasmus, who discounted it and suggested prayer. The dream dealt with a time of coming war and the need to move his wife’s people to a specific area to avoid conflict. Much to the senior’s chagrin, the dream came true in vivid detail with the Riel led revolt. The son’s conviction of this God-given dream resulted in the physical salvation of both their families and their wives’ tribe. Erasmus struggled with this as it didn’t fit the Christian worldview he had been taught. He could not explain this mystical element of his heritage to whites.

- 1885 The half-breeds, mixed-bloods, or more politely — the Métis — primarily were and are Roman Catholics. Originally the term Métis referred to the people who are the natural legacy from the fur trade. They were the off-spring from ‘country marriages’ between Indian women and traders or seamen, French and British (the latter mostly from Britain’s far north, now Scotland). In a patriarchal age, the Métis

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70 Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights*, 240.
71 Ibid.
72 A literal footnote in history is the country marriage of Lord Simpson of York Factory fame. When he returned from a leave in England he
established their identity through matriarchal lineage. In the words of Louis Riel, “It is true that our savage origin is humble, but it is meet that we honour our mothers as well as our fathers. Why should we concern ourselves about what degree of mixture we possess of European or Indian blood? If we have ever so little of either gratitude or filial love, should we not be proud to say, ‘We are Métis!’”?73 They sought the rights that had been allotted to them, but never fulfilled. Even Bishop Grandin’s trips to Ottawa in 1882 and 1883 on their behalf were ignored. The legally elected Louis Riel was denied his seat in Ottawa. Thus the Métis came to ensure 1885 as a major marker in Aboriginal history in Canada. A Métis led last stand, dubbed a rebellion by others, is a turning point in Western Canadian history. The outcome is only partially captured in a photograph taken after the last battle.74 Without the caption, it looks like a rather typical political picture from the period. Entitled “The leaders of the North-West rebellion and their captors,” the photo-op includes 6 captors and 3 captive Indians: the youngster, Horse Child; Cree Chief Big Bear; and the still proud and regal Cree Chief Poundmaker. Other individual photos show the latter two in chains. Riel was hung. Métis Peter Erasmus, who did not support the rebellion, lamented “After the rebellion virtually all half-breed [even those who did not support Riel] were treated as outcasts and never again could they hold up their heads with pride for their earlier accomplishments.”75 The defeat of the Métis ambition for political parity and their own land, broke the back of brought along a white wife (some say his cousin). This was a completely unexpected (and unaccepted) act. As a result, he ‘gave’ his Cree wife, (English name Margaret Taylor) and their two children to the French fur trader, Amable Hogue. Now called Marquerite Hogue (her Cree name is lost), she bore a number of children, one of whom is my great grandfather, whose daughter is my grandmother, Albina Hogue Beauchemin. Albina also married a Métis. Marquerite is said to have influenced the relocation of Lower Fort Garry so that Simpson could “get away from his Cree wife”. See National Filmboard of Canada documentary Women in the Shadows by Carol Welsh, another great-granddaughter to Marquerite.  

74 Peter Erasmus, Buffalo Days and Nights, xxix.  
75 Photographs available from Public Archives of Canada.
Aboriginal resistance. Occasionally minor pockets of resurgence popped up like prairie gophers, but it was almost a hundred years before Native voices grew strong — together — to gain any credence.

1880s to 1940s
The Canadian Government had “consolidated its control over Canada’s First Nations” not in small part through starvation.\(^{76}\) The slaughter of the buffalo by the thousands for their hides left the Indians not only starving, but incredulous for the “Destruction of food was in their minds worse than the murder of a man’s own family.”\(^{77}\) Further, Erasmus records “a growing resentment among various native people that men from the Hudson’s Bay Company … should be called into consultation with the big chief while the Indians and half-breeds, those chiefly concerned, would be ignored completely. It was worse than useless to try to justify these facts or explain them to native thinking.”\(^{78}\) An increasingly important figure who would come to dominate Native life, and create resentment, was the Indian Agent. His role was to impose government policy and oversee ‘wards of the state’. Some did this with kindness; most with pharisaic rule, and ruthless disregard for life.

**Historical Markers**
Sensitivity, even admiration, for Aboriginal culture does appear from earliest contact in records and literature, but it almost always in the same context as words that reveal a deeply rooted sense of superiority. John McLean provides an example in his 1889 book. Having spent nine years with the Blood Indians and learning their language, he wrote as both an academic exercise and as an impetus for more missionaries to go to “the red man”. He speaks with disgust for the white man who cheats or speaks hatred of the Indian, noting the trade in liquor. Yet, he insisted, “We have not been guilty of gross injustice toward the red man, but we have failed in not answering fully the demands of the aborigines for education and Christian teaching.”\(^{79}\) He argued,

\(^{76}\) Shewell, *Enough to Keep Them Alive*, 166.
\(^{77}\) Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights*, 227.
\(^{78}\) Ibid.
“Point not to the influences of civilization as the cause of the deterioration of the Indian nature, but rather ascribe their degeneracy in morals and debilitated physical condition to the evils that follow in its train.”

On the one hand he chided white men for thinking Indian customs strange, informing them that Indians inversely considered them “white savages” for institutionalizing orphans rather than adopting them into their homes. On the other hand he expressed repulsion that the Cree left the bodies of loved ones wrapped in blankets and placed in trees, rather than burying them. In fact, a sign of their successful Christianization is for him “Christian burial”. He adopts an academic theory in vogue at the time (Darwinism) that intelligence and body structures were directly linked to physical environment. Therefore, he concluded, “The prairie tribes are the Goths and Huns of the New World.”

- Canadian settlements developed rapidly from outposts to full fledged cities. Steeples representing all the major European denominations dotted the landscape almost from sea to sea by 1880. Rapid change also brought transient workers who settled in slums faster than the city fathers could respond. Some N.A. cities were wretchedly filthy and immoral, with Toronto’s reputation amongst the worst. A Christian man, Howland, is credited with turning it around, cleaning up the slums, and leaving a legacy which included the label “Toronto the good”. Desperate poverty in the cities led to the growth of city missions as denominations reached out to both settlers and Natives. Records claim much drunkenness and immorality amongst both, yet, as in our inner cities today, the labels stuck more firmly to the latter while the former are treated with nostalgic amnesia.

- The 1895 depression found the Blackfoot starving. Scraping High, a non-Christian, was persuaded to send his son to the residential school. There is a question as to whether or not he understood the son would not be permitted to return home until he was 16, but he did come to understand his meager rations were then cut by a third, and sent to the mission school. When his son was sent home to die, Scraping High

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80 Ibid., 285.
81 McLean, The Indians, 312.
82 Knowles, Canada, 75f.
killed a white man. This was not an act of insanity as interpreted by the whites, but a deliberate religious ritual to send a messenger before him to prepare the way for his child and himself for the next life. This incident again provides a study in the piling up of cultural misunderstandings that led to desperation and death.\textsuperscript{83}

- During 1871 and 1923 in the West (excluding B.C.), eleven numbered Treaties plus the Williams Treaty were signed. It would be 1996 before another negotiated treaty. It should be noted that “less than half of 1% of land south of the 60\textsuperscript{th} Parallel was set aside as Native Reserves — a tiny amount compared to the vast territory of Canada.”\textsuperscript{84} \textit{If all the reserve land in Manitoba were to be gathered together plus the land which is disputed and then placed on an envelope, it would be less than the size of a normal stamp.}\textsuperscript{85} This is less Manitoba land mass than belongs to Parks Canada. Regarding the treaties, the claim is made that missionaries often “lent ‘the authority and prestige of white man’s religion’ to convince the Indians to sign.”\textsuperscript{86} Were the missionaries unwitting pawns of the government? Of traders? Of chiefs? Of the North West Mounted Police? It is argued, yes, to each of these in various circumstances.

- A singular event occurred in 1906. Chief Joe Capilano ventured a trip, along with his Squamish delegation, to London, England. Their intent was to petition the King. The issues included unkept promises regarding land title, white intrusion on their land; ignored or dismissed appeals to the Government; no right to vote; and no consultation on issues “which gravely concerned them.”\textsuperscript{87} No response received.

\textbf{Missions & Contextual Markers}

By the end of the 1800s some Christians questioned the validity of missions to Indians as ‘money wasted’ with so little return for

\textsuperscript{83} Dempsey, \textit{The Amazing Death.}

\textsuperscript{84} MacArdle, \textit{The Timechart}, 3.

\textsuperscript{85} A fact I include in class lectures along with an article and map from the \textit{Winnipeg Free Press}, date ca.1996, but unavailable at time of writing.

\textsuperscript{86} Patterson, \textit{The Canadian Indian}, 180.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 169.
the dollar. McLean responded: “here are many doubters as to
the success attending the labours of missionaries among the red
men. With them it is the practical question of dollars and cents.
A definite amount had been expended on an Indian mission, and
the exact equivalent in conversion according to some ideal
standard must result.”88 McLean affirmed the power of the
Gospel in that “the Indian manifests no less than the white man
the power of the Spirit of God.”89

- Increasingly education was taken from parents and turned
over to the churches. Through the Indian Act, boarding
schools were promoted over day schools, turning them into
virtual prisons to protect the children from their own
parents and culture. Education was often in the hands of the
churches, which suited both them and the government. The
government paid while the churches did the teaching and
enculturation. Educational experiences ranged from a
positive (as testified by 91 year old Kay Restoule, who
“would not trade all the money in the world for the things
she learned” at residential school)90 to outright abuse.
Perhaps the most positive general statement to make is
“particularly in the more remote areas, Indians were able to
gain time and perspective to mitigate the severity of the
impact and to achieve a degree of selectivity in adjusting to
the many facets of European culture.”91 On the negative
impact, the Residential Schools have become a byword for
abuse. The overall negative effective is well documented
elsewhere.92 For the sake of this topic, it needs to be said
that the concept of contextualizing educational methodology
or preserving cultural values was the antithesis of the
educational intent. The true intent was to produce a non-
Native Native. To change all but skin colour.93

88 McLean, The Indians, 287.
89 Ibid.
91 Patterson, The Canadain Indian, 17.
92 E.g., see Journal of North American Institute for Theological Studies
(vol. 3 2005), especially “Where Do We Go From Here?” by Anita Keith.
93 Although the movie The Rabbit Proof Fence, capturing the Australian
experience, argues against that statement demonstrating the intent to
‘breed out’ the dark colour.
• An undated story told in 1894 speaks of a Methodist missionary’s experience amidst the Saulteaux:

> We were surprised at times by seeing companies of pagan Indians stalk into Church during the services, not always acting in a way becoming to the house or the day. At first it was a matter of surprise to me that our Christian Indians put up with some of these irregularities. I was very much astounded one day by the entrance of an old Indian called Tapastanum, who, rattling his ornaments, and crying “Ho! Ho!” came into the church in a sort of trot, and gravely kissed several of the men and women. As my Christian Indians seemed to tend the interruption, I felt that I could. Soon he sat down, at the invitation of Big Tom, and listened to me…

> [T]o aid himself in listening, he lit his big pipe and smoked through the rest of the service. When I spoke to the people afterwards about the conduct of this man, so opposite to their quiet, respectful demeanour in the house of God, their expressive and charitable answer was: “such were we once…let us have patience with him…let him come; he will get quiet when he gets the light.”

• The Blackfoot of Paul Little-Walker’s (Small Eyes’) area had been divided into two camps, but in the 1920s faced many divisions and fighting not in small part due to religious differences as “missionaries added to their problems by constant competition for pupils for their residential schools.”

> God used a lost election to humble the dogmatic evangelist, Little-Walker. This led him to attend the banned, but still going, Sun Dance as an observer. His new respect and softer approach to Native religion won him friends. He was elected Chief of the reunited tribe. He earned respect from both Native and white, dressing in full regalia for ceremonies at the Calgary Stampede each summer. He had found a peaceful balance between the old ways and the new, still witnessing for Jesus until his death in 1952.

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• Luther L. Schuetze sought to serve the Anishinabe people at Little Grand Rapids, Manitoba, from 1927-1938 through the United Church. A man very proud of his own physical strength, who used it to win respect from the people, he laboured for the people he loved. Yet, he was a man of his times. Even when expressing that love, he saw the Indians as ‘other’. While he avoided some errors of his time, such as demonizing all things Aboriginal, and embraced much of the lifestyle, he and his family lived apart from the people in a white-style house and ‘fellowshipped down’. An example of his unconscious bondage to white man’s ways cannot be better illustrated than his own tale of building a church at Little Grand Rapids. Through tough Manitoba wilderness terrain, up numerous rapids with a canoe, he insisted on transporting not only gothic style windows, but also a full sized organ. After all, how could the Creator be properly worshipped without them? To Schuetze’s mind and heart, a church was not a church without the right windows, music, manner of sitting, respectful quiet, and of course, a steeple.

• The Anglican missionary from Big Trout Lake, Ontario, in 1938 notes: “With the advent of air travel and radio and later mines springing up all around and bulldozers opening up winter roads so that tractor trains could reach every major trading post with vast quantities of freight, suddenly all Indian life was becoming engulfed in the white man’s culture, bringing with it great repercussions to the economy and spiritual lives of the native people.” One wonders if the impact of all of these was dwarfed in comparison to the impact of television, which would replace the story-telling of the Elders.

1948 to 1985— including the 1969 White Paper
It has been argued there are really only two distinct periods of Canadian policy related to indigenous people: (1) Confederation to World War II, and (2) Post-war. The first was marked by continued colonialism including cultural repression with the

97 Leslie Garrett, My Album of Memories (Saskatoon, SK: Western Tract Mission, n.d.), 29.
98 Shewell, Enough to Keep Them Alive, 22.
Church and the Department of Indian Affairs administering policies, assisted by the Hudson's Bay Company. The problem to be resolved: Indians. The latter phase emphasized indigenous integration via granting earned citizenship rights. Indians were not now viewed as the problem, but rather as “having problems, which scientifically conceived programs could address and fix”. Shewell insists, “To modernize Canada’s Indian policy, a thorough transformation of public attitude will be required... so fixed has become the idea that he is an inferior person. But up to now Canadian Indian Policy has done little beyond save the Indian from extinction.”

Poverty and welfare are central to understanding Aboriginal status in Canada at both a legal and social level. Shewell insists “Indian welfare dependency has been a manifestation of the loss of First Nations’ political and economic autonomy and of the impact of the processes of state legitimization on their communities. Thus, Indian dependency on welfare is not simply an episode in the history of their dispossession; it is an integral aspect of the continuing history of relations between First Nations and Europeans.... [I]t has been a consistent part of state attempts to assimilate Indians into Canadian Society.”

Officials developing assimilationist policies “honestly believed themselves to be doing good and to be bringing progress”. The surest measurements of progress, indeed success, were deemed to be the tandem expectation of (1) Accepting administrative surveillance, and (2) The conversion of collectively held lands to individual ownership, creating an emerging bourgeoisie.

The social value granted to/withheld from indigenous peoples cannot be separated from the widely adopted Puritan doctrine: the poor are poor due to moral shortcomings. Help is therefore always given by moral superiors. “The poor are in but not of civil society.” This has suited government policy just fine, as

99 Ibid., 23.
100 Shewell, Enough to Keep Them Alive, quoting “The Canadian Indian”, reprinted from the Economist, 1944.
101 Ibid., 23.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid., 22.
104 Ibid., 91. Emphasis added.
welfare dependency, “the language of domination”,\textsuperscript{105} was intended “to maintain the pacification achieved during the post-Confederation period and to teach Indians the principles of individual self-reliance, often through harsh measures.”\textsuperscript{106}

\textit{Historical Markers: Resurgence is born}

- The proposals in The White Paper of 1969 under Prime Minister Trudeau served to ignite a new era of activism. The attitude of people like Toynbee (quoted at the beginning of this paper), reflects the beginning of social attitudinal change, albeit for a minority of Canadians. WWII had transformed some ideas. Prior to the proposals contained in the ironically named \textit{White Paper} — a governmental attempt to develop a new comprehensive “Indian” policy — any policy changes that occurred were not “the result of the aggressiveness of the Indians, but due to the benevolence of white elements who had undergone a change in attitude in the post-war years.”\textsuperscript{107} First Nations people found the White Paper insulting, as expressed by Dave Cochrane, then President of the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, at an Anglican conference:

\begin{quote}
Your government recently announced their new Indian policy, their grand design for Indian emancipation, for Indian assimilation. This new policy was not developed with Indian participation, co-operation, or consideration. It is a white man’s white paper, conceived in isolation and as far as Indians are concerned aborted at birth. No single action by any Government since confederation has aroused such a violent reaction from Indian people — never have Indians felt so bitter and frustrated as they do today.\textsuperscript{108}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 337.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 166.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid. The White Paper was eventually withdrawn.
Thus resurgency is born.  
While Patterson suggests resurgency existed in embryonic form prior to the 1970s, this is clearly a watershed. It has been augmented by authors such as Harold Cardinal, an Aboriginal activist for parity and justice, who has authored *The Unjust Society* (in parody of Trudeau's campaign for a Just Society), and in 1977 wrote *The Rebirth of Canada's Indians*. Indeed, it appears from this vantage point in history, to be the strongest on-going resurgence of Aboriginal voices across the nation of Canada. Demands are being made, not always with a ‘please’ attached and not always in a manner that the dominant culture finds acceptable. It is obvious that Aboriginals have refused to assimilate, to melt, or to go quietly into the night. Non-natives often find this stance uncomfortable, and so they turn the focus on finances and the protest of tax-dollars being ‘wasted on and by Indians’.

Until the latter part of the 20th century, many Métis tried to ‘pass’ as French, to either deny or live in the shadow of their Indian-ness, speaking their identity in whispers, in order to survive economically and socially. The resurgence of Aboriginal self-identity and pride extends also to the Métis, many of whom are seeking (certainly not for financial gain as that is limited to non-existent, depending on the province) to establish their historical identity.

**Mission & Contextual Markers**

- In a booklet published around 1965 by the conservative Northern Canada Evangelical Mission [NCEM], the question

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109 Patterson, in 1972, noted the parallel resurgence of indigenous nationalism in other colonized countries. He predicted that unlike West Africa, “the Indian seems to have found himself resurging too few and too late. In Canada the Indians will never be able to expel the white man or subdue him in their efforts to create an Indian synthesis in their own ‘new’ nation. Instead, the impetus will remain with the conqueror.” Op. cit., 1. My note: Canadian “Indians” were not conquered. This is a historical misnomer.


111 My two favourite aunts, born in 1899 & 1907, reaffirmed this in the 1980s.
of their attitude to the “Indian Indigenous Church” is addressed.\textsuperscript{112} NCEM confirms their affirmation of such churches. The interviewee notes only one such work exists, while other Native pastors encouraged by it formed the Indian Gospel Church Association in 1963. NCEM presents the church as self-supporting, albeit, overseen by white men. The conclusion is drawn, “The Indian who becomes a Christian can and does carry on church affairs independent of the White Christian.”\textsuperscript{113} If a study has not been done on the approaches and views of the various mission organizations that have been active since WWII, it needs to be done. Also of interest would be the longevity and impact of IGCA.

Other avenues of research suggested for this time period:
\begin{itemize}
\item Higher Christian education: the various indigenous Bible schools; the inclusion/exclusion of Aboriginal students related to denominational/inter-denominational colleges and seminaries, with their outcomes.
\item Aboriginal initiated para-church organizations and Aboriginal mission to non-Aboriginal people.
\item Any other topics which will aid in understanding the past to inform the now and plan for the yet-to-be.
\end{itemize}

How far had contextualization come? A book published in 1982 contains an undated picture of an Inuit church. The caption proudly proclaims: “Cultural adaptation: a church in Inuvik.” I note the structure is round, with a vestibule jutting out at opposite points, shaped generally like an igloo: an igloo with gothic windows, 2 crosses, modern vestibule and stairs. A dozen people are emerging from a service, all in western attire, some of the women in knee-length skirts.\textsuperscript{114} And yes, although less grand, it does have a steeple.

\textbf{1985 to Present}

Indigenous peoples have been studied as much as the floral and fauna. There have been task forces, commissions, policy papers,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{113} Barron, “An Analysis of the Problems”.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Knowles, \textit{Canada}, 119. Skirts. In igloo country!
\end{itemize}
negotiations, laws written and laws repelled, and many many promises in an effort to ‘fix’ them. The Aboriginal people of Canada have experienced first hand the biblical warning uttered by King David: put not your trust in princes.

Patterson observed “The Indian, biologically and culturally swamped, has been forced to shape his renewal in a world dominated by white men, even within his own reserve community.”¹¹５ Thirty plus years later, this statement in the main holds true. Unfortunately, too often it could be rephrased to say, “The Christian Aboriginal, theologically and culturally swamped, has been forced to shape his/her renewal in a world dominated by white culture, even within his/her church.” A worldwide resurgence of global colonized indigenous peoples led Patterson to conclude the Canadian Aboriginal would never be in a position to reclaim the homeland as some African peoples have.¹¹₆

I have rephrased his political remarks to apply to contextualization: “the Aboriginal seems to have found him/herself resurging too few and too late. In Canada he/she will never be able to expel the Euro-centric theology and cultural impositions, or create an Aboriginal contextualization in their own church. Instead, the impetus will remain with Euro-Canadian denominational leadership.” May this not be.

Historical Markers.
At the present, non-Native /Native relationships include:

- Issues related to the transition of land from its indigenous peoples into Canadian Government control remain to be addressed.

¹¹⁵ Patterson, The Canadian Indian, 1.
¹¹₆ To rephrase a former footnote, Patterson (1972), noted the parallel resurgence of indigenous nationalism in other colonized countries. He predicted that unlike West Africa, “the Indian seems to have found himself resurging too few and too late. In Canada the Indians will never be able to expel the white man or subdue him in their efforts to create an Indian synthesis in their own ‘new’ nation. Instead, the impetus will remain with the conqueror.” Op. cit., 1.
In recent times, the Supreme Court of Canada has affirmed the legitimacy of oral transference of history, which indigenous peoples of many cultures already knew. On-going interpretation/re-interpretation of Treaties, leave the general public negative and confused. On-going negotiation/stalling of land claims frustrate Aboriginal people. A discrepancy in viewing land. Aboriginals see land as the preservation of a homeland — their gift from the Creator. Non-Aboriginals see the homeland as having been conquered and improved. The signing of some new Treaties (especially in the province of British Columbia) are encouragement to Natives; but cause for fear in others (especially when they note land claims add up to over 100% of B.C., ignoring the fact that these are based on nomadic/seasonal use of land). Various stand-offs over land disputes, some end in tragedy. The Métis are granted legal status as a people group. On-going court action seeks to interpret that reality. The on-again off-again social attitude of “Indians as the flavour of the month”. \(^{117}\) The contrast between Aboriginals as just ‘one of many minorities’ with that of “Citizen Plus” (an Aboriginal document). Aboriginals do not want to be “wards of the State”, nor absorbed as another immigrant minority.

**Missions & Contextual Markers**

- A parallel to, and some may say a movement growing out of, resurgence is the Christian contextualization movement. \(^{118}\)
- Extreme attitudes exist on both sides of the desire to reclaim Aboriginal identity for the Glory of God.

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\(^{117}\) As sardonically stated by Cree friend, Ray Aldred, then Director of Aboriginal Ministries, Christian and Missionary Alliance (Canada); personal conversation early 2000s. This phrase aptly describes the social climate and speaks to the reality of distracted dreariness that is public opinion based on what’s currently ‘hot’ in the media.

\(^{118}\) Adrian Jacobs’s paper, *A History of Slaughter*, presented at this symposium, deals more adequately with this.
• Aboriginal-centered literature has been written by Aboriginal authors speaking to the whys and wherefores of contextualization.
• Symposia, conferences, co-operative agreements, pursuing higher education, and changing attitudes are all contributing to self-theologizing and truly indigenous expressions of the Gospel.
• A book is required to tell this story in its entirety.

Conclusion
This paper is quite another paper from what I began to write. Rather than the Recent History of Contextualization in Canada, I needed to package, for my own benefit, a more comprehensive understanding of the past. I trust some of the readers will also benefit. I intend to tell “the rest of the story” in the next NAIITS journal. For now, some of my conclusions:

Since European contact, Aboriginals have experienced status reduction from sovereignty in their land, to guide, military ally and potential convert, to that of financial burden. The retelling of the story of Canada’s development is being undertaken by indigenous voices, placing Aboriginals at the center of the story. Some are calling this the de-colonization of their history. As has been alluded to, the contextualization movement in many ways parallels the political and literary resurgence among Aboriginal peoples. The intent is to de-colonize the Gospel, not create a new Gospel, but rather reveal the true story with more power for heart transformation — seeking healing and wholeness in place of humiliation and loss of dignity.

Missions and missionaries made valiant, and often stupid, attempts in communicating the Gospel to indigenous peoples, too often with the attitude of American Richard Pratt: “all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian and save the man.” Others spoke of the only good Indian being a dead Indian. For Canadian missions, too often “the only good

119 Patterson, The Canadian Indian, 181.
Indian is a non-Indian”. Missionaries and their senders were products of their time, seeing darkly the things of the Lord through eyes blurred by cultural blinders and hearts filled with ethno-arrogance. And yet by the grace of God, the Gospel did go forth, transforming inner lives and at times imperfectly transforming entire communities.

From this sweeping overview of history, I have concluded that as a community we need to continue our investigation of the things that have gone before, in order to inform the present and to build a better future for all. And like the Old Men and Old Women who recorded their history in their memories, we need to tell and re-tell the stories, both to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Earlier I noted that to Schuetze’s mind and heart, a church was not a church without gothic windows and a steeple. Steeples multiplied across our land, testifying of cultural insensitivity and ethno-centricity, yet also of faith in Jesus Christ. The time has come to build churches thoughtfully with Christ-like, metaphoric incarnational ‘steeples’ — communities of Christians that say “Look. Here we are. Come join us in worshipping the Creator. You will find peace here.”

I will close with this 100 year old exchange between a Methodist missionary and a Cree:

The last to speak was an old man with grizzly hair, and wild, excited movements. His hair was braided and reached to his knees....
“You say, Notawenan (“our Father”): He is your Father?”
“Yes, he is my Father.”...
“How it mean he is my Father...?”
“Yes, O yes! He is your Father, too.”
“Your Father — missionary’s Father, and Indian’s Father, too?”
“Yes, that is true.”
“Then we are brothers?” he almost shouted out.
“Yes, we are brothers,” I replied. Amen!

122 Young, By Canoe and Dog Train, 127.
A VIEW OF THE NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXTUAL MOVEMENT and ITS UNDECIDED FUTURE
Randy Woodley

Background
The origin of what is being called the Native American Contextual Movement is founded on the Mission of the Triune God. The Creator situated First Man and First Woman in a garden and then began the contextualization process by revealing himself in their garden culture. The expectation of Creator in the original garden culture, and every culture since, has been to produce sincere intimate relationships built upon an understanding of who God is. This message is contextualized best to all cultures by understanding God’s shalom kingdom.

Contextualization, in the context of this paper, means to present the good news of the shalom kingdom of Jesus Christ in a way that people can understand and relate to it within their own cultural context. My use of the concept goes beyond mere translation of Scripture. It includes the belief that God can be found at work in every culture of the world and expressed through any culture.

The incarnation of Christ is the prime example of and model for contextualization. Here the whole person of God (Colossians 1:19) is made manifest in one human being and in one human culture — the Creator becoming a human being in Jesus Christ contextualizing himself within the Hebrew culture. We can see the contextualization process clearly by following the logic in Philippians 2:5-11. Jesus empties himself of all his divine privileges. He comes under threat as a baby born in poverty. He must learn the language and develop an understanding of relationships and proper behavior in that culture. He must learn the family structure, eating habits, sexual habits, humor, everything about that culture. Jesus must learn to respond to authority — both human and divine — and submit to those authorities for thirty years before becoming a teacher.
In a broader sense, Christ is contextualized to all other human cultures as well, with the Hebrew culture being the most complete package from which we have to view the process. The good news of the *shalom* kingdom has been contextualized thereafter in particular cultures, making contextualization a universal process. No human culture is ineligible to be a receiver of the contextualized gospel.

The universal nature of God, a natural and appealing concept according to Romans 1:19ff, somehow offends people whose *cultus* perspective negates *Missio Externa* and in fact, becomes to them a questionable concept. Such was perhaps the case with the Jews present when St. Paul exclaimed “Now I go to the Gentiles.” The narrative in Acts 13:46-48 (NLT) indicates both the particularity of the gospel for the Jews and the universality for all other nations.

Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and declared, "It was necessary that this Good News from God be given first to you Jews. But since you have rejected it and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life — well, we will offer it to Gentiles. For this is as the Lord commanded us when he said, `I have made you a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.'"

Luke makes note of two similar statements by Paul. The first statement is made in Corinth (Acts18:6) and the second one in Rome, concluding the book of Acts (Acts 28:28). As shown by Paul’s quote from the prophet Isaiah, this was not a new idea in Israel. The Hebrew Scriptures reveal the universality of the message as demonstrated by Yahweh himself in numerous passages such as Isaiah 65:1 where Yahweh states:

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I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me;  
I was found by those who did not seek me.  
To a nation that did not call on my name,  
I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' (NIV)
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In Paul’s mind, “going to the Gentiles” was fulfilling the transcultural mandate to reach out to those from other nations and
cultures. Paul’s writings are replete with examples of his theological thinking and his methods of contextualization. Suffice it to say, Paul the great missionary carried a universal message of good news that demonstrated people don’t need to change their culture in order to find Christ — and — Christ can be found and expressed equally in every culture of the world.

From the Apostle Paul until now there are numerous missionaries who, to one degree or another, embodied a message of contextualization. Patrick of Ireland, who brought the gospel to the Celts, was contextual in much of his approach. Methodius & Cyril in the ninth century contextualized the gospel to Eastern Europe, focusing on the questions & concerns of the local community. Mateo Ricci, Jesuit Missionary to China, allowed the context of Chinese culture to determine their form of Christianity. Bartholome de las Casas (1484-1566) must be given some credit, in trying to uphold the rights of indigenous people in the Caribbean by advocating the survival of their communities in the midst of genocide.

De las Casas was perhaps the first missionary in his era to confront the Church as an insider for the rights of those outside the Church. Unlike many Christians before him, and those today who set up charitable aid stations in order to relieve personal problems actually caused by the systemic powers, de las Casas spent his life bucking the evil system (the systemic demonic powers within the Church) pleading the rights of the powerless Indians. He did this during a time of many “justified” atrocities against Native Americans. For de las Casas, there was something in indigenous culture worth preserving. This recognition of “a culture worth preserving” is perhaps the first necessary step leading to contextualization. One must see value in another culture — even to a small degree — in order to deem it worthy of preservation.

In a real sense, all true theology and ministry is contextual, considering the culture of the people as important and believing the Creator’s desire is to be expressed through other cultures. If any theology or mission does not take into account the importance of the culture of each particular people, then it does not appear to follow Christ’s example of contextualization.
God sent Jesus into the world of human beings as a human being, because those God wished to reach are human beings. Beyond that, God sent Jesus as a human being to a particular culture — a first century rural Jewish culture. From within that particular culture the Creator planned to reach the Jews. Yet, it was not Creator’s plan to reach just Jews with the message of the kingdom, and so he designed the gospel to be contextual, that is, transferable. Acts 17:25-27 and Revelation 7:9, along with other Scriptures, confirm that God does not prefer one culture over another. All are acceptable and important to Him.

Although the Scriptures themselves were written to a number of particular ancient cultures, they were intended to be translated and contextualized beyond those cultures. In Jesus’ own method of disciple making, while he taught particular disciples, he also intentionally taught those who lived beyond the life of his disciples. If we do a good job of applying Christ’s teachings, we will always find ourselves contextualizing them from his first century Jewish culture to our own twenty-first century culture.

Invariably, it has been the case in history that weak Christianity follows weak contextualization. When the gospel first reached America’s shores a contextual approach to mission among Native Americans was rarely practiced. Since those earliest days in Native American missions, the results have only become more abysmal. Until recently, most of the methodology of the missionaries has changed very little. The core principles and attitudes towards contextualization among most denominations have wrought little innovation. The lack of contextualization in Native North American missions has not been the only problem, but this missing element, coupled with hegemony, has perhaps had the most severe consequences.

Historically, missionaries and mission sending agencies participated to various degrees with Government agencies and their policies by attempting to alleviate what has officially been dubbed the “Indian Problem”. These policies, claiming civilization as their objective, have included many programs intended to assimilate Natives into white society. The practical reality is that most of the Government and mission policies lead
to the eventual goal of cultural genocide of all indigenous Americans.¹ Cherokee/Osage theologian George Tinker expresses this march towards genocide by stating,

Cultural genocide can be defined as the effective destruction of a people by systematically or systemically (intentionally or unintentionally in order to achieve other goals) destroying, eroding, or undermining the integrity of the culture and system of values that defines a people and gives them life. First of all, it involves the destruction of those cultural structures of existence that give a people a sense of holistic and communal integrity. It does this by limiting a people’s freedom to practice their culture and to live out their lives in culturally appropriate patterns. It effectively destroys a people by eroding both their self-esteem and the interrelationships that bind them together as a community. In North American mission history, cultural genocide almost always involved an attack on the spiritual foundations of a people’s by denying the existing ceremonial and mythological sense of community in relationship to the Sacred Other. Finally, it erodes a people’s self-image as a whole people by attacking or belittling every aspect of native culture.²

Mission activity in North America customarily began from a place of superior political power. To this day, most mission agencies still do not deviate far from the principles that allowed such policies to occur. As a result of the failure to be contextual within Native American cultures, the Church of Jesus Christ is,

¹ Col John Chivington, Methodist minister and commander of the grotesque massacre of over one hundred and fifty old men, women and children at Sand Creek in Colorado, in some ways represents the convergence of American political and American Christian intention in both his actions and his statement “nits make lice”. Both interests had white civilization as the goal. Although the missionaries by and large rejected direct violence as a means of carrying out this goal, their methods of “civilization” of the Indian had then, and have today the same results — that is — attempted cultural genocide.
by and large, still seen in Indian country as the “white man’s religion”. This scenario is ineffectual for Natives but works well for the white and affluent in a society built upon a foundation of “white privilege” which is, as my friend Jim Wallis likes to point out, a polite way of saying “white supremacy”.

In spite of the lack of overall contextualization, my personal experience bears out that there are actually many more followers of the Jesus Way in Indian country than may be realized. It never surprises me to find those elders in Indian country who clandestinely follow Jesus Christ, choosing to read their Bibles and pray at home. This surreptitious posture is maintained primarily because the Church will not allow these believers to be indigenous Christians from within their own culture. These stalwart believers are “not allowed” by the present system to be whom God has created them to be. This is one of many indicators pointing to hegemony and to the fact that many missionaries are still confused about how Jesus Christ can be contextualized from within Native American cultures.

Much of the confusion still comes from the long held belief that European culture is far superior to Native American culture. Missionaries have difficulty finding godly value in North American indigenous cultures.

Historically, it is understandable why missionaries find little if any value in Native North American cultures. Several theories of Indian inferiority had come and gone by the nineteenth century that even included a debate over the existence of the presence of an “Indian soul”. The words of Henry Clay, U.S. Secretary of State in 1825, make this claim of superiority evident.

Be it known to you now that it is impossible to civilize Indians. There was never a full-blooded Indian that ever took to civilization. It is not in their nature. They are a race destined for extinction and I do not think that they are worth preserving. They are inferior to the Anglo-Saxon race which is now quickly replacing them on this continent. They are not an improvable breed, and their disappearance from the human family will be no great loss to the world. In point of fact, they are rapidly disappearing and if
government should take proper action, in fifty years from this time there will not be any of them left.³

A 1987 standard high school history book, *American History: A Survey*, concerning pre-Columbus America, stated the land was “…empty of mankind and its works”. The story of Europeans in the New World, the book explained, is the story of the creation of a civilization where none existed.”⁴ Despite the missionaries’ and missionary sending agencies’ stated preference towards meekness, the predisposition was and is to embrace a position reflecting an attitude of Social Darwinism. Jerry Mander uncovers this attitude when he admits, “Our assumption of superiority does not come to us by accident. We have been trained in it. It is soaked into the fabric of Western religion, economic systems and technology. They reek of their greater virtues and capabilities.”⁵

So when we speak of contextualization, both then and now, we must understand the difficulties at the outset that Euro-Americans have held in the formation and preservation of hundreds of years of lies, justifying the position that their culture is more godly than our own native cultures. I believe this hegemony to be the most significant cultural impasse even today, for most white missionaries. Although some white missionaries have over the years, served indigenous people in many wonderful ways, there are arguably few who have crossed over the wall of superiority in believing their own culture, (whether theologically, economically, intellectually, socially, or spiritually) to be more godly. Because hegemony cannot produce true contextualization, I have chosen to focus this overview of the contextual movement only on Native Americans who

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themselves, have spent considerable time and energy contextualizing the good news among their own cultures.

**Native North American Contextualization Efforts**

Perhaps the beginnings of the Native North American Contextual Movement can be traced back to those persecuted Indians who, in order to follow Christ, first refused to exchange their own imperfect culture for an imperfect European culture. Instead, they hid away like their early predecessors in the Roman catacombs and prayed to Jesus secretly for fear of retribution. Although accounts are few, there must have been those in early Native American missions among the praying towns of New England and others in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, able to see the remarkable similarities between Native American spirituality and what the Bible purports as true spirituality. At the turn of the nineteenth century the most well known native Christian in this regard was Black Elk, the Lakota Holy Man.

In *Black Elk: Colonialism and Lakota Catholicism*, Damien Costello’s postmodern interpretation of Black Elk is a great addition to Black Elk scholarship.⁶ Using Lamen Sannah’s work to strengthen his position, Costello shows that early Catholic missionaries on the Native field were naturally changed, at least to a position of cultural ambivalence. But, in my opinion, the unfortunate overall results of the missionary position, with few exceptions, still reflected the goals and intentions of the imperialistic colonial political powers.

This is not to say in any way that certain missionaries did not see some good in Native American culture and values, but rather that they invariably did not see themselves and their own culture as equal to those to whom they were serving. Regardless of the denomination or method, the results of colonial mission programs show that the missionary endeavor invariably produced missionaries who approached Native American people from a position of strength and superiority rather than equality.

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— not with cultural or epistemological humility. In contrast, we learn from the life and teachings of Jesus, the Master of contextualization, giving up one’s power is *a priori* to the missionary task.

As Costello rightly points out, Black Elk can be credited for negotiating both worlds as Christian Evangelist and as Lakota Holy Man. I believe that Black Elk’s ability to navigate the two worlds came from the strength, power and truth found in both systems — but primarily from the ethic of tolerance found in his Lakota value system. While commending those early missionaries, who on occasion did great things among us, we should not forget that Black Elk and all other Lakota believers were restricted in developing a truly Lakota Christianity. The freedom to develop such a public framework simply did not exist at that time. And, I would ask anyone who understands our traditional indigenous values to consider: can freedom in Christ truly be indigenous, if the cultural expression of that freedom must be minimized or made clandestine?

The ability for the Lakota and all Native North American converts to cope with this lack of public expression was drawn not only from a deep Native ethic of religious tolerance, but also from their ability to have continuity in the realm of the sacred, even when restricted to select Native gatherings and to their own private lives. In Native North American worldviews all of life is sacred. To keep one’s faith in Christ culturally relevant but hidden could be done, but transcending this reality to the next generation would prove more difficult. The forced concealment of such cultural/spiritual practices would eventually have direct negative consequences on the contextualization of Christianity among Native believers. Let me explain.

During Black Elk’s time (the transition from a fully native cultural existence to forced assimilation), Native converts understood their cultural identity. Even though families and clans might have actually been separated, the memories of “the tribe” were still a strong source of their identity. Therefore, adopting white man’s culture was often inconvenient, but it generally affected the first generation Native convert’s self-
image very little. Black Elk was such a person, as were many others. These people spoke their language, knew their ceremonies, remembered the stories and lived according to those values with little trouble — as Christians. Such a person if necessary, could even cut their hair, stop speaking their language in public, attend the white man’s church and still have singular identity as an Indian.

As the realities of tribal life increasingly faded, a new kind of Indian was born and resultantly, a new kind of Indian Christian was made. This new Indian had little foothold in either world. Negotiating these two worlds was in some ways more difficult for the modern Christian Indian than for those who had lived during the former tribal era. Pressures stemming from Government and missionary policies, and the need to survive, often prevented this new era Native American from “returning to the blanket”. The dominant society continually forced its culture upon Natives, making assimilation real and inevitable.

Naturally, those in the second and latter generations had a crisis of identity. By this time the “half-breed” phenomenon was not only a cultural dilemma, but also a physical reality through intermarriage or other reproductive results, forcing them to look at themselves in a whole new way. With a natural respect for their elders, later generation converts adhered to the outward forms of Christianity that they had observed, making some of the dominant culture’s expressions the hallmarks of their own faith. Those who wished to hold on to “the blanket” were often forced to find other stealthier ways of expressing their faith and culture. This forced dualism is still ever present throughout most of Native North America.

I will mention one example. When we first opened a contextual Native American church in Tulsa Oklahoma, I remember the speech of a traditional Kiowa elder addressing this same issue. The elder woman said her father had predicted this day when the Christian Indians and the traditional Indians would come back together to worship the Creator and his Son. She addressed one particular comment to another Kiowa present. This man came from an old Kiowa Christian family who had long since shed the external vestiges of their Native American spirituality,
such as the drum and eagle feathers. The elder called this man out, whose father was among the first appointed deacons of the Kiowas, and said, “I remember when you and your brothers and sisters would go to sleep. Your dad would sneak over to our place and sometimes sing all night on the drum, getting back at sunrise before anyone saw him. Once in awhile though, the missionaries would find out and make things rough on him. It’s good that no one has to hide their beliefs anymore.”

Today, many Kiowa, whom I love dearly and consider my relatives, may typify the dualistic results of the missionary influence and their penchant towards a colonized form of Christianity. Very few Kiowa Christians in the churches are able to express themselves spiritually with congruence. Instead, their faith has most often been expressed in one of three ways:

1. They have abandoned most of the religious and spiritual symbols of their Indian culture altogether and have in most ways, with the exception of singing hymns in the Kiowa language (but with piano accompaniment) adopted the cultural faith expressions of the whites taught them by missionaries.
2. They express their faith in the culture of the dominant society at church meetings and then express their Kiowa cultural ways outside the church in ceremonies. For example, in church an eagle feather and cedar smoke would be disallowed, but outside the church one might use it in a ceremonial way.
3. Their faith is expressed generally the same as those white Christians around them until a deeper faith is needed, such as during a crisis of faith such as the need for healing a sick family member. They then revert to their Indian symbols and ceremonies for faith expression.

None of these alternatives offers much congruence of faith and culture. As a result, a weak faith is oftentimes produced. Often testimony times in these churches are filled with sacred remembrances of those first Kiowa Christians and their strong faith. The strong faith of those early Native American Christians, I believe, is more likely attributed to their security in their own
Native identity, coupled with their love for Christ. In my own experience I believe this to be the reality of not just the Kiowa, but of all Native North Americans where a non-contextualized mission approach has had a strong influence.

The transition into the twentieth century in Native North America (the time of lowest Native population) produced native Christians who were systematically forced to adopt the culture of the dominant society or else pay a heavy price of social malignation, physical punishment or even death. This was often the case in the government funded/mission administrated Residential Boarding School system.⁷ Perhaps more than at any time, missions were administered from a position of power and superiority to the “unlearned savage” rather than in humility and weakness.

World War I and especially World War II offered Native Americans a chance to see the rest of the world. Indians often traveled to places such as Europe where they (ironically) were held in high esteem, even though it was sometimes as an item of novelty. In these far away lands, Native American soldiers were allowed privileges not afforded them in the socially restrictive climate of North America. When they returned home they began to push their former restrictions. By the 1950s things were already beginning to change as noted by the sympathetic (yet continued paternalistic) tone from a 1952 handbook.⁸

The assumption of cultural assimilation into the dominant culture was still present as noted by the latter, “Do not spend too much time trying to learn the language.... [If] the Indians among whom you are to work do not speak English, they will soon do so”.⁹ Yet, there are hints that a desire for understanding the

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⁷ In Ward Churchill’s *Kill The Indian, Save The Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 2004), xxiv. Churchill shows the correlation of genocide with the boarding school system. He claims, among other statements, that the death rate of Indian boarding school children was in some cases higher than those of the Jews held in Nazi concentration camps.

plight of the Native was developing. Perhaps these were the first steps toward seeing value in the culture. He continues, “Show a lively interest in all things Indian, without condescension. A genuine love for people is a must for a missionary....” Unfortunately, the next paragraph re-introduces the paternalistic patterns from the past.

The fact that Indians have been generally wronged, cheated, divested of initiative, belittled, subject to constant oversight and direction, is not ample reason to be over sentimental about them, or to make sentimentalism a philosophy of service in solving the resulting problems. The wounds are deep and the scars easily opened, and with some Indian people they are dripping with blood, full of hatred and bitterness. It is both a psychological and a physiological as well as a genuine spiritual problem. Indian people, especially Indian young people need high hopes, high inspiration, high ideals, high resolves, in full measure and pressed down, to acquire and possess permanently the personal discipline so necessary in performing enlarged services.

There is no doubt in my mind from whose culture the author intended to draw for these high hopes, high inspirations, high ideals and high resolve. Certainly he did not mean they would be drawn from the indigenous culture.

By the 1960s the fabric of a socially constructed white North American society began to show severe wear, and as a result, more freedom of expression from marginalized groups was tolerated. Included among these groups was the continued Native American desire to receive many of the same rights of expression as other members of society. The late 1960s and early 1970s in particular was a time when, as we often hear people say, “it was okay to be Indian again.”

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9 Ibid., 33.
10 Ibid., 51.
11 Ibid.
This opportunity for public self-expression of indigeneity also influenced Native American Christian thinkers and theologians. As First Nations Christians examined the Scriptures through renewed cultural lenses, they were more easily able to observe God as the one who was “no respecter of persons” nor culture. Some of these Native Christian thinkers were provoked towards finding new paradigms of faith expression after reading books such as Vine Deloria Jr.’s God is Red and Custer Died for Your Sins. For brevity’s sake I will not reflect on Deloria’s writings but the impact of these two books on the contextual movement should not be understated. At the same time many missionaries (both white and Indian), on the “Indian field” fought the expression of Indian culture related to Christian faith all the more.

It was during this changing social climate, in November 1969 that a meeting occurred in Winnipeg between several Native Christian leaders that sparked the first Indian Ecumenical Conference to be held in the summer of 1970. Cherokee leader Andrew Dreadfulwater, a committee member, remarked, “We have almost let all this religious squabbling smother our spiritual power and destroy us as a strong people.”12 The renewal of spiritual power as drawn from Native traditions and the rise of Native American nationalism would be hallmarks of the Indian Ecumenical Conference in the upcoming years.

About the same time efforts were underway to develop a Native studies program to be incorporated into the avant-garde Rochdale College near Toronto. The institute held a series of annual Cross Cultural Workshops that had significant influence in both Canada and the U.S. Another convergence during this time was the ecumenical interest of various Native segments in North America. Cherokee anthropologist Bob Thomas was one of those people instrumental in both the resulting Institute and the Ecumenical Conference. Thomas considered himself a “Nighthawk Keetoowah” (traditional Cherokee) and a Christian. In the book A Good Cherokee, A Good Anthropologist: Papers in

Honor of Robert K. Thomas,\textsuperscript{13} Terence R. Anderson points to the problem of modernity’s influence upon Christianity which produced the inability to recognize the sacred universe. Although recognizing there are significant differences that must be addressed by Native American theologians, Anderson reports,

I am convinced that many of the purported differences between Christianity and Native traditional religions which have set barriers between them, actually have little to do with the Bible or the main strands of Christian tradition. Rather, these differences have become barriers because they create difficulties for modern Christians who have problems with a sacred universe. It is modern thought and its sensibilities that they scandalize, not traditional Christian views. The numerous Native elders who claim that generally the Christian gospel and Native sacred traditions are compatible, and the many differences are more complimentary than antithetical to each other, in my view are correct.\textsuperscript{14}

I pause, simply to say that my own experiences with traditional Native elders have on numerous occasions supported Anderson’s claim. He goes on to say,

The degree of Christianity’s captivity by modernity, has a direct bearing on the relation of Christianity to traditional Indian religions and in turn, on the survival of Native peoples. A working hypothesis has emerged for me out of these discussions with Bob: Christianity becomes alien and destructive rather than enriching to Native traditions and peoples in direct proportion to the degree that it has been captured by modernity or has become a carrier of it, either intentionally or unintentionally.\textsuperscript{15}

In the 1980s a number of writers started to surface in addition to a few earlier innovators and practitioners (some who had been

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 207.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 207f.
practicing in private for many years). Among these were George Tinker, Steve Charleston, Steve Cheremie Rising Son, Bill Baldridge, Leverne Jacobs, John & Gerri GrosVenor, Lawrence Hart, Spencer Cody, Jim McKinney, Reeves & Clydia Nahwooks and Adrian Jacobs. Since it was not popular to talk in denominational circles of such things, these people were not often well received by those in the Church. Still, the word about contextualizing the Gospel to Native Americans was getting out.

We owe a great debt to James Treat who has documented the early days of the Ecumenical Council in a work entitled *Around the Sacred Fire: Native Religious Activism in the Red Power Era*, published in 2003. Treat also edited the premier volume of this subject in 1996 called *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*. This work was a series of essays by Native writers from various perspectives including: James L. West; Rosemary McCombs Maxey; Stan McKay; Paul Schultz; George Tinker; Steve Charleston; William Baldridge; Jace Weaver; Robert Allen Warrior; Vine Deloria, Jr.; Marie Therese Arrchambault; Kim Mammedaty, Alberta Pualani Hopkins, Kateri Mitchell, John S. Hascall; Adrian Jacobs; Emerson Spider, Sr; Juanita Little; Karol Parker; Klem Bear Chief; Tweedy Sombrero; and Levern Jacobs. To these early thinkers who expressed their thoughts in writing, we owe a great debt.

The impetus of the movement that began in the late 1960s was waning in the mid-eighties but a spark still continued and it began to be fanned into a flame over the next decade. It was in the mid 1980s when I fully came on board within the Native American contextual framework — yet, no one thought of it as a movement until recent years. My own experience of cultural revelation came after I had spent two years in Alaska among Inuit and Aleutians as what I now call a “missionary oppressor”. After great conflict of values and soul I vowed I would never again participate in the oppression of my own people.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s Edith, my wife, and I were running a Sweat Lodge for Jesus, sponsoring Native American Youth Culture Camps, holding Native language classes and hosting Pow Wows to name just a few activities. At that time I
only knew of a few other ministry leaders in my small denominational circles using their own culture as worship expressions to God. These included Bill Thompson; Newton and Amelia Old Crow; John David White Eagle, Jr.; Herschell Daney and Kim Mammedaty. Others that I later heard of who began moving out contextually during that decade included Robert Francis, Richard Twiss, Suqquina, Terry LeBlanc, Fern Cloud, Spencer Cody, Robert Soto, Casey Church, Richard Nunez and likely numerous others. I obviously can’t list everyone who deserves to be mentioned as an early innovator from the mid-eighties to mid-nineties because of my own limited knowledge. My apologies to those whom I have missed.

It was in the early to mid 1990s when this “new batch” of native leaders began meeting together on a national level to expressly discuss Native culture and Christianity. In 1991 Edith and I hosted a conference called “Christ & Culture: Missionary Influence on the Plains Tribes”. It was at that conference where we learned that there would often be stiff opposition from Native brothers and sisters in Christ who vehemently disagreed with our methods and theology. Most everyone in Native contextual ministry has gone through something similar.

It was also during this period, through the organizational efforts of key leaders like Richard Twiss and Terry LeBlanc that we began to find each other and allow God to use the contextual theme as a unifier to promote the kingdom and the contextual gospel in a public way. Perhaps the greatest influence took place in 1996 with the “Inaugural World Christian Gathering of Indigenous People” in New Zealand. Among those native leaders who attended were Twiss, LeBlanc, John Sandford and Garland Brunoe. The Maori people especially had a great impact upon the Native Americans.

Resultantly, in 1998 the 2nd “World Christian Gathering of Indigenous People” was hosted by Native Americans in Rapid City under the guidance of Richard Twiss and Terry LeBlanc. Some other key leaders who were brought to the forefront at that time and who have yet to be mentioned, were Lynda Prince, Mary Glacier, Fern Noble, Dean Shinnoose, Ray Aldred, Dan LaPlante, Jonathon Maracle, Rita Bear-Gray, Phil Duran, and
Art and Ralene Begaye. A few of the elders in cooperation with this movement about that time were Jerry Yellowhawk, Marles Moore and Vincent Yellow Old Woman.

Twiss’ and LeBlanc’s efforts with the World Christian Gathering in Rapid City could be characterized as the catalyst for bringing hundreds (perhaps thousands) of likeminded people together for the first time to declare publicly that the gospel can and will be contextualized among Native North Americans.

Perhaps the greatest lasting impact from this event was the realization by isolated individuals experiencing loneliness and persecution that they were no longer alone in their struggle. Indeed, it was finally realized that God was sovereignly raising up Native North American ministry leaders from all across the U.S. and Canada, desiring to proclaim freedom in Christ found in a culturally contextualized gospel. Only a few books were available at that time to help instruct those who wanted to share with others a written testimony of this phenomenon.

The late 1990s forward saw the publication of several books on indigenous Christianity. Included are:

- Adrian Jacobs’ two books, *Aboriginal Christianity: The Way it Was Meant To Be* and *Pagan Prophets and Heathen Believers: Native American Believers in the God of the Bible*;
- Richard Twiss had a manuscript at various times under several titles that ended up being published by Regal and called *One Church Many Tribes: Following Jesus the Way God Made You*;
- Dr. Suqqiina released *Can You Feel the Mountains Tremble? A Healing the Land Handbook*;
- My work called *Mixed Blood Not Mixed Up: Finding God-given Identity in a Multi-cultural World*. Soon afterwards, I was able to have another manuscript published by Baker, and later InterVarsity Press, called *Living in Color: Embracing God’s Passion for Ethnic Diversity*.
- In the past several years, largely through the publishing efforts of Tony Laidig, various publications have been produced by Native authors with a contextual bent.
Included in these are works by dozens of good authors such as Robert Francis and Phil Duran. The writings, like the movement, continue to expand.

In 1999 Richard Twiss sponsored the first “Many Nations One Voice” conference held in Kansas City. The Many Nations conferences were a natural follow up to the World Christian Gathering and they took the contextual theological issues to the level of public apologetics. These conferences (currently in a transitioning phase) are still hosted under the efforts of Twiss’ Wiconi International Ministries. They serve as a gathering place to help the non-Native community understand these important issues as well as to inspire Native Americans towards a healthier and more Biblical view of God and themselves.

Native American Christian networking continues to expand. There are several Internet networks which connect Native believers, many of which are devoted to a contextual approach to ministry. A few of these include Ray & Liz LeVesque’s “Round Dance” and Jeny Covell’s “First Nation’s Monday” and her other sites. The North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies (NAIITS) is certainly burgeoning as a promising opportunity to gather Native Christian thinkers from all walks, along with non-Natives, to discuss current issues and topics that concern Native people and mission.

**Moving Forward**
There are probably thousands of people who see their ministry as part and parcel of this movement, or who feel a call to this approach. Unfortunately, no stable school or training center exists where a person can go for instruction in Native American contextual theology and practice. This void of a place to gather such ideas and work them out feeds the ever-present dangers associated with isolation in a movement.

Several years ago the Wesleyans, under the guidance of Adrian Jacobs and Phil Duran, attempted such a school but through no fault of their own, it failed. Several other attempts have failed. It is the vision of Eagle’s Wings Ministry (our own ministry) in cooperation with NAIITS, to begin a place dedicated to this purpose and to serve as a proto-type for regional training.
centers around the continent. We had begun such a school but recently have been ousted from our current location due to pressure from white supremacists.

Numerous seminaries and professors have invited dialogue and have publicly come forward to commend the theology of the “Native American Contextual Movement”. In the words of Darrell Whiteman, former Director of the E. Stanley Jones School of World Missions at Asbury Seminary — words directed towards myself, Ray Aldred and Terry LeBlanc — “We believe that you guys are doing some of the best missiology in the world....” Other globally known theologians and missiologists have made similar supportive comments including: Ralph Winter, The Center for World Missions; Larry Shelton, George Fox University; Charles Kraft, Fuller Theological Seminary; Doug Hayward, Biola; Douglas Pennyor, Biola; and the list could go on. It should also be noted that Asbury Seminary has granted several Native Americans, myself included, scholarships in doctoral degrees and they continue to show interest in our approach to mission.

Certainly indigenous leadership is a key to the future. The challenges of the Native North American Contextual Movement are daunting. Negotiating the path of forgiveness of past wrongs is a major obstacle, along with shedding the vestiges of modernity through decolonization, developing indigenous theologies and indigenous expressions of worship. Addressing the superficial nature of much of the current contextualization being done is yet another issue. Facing those components of our past and our traditions that do not honor the Creator — are yet another set of tasks we as Native Christians are called to embrace.

How these tasks are approached will be as important as the tasks themselves. Modernism’s techniques, fully embraced by the American church, have all but consumed us. Our indigenous identities have been forsaken for a post-colonial portage that, on a systemic level, we can’t seem to shake. Our first approach is often taken from an individualistic, materialistic, expedient position like that of our colonial forebears. Rather, we require a more experiential and relational approach that stems from our
own Native heritage. We, at least in our own minds, feel trapped into submission, boxed in by the categories of “aboriginalism” handed us by colonialism. We often see ourselves as the image that colonialism has tried to make us into, rather than those whom the Creator has intended us to be. The questions concerning tolerance, unity, de-colonization and what will be a truly indigenous theology and an indigenous church are therefore, still nebulous.

Adversaries to an indigenous contextual theology and ministry tell us that we can not go back in time. Our opponents are partly right in their criticism. We are not today the people who we once were. Compared to our ancestors, we are weak physically and spiritually. Even if we wanted to return to their level of spirituality we could not likely bear it. We have a crisis of identity. We have a leadership crisis. We have a cultural crisis and now we are experiencing a crisis of worldview. We are a weakened and dispirited people. Ours is predominantly a spiritual crisis and plight. And history has shown us that we will not find the answers needed for ourselves, nor for the future generations of indigenous Americans, by assimilating into the empire of white America.

**Concluding Remarks**

If the contextualization movement has taught us anything, it has taught us that returning to a colonial ordered theology is to cooperate with the intended cultural genocide. So we will never retreat. Like the Dog Soldier warrior societies of the past, we have placed our lance in the ground and we only await a fellow member of our society to lift the stake so we can advance further. Like the first Dog Soldier — Jesus Christ — we have made our stand for a *shalom* kingdom that has been waiting for the First Nations of North America. To live it to its fullest we must discover what was in our culture and in Christ from the beginning. We stand on the shoulders of many Native American brothers and sisters, grandfathers and grandmothers, who have awaited such an opportunity as we now have. It is to their honor, and to the honor of an honest Christ, that we must make our stand. I close with the words of Leverne Jacobs,
I listened to the stories of others whose ways are different, but in whose stories I have found the Christ of the Christian gospel. I learned to put aside my fears and step out in faith; and in that step of faith experienced the vastness of God, the Creator. I hear the sounds of many voices, each with a tenor and beauty of its own, but which together sing the praises of God the Creator and Jesus the son in one great symphony of creation. In the midst of that glorious sound rings the phrase “This is you—both Native and Christian.” The meaning of that phrase will be a life-long dialogue with self. Each new experience and each year will uncover different aspects of that reality like the many facets of a precious gem. This dialogue is a dialogue shared by many First Nations people and which must continue in the midst of a changing world.  

Wa-do! (Thank you!)

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God’s Message: Because of the three great sins of Israel — make that four — I’m not putting up with them any longer. They buy and sell upstanding people. People for them are only things — ways of making money. They’d sell a poor man for a pair of shoes. They’d sell their own grandmother!  

Introduction: First Person History
I want to tell you a story of recent history. This symposium is on the history of contextualization in Native ministry. Someone called “official” history the fictional recollection of the dominant society. My story is one of a first person participant. I understand that memory is not simply the objective recording of factual reality as it happened. The images, voices, and sequences of experience are all intertwined with our interpretation of what happened and our emotive response, that sometimes stem from large pools of emotional residue from previous experience. I will do my best to sort through everything and accurately tell what I observed along with my emotive response.

First person witness is the foundation for any further interpretation and evaluation of history and so I submit my experience to this symposium. The rest of this paper is my interpretation of my experience followed by an evaluation of what appears, from my study of history, to be a similar repeating experience in Native ministry.

Death of a Dream
It was March of 2000. And 109 years after the pain of Wounded Knee I was to experience Lakota angst and agony once again, not with death by government troops, but betrayal by the Church

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1 Copyright June 2006, Adrian Jacobs.
and the death of another beautiful dream — First Nations Institute. Black Elk’s recollection of a much larger beautiful dream that lay frozen in the bloody mud in 1890 was a greater dream than the one I saw die in 1999. Nevertheless, it was very painful for me.

My own life at that time was in turmoil from changes. In the seven months preceding, I:

- changed jobs;
- packed and moved all our belongings 1600 miles to another country;
- re-established four of our five children in a new school;
- was promoted to the head of a denominational Native ministry;
- was living in my fourth home since relocating;
- was getting to know the Lakota people; and
- unknowingly, was preparing to be part of the death of one of the biggest dreams of my Christian life.

The great dream that drew us to South Dakota was a contextual Native ministry training school. I authored the two-year ministry curriculum from a Native cultural perspective. During that bright hopeful fall semester of 1999, I taught the first course. Now only five months later I was dealing with the school’s premature death and closing. The Christian powers-that-be did not seem to care enough about Native feelings to change this destiny as other matters consumed their attention.

**First Nations Institute**

One hundred and sixty acres in the Black Hills of South Dakota was home to a fifty year old denominational residential school. It was transformed into a ministry and vocational training school for Native people — First Nations Institute [FNI]. I met Larry Marshall, my predecessor overseeing this school, during a planning meeting for the *Second World Christian Gathering On Indigenous People* in Rapid City, March of 1998. My curriculum was a perfect match for this new school. The old building had been renovated with a round Lakota chapel, a dance arbour, and a commitment to a re-envisioned Christian ministry from the Native perspective. The dream was so encouraging with qualified and gifted Native staff committed to the contextual
approach and Native students recruited to change the face of Native ministry. I gambled my future on the hopeful beginnings of a dream come true, moving to South Dakota from my home in Belleville, Ontario.

Within one month of my family’s arrival, I heard the rumblings of the end of the dream. One more month and all but one staff member of the school had painfully departed. Two months more and I was dealing with the deepest pain of all — the sale of the school property.

Accounting incompetence, the overspending of a staff carpenter, and the fearful over-reaction of a denominational board brought the door slamming shut on this dream of a contextual school for Native ministry. Then, from the ashes, a Phoenix of hope began to rise; only to be strangled before it could even get off the ground. The death of this hope was the keenest pain of all.

Chosen as Funeral Director
On March 4, 2000, during a telephone conference call of the board of the denomination overseeing FNI, I was asked to become the second Native director. The first had been the original founder of this Native ministry. During this meeting, I was asked by the Board Chairman if there was a coalition of Native ministries that could purchase FNI property for a nominal amount of $50,000. I told him, yes. He told me, in the hearing of the remaining board members participating in the conference call that this coalition had until April 1st to make an offer to purchase.

I was overjoyed. We had a golden opportunity to realize the dream that had seemed to die with the dismissal of the FNI staff. I knew many other Native ministries who shared the same vision and was thrilled to see the possibilities unfolding before my eyes. By Saturday, March 18, Richard Twiss of Wiconi International, our lead organization in the coalition, had a firm offer of $50,000 sent to denominational headquarters. The Phoenix was beginning to rise from the ashes. Little did I know that I would serve as funeral director. The Phoenix was already dead.
Another Broken Promise
I found out later that the offer made by the Board Chairman was a lie. The District Superintendent of the non-Native Dakota District, a member of the denominational board and participant in the conference call, sent a realtor to FNI the day after the board meeting. The next day they received a similar offer of $50,000 at the denominational headquarters. Before the coalition of Native Ministries had our offer on the table, and weeks before the deadline, the property was sold to the non-Native Dakota District. I felt deep betrayal and learned a difficult lesson about systemic evil and martyrdom.

The Dakota District Superintendent sat in my office to answer my complaint of a dirty behind-the-scenes deal. All of his win-win spin did not remove the sense of betrayal I felt. I had not the same long-term attachment to the FNI property as others, so I went to two Lakota elders — one male, and one female. I asked them how they felt about the property and its vision for contextual ministry. I asked how they felt about its sale to the non-Native Dakota District. They both shared their love for the Black Hills and their deep sense of betrayal. I brought these feelings to the Dakota District Superintendent and received no acknowledgment, only more justifying rationale. My frustration grew as I heard no acknowledgement of responsibility for broken promises. My upset multiplied as I learned that everything on the property was sold too, all our vehicles, equipment, and building materials. These were stored at FNI for other churches, schools, and offices of the Native ministry. Finally, with deep anger and a deep feeling of betrayal I said, “I’m glad my grandmother was not there, because you probably would have sold her too!” I wept with frustration.

Betrayed by Callousness
The district superintendent sat there like a stone, not a word of comfort, not a wince of conviction. I died a thousand deaths that day. Then, to add insult to injury, this property was later sold by the Dakota District to the Nature Conservancy for $270,000, a profit of over $200,000. To add a second insult to injury the Dakota District had to overcome opposition among their non-Native churches in order to give the Native Ministry a tithe of the sale. It turns out they also believe in net-tithing as the Native Ministry received a check from the Dakota District for under
$20,000. Two hundred thousand dollars raised for Native ministry went into the coffers of a non-Native district and the powers-that-be patted themselves on the back while Native ministry suffered once again.

My story is one that has been repeated time and again throughout Native mission history. The dates, names, and circumstances change but the plot plays out in the same way. It is our sad legacy and yet the one the Creator has given us to endure. I wish there was another story to tell but this is the one I have. I have found some healing in my own personal history of trauma and I sense a process before us that will heal us corporately of our historical wounds.

**Corporate Healing from Betrayal**
There is a healing for us for the betrayal of First Nations Institute. There is a healing for Wounded Knee for the Lakota people. It is a corporate healing for us as Native people — churches, missions, ministries, nations, and other groupings. It is a difficult journey before us as it requires us to embrace the pain of our martyrdom in order to emerge to the glory that the Creator has set before us. It is the path Jesus embraced. There is a glory yet to be revealed in us as Native followers of Jesus.

There is purpose in our pain. What the enemy of the Creator means for evil and destruction our Maker is able to turn to good. The Lord of history has overseen our history. He has a destiny for us to fulfill in our history. It is a witness to His nature in us.

**Pioneer Mission**
The Native contextual movement has been with us from the very beginning of Euro-Christian witness. Pioneer mission always acknowledged the evident necessity of adaptation to Native culture (if only for physical survival) and expressed the vulnerable spirit of the Incarnation. Thinking Native people forced missionaries to adapt their conventions to new realities and as long as this happened the movement of God began to emerge out of Euro-cultural limitations. As long as this spirit of humility existed Incarnational contextual ministry had a chance.

Roger Williams, the left wing Puritan, was beloved by Native people on Rhode Island because he spoke their language, lived
among them, and was gracious and respectful. The hidden story of Thanksgiving is the assistance of Squanto and his advocacy for the vulnerable Pilgrims. Catholic fidelity among Wendat/Huron people of Quebec is, in part, due to the blood of Jesuit martyrs. Jesuits contextualized Catholicism and stayed with them till death by Iroquoian attack. Moravian austerity and sincerity demonstrated Christian love to Delawares martyred in the cross fire of Native-Settler conflict. So many Native people have clung to the faith brought to them by suffering missionaries, even when hurt themselves by Euro-American church goers.

**Colonial Mission**

When Euro-mission began to emerge from a numerically dominant position its previously inherent humility was replaced with ethnocentric oppression. The current Euro-American mission agenda to reproduce three-self indigenous churches after their parent models is nothing more than indicative of the forces behind Babel’s “one language,” “one building project” oppression of diversity and cultural expression. Forces from the centre of ethnocentrism mitigates against the spirit of humility inherent in Incarnational contextual ministry.

The dominant English strategy of state and church was to extend the borders of England. Within the borders assimilation was the given for Native people. The only thing that made the Native church different from the English model was dark skin. The structures and values were no different than the English church. Challenges to this were confronted as heresy and Native people acquiesced to the dominant party line. Façade efforts to advance the Native church have a hollow ring to them. The Native soul has been squeezed into a Euro-American mould and has been restless ever since.

**Self-Theologizing**

The heart of the contextual movement is the four-self of a truly Indigenous church — self-theologising. This produces truly Indigenous Christian experience. The mystery of God is made flesh in Indigenous skin. It is the triumph of God against the selfishness of humanity in its ethnocentrism and prejudice. It is the transcendence of love across the boundaries of other-ness. It is the affirmation of dignity in the acceptance of diversity made
in the image of God. It says to ‘the other’ — “You have something valuable to offer me that only you can give.” We are the offspring of God united in the purpose of the Creator to express His heart to creation.

This has been the area where the hegemony of the Euro-American church is most threatened. The sincere desire of dominant culture churches pours money and effort into reaching Native people. Some denominations establish Native districts and special ministry training programs to bring Native people into the Euro-American fold. When sufficient Native initiative gathers steam the non-Western value system of Native people challenges the Euro-American status quo. Native districts get dissolved and training programs fall by the way side.

**Satanic Persecution of the Righteous**
The enemy of God does not want a church of Native expression to exist. There is a Satanic persecution of the righteous. The nascent flower of Native dignity is assaulted by the enemy of God. We are in a spiritual warfare and our every movement toward the Creator is strategically resisted by Satan. Jesus knew this and told us we would be witnesses-martyrs to His goodness in our lives. Followers of Jesus shall ever be dogged, as the apostle Paul was, by Satan and Satan through human agency. Every step into greater freedom and dignity is on a battlefield where people are wounded and lives are lost. We are born to pain and to a battle. The hardest part of the battle is dealing with the faces of those who are used by Satan, those who appear as friends and who claim Christian allegiance.

Our efforts to alleviate our pain by all other means than forging forward in God-seeking struggle are cowardly and blinded. The only way beyond the pain of our martyrdom to the glory of the other side is through the pain of our martyrdom. We must embrace it in order to emerge to the always new face of Indigenous Christian expression in the same orthodox spirit of the Biblical record.

**Reality at the Margins: Pioneer Mission**
The margin is the centre of the Kingdom of God. It is the place of encounter. It is the testing place of love. It is the ground of mission. It is inherent to human relationships. It is meeting
someone so different from you and facing the struggle for communion, for true intimacy. It requires humility and vulnerability/nakedness. It is the greatest thing. It is the most awful thing.

Pioneer missionaries had to become children and learn at the feet of Native people in order to physically survive. They faced the humility and humiliation of language learning. They faced understanding their own faith and the culture of those they were reaching out to in order to communicate their faith. The years it took to earn trust and gain a voice of credibility in the community meant they had to rely on much outside of themselves. This dependence kept them in a vulnerable learning stance — the foundation of mission.

**The Margin: Authentic Glimpse of the Creator’s Original Intentions**

Indigenous people have fulfilled the two original human covenants — that of Adam and Noah. We have gone into all the world (including the harsh Arctic and far flung Pacific islands). We have multiplied (Canadian Natives are the fastest growing ethnic group in Canada). We have stewarded the earth and have learned to live in a respectful reciprocal relationship with the environment. Throughout the world dominant groups have attempted to kill off Indigenous people and steal their lands.

The interface of diversity is the proving ground of love. This is where you will see all that is good and noble in the human heart and all that is so terrible. In the awful affairs of border disputes between nations (such as the current one in Caledonia, Ontario, among Six Nations Iroquois and Canadians) God makes Himself known to those who “feel after Him and find him though He is not very far from anyone of us (Acts 17:26,27).”

**Colonial Oppression**

Babel is a tower distancing the seat of power from the most vulnerable in society. It is the monument to human ingenuity moving against the covenantal instructions of God. Instead of filling the earth and letting diversity evolve naturally in the passage of time, geographic distance and human ingenuity, Babel fearfully gathers everyone to a single language, to a single
building project, to a single governing structure that stifles diversity.

This is the agenda of colonialism. In Babel humanity tries to bring about heaven on earth through violation of God’s covenant with creation. In colonialism, the heaven of the motherland is forged out of the wilderness with Indigenous people suffering the fate of Canaanites. This is the false hope of human self-salvation that finally reveals itself in all of its awful nature as Babylon of the Book of Revelation.

**The Centre of Ethnocentrism**
The centre of ethnocentrism is often the place of the oppressive rule of dominance. The centre is where the predominant thought is “we are the same.” At the centre the rules are well established, the assumptions of acceptability are foregone. If it were not for the intrusion of difference the centre could carry on in its own selfish way. The closer to the centre of any ethnocentrism you are, the closer to hell you get. Mission conducted from the centre of ethnocentrism results in colonial oppression.

Once sufficient numbers of Christians could seek solace in their dominance the inherent humility of pioneer mission passed from the scene. Teaching the language of the sending Euro-American church, its catechism, hymnology, ecclesiastical structure, and other cultural forms became the task of second generation missionaries. Nascent efforts to contextualize ministry fell away and denominational reproduction became the norm. Western thinking characterized by dichotomous reductionist reasoning supplanted the holistic relational processes of Native culture. In spite of this, Christianity took hold of the magnanimity of Native people in a large way, albeit with a simmering cultural dissatisfaction underneath.

**The Way Out**
The journey out of colonial abuse begins with the word “No.”. No, I will no longer be a peon in your game. No, my identity is not given to me by you. No, you will not think for me and tell me how I should feel. No, I will no longer take the back seat in your bus of arrogance.
A Canadian historian of Native mission said that articulate and often abrasive Native leaders often marked the beginning of a new kind of Christianity taking place in the soil of Native hearts. Much of this conference will be about the failures of Western Christianity among Native people. It is only one characteristic of a new beginning.

The beginning of recovery from abuse is a revelation of the aberrant nature of the abuse suffered and the disparity of power between the abused and the abuser. Native victims of cultural abuse take the first step out of the cycle of abuse by telling their stories. You cannot avoid, medicate, or manage the issue and the pain. You have to confront it and bring it to light. You may become weary of the tale of tragedy told but it is the means to emerge to the purpose and destiny the Lord of History has for us. As we embrace and deal with our corporate wound, we have Micah 6:8 to guide us:

- We must embrace our history. To “do justly” we must tell our story and express all the pain of our history. You will hear of our bright hopes and our painful deaths. Weep with us and sing with us. The pain will be so deep there is only consolation in Our Creator. This is the blood of Abel. This is the story of Native encounter with Euro-American people — the Indigenous holocaust. It is the story of colonial Native Christianity.
- We must love mercy and express our Creator’s heart. Our history reveals our purpose and our destiny. The great sin against our dignity is answered by a love that brings arrogant violence to its knees. This is the message of the Blood of Jesus that speaks better things than that of Abel. This is the testimony of Native people returning to the treaty table with American and Canadian authorities that have not kept a treaty yet. It is the testimony of NAIITS and other efforts by Native peoples to express an Indigenous Christianity in partnership with its repentant historically colonial Euro-American/Canadian church family.
- We then must walk with humility with our brother and Creator. We are no more righteous than any other. We are equally in need of the Blood of Jesus for our own arrogance against the image of God in others. This is the
celebration of the Creator’s diversity in humanity from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

It is out of this seed bed of honesty, forgiveness, and humility that an Indigenous Christianity can grow — an Indigenous Christianity that seeks the peer respect of the treaty making nature of Native people. This is a Christianity that respects the least in its midst as having a legitimate voice. It is a Christianity that listens like a brother and fights like a warrior for the vulnerable in its midst. It is a Christianity that is not afraid to laugh at itself and at the pretensions of leadership. It is a Christianity that believes we are stronger as a group and that humbly relies on others for support and correction. It is the wild Christianity of the charismatic prophet challenging the status quo of presumption and arrogance. It is right before you eyes.

I Don’t Ever Want to be Part of the Establishment
I don’t ever want to be part of the establishment. Although I long to have a voice of influence and the comfort of the powers-that-be, my deepest heart calling dooms me to the periphery of human hegemony. A passing voice crying in the wilderness I will ever be.

I am called to rest in the desert. A dry rock follows me slacking my thirst. Daily bread is my lot, not a bank vault. Wandering here and there I am passing mist. No foundation to a prideful edifice, charcoal black is my only record left. Only heaven and God’s presence there will fill this empty soul. Crumbling tattered ruins of time can’t compete.

I understand it takes more energy than we have at times to soul-search and actively love others. We selfishly just want to be happy and live an essentially fulfilling existence. Yet total selfishness is the centre of hell. Love sweats. Love risks. Love tries. Love is not love until it is given away. Ultimate love is never seen as such until it dies a bloody death on a cross. This is total trust in the sacrifice, for God must resurrect for love to have fruit. It seems that true love always dies.
Job’s wife wanted him to curse God and die. She didn’t want him to face his pain. She did not want to truly love him. She wanted her comfort and unexamined life. She could not bear the struggle of reflection. The primrose path to hell was her choice; careless diversionary comfort her chosen way.

The soul that struggles is closest to the Holy of Holies. The struggle is the laying down of human trust into the hands of God. The one whom answers elude, surrounded by uncertainty, is closest to real security. The pat answers of ethno-centrism's core are false assurances, providing the comfort of hell. You are OK in your comfort. You are OK in your assumption. You are OK in your prejudice. You are OK in your selfish view. I however,

I live at the intersection of difference
There are a lot of crashes here
Painful consequences of encounter
Where blood is spilled and lives mingle
Oh how I wish it were different
That true love didn’t have to die
A heart poured out to an empty sky
Or so it seems when the water’s dry
Intersections like incisions carved by truth
Love resurrecting, intimacy’s prize

Jesus was born in the margins, from poverty, from a small village, growing up in the hinterland of acceptability. He flourished with the marginal: prostitutes, tax collectors, fishermen, multi-divorced women, adulteresses, the demon possessed, sex-trade workers, the occupying powers, Samaritan half-breeds, Canaanite women, and others of questionable reputation. Sinners flocked to him.

He ventured to the centres of power and demonstrated real power to political hegemony. He called from the margins and castigated the powers-that-be: white-washed tombs, brood of vipers, gnat straining/camel swallowing fools. He spoke of the most terrible judgement for those from the centres of power who oppressed and manipulated the vulnerable.

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3 I Live at the Intersection of Difference, © 2003 Adrian Jacobs.
I worry as our numbers grow. I worry as our influence is felt with increasing respect. I feel the pull of dominance, the clarion call of Babel to unity and strength for a grand building project to our brilliance. “Lord, deliver me from the centre, where the answers are so clear, where everyone knows what to do and the assumptions rule. Lord re-take me to the margin where I am poor. Keep me in the place where my only choice is to trust you. Let me not be blinded by riches and the ability to make selfish choices. Keep me from the politics of shame.”

I can’t believe I am asking for the very miserable life I hate so well. I long for the opposite, for surety, for comfort, for choice. My flesh calls out for the deception just beyond the veil of abundance. I know there is only sorrow there strangled by cheap laughter.

I wish I could just live a “normal” life with few worries, a pleasure or two, and just let everything else go to hell. I am cursed with conviction and a thinking mind. Something in me calls out for more than a vain existence here. I long to give myself to what really matters. I want to upset the status quo and point the way to a better place. I am alive and I would have it no other way!!

I was born to mix it up with Deity. My name is “Jacob’s.” I was born to mix it up with divinity in humanity making a royal mess in my search for the “Rachel” of my biblical namesake. My children suffer my uneven life and are scattered to their own rivalry and sibling pain. My failures point the way to the only hope if you’ll look up from the dust. I cannot apologize for living and risking all. I will not skulk from the sidelines. The margin of encounter is my parish.

I’ve been to the headquarters of power. There is nothing left for me there. I’ve seen strong men belittled by fear. I’ve heard the haunting voice of mermaids mesmerizing me to shipwreck on the rocky shore of political expediency. I’ve seen the dance of politics; spastic comedy masking as dignity. I’ve watched pissing powers marking their territory. I’ve heard whispers that should have been shouted out in the lobbies of innocence. I’ve watched ol’boys pat each other on the back as they lynch another peon from the margins. Money changes hands and everyone looks
away. I am from the outskirts of decency. I am from the hinterland of respectability. I live in the border town of despair. I am not interested in earning the right to piss in their game, to mark my little corner of dignity. They only worship themselves in their little nod to me, another one from the margins made in the oppressor's image. All to please the ignorant masses, kept so by them, preserving their margin of victory in the polls of spin.

Don’t tell me to lighten up. Tell me a joke. Don’t balance me out. Let me burn. Don’t snow me with accolades. Think it through yourself. Don’t comfort me with words. Show me your bloody sweat. Don’t distract me from my pain. Cry with me.
The title of this piece might suggest an essay about something that happened centuries ago. In fact, I want to describe something that is taking place now. Though it may seem absurd or amazing or both, it appears, at least from the perspective of mainline church institutions that the Gospel is just now about to find its first real home in North America.

This thought began to dawn in my consciousness in 1996, with a winter visit to the Rt. Rev. Gordon Beardy in Kenora, Ontario. I was seeking his counsel and prayers regarding the possibility of my nomination as bishop of Alaska. As the Oji-Cree bishop of a multi-cultural diocese, he would know both the pitfalls and promise of working in a church institution in a diverse population. As an honest friend, he would have some idea of my capacity to do the work with effectiveness and integrity.

Gordon warmly and enthusiastically encouraged me, but it came with a challenge: “Do you think I can start a church that believes that this is sacred land?” I asked him what he meant and, with very little explanation, he said, “If you were a bishop, you could join me in a church that would believe that this is sacred land.”

I was confused. Though Gordon’s thought and values respectfully reflect both traditional Native and Christian teaching, I had never heard him use a phrase with such a powerful traditional Native reference. Like many Native elders, though his thought and values are thoroughly Aboriginal, his theology is normally phrased within the confines of a very orthodox and evangelical Christian faith. Further, the promotion of what sounded like a new church seemed completely out of character. He has always been loyal and dutiful to the Anglican Church.

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1 Copyright: Indigenous Theological Training Institute of North America, used with permission.
I’ve thought about it a lot since that day. Time and experience have peeled off a number of layers of my confusion. Today, I consider Gordon’s words prophetic. At one level, his words confront the evil that has stubbornly refused to recognize God’s presence in this graced Land and its peoples. At another, they unveil God’s grace and sovereignty in the history and on going life of the People of the Land, the Aboriginal nations. Taken together, and at both of these levels, we are inspired to expect a new future for the Native Peoples and Nations of North America.

The Churches of the West in North America and the Doctrine of Discovery

Aloysius Pieris, a contemporary Asian theologian, has pointed out that most of the churches of Asia, though they attempt to be local, are local churches of another continent. They have been “struggling for centuries to get acclimatized”. This is even more strikingly true of the churches of the West in North America. They came guided by European assumptions of cultural superiority and, with deadly consequence, by what has been called the Doctrine of Discovery. Ignoring for the moment larger societal issues presented by colonialism, we may say that the impact of these embedded cultural themes on Christian mission has been devastating. Though the modern age of mission began with the indigenous peoples of the Americas, the colonial churches’ basic operating assumptions have stunted the growth and impact of the Christian Faith among the Peoples of the Land and compromised the testimony of the churches of the West around the world.

The influential Doctrine of Discovery, providing the basis for Colonial expansion for over 500 years, presumes that Civilization is not present if the institutions of Western Culture are not available. A land that is discovered without Western institutions is considered “Terra Nullius”, an uninhabited land, even if peoples and cultures are present. The Right of Discovery, then, grants to the one who discovers the right to control, exploit, and rule, in the name of a supposed beneficial progress for the discovered. Actual experience suggests, however, that as Western colonialism spread, catastrophe and discovery were hard to distinguish.
Though we may acknowledge that Western development brought some good in its wake, the good comes with a heavy price. A quick and simple review of the sad history of the European encounter with the Peoples of the Land shows this clearly. The “discovery” mentality is also related to the now familiar litany of environmental destruction in North America. Regrettably, we are now seeing this attitude exported around the world through globalization or, as Lamin Sanneh has described it, “Americanization”.

Though long repudiated by most of the world’s major religious, moral, and legal traditions, the Doctrine of Discovery reappears like a noxious weed in the all too frequent arguments that challenge the contemporary legitimacy of Aboriginal life. Theologically, the Doctrine of Discovery has been the handmaid to the idolatrous assumption that God’s presence has been confined to Western Civilization — an idea that has all but destroyed the capacity of the major denominations to grow in indigenous communities.

Amazingly, the churches of the West remain perplexed that their cultural framework is neither easy nor self-evident for the People of the Land. Much of the Western mission to the People of the Land treats them, as a number of commentators have noticed, as insufficiently developed Euro-American suburbanites. They must join the church of a European Diaspora in order to achieve spiritual legitimacy.

The basic operating assumption of the colonial mission to North America has been that the land and history that produced European Christianity was sacred, having a privileged role in the development and communication of Christian faith. This privilege is so deeply ingrained in the churches of the West that many Native people assume that Christianity and Euro-American culture are inseparable. It is hard for many, even among the Native nations, to understand the monumental change that would come from a repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery by the recognition that this North American land is sacred.

To this day, the climate and seasons of European Christianity shape the liturgical seasons of faith and worship in North
America. This is so elemental that it is barely noticed, despite a growing appreciation for the way that the land based pre-Christian cultural beliefs and practices of Europeans shaped the churches of the West. Even before this awareness, the interaction of a developing Christianity with pre-Christian philosophers was, at the very least, seen as providential if not divinely ordained. The shape that non-Christian cultural influences gave to faith and practice has been normative for all who have followed in the churches of the West. In many, if not most, of these churches in North America, a basic understanding of the history and environment of Europe, as well as its churches, is necessary to be a fully recognized practitioner of the Christian faith.

Central to the Gospel is the idea of Incarnation: the Word made flesh. Unfortunately, even an idea so central to Christian faith can be ignored when obscured by cultural idolatry. The cultural experience of missionaries could be viewed as a part of the precious legacy of a worldwide faith, if put in proper perspective. Made an idol, it becomes a difficult obstacle to living experience of faith in a new context. The Word made flesh, the living experience of the Gospel, cannot be “freeze dried” in one culture's experience and transferred to another (hoping, perhaps, that the addition of baptismal water would lead to the production of a Western Christian on foreign soil). It is wrong to hope that the normative experience in one context will become an identical or normative reality in a new context. Incarnation means local. You can’t have an incarnational church that is not local. You can’t have a local church in the Americas that is substantially and foundationally a European export.

The Gospel’s Power and Promise
Gordon’s words reach beyond a simple repudiation of cultural idolatry. Constructively, they point to a living encounter with the Gospel in a North American context. Such an incarnation of the living and active Word of God would have great impact and consequences among the First Nations and far beyond. To be sure, one of the first places to be transformed is the past, or more precisely, our reading of the past.
Though colonialism limits the capacity of Westerners to see it, God’s Word has always had a vital and prophetic presence among the Peoples of the Land. In their diverse cultures and histories, we see constant suggestions of that presence, before, during, and after the arrival of the missionaries. Before, as many missionaries noted, evidence of God’s presence was seen in the values of family and faith that echoed so surprisingly and powerfully the Gospel the missionaries carried. During their initial encounters with the People of the Land the missionaries were surprised by the hospitable reception of the central values and precepts of the Gospel by many. Some missionaries even noted that Aboriginal ambivalence about some aspects of Western Christian practice often indicated a laudable allegiance to Gospel principles, present prior to European arrival in Native culture. After the arrival of the missionaries, Aboriginal survival is one of the great stories of God’s deliverance, a salvation that occurred in the midst of overwhelming opposition. Further, though largely ignored and rarely understood, there have been many examples of Gospel fruitfulness with a unique prophetic capacity among the People of the Land after the arrival of the missionaries and, quite often, without their support or involvement.

Despite colonialism, the Gospel found a home with some quite unexpected promise among the People of the Land in North America. For example, the Ojibwe Prayer Meetings of Northern Minnesota, loosely related to the Episcopal Church, still provide hope and a sense of renewed Aboriginal identity for close to 150 years. The Gospel has even been inspiration for some forms of Aboriginal resistance to colonialism, the Ghost Dance being one prominent example, Louis Riel being another. The Gwich’in Nation of Arctic Alaska and Canada is an impressive example of Gospel based resistance to colonialism that continues to this very day.

These are glimpses of alternative development contrary to colonialism and seeds of a Gospel future among the Aboriginal nations of North America. We see here the Gospel’s stubborn refusal to become the servant of one culture’s attempt to subvert another. The Gospel has a power to convey liberation that transcends the intent, capacity, and experience of its preachers.
In all of this we can also see the vigorous presence of God among the First Peoples of North America.

A Church for Turtle Island
Gordon’s prophetic words have come to mind on a number of occasions over the last 10 years. They echo in the conversations about Aboriginal justice and reconciliation within the Canadian church. These discussions have helpfully focused attention on the discrepancy between church advocacy and policy on Aboriginal rights and the continuing practice of Western cultural domination within Native churches. More important has been the spontaneous, uncoordinated, and unprecedented growth of vital Christian involvement and discipleship among the People of the Land. It is significant that this has been in the wake of institutional decline and chaos, much of it related to the residential school crisis and other by products of colonialism, among the churches of the West in Aboriginal communities. As these developments and their meaning unfold, we are seeing the embryonic emergence of a new church in North America.

For me, Gordon’s words have never been so tangible as this last summer. At the Sacred Circle of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples held in Pinawa, Manitoba in August, the first steps towards a church of the People of the Land of this Turtle Island (a number of tribes use this term to describe the Americas) were made. It is in this sense that I can say that we may be witnessing the birth of the first indigenous Anglican Church in North America — a church that would hold that this land is sacred.

Although it is far too early to tell whether or not the actions of the Sacred Circle in Pinawa will bear fruit — there is much that will work against it, to be sure — it is important to note the way the Circle mirrors developments in Christian mission in other parts of the Americas and around the globe. Despite a deterioration of the power and influence of the churches of the West, internally and externally, there has been an explosive vitality developing among churches and in areas that were formerly thought to be dependent and weak. This development, dramatically evident in the relationship of the churches of the
West to the churches of the global south, is also gaining momentum with the Fourth World, the Peoples of the Land.

As colonial administration ends or weakens among the People of the Land new possibilities for mission and ministry emerge. First and foremost is the growing clarity of a Gospel shaped identity unique to the indigenous nations. This resonates with a broader based renewal of culture among Aboriginal peoples and consciously draws on the vital Gospel presence in some of the earlier challenges to colonialism that we cite above, like Ojibwe Prayer Meetings.

There is, with these developments, a renewal of appreciation for the God given authority that has always existed among the Aboriginal nations. This authority, sometimes called sovereignty, is a direct repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery. With many, especially in a religious context, there is evidence of a unique awareness of the larger mission to humanity and the rest of Creation that this authority bears with it. This understanding of sovereignty — the authority and power to respond to the Creator's call to serve Creation — is in sharp contrast to the understanding of sovereignty generally present among the modern nation states. We may attribute it, in part, to the translation of the tribal ethos into a modern context.

Westerners often misunderstand the tribal ethos and its understanding of community. It is common to see the word “Tribalism” used to describe an isolated and fragmented identity held over against the good of the larger needs of humanity. In fact, this fragmentation is a common result of the commodification and breakdown of both social identity and community in the process of globalization. Aboriginal life — true tribal life — is, to the contrary, a call to relational and interdependent identity with humanity and all of creation. This is a vision that is desperately needed by the peoples of our world.

The events and movements of Christian renewal we witness today among the People of the Land in North America are undirected, uncoordinated, and simultaneous, in a pattern similar to indigenous church development around the world. We
witness a sprouting or spiritual vitality in myriads of patterns, too numerous to mention in a brief paper like this, but with a kind of family resemblance that has the stamp of both spiritual authenticity and authority. This renewal in Aboriginal communities seems to be influencing in equal measure those affiliated with the old-line denominations, newer independent and Pentecostal congregations, and others who have no clear identification with any known Western Christian institution. Significantly, though much of the renewal is premised on a certain independence from earlier colonial and Western models, there is very little evidence of bitterness or resentment displayed towards earlier mission work.

A survey of the various expressions of this renewal reveals that, from the human side of its genesis, the motivating and inspirational factors that accompany it are dynamic and multiple. First, there is a collective sense of obedience to a unique and timely mission and vocation among the People of the Land. This mission begins with a focus on the Word becoming flesh, being inculturated in contemporary Aboriginal life. This incarnational presence, despite its highly local context, is related and a vital part of a broader spiritual message and destiny addressed to “every family, language, people, and nation”. This dramatic expansion of mission results in a sense of responsibility for all humanity and all of Creation, a clear imperative in Scripture that is given too little attention in recent Western missions. There is, along with this broad sense of mission, a sincere desire to deepen communion with other Christians and cultures, not to separate from them. The paradox of a growing sense of Aboriginal identity is a more intimate sense of world community. But with this sense of global membership and leadership, there is, with great passion, a commitment to reconciliation and healing among the People of the Land — a reconciliation and healing that a growing number of Aboriginal Christians recognize can’t happen apart from the fulfillment of the Gospel in Native Life that is quite separate from the colonial church system.

**Marks of a North American Church**
What will be the marks that this venture is succeeding, both liberating for the People of the Land and transformational for
the Church as a whole? What will be the critical factors for the creation of a North American home for the Gospel of Jesus? I believe there are 7 touchstones:

1. A robust awareness that God has, is, and will be present among the People of the Land.
2. A recognition that God has acted definitively in the survival of the Peoples of the Land. Their continued life, despite centuries of often deadly and vicious opposition is a sign of God’s Grace and Judgment. Their on-going life is a prophetic act of witness against the materialism and avarice of our age.
3. Along with 1 and 2 is a related denunciation of the Doctrine of Discovery and an end to measuring Aboriginal church development by Western models.
4. The boundaries of Native church life should reflect and respect the boundaries of the People of the Land. The churches of the West must do more than affirm the authority and validity of the First Nations as it relates to other Nations and States. They must recognize it among themselves.
5. The Spirit of God has and will develop leaders among the People of the Land.
6. The Land is Sacred and a gift from God. We must recognize sacred place, history, and ecology. All people are here to tend and care for Creation in the service and power of the Creator. In addition, as the pattern of seasons and geography have shaped the experience of prayer, faith, and service since the beginning of the revelation recorded in Scripture, so must the Land of the Americas shape the pattern of Christian life in the Americas.
7. The spiritual and moral authority of the Aboriginal nations of the Americas, especially as they relate to their own, must shape the decision-making and the actual shape of these factors. This discernment must be both tribal and consensual, not imposed from above. This will demand flexibility and creativity. The shape of the relationship of the People of the Land to the churches of
8. the West must be up to them, but promises a pattern of community that, of necessity, call all to transformation.
The Promise of Gospel Transformation
If an Anglican Church of the Aboriginal nations of North America fulfills its promise, it may lay a serious claim to being the first and highest profile truly indigenous witness to the Gospel to North America among the historic mainline churches from Europe. It would be a church that holds sacred this land; its history — both prior to and since the coming of the colonial powers. It would also hold sacred the future of God’s Gospel in this Land and among its Peoples. Its development is radically placed in the power of the Gospel, which unveils God’s presence and, thereby, opens the door to repentance and new life. We may say, then, that in the Gospel, we see the Word of God, living and active, revealing the presence of God in the land and its Peoples prior to the introduction of Western civilization and, since that time, in the survival of the Aboriginal nations despite 500 years of oppressive and destructive colonialism. This revelation calls all of the churches of North America to repentance and new life, breaking down the walls of enmity and creating the way for us to become the true Church, together.

Throughout this paper, we have paid some attention to the larger context in which these developments among the Peoples of the Land will be received, both locally and globally. A Church for Turtle Island would call the whole Church to transformation. Locally, the churches of the West in North America would need to face some of the internal barriers that keep it from true growth. They must deal with the log in their own eye before taking out the speck in the eye of others. Globally, we may anticipate that the realization of a truly North American church would enrich all of the local churches. Once again, we would see that, perhaps more than anything else, the Gospel thrives on translation. Nothing is lost in translation; a new world is gained.
Each man sets out to write one kind of story but later finds he has written another.  

Playwright, James Barrie

The year is 2002. The place is Mission, British Columbia, a small town at the foot of the Coastal Mountains an hour drive East of Vancouver. This area is important to First Nations communities in Canada because of the historical significance of the Stol:lo nation burial mounds and other archaeological discoveries found at Xa’tem.¹ Twenty-seven First nations/Native American leaders have gathered to attend a week of leadership training. The meeting is convened at the newly minted Meeting Place of the Nations, headquarters of a non-profit agency dedicated to increasing Aboriginal awareness in the provinces. Its building was funded by non-profit monies.

The gathered are community leaders of various kinds: tribal council members, elected chiefs, various community workers, such as counsellors, social workers and ministers. At least two are elders and one of these is a pipe carrier (one acknowledged with authority to lead ritual movements of wisdom-gaining and peace-making). This group is comprised of First Nations/Native American leaders who have come from Umingmatok, Nunavut; as far West as Porcupine River, Gwich’in area in the Yukon Territories; and as far South as the Pokagan Band of lower Michigan, as well as parts in between. Some have been sent by their communities, others attend through Federal continuing education grants. Still others have paid their own way. A college-level certificate is transcripted with the University of British Columbia. Four participants are non-Native, having

¹ See www.xatem.com
applied to attend the lectures being offered by professor Carson Whiteowl, an archaeologist-turned-author whose spiritualist writings have become popular among seekers, especially in the mesas of the Southwest in the U.S.

People have traveled for days to participate in the first of five units of the Aboriginal Self-Government Program. The program is part of a larger implementation strategy that seeks to make credible the Canadian legislation designed to support “the era of self-governance”.

The classroom is smallish, perhaps the size of a three-car garage; no windows, pictures or plants. The seating is an arrangement of theatre-style rows and columns. The individual desks, fabricated out of a gleaming titanium-like metal, have flip down tables (the kind usually seen is grade school classrooms). A small plastic box is fixed to one corner with a web network and power cables to allow laptop users access to the web. A few of the larger adults comment to one another there is no room to “spread out” their notebooks. The class is called a “smart classroom” because the podium, a large wooden construction the size of a baby grand piano, allows lecturers to project videos, display pictures, connect to the web and interface with other smart classrooms through CU-C-ME video networking technology. Each student is micro-phoned and within reach of three cameras.

\[2\] The “era of self-governance” signals a marked distinction between the multiculturalism as experienced in the lower 48 and Canadian multiculturalism. U.S.-centered multicultural relations has functioned for most of post-segregation history as an assimilation program which validates intercultural relations, but is designed to assimilate underrepresented person groups into the mainstream of the dominant culture. Historic travesties again person and property are denied specific relief from the U.S. government. For America’s indigenous peoples, nullified treaties are nullified. This leaves Native Americans without legal access to many rightful lands and recourse; it offers others concessions in the forms of federal reservations. In the case of the forced immigration of African Americans through the slave trade, no legal pretence of treaties ever existed to nullify. Rather the costs of enslavement to African Americans (and the economic benefits to the country) are denied validity even as reparations are discounted for their practical unfeasibility.
As we join the group, professor Whiteowl is in his second day lecturing. His topic, “The Old Voice of the Land”, is intended to help participants read the natural spaces for their sacred richness, to discern the ritual clues left by the ancestors for their people. He flashes pictures of archaeological digs from the Mission, B.C. area. He creatively interweaves legends with interviews with various nations of the Sto:lo band regarding the legends. Maps appear and fade from the screen as he clicks the controller and points with the laser pointer. More than a few times, he comments on the ease with which he is able to switch from PowerPoint, to video, to transparencies and back to PowerPoint. Grinning, he comments, “this really is a smart classroom.” He commends the new Meeting Place of the Nations director for “this example of Native advancement and self-governance.” Many participants nod in agreement with much of what the professor says.

At least one leader present, Dara Crow, a recently elected tribal council member and associate pastor in the Assemblies of God, listens, while exhibiting a growing restlessness. Her success at grant-writing has allowed her to introduce community-based education programs. She is responsible for administrating a grant program credited with revitalizing interest in shaping Native approaches to the provision of community services such as family-involved elementary education, primary health and micro-economics education. Yet, secretly, she feels like an impostor on several levels; e.g., as a young person, as a woman, as a woman in a church which doesn’t always support women in ministry leadership, as a Native American caught between traditionalism and urbanism, etc. Because she is interested in increasing her managerial leadership skills for the reservation council, she attends all the seminars that will help her bolster her confidence and abilities. It has not been easy getting an education that fits who she is, deep down inside where culture meets personality.

As she nervously taps her pen on the blank page, she listens restlessly to professor Whiteowl. She is aware something is off beam for her, but it is below the surface. It has no name. One part of her is deeply gratified by being in a room almost
completely made up of Native and First Nations people. She relaxes at the thought. Most of her education — public schools on reserves, a private Christian college, and graduate work at a state university — has happened in majority culture institutions, where Native Americans were hardly noticeable in the demographic. Most responded to her dark hair and olive complexion by assuming she was from Mexico. She was never comfortable with having her identity fused with other groups called “people of color”, yet she had to admit, it offered her some anonymity and a place to hide when she did not want to be associated with Indian stereotypes ... sigh. Here, she is surrounded by her people. She was surprised by the calmness that came from her people “in the majority” for a change. Exhale. And yet, something was being disturbed within her.

She knew she signed up for this certificate program for two reasons: increased competence and confidence. The rising anxiety causes her to shift in her seat; the nervous tapping of her foot begins. Dara wants to stand. As Whiteowl clicks and points, and commends the efficiency of this metal room, Dara conjures a bond with that which is outdoors. She is aware of holding her breath again, as if steel bands were corseting her. And then it sinks in. The fretting takes on a name: alienation. Amid her own people, in a classroom led by a Native scholar, in the seat of North America’s ancient pathways of indigenous spirituality and gathering, Dara is not at home. She is in a cage. From seemingly out of nowhere she suddenly floods with resentments she had kept at bay in former classrooms, resentments she could keep at bay because these experiences were not hosted by her people. She had expected so little then. She does not understand why Professor Whiteowl stands theorizing about her people’s land and past as if it were not just outside the door! Why these pictures, and maps and diagrams and interviews and metal chairs and plugs and cords to experience the ritual deeps of Native souls as if they were in some foreign country? She cannot keep it back now. She is thinking of a string of churches she has attended, but has never joined (in her heart). In those places, where the soul was to meet with the Creator, she had had these same feelings. She never could feel at home with this part of her spirituality. It was like an acquired taste, but not a natural one. Nothing about the square buildings, Scandinavian images of
Jesus or the constant rush to keep in line with the clock ever really sat well with her native soul. Although, when she stumbled to pray to the Creator in her Native ways, think upon God during her people’s ceremonies, she felt both peace and guilt at once.

In this classroom she feels stiff. Her lower back aches as her body registers the collusion it has committed, as it fails to accept the punishment of the chairs any longer. She must get into the open air of these sacred mountains. She is standing before she knows it, her feet moving her toward the door. She looks her shoulder toward Whiteowl and words are forming on her tongue. The elders have taught her she must never intentionally bring shame upon another, especially leaders. Her majority culture education, however, has taught her to speak her mind in class, to frame the debate, to strike first with lightening fast logic. Everything in her wants to protest the lecturer’s celebrated incongruities between the context, the content and the cultural identity of those involved. These words remain unspoken as the automatic door opens for her: “Professor Whiteowl, this classroom hurts!” Outside, with eyes toward the rising back of the Resting Buffalo, her people’s name for these mountains, now known as the Coastal Mountains, she exhales once again. Calmness comes slowly to her body; her mind, however, is on edge.

Witness to a Cultural Hijacking
In 2002, I was invited to observe an Aboriginal leadership development program in Canada.\(^3\) This experience would become distinctive for me in two ways: (1) it was my first

\(^3\) I have decided not to include the name and location of this training site. I have permission to publish the results of my research, interviews, participant observation, but my report on the matter of contextualization of the intercultural classroom experience is less than flattering. I chose not to identify the organization because I value the intent of the training experience of the program which extended a kind invitation to me to be with them as they seek to help indigenous leaders develop as managers, negotiators, advocates and politicians. I will discuss the 58-pages of transcripted interviews with other intercultural researchers who would agree to a common code of research ethics on this point.
opportunity to observe an intercultural classroom where most of the participants and facilitators would be First Nations/Native American. This opportunity would allow learning conversations with participants to see what a difference might accrue when the primary features of the learning event were influenced by indigenous leaders; (2) this opportunity would also allow a chance to commence a journey I had desired to begin but had not had opportunity to do so. The journey would be one which involved my own unfinished work of cultural and racial identity processing.  

Having arrived at the site, like the Dara character, I could exhale when I learned most of the participants were indeed culturally indigenous to Canada and the U.S. All of the instructors were First Nations field practitioners in their various areas. An elder offered prayers and a smudge ceremony before the event officially began. When the last whisps of burnt Buffalo grass wafted from the room, so went all semblance of a Native learning experience. Had I arrived moments after the smudge, and left before the same elder offered prayers for safe travel at the end, I would not have known the difference between this self-governance training event in Indian Country and a secular engineering class at a University in Kansas (although I guess that too would still be Indian country). I had witnessed a hijacking of sorts, only the perpetrators did not use guns and threats for ransom. In fact their hands and means were quite invisible in the entire affair. I had witnessed a cultural hijacking! And according to the lessons learned during my interviews, these observations were not wasted on me alone. Hear the words of one person I asked regarding his preferences

4 Despite a movement of indigenous identity-seeking interest groups, my reasons for identity processing had less to do with a dubious Native American ancestry I am told to have, and more to do with a symbolic kinship which it is psycho-cultural, political, rhetorical and historical. I can learn of my own experience as historically displaced person by walking a mile with other groups who have been so treated and so formed, such as Jewish pilgrims, Native Americans, indentured immigrants of all ethnic backgrounds and interned Japanese Americans. The visit to this intercultural leadership classroom links me to the identity of the Dara character more than the others in the room.
for oral forms of communication that many indigenous groups are characterized by:

Oh, there’s a lot of good people that could come to this, but they can’t read or write, so I think they should [make] at least half of what’s happened here should be oral, because there’s a lot of good people that are in pretty hard places like chiefs and [others who] just can’t read or write, but are very good orally and that’s what our heritage was before. Even the treaties, when the white man sent the treaties on our side everything was oral…. Just because you read or write doesn’t mean you’re going to be chief. You have the common sense and the brains and you’re a good talker you can be anything you want. But the way everything’s structured now is… if you can’t read or write you’re out of luck. Which is on the Aboriginal side, it’s not that way…. There are quite a few chiefs in my region who can’t read or write but they’re good chiefs. And for this program I’d say there’s got to be at least half of what we’ve done here changes so there’s not so much reading and writing, just oral. You know, for those competency maps [a pre-seminar inventory to be completed by all participants], if they want something written down just talk with the person and they’ll tell you then you could write down. [West: You interview them?] “Yeah, interview. This way we will get rid of that, “I can’t read or write so I’m not going to go up to [the unnamed training event] to do this thing because I can’t read or write. This way we’ll get more good people up here.”

In the “Call for Papers”, conveners of this NAIITS conference invited writers to address specific items of interest to NAIITS. My presentation seeks to address the following of these priorities: a) “show how traditional practices and cultural perspectives might be strengthened and implemented, or how new ideas and practices of contextualization might further the goals of Native mission and the advance of Native people in

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5 Personal Interview with E.C., December 6, 2004.
Christian life, service, and ministry”; and b) “How do Native and Christian values intersect in the shaping of practical tasks associated with Contextualization? How does contextualization contribute to more effective discipleship, outreach and community development?”

My response to this invitation is this, in a word: For want of spiritual imagination it seems leaders can initiate and perpetuate contexts of cultural alienation when they aim to convene contexts of shalom (intersections between the social and the divine, meeting places where God meets humans). This paper invites NAIITS participants to engage spiritual imagination already evident in the earliest theological contextualization works and conversations to the context of contextualization.

While I have intentionally selected cases which lack specific “gospel contextualization” subjects, the provocative imagery of how organizational and learning structures can evoke alienation make vivid the questions implied in this paper. By illustrating the cultural hijack without the cluttering variables of Christian spirituality to confound the outcome, it is easier to build a bridge to Christian acts of organizing, leadership development and mission. When the intercultural dynamics within Whiteowl’s classroom can be understood and observed, then the Christian contextualizer is invited to consider classrooms of Christian purpose wherein theological discussion of gospel and church contextualization (content), are overridden by the linear, abstract or dislocated methodology of the conveners (contexts). In addition, when contextualization scholars and participants make the matter one of theology, with little reference to what the act of contextualization is (one of communication fidelity), the conversations can become un-tethered from their driving purpose, and thus be doubly hijacked. Lastly, when the identity of participants is sublimated (or neutralized) to the structural technologies of the very learning experience, the hijacking can be absolute. Participants can be present, even pass exams (a peculiar technology designed to measure some things, but not all things that matter in learning), be deeply alienated from the entire enterprise and not know that their sick feelings (questioned confidence) have everything to do with the cure (the
schooling). When the structures that matter are left unchanged, the results will be unchanged as well, regardless of the best laid intentions reflected in the content. The playwright of the magical Peter Pan tale offers us this caveat: “Each man sets out to write one kind of story but later finds he has written another.”

The Making of a Cultural Hijack
My concern is captured in the cultural hijack, a phrase I have coined to describe the phenomenon. But how do cultural hijacks of intercultural contexts take place? Its cause is attributable to a kind of structural naïveté which operates with a second order appreciation of the known world. When changes are introduced, even good changes in Jesus name, this pre-commitment to reality on this level lets down its holder in the most disturbing (but predictable ways). The possibility of the cultural hijack demands that life and circumstances be viewed with respect to their multi-dimensionality.

Ambivalence in Cultural Identity
I am not as concerned with those who have invested personal work on cultural identity, as much as I am with those who make either too much or too little of cultural differentials in intercultural settings. Cornel West projected a range of reactions to our situatedness in matters of cultural identity in his conclusion of Race Matters with these words. The options for a person are: embracing race, denying race or transcending race. He suggested a reality-based appreciation of the first can lead to the third option as the ideal.

The character Dara, in the case study above, is a composite figure into which the sentiments of thousands of under-represented people in North America (all of it, including Mexico) can relate. She has been offered a bifurcated created by political and social constructions. She has survived it by embracing what she can, using what she knows from both wings of her existence and at time, rising above both to be a teritum quid, “a third other” kind of person. Her third cultural existence is at times a burden of loneliness; at other times it is power of penetrating insight into socially constructed political fictions like race. Whiteowl, too, is a composite character to which many can relate. He also is culturally alienated: he is assimilated in
his uncritical appreciation for the industrial-mechanistic worldview, a worldview that allows him to compartmentalize his Native identity and heritage from the character of his life, perceptions and vocational expressions. More victim than perpetrator, he seems to be working out his identity quest on convenient terms. This makes him understandable and safe to Native spirituality seekers wherever they are found, and makes him the subject of concern and suspicion for Native participants who do not have the luxuries of slipping in and out of their identities like some slip in and out of coats and gloves.

But this intercultural alienation is not peculiar to this hemisphere, nor the particular circumstances of European imperialism of indigenous, African and Asian people. Compare my fictitious composite; Whiteowl’s celebrated “smart classroom” and Dara’s constricting need for air, protesting feet; with the very real account of Kosuke Koyama’s entitled "Theological Reflections on the Bamboo Room and the Oil Room." He recalls his visit to the Kuching museum in his native Sarawak. Two rooms in that museum frame the matter for us:

The Oil Room expresses the human mind which is (1) straight down (look at the long, straight steel shaft); (2) fast (look at the power of the engine that rotates the enormous iron mechanism); (3) self-assertive (look at the shark, aggressive drill head). The Bamboo Room represents an almost exactly opposite type of human mind which is (1) curved (look at the graceful curves of the bamboo bird traps); (2) slow (look at the models of canoes and paddles); (3) biological (look at all those bamboo products depending harmoniously into the surrounding nature). The curved, slow, biological spirit is the indigenous spirit of sorrow like. Here Mother nature is curved, slow and dialogical. Here self-understanding is curved, slow and dialogical. The Sarawak man is in appreciation of the relationship between his spirit and the outside world, does not go in a straight, fast, self-assertive direction. He goes on the contrary, in the direction of animism (curves), symbolism (slow), and integration (dialog).... My observation of curved-spirituality was in fact stimulated
by the strong impression the Oil Room printed on my mind. I felt the Oil Room was a threat directed at my personality.\(^6\)

The subtle emotional alarm of one man’s alienation registered in these words underscores how structure cannot be separated from symbol and content as we consider perspectives and practices of contextualization. Despite the fallacious notion associated with Western socio-linguistic habits that deemphasize environmental contexts as mere backstage scaffolds to the all-important human dramas, background structures have a way of making themselves noticed when we treat them as impersonal and collateral categories.\(^7\)

The by-products of multiple waves of globalization in the past two centuries have made intercultural relations a normal part of the socialization of people. But this exposure, along with the introduction of non-assimilated technologies, has awakened a kind of morally and culturally confusing alienation in the breasts of a million or more souls. Given its global nature, and Christianity’s global mandate and opportunity, the context-structural dynamic of contextualization must rise in importance in contextualization conversations and efforts.

The structures we create in Jesus name (we, being those who have tasted of Christ’s salvation) wear the cultural clothing of their makers. Our artefacts are experienced by others personally, culturally and socially. The pressing question is this: whether the contextualization of the gospel of Christ has taken root if such a faith purports to convert the heart unto salvation, but leaves the theological imagination untouched when it comes to the cultural artefacts that emerge from that heart. Can the

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\(^7\) Consider the origins of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. Edwin Sapir, conducting an after-fire inspection, noticed learned factory workers took smoking breaks next to fuel drums labelled “EMPTY.” Since empty is an absolute null condition in the Western mind, worker disassociated their open flames with the very full barrels of gas fumes.
heart be deeply converted if it sponsors those structural and
community spaces that misshape and distort the human spirit?
Consider again: “I felt the Oil Room was a threat directed at my
personality.” The structural context is also the message; it must
matter in our considerations of contextualization.

**Context-less Contextualization**

Of course a cultural context is always implied when we refer to
contextualization. We aim to ensure that a “one size fits all”
application from one cultural context is not superficially
overlaid on another. So then, contextualization always implies
concerns for clarity and coherence, and even justice. However,
when we refer to the concept, especially at times when the
contextualizing task is biblio-theological, we can inadvertently
leave the matter quite disembodied. Our theoretical energies
may be fervent, but they can easily lack an address, a zip code.
When this occurs, contextualization can become context-less.
Even our references to communities which may be agents of this
work, does not necessarily locate a residency for the act of
contextualization. After all, if I applauded the Native American
community for its good work of contextualization, would you
know to which work I was referring? If I pointed to NAIITS, you
would have a neighborhood, but still not know if I grasped any
particular case of the act. Until I got to street and address, the
matter would continue to have a kind of abstract remoteness.

Historically, as we have sought to contextualize the gospel, we
have not always gone about our consideration of this
communication task ecologically. Our conceptions of the gospel
are weighted toward the messaging end of the communication
continuum and not always the medium end of the continuum.
And it has been my experience that while Christian people have
made much of getting the message right (as if a message and its
methodological and contextual dimensions could be cleaved
apart) they have not always paid equal attention whether those
messages reverberate outward into structures of congruence.
After all, not only is the medium the message, but so are a
thousand acts of sense-making that following wherein we
demonstrate we are attending to the implications of the message.
If one cannot not communicate, then those attending actions of
fidelity which follow our words redouble and deepen our first
words or they contradict them, casting doubt as to whether anyone should consider these as worthy and certain guides for consideration, faith or action. But what has this to do with managerial leadership? And what does leadership have to do with our conference theme, "Historical Efforts to Contextualize the Gospel: Perspectives and Practices?"

**Evangelical Toolkit**

In their book *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America,* sociologists Michael Emerson and Christian Smith report the results of their research on the perceptual status of race relations among Evangelicals. While summarizing all of their report would exceed the scope of this paper, one of their findings is particularly relevant to explaining the cultural hijack. Respondents asked to provide explanations for certain societal conditions; such as poverty, crime, homelessness and addictions; offered explanations which cohered around the personal morality, responsibility and ethics of the individual. Solutions involved conversion of individuals to Christ. As conversions accumulate in the societal space, social maladies such as poverty, crime, etc. would abate at a similar rate. Non-white Evangelicals offered solutions as well: society is structured in ways which secures the privilege of dominant culture whites, while disadvantaging historically marginalized persons. The solutions were consistently structural in nature as well, e.g., government programming, education, partnerships, etc. Evangelicals, particularly white Evangelicals according to their findings, tend to be habituated as socio-theological dualists.

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8 I am adopting the blended "managerial leadership" to escape the dichotomous "manager vs. leadership" distinction. I do not wish to instigate here that debate, but will rather declare my assumption that these are not different kinds of people as much as these are complementary functions which are apposite on a situational continuum. The term refers to that which makes Holton’s literature review on the subject models this precedent. See Doris B. Collins, and Elwood F Holton III. “The Effectiveness of Managerial Leadership Development Programs: A Meta-Analysis of Studies from 1982 to 2001” in *Human Resource Development Quarterly* (Vol. 15, Issue 2), 217-248.

Many answered survey questions in ways which suggested that the faith of Christ is highly personalized, propositional and vertical piety. In contrast, non-whites in the same survey answer questions of their faith in terms of communal values, structural conditions and horizontal and vertical models of piety. Emerson and Smith inferred the racial make up of the sample reflected two different cultural appropriations of the gospel and church experience.

**Ill-Matched Pedagogical Models**

What do people say they are doing when they say they are forming leaders? What beliefs about the make up of persons, the nature of learning and the outcomes of such training can be found in the “best practices” of managerial leadership development? A review of leadership studies on the topic of leadership development is mixed. The little research found on the topic divides into six basic areas. These areas are approaches to the development task, its participants and outcomes. I must emphasize here, these categories are descriptive of practices. In most cases, the practitioners do not make explicit their assumptions, but the assumptive systems are evident, in an inductive way, from the practices. I will present the approach so theory-to-practice relationships are obvious.

The first type is, unfortunately, the most prevalent type in leadership studies. Many groups which do leadership development may ply models with little self-conscious theoretical warrant other than knowledge of what their organization needs and a mechanism to conduct the training. “Leadership Development of Link Inc.” is a good example of this. A quick search for “leadership development” models on the web will lead one to countless sites of consulting firms promoting their approach as the best way to make a leader. These models often seem to be wholly unaware of the cultural and contextual constraints that would make their trans-contextual applications into absurdities. When pure profit models are adopted into education, or military models are baptized into the church sector or heroic/sports leadership is morphed into business models, confusion and conflict are predictable at the level of implementation. This is not written to say that different groups cannot learn from one another, but
rather to say that such learning must proceed with an intercultural awareness of both context of operation and theoretical assumptions guiding the leadership development model.

The second type, framing approaches, concentrate on obtaining perspective on one’s life developmental experiences as the core materials for future leadership successes. These focus on response patterns, task completion in specific timeframes and stages used to focus next-step and future growth planning. Works by Levinson, Sheehey, Kolberg, Fowler, Clinton and Hagberg are examples of the focusing approach.

The third type, the fixing approach, assumes all people are leaders, or at least should try to be. Leadership is an enlightened state of self-actualization — comes from Great Man Trait Theory — and all who are not leaders are socially deficient. Leadership training is correcting this deficiency to enable socialization and engaged social responsibility. An implicit use of Maslow’s hierarchy points out the ends and means of this type of leadership formation. Illustration: “Effective leaders ...understand that there is no difference between becoming an effective leader and becoming a fully integrated human being”.

Howard Prince may represent a cultural preference for this approach by valorizing the Center for Creative Leadership’s approach:

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) has one of the world’s best research and training programs for the study of leadership. Scholars there have tried to understand leadership development in order to be able to enhance the development of leaders. Some of the CCL staff has suggested that it might be useful to think of leadership development as a form of individual adult development and that leadership development could be defined as the expansion of a person’s capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes.

10 Bennis, (1999), 23.

11 Howard T. Prince.
Filtering approaches make up the fourth type of developmental models. These approaches indirectly build on the notion that leaders are born, not made. The approaches begin with a picture of the “Right Stuff” and strain out all participants who do not fit the profile. Many elitist academic institutions, military academies, sports franchises and social organizations select leaders based on this. In the seminary setting, this often occurs by selecting according to “intellectual ability” at the admissions gates, through examinations or culminating experiences that weed out.

The fifth type bears some similarity to the final one (farming, mentioned below), with slight but substantial differences. The filling model of leadership development agrees leaders can be made, however, builds on assumptions that people enter the program or institution with little or no leadership aptitude, experience or ability, e.g., _tabla rasa_. These programs always start from “square one” without granting credit that the adult experience is an ally in the training process; an _en loco parentis_ approach to rules, regulations and precepts can be evidence of this assumptive system.

The sixth type is comprised of farming approaches. Farming approaches also are designed around an implied profile of the ideal leadership candidate. It differs from the filtering model in that it select people with a commitment to help them grow toward the profile. It is founded upon the notion that leadership can be learned and that motivational appeal is a deciding factor in development. This model obligates the trainers to achieve expertise as “people-reading people”, a capacity that is not always emphasized in the selection, training and evaluation of faculty who facilitate leadership formation processes in seminaries.

These metaphorical models when operationalized within learning settings can wreak havoc or harvest in the human soul. Their relative distance from relational development themes found within the narratival practices evident within Scripture and selected instances of the Church’s expansion in time are measured by the degrees of drift from the shore of organically
shaped life transformation dynamics and organizationally exchanged transactional dynamics. The figure below (Figure 1, “Method Adrift from Mission”) pictures agricultural imagery, but consider: seminary (nursery for young plants), incubation, cultivation, conditioning pruning, fertilizing are implied in the convergence points where the church metaphor resides. As mission and methods diverge, the language shifts toward more depersonalized mechanistic imagery – transaction, exchange, institution, degree, gradation, etc.

**Figure 1 Method Adrift from Mission**

![Figure 1 Method Adrift from Mission](image)

**Conclusion: Making Our Way Home through Indian Country (The Gardener)**

Obviously, we are not at home with the language we use to describe what we may be doing in the classroom. That which was centrally a relational process, and one which was organic in its best expressions, has drifted into an organizationally strained
one. But it has drifted onto a shore, at a time and place which is fortuitous for us missionally. In the post-modern moment, one where sense-making is the *sine qua* of self-identity, a mood has emerged which invites the religious worker back into the conversation, albeit through back hallways often. I think the core images of the Garden offered to us in Genesis 1:26-28 are like a short pathway home. Metaphors matter. Metaphorical imagery of ecology may best serve us as we seek to awaken the theological imagination in contextualization.

**Questions for Our Conversation**

Some scholarly papers are set forth with a head full of academic confidence, of well-rehearsed knowledge and air tight cases. This is not one of those papers. Given the nature of this topic, we are constrained to raise more questions than we answer. The work may begin in the soul of one, but must be completed in the conversational circle of the many. As an attempt to practice that about which I am concerned in this paper – a match between method, material, mission and mirror (I could not think of an “m” word that represented cultural identity) — I conclude this project by raising several conversational questions. I have four general areas which may be important to an awakened theological imagination. Perhaps around these themes, we can offer light that will lead many to become sons and daughters of glory. The questions come under four headings: *An Ecological Spirituality, Curious Curiosity of the Mainstream Identity Movements, Dualistic Correctives from Indian Country and Eschatological Vision of the Creator, Created and Creation Reconciled*. Each theme is introduced followed by a primary question.

**An Ecological Spirituality**

Considering the problems of context-less contextualization, I call to mind the powerful imagery in Scripture of The Garden and the first laws of our being. From a leadership perspective, I could think of only one other person who had published reflections mildly related to this theme.12

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Gardeners begin with an inner compulsion that may be explained as a law of their being. This law accounts for the entire half of leadership studies which is characterized by the “flatness” themes. The global yearning toward a participatory mood (and inveigh for anyone isolationistic, paternalistic, controlling, etc. mood) is explained by the common grace of the law of culturing that is every human’s. This is why we can bestow leadership titles without sacrificing our own responsibility for agency. This is why a theology of vocation must surpass our theologies of ecclesiology and be relocated into our theologies of mission. A thousand communities of faith could burst into life tomorrow if someone of their un-recruited numbers could be validated as contributors to a better world. Evangelism need not start and end with four spiritual laws, but with a divine affirmation that a Creator endowed every person with a way of offering their sense-making gifts to the world as a common grace.

Gardeners fortify virtues by calling things by their proper names. In the first garden, one of the several tasks was that of tending. In Genesis chapter 1:26-28, we see the new family are called to tend to the garden, tend to the living, tend to the growth of people and tend to the Creator’s character through resting as He did. The task of tending would involve reading into the character of things and giving them their proper names. Keeping fidelity with the truth of our circumstances is no easy task; deceptions, illusions, betrayal of truth can easily cloud the objects within our task. Gardeners weed out the competitors for clarity by creating conditions for sense-making to go unimpeded. From a contextualization perspective I think Native Christian leaders can host discussions which result in the creation of “restless structures” of faithful change. Such structures as “Communities of Practice” and “Hermeneutical Circle” seem fitting forms to express and deepen Native Christian spirituality, theological reflection and leadership development.

Gardeners reckon with residency, with matters of place, on several levels for some time before committing to plant.
Ecological factors, especially when one is not indigenous to the land, take time to sort out; sometimes these matters require the rise and fall of several seasonal cycles before one learns how to read well the nature of the content. Gardeners take context seriously, in all its ecological implications. This surfaces the point raised in the first half of the paper: the drift from the relationally rich context of gathered church community. Not a building, but a kind of called out circle of missional people are at focus in the young gathered churches of the Old and New Testament. The people of God were distinguished in both Testaments by their sense of being the called seed that would be scattered among the nations (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:17-19). From them, seed would be replenished both in the physical generative sense and the spiritual incorporeal one. This is why I am so enamored with Church-based models of leader and laborer equipping, as these have the best opportunity of getting right the context problem that residential leadership formation outfits handle awkwardly. Consider: every natural chance for a seed to grow is severed when a person decides on their own to attend a residential seminary distant from a commissioning community.

**The Question:** Can the garden imagery offer the first words of a post-industrial critique and reconstruction of God-ordained social agency? Can the command, control and commodify imagery of the neo-colonialism — think: Oil Room — bend toward the curved postures of the post-modernism, post-colonial and post-industrialism — think: Bamboo Room?

**Curious Curiosity of the Mainstream Identity Movements**

Gardeners have a kind of invitational spirituality that integrates the rootless soul into a virtuous harmony with the way the world works. Perhaps this point, more than others, demands underscore at the conference. Native spirituality – I do not need to tell you – is prey to the fad-making habit of the Americans, who have a devilish propensity for commodifying just about anything imaginable. The divine gifts of native peoples and their spiritualities are a case in point, e.g., dream catchers, etc. Rootless romancing of myth and abuses of symbols, notwithstanding, it just may be that the yearning for all-things
Indian, according to Phil Jenkins,¹³ may be more primal than we think. I quote an observer of Westerners with Native Americans. Despite the obvious racist assumptions about who and who is not civilized, the observation is poignant: “When Robinson Jeffers witnessed the tourists watching the dances at Taos Pueblo in the 1920s, he remarked on their quest for authentic religious experience that they could not find within their own worlds: Pilgrims from civilization, anxiously seeking beauty, religion, poetry; pilgrims from the vacuum [the parallel to civilization here]. People from cities, anxious to be human again.” God gives gifts to peoples. He may intend that this movement is for the salvation and revival of authentic contact with God, one that like the law (when rough hewn and lacking a Christocentric substance), leads people to grace; perhaps when such Native spirituality is in Christ and in Native clothing, The pathway is shorter. This revitalization may issue forth from the first words in the garden (Genesis 1:26-28).

**The Question**: Notwithstanding romantic, atavistic, historically fictitious caricatures of Native Spirituality resident within mainstream America’s interest in Native Spirituality, can such constructions be taken as indicators of God-given longings for the values that may actually be found in traditional ways of structuring life?

**Dualistic Correctives from Indian Country**
*Gardeners escape the duality of the organizational and the organic problem.* In my learning of leadership literatures, I am bemused by those “either/or” gimmicks that allow some writers to seem enlightened in their critique of opposite poles from themselves. In leadership studies the polarities sound like: born/made, positional/emergent, hierarchical/participative, etc. In the gardener, the both/and are present. Anyone with a green thumb, or even a farmer, will make much of organizational structuring. Gardeners will have the advantage of nimble agility, the ability to introduce disruptive technologies. Any farmer who is concerned for more than one crop will demonstrate a keen sense of mechanization. There is not glory in a romantic

agrarianism, the inventions of today’s farmers were innovated by yesterday’s age-old problems.

The Question: As Evangelicals migrate toward more holistic models of spirituality, this indicated by a series of signals over the last fifteen years — I think the racial reconciliation movement to be a prime example of this, along with these early stages of the emergent church movement — is there room for Native leaders to convene conversations that can serve as accelerants to fire to what at this point merely glows like embers?

**Eschatological Vision of the Creator, Created and Creation Reconciled**

Gardeners, now, will prepare the world for garden city, later. In the contemporary world, at least in most places in America, gardens are connotative of privacy, and private enjoyment (if not, exclusion). This is a curious notion. Its pervasiveness in this culture can work to contradict and make vulnerable my argument. But are we looking at something that is the ideal, or the corruption? Let us not be fooled: we are looking through a glass darkly on this point. The abuse does not dislodge the right use, but invokes its restoration. These backyard pottings cannot begin to be suggestive of all that Eden was. Even the English Gardens of commoners and royals fall short. The point of Eden is not privacy, but communion, recreation, reigning, rest, fit, and eventually mission. What began in a primitive garden land, ends in a garden city where the trees on the leaves heal the nations.

The Question: While recourse to the Garden metaphor is tempting imagery for the Church, does the metaphorical appeal stand to be hijacked itself? Is this the kind of sub rosa logic that allows everything to be possible in the past, the future and the metaphorical but a non-starter in the present? Is a romantic vision of Eden compatible with or robust enough to compete with the hard realities of this world of social, environmental, economic and political injustice? Should the real not be pulled up by the ideal, and not the other way around?
These questions are perhaps starting places to begin to explore the possibilities of an ecological approach to contextualization that takes seriously the actual structure contexts where gospel living and learning take place. While this paper does not pretend to answer all the questions it raises, it seeks to garner a recognition that the alienation of the Dara Crows caused by ill-fitting classroom, churches, and organizations needs acute attention. When such alienation is caused by cultural hijacks at the hands of fellow Native sojourners, such as the fictional (but very real) Professor Whiteowl, then the call for increased vigilance in poor community-building must be acute. We do not need to live the tale the playwright described of intending one story, but writing another. With a thoroughgoing contextualization that gives attention to the organizational community contexts even while attending to the messages, we can close the gap on this kind of identity-centered alienation.
SECTION II

Related Paper(s)

This section contains submitted paper(s) not presented at the symposium.
The Lord God of Israel created all humankind in His own image. He separated us into different languages and dispersed us throughout the world. Our God gave to each people the knowledge and wisdom needed to survive in each place. His hand has always been present in each of our histories.

No people are without God. They may not know Him, and they may not serve Him, but He is still in their midst. Most basic expressions of life and faith are God-given. We may not use themproperly, or honor Him with them as we were intended to, but that does not mean they are inherently ungodly or unbiblical. It simply means we have misused them.

Every people and place has distinct characteristics with distinct corresponding expressions. Our Creator made us and these places for His glory. The whole earth is full of His glory. He longs to be served and worshipped by us, in and through His creation.

**Separation by Language and Location**

*Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the LORD said, “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.*
Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” So the LORD scattered them abroad from there. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Gen 11:1-9

A few generations after Noah and the flood, all mankind was still united as one people with one language. Within the context of uniformity, that one people came together to build a tower and to make a name to glorify themselves rather than God. They sought to secure their unity around a man-made edifice rather than Him. We are told that the Lord saw where this would lead them, and intervened to prevent it. He then separated humankind into different peoples with different languages, and scattered us abroad across the face of the earth.

Even so, this was not meant as a punishment for man’s failure. Remember that, following the flood, Noah and his sons were commanded to fill the earth (Gen. 9:1). So, this dispersion of mankind across the earth was God’s intent. It was part of His plan, and not a punishment for sin.

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” [Emphasis added.] Rev 7:9-10

In Genesis, we see the Lord dividing humanity into different peoples with different languages, and scattering us around the world. In Revelation, we see Him eventually bringing us all back together united in Him and worshiping Him as one, yet remaining distinctly the unique peoples He created us to be and having the separate languages He divided us into.

1 All Scripture is taken from New King James Version.
So, the Lord chose to scatter us around the world. And, as we dispersed, we came to dwell in distinctly different regions of the earth. Some came to live in places that were very hot and others in places that were very cold. Some came to live in places that were very wet and others dry. Some settled in areas of high elevation and others in areas that were at or even below sea level. Some came to dwell in regions near the equator where there are twelve hours of light and twelve hours of darkness consistently year round. Others came to dwell in regions far from the equator where seasons greatly vary, even to the extreme that the sun does not rise or set for weeks at a time. The natural environments in these places, the weather and the plant and animal life, all require very different knowledge and skills in order to survive. Yet, as our Creator brought each people group to the place that He was entrusting to them as His stewards, He gave them the knowledge and wisdom needed to live there.

As we came to dwell in our own places and live separately, each people group lived out different histories. Some of us dwelt in the vicinity of other peoples, fell into disagreement, fighting for centuries, causing much bloodshed and great suffering. Others lived near people they always got along with, living peaceably for centuries. Some groups had constant interaction with others while other peoples lived in complete isolation. Most peoples experienced natural disasters — devastating floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, and great fires. Some experienced them frequently and others never.

Each people remembered the high points and low points in their histories, the best times and worst times. They told their children about them. We used the stories of our histories to teach basic principles of life to our children. We came to remember the best and worst individuals among us, honoring some and despising others. We honored the memory of those individuals to whom God had given wisdom as to how to endure and abound in our environments, and those who led us to various successes and victories.

In the course of living in extremely diverse environments and dissimilar histories, we developed distinct celebrations for the
seasons in each of our lands. Unique life circumstances led us to mark human life-cycle events in ways that express the distinct characteristics of the heritage we share with our own people.

The children of Israel were also brought to a land. We, the Jewish people, were entrusted with a place in the earth that had been promised through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses, who brought us back to this land, was given understandings of life and expressions of faith to teach us. These understandings and expressions were particularly relevant to this place that came to be called after our father Israel. The customs and traditions Moses imparted were also directly related to the collective history of our people. We were not only given these expressions but in fact commanded to uphold them.

Israel's Feasts of Ascent
Among the feasts of Israel are the three Feasts of Ascent — Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Weeks, Pentecost), and Sukkot (Tabernacles). These are the central feasts during which the people of Israel were commanded to ascend up to the Temple in Jerusalem. Each of these three feasts is integrally linked to our specific history as the people of Israel, and to the agricultural cycle of the Land of Israel in which we live. All three feasts are inseparable from our history and our land.

The main observance of the three feasts today is to remember and to teach our children. Passover is a time of remembrance of our deliverance from slavery in Egypt. We remember the Passover lamb, the blood on the doorposts, and the death of the firstborn sons. We remember how we were delivered and we teach our children.

Fifty days later, Shavuot (Weeks, Pentecost) is a time of remembrance of our God meeting us at Sinai. He gave us His Word there, and empowered us through covenant to create a new future in relationship with Him.

Sukkot (Tabernacles) is a time of remembrance of the forty years we wandered in the wilderness without a land, and lived in temporary dwellings. We celebrate not only that the Lord brought us into the Land and enabled us to build more-
permanent dwellings, but also that He chose a resting place for Himself in this Land and came to dwell among us. His tangible Divine Presence inhabited the fixed Temple that was built to replace the transient Tabernacle.

The three Feasts of Ascent are also related to the agricultural cycle of the Land of Israel. *Pesach* is a spring festival that marks the beginning of the harvest cycle. The unleavened bread that we eat during Passover is made of wheat from a previous harvest. Only after this is a sickle put to the first grain, and the first sheaf is offered to the Lord during this feast of unleavened bread, two days after the Passover meal.

Fifty days later, *Shavuot* is a celebration of the completion of the first stage of the harvest. It is the Feast of First-fruits during which the first loaves of bread made of grain from the new harvest are offered to the Lord.

In the autumn, *Sukkot* is a celebration of the completion of the harvest of all things. It is the Feast of the Ingathering, after everything has been brought in from the fields.

As with Israel, other peoples also have feasts which are integrally linked to their specific histories and to the lands in which they live. They also remember their histories and teach their children. They also mark the seasons of the year and of the harvests of the places in which they live. And, they should continue to do so. Those who know and serve the One God and Father of us all, and who follow His Son, should continue to commemorate the life and land of their people. They should celebrate their successes and they should not forget their failings. They should remember the hand of God in their histories.

When an indigenous tribal man or woman in the tropical rainforests of the Amazon jungle comes to faith in Yeshua, he/she does not suddenly lose their history. He is not suddenly transported to the Middle East to live in a new land. Believers remain people of the rainforest, with a way of life that is relevant to that place and to the lived-out story of their people. Do any of us honestly think that they should slash-and-burn areas of
rainforest in order to start growing grain in preparation for Israel's cycle of the harvest? Of course not. Yet, we should recognize and affirm the importance of them as Believers continuing to honor their land and history together with their people.

Israel's three Feasts of Ascent all look forward to a future fullness in the New Covenant that is shared by the nations. During Pesach, Yeshua became our Passover Lamb. During Shavuot, the first Emissaries (Apostles) were empowered by the Holy Spirit of God to go out into the fields of harvest of the world. Sukkot speaks of a time yet to come in the future of the completion of the harvest — of the ingathering of the nations.

There is no place in Scripture where the nations are commanded to celebrate the Feasts of Israel. There is one passage in the book of the prophet Zechariah (14:16-19) that speaks of a time in the Last Days when all nations of the earth are to be represented each year in Jerusalem during the time of Sukkot. Even that passage does not say that the nations at that time are to observe Sukkot, only that each nation is to be represented. Some people believe that the importance of all nations in that day being represented in Jerusalem is to express the fullness of the ingathering of the nations.

New Believers are adopted and "grafted" into the family of faith that was established through Abraham. In being adopted into this commonwealth, there is a rich spiritual heritage that every Believer inherits. This heritage includes the message of God's Word as first given to humankind through Israel. This also includes many of the principles of redemption as exemplified and foreshadowed in the Feasts of Israel.

Those in the nations who wish to share in the celebrations of Israel's feasts and traditions are welcome to, but not required to. They have the freedom to do so if they should so choose, but Paul, Emissary to the Gentiles, clearly taught against any obligation for them to do these things. He not only releases the nations from any obligation, but even cautions them against embracing these things of Israel. There is certainly much that one can learn from experiencing some of these celebrations. But,
if one should choose to do this regularly, they should be careful not to allow these expressions and traditions to replace the expressions of life of their own people among whom they live. They should still honor their own cultural heritage.

**Diversity of Expressions of Life**

What is culture? It is the language we speak. It is music and dance. It is the clothes we wear and the food we eat. Culture is the history that we have in common with our people. It is celebrations of the year, the seasons, and of nature. It is the way we share life-cycle events with our family and loved-ones. It is the land that a people steward together. These are the common points of reference through which a people communicate with one another. All of these things make up a culture. They are the framework within which members of a tribe or nation share their lives.

All mankind is created in the image of God. There is something of the Creator Himself imprinted on the spirit, soul, and body of every human being. As humanity longs for her Creator, there is something of the way in which that is expressed that inherently comes from Him. There is a yearning within each one of us that reaches back to Him Who is Our Source.

All peoples descend from Noah. After the Flood, his sons repopulated the earth and fathered us all. Every race shares this same forefather who knew and served the One God and Creator of us all. As the various cultures of the world have developed, they have stemmed out of that common origin. Most cultures have a traditional belief in a Creator who created the world. Many cultures have a story of a great flood. As colorful and diverse as all cultures are, there are still common threads that express our shared beginning and ultimately a shared future.

All cultures have strengths and weaknesses. All cultures are also tainted by the sinfulness of humanity. For example, even many of the cultural expressions mandated to Israel in Scripture have been stained over time by pride and presumption. Yet, when we discover imperfections in our cultures, the response should not be to reject everything but to seek to cleanse and redeem what has been defiled. We should seek to restore to proper use those
things that have been misused, rather than throw them away. We should also seek to discover those unique redemptive strengths within each of our cultures of which we may have neglected to make full use.

Most, if not all, cultures have musical instruments. They are used in singing stories of life and songs of love. Some of them are also used for worship and religious ceremonies. When an instrument is crafted that is going to be used in ceremonies, it is common for the craftsman to dedicate the instrument in some way either to the spirits they have believed in (including idols, ancestors, and multiple gods) or to their understanding of the Creator. When someone from this background comes to faith in Yeshua, they should continue to make music with the instruments of their people. They should craft a new drum or flute, or whatever it is they play, and dedicate it to the Lord. In so doing, they may continue to call Him the Creator, but it is with a new understanding of who the Creator is.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 

Rom 1:18-25

There are many Believers among tribal groups who hand-make new instruments or the traditional garments of their people and
dedicate them to Yeshua. Traditional objects that were originally crafted to bring honor to an ancestor, a spirit, or an idol are now crafted to bring honor to the God of Israel. Something that may have once been used to deify creation rather than the Creator is now restored to its proper use. When someone plays one of these instruments unto the Lord, the Lord looks at the heart of the musician and not the form of the instrument. Just because a particular kind of drum may have been used for the wrong purpose or directed in its use toward the wrong being does not make it inherently ungodly and unbiblical. It means it has been misused. We should seek to see it restored to a proper, godly, and "biblical" use; one not contrary to Scripture.

When new followers of Yeshua are taught to reject the cultural heritage of their people, something very precious is stolen from them. In rejecting those expressions of shared life, they marginalize themselves within their own communities and become less relevant to those around them. They lose some of the most basic tools of communication through which their people express love, honor, and respect for one another. They make themselves unable to effectively communicate both their own love and God's love to their family and loved ones. Culture is such an integral part of a people that rejecting a culture is to a degree a rejection of that people.

When a Jewish man or woman embraces the New Covenant in Yeshua, they do not cease being Jewish. They also do not suddenly morph into being 50% Jewish and 50% Messianic (follower of the Messiah — Christ). They remain 100% Jewish and should now also become 100% Messianic.

When a Maori man or woman in Aotearoa (New Zealand) is reborn in the Messiah Yeshua, she or he does not cease to be Maori, nor morph into being 50% Maori and 50% Messianic (Christian). She remains 100% Maori and should now also simultaneously become 100% a follower of the Messiah. There is no contradiction.

I recently heard a Mohawk friend tell of being confronted by someone who was upset by his use of Mohawk culture as a Christian. He was challenged, "How can being Mohawk make
you a better Christian?" He replied that the issue was better expressed, "How can Jesus make me a better Mohawk?"

The Council of Jerusalem
In the book of Acts we read of a dispute that arose among the first Emissaries. They had begun to hear of Gentiles embracing biblical faith and following Yeshua, without undergoing circumcision. The reports claimed that these new Believers had been immersed in water (baptized) and even filled with the Holy Spirit. The leaders in Jerusalem could not imagine it. What? Uncircumcised Gentiles following Yeshua and filled with the Holy Spirit? How could it be? So, the question arose, "Is it possible for a Gentile to be saved without first becoming a Jew?"

Acts 15 tells of the gathering that convened in Jerusalem in order for the Emissaries/Apostles to discuss this matter. As they spoke, prayed, and sought the Lord together, they came to a unity of understanding that it was not necessary for Gentiles to become Jewish in order to be reconciled to God. They began to see that the message of redemption was for all humans. Paul confirms in his writings that it is in fact preferable that Gentiles remain as they were called, and not attempt to become Jews.

The spreading of the Good News among the nations began to accelerate. Within two generations, the majority of Believers in Yeshua were non-Jews. A generation or two after that, not only the majority of Believers but the majority of Believing leaders in the world were non-Jews. As the Believing community grew among the Gentiles, its expressions of faith became less Jewish, such as the Emissaries in Acts 15 had come to understand.

Over time, not only did the expressions of the Church become less Jewish, but many Gentile church leaders began to assert their independence from the Jewish origins of the Church and to teach that they had replaced Israel. During the first three hundred years of Church history, there were dozens of church councils and synods. These were gatherings of leaders convened for the purpose of discussing, deciding, and decreeing Church doctrine and practice. Some gatherings were only regional, for deciding local disagreements. Other councils included the participation of credible authoritative leaders from multiple
regions and/or multiple Christian expressions. It wasn't until 325 A.D. the first council was convened that included credible authoritative leaders from every organized church movement and every region, involving the participation of 318 Bishops.¹

The Council of Nicea convened by the emperor Constantine in 325 A.D. became the first of what came to be known as the seven Ecumenical Councils. Spanning a period of 462 years, both the first and seventh councils were convened at Nicea. The canon law decreed in these councils became the foundation of Church doctrine that nearly every Christian movement has built upon. Even the most protestant of Protestant churches today still base much of their theology and practice on these councils.

At the conclusion of the first Council of Nicea, Constantine wrote a letter of introduction to accompany the copied lists of canon that were to be distributed by the departing church leaders. In this letter, Constantine declared that the Church needed to separate from all dealings and associations with the Jewish people. He then proposed that the celebration of the Resurrection of Yeshua should be completely and universally separated from Passover.

We ought not, therefore, to have anything in common with the Jews, for the Savior has shown us another way.... [W]e desire, dearest brethren, to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews.... How, then, could we follow these Jews, who are most certainly blinded by error? ... But even if this were not so, it would still be your duty not to tarnish your soul by communications with such wicked people [the Jews].... [I]t is our duty not to have anything in common with the murderers of our Lord... and that we should have nothing in common with the Jews.... By the unanimous judgment of all, it has been decided that the most holy festival of Easter should be everywhere celebrated on one and the same day, and it is not seemly that in so holy a thing there should be any division. As this is the state of the case, accept joyfully the divine favor, and this truly divine command; for all which takes place in assemblies of the bishops ought to be regarded as proceeding from
the will of God…. [T]he divine power has made use of our instrumentality for destroying the evil designs of the devil.²

These kinds of statements against the Jewish people had been made before at previous councils. But, it was with the conclusion of this first ecumenical council that one of these decrees finally held authority over the entire organized Church.

**New Expressions of the Faith**

Thus, the annual remembrance of the Resurrection of Yeshua became linked with a spring festival that already existed in Asia Minor. It was a feast that included blood sacrifice to the goddess Ishtar, from which comes the name Easter. This was a feast of fertility that celebrated the new life of springtime. It included the use of symbols representing new life, such as eggs, chicks, and bunny rabbits. As this feast began to be celebrated by Christians as a remembrance of Yeshua's resurrection, blood sacrifice was done away with and the symbols of new life came to represent the new life that we have in the Messiah.

It was not wrong for the non-Jewish Christians of Asia Minor and Southeastern Europe to redeem their own existing feast as a celebration of Yeshua's resurrection. The sin of Constantine was in his intention of breaking relationship with and separating from the Jewish people. When true Believing Christians in Europe today celebrate Easter, they are not worshipping idols. They are celebrating the Resurrection of the Son of God. It is good, beautiful, and holy — a redeemed expression of biblical faith.

At the point of this official breaking of relationship with the Jewish people, the question facing Church leaders concerning Jews became basically, "Is it possible for a Jew to be saved without first becoming a Gentile?" Throughout most of Church history, the response to that question has been that it is not possible for a Jewish person to be in relationship with God

without first forsaking their Jewish heritage and community, and embracing these new expressions in the Church. The problem here is not the Church's new expressions of faith but the rejection of Jewish expressions for Jewish Believers, and the cursing of the Jewish people.

As Christianity spread into Northern Europe, it arrived in a region with long dark winters and long sunny summers. The two main festivals of the year there were mid-summer and mid-winter. Throughout Scandinavia, the mid-winter festival was named after the Viking god Jul (Yule). It was a feast that included blood sacrifice to Jul. Immediately following the shortest day of the year, the people would cut down an evergreen tree and bring it into their home to celebrate the passing of the darkest day of winter and the soon return of the sun and all of the greenery that comes with it (birth of the sun). They would sacrifice a pig on the altar to Jul and bring the meat of the sacrifice into their home and eat it. As with Easter, this feast was given new meaning. It was transformed into a celebration of the birth of Yeshua.

As the Good News of Yeshua advanced across Europe it entered the cultures of the people. They were not given, as it were, a "potted plant" of faith. Rather, the seed of the message was planted in the "soil" of their own unique cultures. New life was born among them. It took root in new soil and flourished.

Here again, when true Believing Christians in Europe today celebrate Christmas or Easter, they are not worshipping idols. They are commemorating the birth of Yeshua the Son of God. It is a beautiful redeemed expression of biblical faith.

The Europeans soon began taking that message to Africa and Asia, but in so doing failed to follow the example of the first Emissaries. They took their own cultures with them, and imposed them upon those they were sent to. They declared, "Your cultures are pagan. You need God's culture. You need our culture." And they proceeded to teach the practices of their own culture. This included some of the redeemed expressions of European culture — redeemed and yet still foreign and irrelevant (such as the mid-winter festival of Christmas and the
spring festival of Easter). These foreign practices also often included less-than-redeemed expressions of European culture. One problem was that cultural expressions became confused the Gospel itself. Those to whom the Good News was being presented were all too often so blinded by the cultural baggage within which the message was packaged that they were unable to discern the message. Of course, another major problem was the way Europeans all too often treated those they went to was not "Good News". Their sinful actions against the hearers spoke louder than their words.

Honoring Diversity
I heard of a Bible translator working in Southeast Asia. He was translating the New Testament into the language of a tribal group living in a delta region. Each year during the rainy season, the river would rise and the whole area would flood. The people of this tribe built their houses up on stilts so that when it flooded the water would simply pass under their houses.

As the translator came to Matthew 7, he faced a difficult question. At the end of the chapter it speaks of a wise man who built his house on a rock and a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The problem was that in this culture if you build your house on a rock, the flood waters will wash it away. A wise man in this tribe builds his house on the sand, because he can sink the poles down deep into it and make his house secure.

The translator wasn't sure how to translate it. Should he say, "A wise man built his house on the sand" and "a foolish man built his house on a rock."? Well, that's not faithful to the text. So, he thought some more. Then he found the solution. He translated it as, "A wise man built his house on a good foundation...", and, "A foolish man built his house on a bad foundation." This was faithful to the text, and it also allowed the people to interpret it for themselves. The translator had found a way to transmit the truth of the text in a way that was relevant to how they live.

Many missionaries would have been dogmatic in their insistence about the wise man having to build on a rock. They would have said, "My Bible says...", and "My God is the same yesterday, today, and forever." And, "My God is not a liar." Unlike the above
Bible translator, they would have failed to communicate the truth of the passage to those they were sent.

There is great value in honoring the traditions of our fathers. One should uphold them so long as those traditions do not contradict the principles of Scripture. They may be extrabiblical, in addition to Scripture, just as long as they are not contrary to its principles. The practices may look and be different, as long as they uphold the same principles.

Chapter 35 of the book of Jeremiah the prophet gives a powerful example of a family who upheld the commandment of their father, even in the face of being ordered to do otherwise by the prophet Jeremiah while on the grounds of the Temple. Neither the man nor the place intimidated them. The Lord then spoke to them through Jeremiah,

> And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you, therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever.”’”

Jer 35:18b-19

The things Jonadab had commanded his sons and descendants to do were not biblical requirements. They were extra-biblical. Yet, the Lord greatly honored those descendants for upholding the commandments of their father.

I was once invited by a Christian pastor to go fishing on a Jewish holiday. I declined and said it was one of my holidays. He laughed and suggested I make an exception. I told him that the holiday was important to me, and that I didn't want to miss it. He then began to prod me and say that if I couldn't make an exception in order to go fishing that I was really hung-up on legalism. I responded by asking if he celebrates Christmas.
"Of course I do," he responded.

I then asked if he had ever made an exception and skipped it. He looked puzzled and said, "No."

I said, "You mean to tell me you've celebrated Christmas every year of your life, without making one single exception?"

He answered, "Well, yeah."

"Whoa", I said, "It sure sounds like bondage to me."

Even more puzzled, he just looked at me. Then I continued, "But it isn't, is it?"

"No", he said.

I went on, "It's probably your favorite holiday. You probably really look forward to it?"

"Uhuh"

"It's a time of year when your family gets together and you give each other gifts. You express your love and God's love to your friends and relatives. All other things are put aside, and you just enjoy being together. You laugh, joke, tell stories, sing songs, and hear the latest about each other's lives. You share together in the event and in all of the special things that are part of that celebration. And, you probably take time together to give thanks to God."

"Yeah"

"Well", I said, "My holidays are the same for me. They are not a burden, but a blessing. I keep them because they are meaningful and I enjoy them, and not because I am forced"
Do we honor the traditions of our fathers? Do we respect other peoples' traditions as passed down to them by their fathers? In bringing the message of redemption to others, have we taught them to honor their fathers? Or, have we possibly taught them to dishonor their fathers?

**Embodying the Redemption of Our People and Land**

Creation is in a state of brokenness. Humankind has broken relationship with her Creator and has defiled the land she was given to steward. The plan of redemption is for our Creator to restore creation to Himself. The Creator communicated that plan to Israel through the cultural heritage He gave to us. His Son Yeshua lived among us within that heritage and fully embodied the message. Yeshua honored the Land in which He was born, and He honored the people among whom He lived. The message became flesh and dwelt among us as one of us.

As the first called-out nation of messengers, Israel was set apart for a purpose that is not yet complete. It remains her destiny. She is still called-out to carry that message of redemption.

Faithfully upholding our Jewish cultural heritage as Messianic Jews links us to our original and ultimate national purpose and calling. Failing to keep it does not separate us from God, but does put us outside the community that has faithfully served the purpose of preserving us as a people. Examples of traditions that have served to preserve us as a distinct people during centuries of exile are *Shabbat* (the Sabbath) and *kashrut* (dietary guidelines). More than we kept these two traditions, they kept us — preserved us. They distinguished us from the people among whom we lived during our exile. The Lord used these things to preserve us for His purposes.

There are a number of well-established Jewish communities in the Southern Hemisphere. Below the equator the seasons of the year are the inverse of when they take place in the Northern Hemisphere. During springtime in the Northern Hemisphere it is autumn in the Southern Hemisphere. So, as the Jewish communities in the South celebrate the Feasts of Israel according to the Hebrew calendar and the seasons of Israel, they are actually marking them in the opposite seasons of when they
are observed in Israel. Jews in New Zealand celebrate the spring festival of *Pesach* (during the harvest season of the land of their exile). They celebrate the harvest festival of *Sukkot* in the springtime of the land of their exile. In so doing, they express their connection to both their history and their future in the Land of Israel. They honor their fathers. They identify with their communal Jewish history and also a destiny. They express that they are not of the land they are presently in.

To teach Maori people that they must also now keep the Feasts of Israel would serve to dishonor their fathers and their land. It would clash with who they are and where they live. It makes sense for the Jewish community in exile there to uphold their traditions as a connection to their past and future. But, it would be out of place to impose that on the other communities of New Zealand. If others wish to participate in marking those times, they are welcome. But, they certainly do not have to. They are free to choose to share in these traditions as a means of identifying with the Jewish people, or simply as a learning experience. But, it would be a bit out of place for them to simply appropriate these expressions as their own. They would do better to hold to the expressions of their own land and history — to honor their land and their own fathers.

In Romans 11, Paul the Emissary uses the analogy of Gentile followers of Yeshua being as branches cut from a wild olive tree and grafted into a cultivated olive tree. When branches from multiple olive trees are cut and grafted into one new tree, they each continue to produce the same variety of olives as the tree they came from, with their own unique color and flavor. The difference is that those branches now begin to receive their life-giving sustenance from a new root. If that root is a stronger and better root, the branches will now be able to produce fruit to their full potential. It will still be the same unique fruit, but it will be of a higher quality and there will be a lot more of it.

The root of the cultivated olive tree of Romans 11 is not the Jewish community. It is Yeshua Himself. He is our root through whom we receive our life-giving sustenance. Those Believers in the nations who are "grafted in" now receive their life-giving sustenance through Yeshua. This olive tree that we are all now
part of is not a tree with only one kind of olive. It is a tree of grafted branches from many trees. It is a tree of many varieties of olives with different colors, flavors, textures, and scents. Some are better for making oil and others for pickling. They are all prepared and served differently. By receiving our life-giving sustenance through a better root, we can all now reach our full potential. Our respective fruit is still unique, but the yield is now much greater and of a higher quality.

The worldwide Body of Messiah should be a symphony of colors and flavors and sounds. We are one in the Lord, but still diverse. Unity is not uniformity. We should celebrate the diversity of our peoples as we each seek to be conformed to the image of God's Son, Who was the message lived out. May we each live out the message in the midst of the people among whom we live as fully engaged members of our communities. May we seek to see the message lived out among other peoples in ways that speak to who they are and where they live.