

## CONTENTS

### Introduction

DOUGLAS TODD / 1

### ∞ Part One

#### CASCADIAN RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY AND VALUES

##### Chapter 1 The Promise and Limits of Secular Spirituality in Cascadia

MARK A. SHIBLEY / 33

##### Chapter 2 Mapping Spirituality and Values in the Elusive Utopia

ANDREW GRENVILLE / 53

##### Chapter 3 Memory, Novelty and Possibility in This Place

PATRICIA O'CONNELL KILLEN / 65

### ∞ Part Two

#### CASCADIAN HISTORY

##### Chapter 4 Cascadia Once upon a Time

JEAN BARMAN / 89

##### Chapter 5 Cascadian Civil Religion from a North American Perspective

MARK SILK / 105

##### Chapter 6 Secular Utopias Versus Religious Credos — One Cascadia or More?

PHILIP RESNICK / 115

### ∞ Part Three

#### CASCADIAN NATURE

##### Chapter 7 Geography, Spirituality and Social Change in Cascadia: A Bioregional Perspective

MIKE CARR / 127

##### Chapter 8 Sustainability and Spirituality in Cascadia

PETER DRURY / 143

Chapter 9 Toward a New Cascadian Civil Religion  
of Nature

SALLIE MCFAGUE / 157

∞ Part Four

CASCADIAN CULTURE

Chapter 10 “The Divine Brushing Against the Natural”:  
Pacific Northwest Magic Realism

PAULO LEMOS HORTA / 175

Chapter 11 Let the Salmon Be Salmon: The International  
Peach Arch as Symbol and Challenge

ELEANOR J. STEBNER / 195

Chapter 12 A Geo-indigenous World View from the  
Far West Coast of Cascadia

ELI BLISS ENNS / 207

Chapter 13 Conjectures on Workplace  
Spirituality in Cascadia

MARK WEXLER / 215

Chapter 14 Nature-Based Spirituality in Cascadia:  
Prospects and Pitfalls

GAIL WELLS / 241

CASCADIAN CONTEMPLATIONS

Cascadia

GEORGE BOWERING / 265

Whatever You Do

GEORGE BOWERING / 267

West Coast Mythistorema

PHILIP RESNICK / 269

Afterword / 273

*Contributors* / 275

*Notes & Works Cited* / 287

# Introduction

DOUGLAS TODD

*“Oregon is California’s Canada.”*

— US POLITICAL SATIRIST  
STEPHEN COLBERT

POPULAR CULTURE HAS tuned into the unique character of Cascadia: the rich, wet and spectacularly mountainous region this book defines as Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. Late-night TV comedian Stephen Colbert, who mocks right-wing ideology at the same time as he pretends to be one of its chief exponents, has a regular shtick in which he highlights how progressive values among “the tie-dyed tree-hugging wusses” of Oregon reflect the pink-tinged hues of liberal-left Canada.

Even the veteran lawyer played by William Shatner in the TV show *Boston Legal* sees Cascadia as a utopian home of the divine, remarking, “God lives in British Columbia.” His jest reflects the belief, widely held outside Cascadia, that the region is intimately connected to nature, leery of tradition-bound institutions and

open to experimenting with novel expressions of freedom. Cascadia may be a so-called secular place where fewer people than anywhere else in North America consider themselves institutionally “religious,” but they certainly think of themselves as “spiritual,” often experiencing sacredness in the imposing landscapes.

Then there are those semi-humorous bumper stickers found on cars in the region, which read, “Keep the US Out of Cascadia!” They are warning the imperialistic eastern establishment of a long-held separatist sensibility among many of the Pacific Northwest’s Americans and Canadians. Their prickly attitude goes something like this: if outside government and corporate forces would just stop meddling, Cascadia would be able to evolve into something truly idyllic.

Up until the last 150 years, the relatively few people who lived in or thought about what we now call Cascadia considered it a cohesive bioregion, as do many of the contributors to this book. To some extent that remains the mindset of the region’s aboriginals, who practised their nature-revering spirituality while hunting, fishing and trading along its north-south valleys and inter-connecting coastline. They certainly did not conceive of invisible boundaries on maps. In a different way, a borderless vision was shared by early European explorers and trappers. They include Columbia River explorer David Thompson and Captain George Vancouver, one of those credited with “discovering” this land off the northern Pacific Ocean in the 1790s.

Soon after, in 1803, US President Thomas Jefferson dispatched the famous Lewis and Clark expedition to the region, in part to solidify the majestic terrain between what is now northern California and Alaska into an independent entity to be called “The Republic of the Pacific.” As historian Jean Barman explains in Chapter 4, there were several times during the nineteenth century when expansionist Americans almost had their wish of claiming what is now the west coast of Canada. But the British Empire, working through the Hudson’s Bay Company, did just enough to claim for itself a portion

of this wild and bountiful region now known as Cascadia, which through the early 1800s was being called “The Oregon Territory.”

The international border, featuring in recent years often-intimidating customs guards, was not created at the 49th parallel until 1846, when Britain and the US felt pressured to accept a compromise to avoid warfare. Despite the pronouncements of radical environmentalists, some popular talk-show hosts, urban planners and intellectual travel writers, few people with their feet planted in the world of *realpolitik* would suggest the US-Canada border is going to disappear anytime soon, making way for a proud new, independent Cascadian nation. But that has not stopped many people from dreaming about all the things — seen and unseen — that continue to tie together the landscape, people and futures of Oregon, Washington and B.C.

The aim of this book is to explore deeply that elusive utopia. To dig into Cascadia’s seemingly unlimited possibilities, this volume brings together fourteen of the region’s most able essayists, religion scholars, bioregionalists, literary analysts, historians, philosophers, theologians, ethicists, political scientists and poets. With the addition of two carefully selected Cascadian “outsiders,” from Toronto and Connecticut, the contributors to this book are almost evenly sorted between those born in the US and those born in Canada, with two carrying dual citizenship. (One other was raised largely in Latin America until arriving in Canada in his teens.) I believe Americans and Canadians in Cascadia have been missing out by failing to learn about each other’s insights. The people of Cascadia have many common values, worries and sensibilities, but the international border has often proved a barrier to sharing innovative responses to the region’s problems and possibilities. In this book, you would be hard-pressed to find a more gifted and well-suited binational group of people with whom to probe — imaginatively, realistically and even romantically — the cultural promise and spiritual character of this remarkable place.

Before the reader goes much further, take note that *Cascadia*:

*The Elusive Utopia* defines “spirituality” very broadly — as the way that humans create for themselves ultimate meaning, values and purpose. Along with the unusually high number of Cascadians who like to say “I’m spiritual but not religious,” the authors agree that one does not have to adhere to a religion to be spiritual. Contributors to the volume may go one step further: we assume that atheists, who live in record numbers in Cascadia, can and are making profound contributions to this region’s particular sense of spirituality and place.

## THE GEOGRAPHIC, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC TIES CONNECTING CASCADIA

Before turning to the crucial role that spirituality is playing in shaping public life in Cascadia — the subject at the heart of this book — it is worth taking a look at the more commonly discussed links among residents of Washington, Oregon and B.C. These factors have customarily made both residents of the region and a surprisingly large number of outsiders wax eloquent about their dreams for Cascadia.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Cascadia, which is also known as the Pacific Northwest, is that its rugged geography is impossible to ignore. Even the origins of the name Cascadia emerge from the natural world, which is so passionately revered in the region. The term “Cascadia” is historically credited to early nineteenth-century Scottish botanist David Douglas, after whom the mighty Douglas fir, one of the tallest trees in the world, is named. Hunting for plants near the mouth of the Columbia River in the 1820s, Douglas was struck by the region’s many glorious “cascading” rivers and waterfalls. Since then, the name has been applied to the Cascade Mountain Range, the Pacific Ocean’s Cascadia subduction zone (tectonic plates which frequently visit earthquakes upon one and all) and the Cascade Volcanic Arc, part of the Pacific Rim of Fire.

Unlike in less physically endowed corners of the world, Cascadia’s geography is so grand it is inescapable. Cascadia boasts the impos-

ing Cascade and Coastal mountain ranges, with many of their peaks as volcanic and changeable as the region's residents. These daunting mountains, with their bears and wolves, are in view of the region's three major metropolises: Seattle, Portland and especially Vancouver (where one of the city's most impressive spectacles, the Cascade's perpetually snow-capped Mount Baker, actually rises up from US soil to the south). Also impossible to disregard are Cascadia's waterways: the Pacific Ocean, bringing temperate weather; and its thundering rivers, particularly the take-your-breath-away Columbia, which runs through and has helped define all three political jurisdictions. The region's waters, in turn, are famous for salmon, the legendary and threatened species that some people believe should be the symbol of Cascadia.

Those who champion the supremacy of salmon mythology for the Pacific Northwest, however, will have to battle with earlier defenders of the concept of an independent Cascadia, who have customarily held up the Douglas fir tree as the region's archetype, displayed on their only slightly tongue-in-cheek rebel "Cascadia nation" flag (affectionately known as "the Doug"). As both evergreens and salmon decline in abundance, threats to these awe-inspiring expressions of raw wilderness are causing many to mount the ramparts to try to preserve this edge of the continent, or at least parts of it, as a glimpse of unspoiled Eden. Then again, as religious historian Eleanor Stebner writes persuasively in Chapter 11, perhaps the region needs a human-constructed symbol, like the Peace Arch at the Blaine international border crossing, which reflects the goodwill, idealism and communitarianism that those who have settled in Cascadia can bring to creating a model future for this binational, multi-spiritual land.

Setting aside the spectacular wilderness, however, Cascadia has an inter-connected urban culture, and not only because sidewalk coffee cafes are *de rigueur*, and fashion (typified by water-repellant fleece clothing) is ultra-casual compared to the pinstriped East. The city dwellers of Cascadia live surprisingly close to each other.

Cascadia's three major metropolises house almost half the region's almost 14 million people (6 million in Washington, 4.25 million in B.C. and 3.5 million in Oregon). A resident of Vancouver can drive to Seattle in one-quarter the time it takes to motor to the nearest major Canadian city, Calgary — the oil-industry-run, Conservative-party-backing prairie metropolis nicknamed “Cowtown,” a tag that suggests just how culturally removed it is from the West Coast, a.k.a. “Lotusland” or the “Left Coast.”

On the so-called profane level of economics, Washington, Oregon and B.C. produce hundreds of billions of dollars worth of goods and services each year — which would make the combined region one of the world's top economies. Promoters on both sides of the border highlight the benefits of the “two-nation vacation,” with more than 40 million people flying or driving across the Washington state/B.C. border each year, clogging customs. In late 2007, B.C. and Washington State officials revealed their plans to introduce similar high-tech licence plates to let drivers cross the border without long delays. Business and community leaders in Vancouver and Seattle began consulting in 2006 on making a joint bid to host either the World Cup of Soccer or the Summer Olympics. In Chapter 2, pollster Andrew Grenville reveals that the residents of B.C. and Washington are the most favourable in North America to an open international border. Whether Canadian or American, his polling suggests, Cascadians like each other.

Politicians on both sides of the border have worked with influential think-tanks, particularly Seattle's Discovery Institute Cascadia Center, to emphasize the importance of expanding high-speed train connections between Vancouver and Seattle, as well as other commuter and trade links within Cascadia. In 2001, provincial and state politicians formed the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNER) to foster regional and economic co-operation. However, the PNER stretches the definition of Cascadia to include Alberta, Idaho and Alaska, which this book avoids because of its lack of bioregional and cultural cohesiveness. When it comes to corporate life, Cas-



cadia is known worldwide for its long-time lumber and airplane (Boeing) industries, as well as lifestyle-related newcomers expanding the reach of coffee (Starbucks), computers (Microsoft), on-line marketing (Amazon), co-operative banking (VanCity Savings Credit Union), sports shoes (Nike) and ecotourism.

Many note there is a cultural kinship among many Cascadians, especially those on the highly populated coast, which includes a comfort with individuality and freedom. At a socio-economic level, household incomes in B.C., Washington and Oregon are higher than each country's average. Real estate prices tend to stay strong in Portland, Seattle and Vancouver even while they flatten out in most of the rest of North America. Residents are the most highly educated on the continent, with more than 26 percent holding bachelor's degrees. When it comes to entertainment, the residents of Vancouver provide 40 percent of the funding for Seattle's arts-oriented public TV station, KCTS, and tens of thousands of Canadians frequently attend Seattle Mariners baseball games and rock festivals at the Columbia River Gorge in central Washington. Virtually every Cascadian seems proud of homegrown Jimi Hendrix, whose utterly groundbreaking guitar style seemed to rise out of the region's wildness. And Washingtonians and Oregonians often dash up to B.C. to ski at Whistler, visit their recreational properties or revel in Vancouver's exotically cosmopolitan urban life, which overflows with Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Korean, aboriginal, Vietnamese and European restaurants, not to mention those experimenting with culinary "fusion."

Part of the romantic appeal of this pluralistic region is that utopian dreams for it never quite die. At the most audacious level, some organizations remain devoted to the vision of unifying the Pacific Northwest, culturally and perhaps even politically. The websites of politico-enviro groups such as Cascadian Bioregionalism, the Cascadian National Party and Team Cascadia include variations on the Cascadian evergreen flag and rally cries to form "the Republic of Cascadia." At the height of his fame, B.C.'s top talk-show host, a

former cabinet minister and political centrist named Rafe Mair, was one of those predicting a political entity called Cascadia would exist by 2010.

The most famous symbol of this mythical free-standing state is Ernest Callenbach's legendary futuristic 1975 novel, *Ecotopia*. Although the boundaries of Callenbach's *Ecotopia* do not actually include B.C., the book describes the Pacific Northwest as a newly separated ecologically sensitive country with a female president and free love. Author Joel Garneau followed *Ecotopia* with a more grounded 1981 book, *The Nine Nations of North America*, which used the novel's title to describe the US and Canadian west coast as a unified geographic and cultural entity, noted for environmental sensibilities and high quality of life. Timothy Egan's 1990 Cascadian classic, *The Good Rain*, magnificently captured how the region is coming of age, promising to reveal to the world tantalizing new ways of doing things. In his best-selling 1998 book, *An Empire Wilderness: Travels into America's Future*, noted intellectual Robert Kaplan enthusiastically championed the notion of B.C. leaving a dismantled Canada to join Washington and Oregon to create a superior culture. Naive or not, Cascadia has a way of inspiring grand visions.

## CASCADIANS' DISTINCTIVE SPIRITUALITY SHAPES PUBLIC LIFE

This book is uniquely devoted to an aspect of Cascadia that rarely, if ever, receives discussion: the surprisingly crucial way that religion and spirituality influences the binational region's public life.

Connecticut religion scholar Mark Silk, senior editor of the sweeping eight-book "Religion by Region" project, maintains in Chapter 5 that religious differences may make up the strongest influence on regional public life in North America. Many of us agree. And in few places would this be more relevant than in Cascadia.

How do the forces of informal spirituality and organized religion, impacted by an overpowering landscape, influence what people believe, feel, do and imagine in Cascadia? They influence Casca-