
Book Review

Decolonizing Theology in Canada

Decolonizing Church: Emerging Voices Speak, ed. Néstor Medina and Becca Whitla. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2025. xiv + 230 pp.

Néstor Medina is Associate Professor of Religious Ethics and Culture at Emmanuel College, Toronto. Becca Whitla is Professor of Practical Ministry at St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon. Together they have edited this collection of essays on decolonial theology in the Canadian context. The book begins with a foreword by Michel Andraos, who argues that although Canadian churches have apologized for participating in colonialism, they remain deeply colonial in many of their worldviews and practices. Medina and Whitla provide an introduction that defines coloniality as the "Eurocentric web of relationships that continues to condition peoples and societies" (6). The book's topic is how decolonizing approaches can and should reshape theology and church practices in Canada and challenge churches to move beyond apologies to concrete action.

Chapter 1, by Carmen Lansdowne, argues that traditional Indigenous worldviews, which teach balance between people's needs and those of others, along with respect for interdependency, can help Christianity be more life-giving in a time of climate change. Chapter 2, by Ahmeda Mansaray-Richardson, notes that a key part of decolonizing is to recognize who is speaking through you, which worldviews and perspectives your speech may be channelling. Chapter 3, by Chung Yan Lam, emphasizes the importance of storytelling by marginalized peoples to present their histories and views of reality and offers a rereading of the Samson and Delilah story from Yan Lam's marginalized perspective. Chapter 4, by Emo Yango, examines how Filipino immigrants to Canada typically bring a colonial consciousness with them and how this inclines them to acquiesce to white supremacy here. Decolonizing involves exposing, criticizing, and unlearning this colonial mentality. Chapter 5, by Hyejung Jessie Yum, reflects on how while racialized persons like herself are marginalized by white society, they are also involved, consciously or otherwise, in various oppressions of others. Chapter 6, by Rafael Vallejo, describes the difficult and precarious life of migrant farmworkers in southern Ontario and their struggle for a better life. Chapter 7, by Miriam Spies, argues that disability or Crip theologies need to acknowledge anger

and lament over the limitations of crip bodies so they can be present within the Church on their own terms. Spies highlights the transformative nature of people like herself failing to perform to the expectations of others. Chapter 8, by Joëlle M. Morgan, describes her involvement in working to decolonize Indigenous-settler relations in Canada as a queer white settler woman and reflects on how the Canaanite woman calls Jesus' presentation of a settler God to account in Matthew 15:27. Chapter 9, by Adele Halliday, explores how on Turtle Island, the relationships and histories of Indigenous and Black Peoples are intertwined and complex. She concludes that Black and Indigenous Peoples need to stand in solidarity and work together toward decolonization. Chapter 10, by Medina and Whitla, explores how liturgy can be a form of resistance to the heritage of colonialism by embodying a decolonial theoethics. They argue that marginalized peoples' lived experience and cultural contexts need to be recognized as sources of knowledge for decolonizing ethics and liturgical expressions. Chapter 11, by Ray Aldred, highlights differences between Indigenous ways of knowing and being and those of Euro-Canadian society. He argues that churches in Canada need to develop emotional intelligence so they can relate to the trauma Indigenous Peoples have experienced through generations of oppression and work at honouring, respecting, and learning from them so the two can work together to find a way to live as relatives. The afterword, by Carol B. Duncan, notes that the presence of non-Indigenous racialized minorities and others who have also experienced various forms of colonizing oppression disturbs a simple binary between Indigenous and settler and complicates the work of decolonization.

Many of these authors emphasize the importance of storytelling, particularly regarding their own experience and the history of their community. Some buttress their personal narratives with social-scientific analysis and data. The emphasis in each chapter is on the alienation and oppressions that each author has experienced and is primarily engaged with. It is odd that there is no chapter by a francophone person in this collection, as the francophone community has

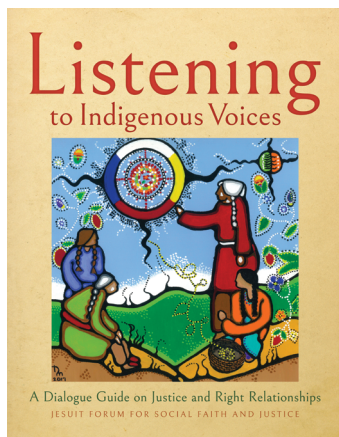
been resisting colonization and marginalization by English-speaking Canada for over 200 years. Still, this is a solid and important collection of essays that sets an agenda on an important topic in contemporary theology. It will be useful for theological educators, clergy, and educated lay people in the Church. Every theological library should have a copy.

Don Schweitzer

St. Andrew's College, Treaty 6 Territory

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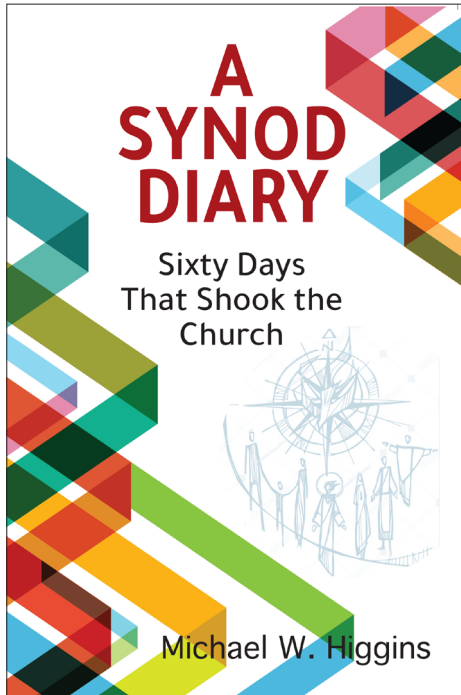


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Michael W. Higgins



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—from the author's *Prelude*

Michael W. Higgins is Basilian Distinguished Fellow of Contemporary Catholic Thought, St. Michael's

College, University of Toronto, and Distinguished Professor of Catholic Thought Emeritus at Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, CT. He has produced several documentaries and authored numerous books, including *The Jesuit Disruptor: A Personal Portrait of Pope Francis* (House of Anansi Press).

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Please send submissions and correspondence to don.schweitzer@saskatoontheologicalunion.ca.



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