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Stories in my neighbor's faith: narratives from world religions in Canada

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diversity, nature itself and those tillers of the soil who work with the rhythms of creation. Such a view has been described by the “shakers and makers” as reactionary and primitivist, but Kneen’s effective advocacy for community-oriented bonding with each other and nature exposes his critics’ apologia as name calling and trivializing.

As for those for whom a faith commitment forms the undergirding of their lives, Brewster Kneen speaks to and for them. His is a voice akin to the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures and the radical message of Jesus about God’s reign. He is rooted in our churches’ call to Jubilee and debt reduction. To read Leviticus 25 on Jubilee and Jesus’ agricultural parables links us with the vision of Brewster Kneen. Indeed, his periodical *Ram’s Horn* comes across both as a call to action and a reminder that we are a biblical people called to defend and serve each other and the land we share in stewardship. The underlying foundation of Kneen’s message is deeply Jewish and Christian; *Farmageddon* mirrors these commitments. His call to justice struggle underscores such values:

Resistance must begin within, as a matter of conscience. It is a matter of life and death, stark as that may sound. It is an issue, in the words of the prophet Moses, of life and death. “I am offering you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live...” (Deuteronomy 30:19). The prophets of biotechnology may offer life, so that you, personally, may live forever – if the companies just get the investment and the regulatory approvals to develop their technology. But the cost, and the price, is death (191).

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Stories in my Neighbour’s Faith – Narratives from World Religions in Canada

Susan L. Scott, Editor

Etobicoke, ON: United Church Publishing House, 1999

183 pages, \$19.95 Softcover

It is no secret that the Canadian cultural and religious landscape is in rapid transition, and that the ethic of diversity is becoming much more of an imperative as so-called “world religions” play an ever increasing role in Canada’s self-understanding as a multi-cultural society. While it would be wildly naive (not to mention arrogant) for Canadian churches to assume that we can simply proceed with “business as usual”, as if the Christian voice were the *only* faith group representing the religious underpinning of Canada’s cultural milieu, it would be equally naive to assume that the various communities of faith could simply co-

exist without some real understanding of each respective faith tradition within the interfaith arena. *Stories in My Neighbour's Faith* provides an excellent entry point into the world of interfaith understanding, tolerance, and acceptance.

Scott has collected the faith stories from such diverse and varied faith traditions as Judaism, Mennonite Christianity, Islam, Sikh, Taoism, Unitarianism, Humanism, Jainism, Buddhism, Zorastrianism, Baha'i, Afro-Caribbean traditions, Hinduism, Russian Orthodox, Goddess worship, and Aboriginal spiritualities.

The strongest feature of this collection is the personal engagement with each unique faith. Whether the story is told in scripture, song, poetry, narrative, or prophetic utterance, the human face of each faith group allows a personal involvement with each individual region. There is no apology, no theology and no philosophy undergirding this collection save for the common theme of the personal story itself and their respective adoption into the Canadian spiritual community. This book is mercifully free of dogma that attempts to emphasize the "sameness" of each faith tradition, but the collection honours the experience and the integrity that allows each storyteller to remain steadfast to her/his own faith commitments.

Each chapter deals with a specific religion or "spirituality" told by an adherent to the specific tradition. The richness of faith as an engagement with the struggle of "what it means to be human – broken, longing, alive" is powerfully expressed as each storyteller wrestles with the tradition that she/he confesses. Some of these stories are filled with profound pain, some with tremendous joy, and some with unfulfilled longing, but each of them tells a personal story of faith and its relationship to what each one calls sacred or divine. I was moved by many of the stories and felt honoured to have been allowed into the personal lives of the storytellers. This was a book that can be read meditatively, reflecting on the way all our stories connect and interweave, yet still remaining uniquely personal.

If there be a shortcoming, however, it would be the choices of voice that represented each faith group. Each tradition seemed to be represented by a member of its liberal wing. While it would be impossible to engage the various factions and sects that emerge from any given community, it would seem that a nodding gesture could have been given to the breadth of each faith.

Assemblies of all faith communities would benefit by studying this book as a way of entering into the interfaith questions that are arising today. The first step toward peaceably living in our interfaith and multicultural society is listening to understand and moving toward acceptance. From there we can live and work together fulfilling a common vision of wholeness for the human community.

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