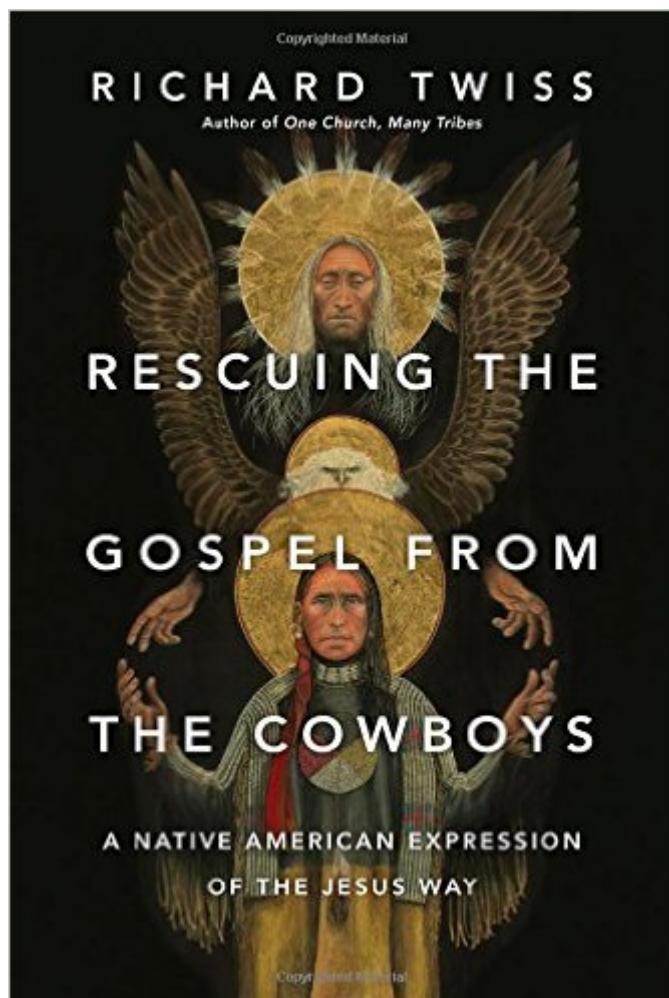


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# Rescuing The Gospel From The Cowboys: A Native American Expression Of The Jesus Way



## Synopsis

Missio Alliance Essential Reading List of 2015 One of Seedbed's 10 Notable Books from 2015 The gospel of Jesus has not always been good news for Native Americans. The history of North America is marred by atrocities committed against Native peoples. Indigenous cultures were erased in the name of Christianity. As a result, to this day few Native Americans are followers of Jesus. However, despite the far-reaching effects of colonialism, some Natives have forged culturally authentic ways to follow the way of Jesus. In his final work, Richard Twiss provides a contextualized Indigenous expression of the Christian faith among the Native communities of North America. He surveys the painful, complicated history of Christian missions among Indigenous peoples and chronicles more hopeful visions of culturally contextual Native Christian faith. For Twiss, contextualization is not merely a formula or evangelistic strategy, but rather a relational process of theological and cultural reflection within a local community. Native leaders reframe the gospel narrative in light of post-colonization, reincorporating traditional practices and rituals while critiquing and correcting the assumptions of American Christian mythologies. Twiss gives voice to the stories of Native followers of Jesus, with perspectives on theology and spirituality plus concrete models for intercultural ministry. Future generations of Native followers of Jesus, and those working crossculturally with them, will be indebted to this work.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Richard Twiss, who passed on in 2013, was a Native American, an evangelical Christian, and an

academic. In *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys*, Twiss argues for contextualization: Native American Christians worshiping Jesus through their own cultural expressions, such as drums, pow-wows, and sweat lodges. According to Twiss, such an approach has been controversial within evangelicalism, as many white evangelicals and even some Native American evangelicals fear that it promotes paganism or can open people up to evil spirits. Twiss believes, however, that Native American evangelicals should feel free to be who they are rather than leaving behind their heritage. At times in the book, Twiss offers a biblical rationale for his position: Jesus came to a particular cultural setting (Palestine), the early Christians drew from Greek and Roman concepts (i.e., the logos, Stoicism) in appealing to Gentiles, and Paul in Romans 1 says that Gentiles are aware of a creator. The book has a lot of strengths. Although there are parts of the book that are rather abstract and academic, there are also parts in which Twiss is passionate about his beliefs. Twiss details the negative effects of colonialism on Native Americans, and he also has some good one-liners. For example, Twiss responds to the neo-Calvinist line of "if you have a problem with what I've said, take your issue to God because I am just telling you what the Word of God says" • by saying "that is, pure God=pure reductionist baloney" •. Twiss jokes that many act as if II Corinthians 5:17 means that old things have passed away, and all things have become white.

The atrocities committed against Native Americans are well documented. What makes the story even more tragic is the way Christian mission was wrapped up in the story of western colonialism. The missionaries told the Indigenous peoples about Jesus; yet they also demeaned and destroyed native cultures. The city I live in Florida (Safety Harbor) is the site of early mission efforts and where the first missionary was martyred (Luis Cancer de Barbrasto). He died trying to reach a people group that no longer exists (the Tocobaga people). Many Native peoples were forced to live on reservations, had their land and livelihood taken from them. Others were treated cruelly or killed by an allegedly Christian dominant culture. In *Rescuing the Gospel From the Cowboys: A Native Expression of the Jesus Way*, Richard Twiss (1954-2013) unfolds a vision of Christian Mission among Native Peoples which honors their culture, traditions and sacred symbols. Twiss was a cofounder of Evangelicals for Justice and NAIITS (North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies) and the founder of Wiconi International (a Christian ministry among First Nations). Twiss was a Sicangu Lakota. When he came to faith in Jesus, he left his tribal practices, only recapturing it later. For the last twenty years of his life, his project was the contextualization and decolonization of the Christian gospel for indigenous peoples. Twiss begins with an affirmation. "There is only one Creator of heaven and earth. There are not "many" creators. Just one! All of

human and non-human creation comes from this One creator" (17). As a Christian, Twiss upholds a biblical understanding of God but sought to follow Jesus in a manner that honored his native culture.

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