

Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada, edited by Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton. University of British Columbia Press, 2016. 226 pp., Pb. \$29.65 ISBN-13: 9780774829403

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Mixed Blessings is a collection of nine heavily footnoted essays divided into three sections: “Communities in Encounter,” “Individuals in Encounter,” and “Contemporary Encounter.” These three sections are book-ended by an Introduction and Conclusion by editors Tolly Bradford (Concordia University of Edmonton) and Chelsea Horton (research consultant working with Indigenous communities in Canada) which serve to reflect on the mixed blessings of cultural encounter as exposed through the essays as a whole.

The first section, “Communities in Encounter” opens with a piece by Timothy Pearson, who holds a PhD from McGill University. Referencing a 1609 publication from lawyer and adventurer Marc Lescarbot as well as the seventeenth century mission reports collected as *The Jesuit Relations*, Pearson explores the association between ritual performance and social identity of French, Huron and Algonquin from the late 1630s to 1650. Elizabeth Elbourne, from the Department of History and Classical Studies at McGill University, explores both power and danger in Haudenosaunee relationships with Anglicans in eighteenth and nineteenth century eastern and central North America during the critical period in which the importance of Haudenosaunee as military allies shifted. Demonstrating thorough knowledge of historical period and excellent attention to detailed primary sources, Elbourne discusses the strategic relevance of alliances, regardless of race, with particular Christianities relentlessly pointing to the enormous complexities, not least of which were competing interests between various communities and individuals. Amanda Fehr, doctoral candidate in History at the University of Saskatchewan, provides the final piece in this first section. Fehr takes a twentieth century Stó:lō Coast Salish memorial in southwestern British Columbia as a focal point for not only exploring socio-economic interests in the Stó:lō leadership who spearheaded the creation of the I:yem monument, but also its deep religio-spiritual significance. In a penetrating gloss Fehr notes the insider/outsider dilemma well-known in Religious Studies, as well as shifting meanings over time.

The second section “Individuals in Encounter” opens with a piece from Cecilia Morgan at the University of Toronto. Morgan details a slice of life in mid-1880s Upper Canada as revealed in the diary of Eliza Field Jones, a British woman living at the Credit mission following her marriage to a mixed-race Mississauga missionary. Jean-François Bélisle, a Latin Americanist, and Nicole St-Onge, Director of the Institute of Canadian and Aboriginal Studies at the University of Ottawa, co-author a reading of Louis Riel that understands his vision for the

survival of his people through the influence of Ecuadorian president Gabriel García Moreno on Riel's integrated political and religious thought, comparing his millenarianism with that of the town of Chan Santa Cruz on the Yucatán peninsula. The final piece in this section is written by Tasha Beeds, who grew up on Treaty 6 lands in Alberta. Beeds glosses the life of Edward Ahenakew, *nêhiyaw* Anglican clergyman born the year of the rebellion of 1885, articulating his integrated loyalty to the church and his concomitant commitment to *nêhiyawak* as evidenced through his life and writings.

In the third section, "Contemporary Encounters," Sipiwe Dube from the Department of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria points to the complexity of Christianity in Canada, noting what he terms its ambiguity: Christianity was complicit in the colonial project and it is also a source of empowerment for Indigenous peoples (146). Throughout his piece Dube reflects on how that ambiguity is, or is not, integrated into the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Denise Nadeau from Concordia University in Montréal provides an essay outlining ways in which she addresses challenges in teaching about religious encounter through her course "Indigenous Traditions, Women and Colonialism." The final contribution in the volume is provided by Dr. Carmen Lansdowne, a member of the Heiltsuk First Nation and an ordained minister in the United Church of Canada. Lansdowne explores autoethnography as a method for theological enquiry into the history of First Nations Christianity.

The nine pieces that comprise *Mixed Blessings* complicate simplistic reductions of a complex period in Canadian history. This complicating is introduced on the first page of the anthology: "Because of her deep Catholic faith, Kateri was largely isolated from her people and remains an ambivalent figure among the Mohawk, a growing number of whom are focused on the resurgence of Haudenosaunee spiritual teaching and nationalism. At the same time, Kateri is a source and symbol of strength to many Indigenous people, Mohawk and not" (1). These few sentences indicate the inadequacy of categorization as an explanatory basis from which to articulate heterogeneity and make some sense of the border crossings that are inherent in the realities that are exposed in each of the essays. Although the essays are for the most part accessible to an educated general audience, the clear scholarly discipline underlying the work serves to remind academics that research methodologies must acknowledge their own locatedness which can, and do, cross borders. An excellent index provided, which is of great assistance in locating topics, issues and people discussed in the collection.

Similar to Margery Wolf's *A Thrice-Told Tale* in its willingness to reconsider phenomenon from a range of perspectives and its unwillingness to perpetuate reified interpretations regarding loci of power, *Mixed Blessings* makes a solid contribution to increasing knowledge about a complex historical period, ensuring that post-colonial understandings are as rich and varied as the lived experiences they purport to explain.

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