Anabaptist Witness

A Global Anabaptist and Mennonite Dialogue on Key Issues Facing the Church in Mission

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Jamie Pitts
JPitts@AMBS.edu

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Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
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Mission & Protest

REVIEWS

Editorial

The Anabaptist relation to government is often described in terms of separation, withdrawal, and rejection. Anabaptist commitment to discipleship community relativizes all other allegiances, perhaps especially those to nation or country, which are invariably ordered by means "outside the perfection of Christ"—to quote the influential Schleitheim "Brotherly Union" of 1527.[1] From this perspective, mission is the Anabaptist alternative to government. It is a nonviolent invitation to join a peaceable community regulated only by love, where the church displays the alternative politics of Jesus rather than attempting to influence, much less run, coercive power.

Historically, however, Anabaptists have related to governing authorities in a wide variety of ways. The roots of Anabaptism are in the failed German peasant revolutions, and many early Anabaptists would have seen continuity between their faith and the peasant aims, which included land redistribution and the abolition of serfdom. Anabaptist pastors Balthasar Hubmaier and Bernhard Rothmann even initiated reforms alongside civic rulers. As persecution grew, many Anabaptists advocated for religious toleration. Later, Anabaptists from Northern Europe reached agreements with authorities in the Netherlands, Prussia, and Russia ensuring their toleration and relative isolation. Russian Mennonites have now negotiated "privileges" with governments throughout the Americas and have reached high government office in Canada and Paraguay. Today, Anabaptists in countries such as Tanzania serve in government and military roles.

That said, since the sixteenth century there have been few cases of sustained, widespread Anabaptist resistance to government. The descendants of the "radical Protestants" largely ceased to protest, perhaps in response to the trauma of persecution. The early twentieth century saw North American Anabaptists get involved in refugee resettlement—which required significant cooperation with governments—and make a successful bid to be recognized as conscientious objectors to military service during the Second World War.[2] This experience generated theological activity aimed at legitimating service and political advo-

1 *The Schleitheim Confession*, translated and edited by John Howard Yoder (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1977), 14.

2 For recent historical overview, Andrew P. Klager, *From Suffering to Solidarity: The Historical Seeds of Mennonite Interreligious, Interethnic, and International Peacebuilding* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), especially chapters 1 through 5.

cacy as part of Christian witness. The new theology, in turn, supported the work of organizations such as Mennonite Central Committee and its advocacy centers in Ottawa and Washington, DC.[3]

Yet protest was still regarded by many Anabaptists as suspicious, as essentially a form of coercive resistance. For example, many white Mennonites were troubled in 1962 when African American Mennonite Central Committee worker Vincent Harding was arrested on a protest march in Albany, Georgia; it was one thing for Harding and his wife, Rosemarie Freeney Harding, to organize an interracial "Menno House" that displayed the possibility of reconciliation in a racially divided society, and quite another thing to openly challenge state authority.[4]

Harding's message to Anabaptists, expressed most publicly at the 1967 Mennonite World Conference general assembly in Amsterdam, was to join Jesus by joining protest marches:

> March out saints, and be counted. March out of the buildings. March out of the denominations, march out of the churches, if need be. March out of the conformity and out of the terror of the roaring night. You have nothing to lose but your lives, and a world to gain. March out saints. Leap up and march out! The Master is already on the road, and He says, "I am the way; follow me."[5]

Harding, in other words, insisted that Anabaptist commitments to nonconformity and discipleship could only be realized by participation in protest movements, which were then spreading around the world.

Although Harding continues to be venerated by some Anabaptists,[6] few have taken up his call. Those who have done so have joined protests against autocracy in the Soviet Union, racism in the United States, indigenous genocide in Canada, violence in Colombia, and apartheid in South Africa. But, unlike in the 1950s and 60s, when Anabaptists developed a theology of service and advo-

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3 On the Washington Office, see Graber Miller, *Wise as Serpents, Innocent as Doves: American Mennonites Engage Washington* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1996).

4 Tobin Miller Shearer. "A Prophet Pushed Out: Vincent Harding and the Mennonites," *Mennonite Life* 69 (2015), accessed October 5, 2021, https://mla.bethelks.edu/ml-archive/2015/a-prophet-pushed-out-vincent-harding-and-the-menno.php.

5 Harding, "The Beggars Are Marching . . . Where Are the Saints?," in *The Witness of the Holy Spirit: Proceedings of the Eighth Mennonite World Conference, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, July 23–30, 1967*, edited by Cornelius J. Dyck (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite World Conference, 1967), 128–29.

6 I was touched to learn from Alle Hoekema that some Dutch Mennonites, in memory of Harding and his 1967 Mennonite World Conference message, continue to tithe a portion of their income annually to social justice causes.

cacy as Christian witness, there has been little written to connect protest to an Anabaptist theology of the church's mission.[7] This issue of *Anabaptist Witness* contributes to filling that gap.

In the opening essay, Andrew Suderman defines protest movements as political challenges to unjust regimes; these regimes rely on violent policing to contain and crush protest and so maintain their grip on society. For Suderman, as for Harding, Christian discipleship entails joining Jesus's defiance of domination, and so preparing to face—and protest—police power.

A poem by Carol Tobin situates protest at the overflow of Jesus's joyful challenge to the forces of evil. Playfully echoing the words of John 1, Tobin shows that Jesus's "coming over" "over came" evil, as is visible in his "wild" action at the temple.

Lydia Wylie-Kellerman's poetic essay on growing up, and now raising her own children, at protest marches, speaks to the ordinary practices necessary to sustain justice movements across generations. Without diminishing the risks of protest, Wylie-Kellerman shows how protest requires attention to packed lunches, tired feet, and school schedules. Inviting children into the "wide rivers of nonviolence" involves honoring and trusting them while persistently including them in the struggle.

One recent site of major protest activity is Colombia. César Moya draws on decolonial theory to analyze these protests as a form of resistance to "coloniality." After describing the context of the protests, Moya argues that Christians committed to peacebuilding need to see anticolonial protest as part of their work of creating an "imperfect peace." Specifically, protests are one way that Christians side with victims of injustice; it is from this position that Christian peacebuilders attempt to build bridges between victims and perpetrators.

Part of the struggle, as Moya defines it, is to remember past injustices rightly, as an act of resistance to oppressive forces that seek to obliterate memories and so avoid responsibility. Luke Martin recalls his own participation alongside a group of Mennonite missionaries in Vietnam during the United States' brutal war against the Viet Cong. As those missionaries came to know Vietnamese people and learn their history and experience of the war, and as they reflected in this light on their convictions as disciples of Jesus, they began to speak out

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7 Drew G. I. Hart's work is an important exception here, as indicated by the title of his recent book, *Who Will Be a Witness? Igniting Activism for God's Justice, Love, and Deliverance* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald, 2020). Other notable Anabaptist theological writings have developed a related theology activism, such as J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), where Jesus is portrayed as an activist. Recent Anabaptist writings on peacebuilding also typically include a role for "strategic nonviolence," as in Lisa Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding: A Vision and Framework for Peace with Justice* (Intercourse, PA: Good, 2004), chapter 7.

against the war, issuing a "Letter from Vietnam to American Christians" in 1967. This "Letter," which we are glad to reprint here, called Christians in the United States to remember the legacy of French colonialism and American exploitation, and to grapple with the damage done by the war to Vietnamese lives as well as to Christian witness.

A poem by Harold Recinos reflects on four years of struggle during the presidency of Donald Trump, invoking the "cross" and "prayers" of those who protested during that period. Recinos hopes for a "new day," in which the fruit of those protests would contribute to the ongoing transformation of the United States into a livable political community.

David Driedger's essay on recent publications on Christianity and socialism begins a review section that further illuminates this issue's theme. Anabaptists have developed rich missional theologies of alternative community, service, and nonviolent advocacy in recent decades. Hopefully this issue will help foster a similar development in our theology of protest as witness.

Jamie Pitts, editor

The Significance of Protest

Disrupting the Status Quo

Andrew Suderman

Those who participate in protests are often confronted with two simultaneous expectations:

1. On the one hand, protesters are confronted by forces tasked to maintain the way things are. In this way, the police become representatives and protectors of the status quo and the constructed social establishment.
2. On the other hand, protesters and protests are expected to be peaceful and respectful. Property, for example, must be respected and therefore guarded. If situations are not "peaceful" or "respectful," the protests are labeled as "violent" and the protesters as "violent thugs." Ironically, protesters are supposed to protest by obeying the rules of the status quo, not by disrupting them. The expectation that protests must be "peaceful" and "respectful" ultimately attempts to co-opt the protests back into the way things are rather than call the present order of things into question.

Both of these expectations fail to understand the situation, the protest, and the reality that protesters try to call into question. The police and those who are tasked to confront protesters often fail to understand that they are being called on to maintain a system that perpetuates injustice—a system in which not everyone counts or matters. They then become the symbolic representation of, and a cog within, a system that must be confronted and changed.

Likewise, those whose initial response is to analyze whether or not a protest is "violent" fail to recognize the way in which protests are a response to situations of violence that have already been perpetuated. For example, many experience the status quo as violent. For them, protest is not the first violence.

Andrew G. Suderman is Assistant Professor of Theology, Peace, and Mission at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He also serves as secretary of Mennonite World Conference's Peace Commission. *This article is reprinted with permission from the Political Theology Network blog at* https://politicaltheology.com/the-significance-of-protest-disrupting-the-status-quo/.

It is a second (or third or more) violence—a response to daily systemic violence embedded in the system.[1] Yet, the spotlight seldom shines on the violence at the root of the problem. Instead, it often focuses primarily on the violence of the symptoms. Racism, economic inequality, police brutality, and chronic corruption are but some examples of root violence. By focusing only on the violence of the protest, we already reveal the socially privileged context of our critique. Every day we see the truth of Martin Luther King Jr.'s comment that "riot is the language of the unheard."[2]

As a Mennonite and a pacifist I am concerned about the methods we use to seek and embody peace. Violence—in any form—fails to embody and bring about peace, right relations, or just systems. If we truly want to mitigate violence, it behooves us to focus on the root causes of it. We must recognize and understand the different forms of violence and how they are interconnected. Furthermore, we must acknowledge our own complicity in the violence of the systems from which we benefit.

Jacques Rancière: Help in Understanding the Significance of Protest

When I ask my students to define "politics," they often portray it as the work of the state—the rule of law along with the work of the politicians at all levels who create it. They often add that they prefer to avoid politics as much as possible. It is too divisive, they say. Such understandings, however, assume that it is possible to be apolitical.

Jacques Rancière, a French philosopher, calls such understandings into question. He differentiates between "politics" and the work of the "state." The work of the state, he says, is simply that of maintaining order—a particular order. He describes this as a "police" order (which has close ties to the carceral state). Its purpose is to create and maintain a particular social construct that establishes how relations will function in society. Inevitably, this form of social construct will privilege certain people over others. Put differently, it assumes that certain people matter and others do not. Such "policing" logic creates and maintains a society whereby the police limit political participation by "delimiting in advance the sphere of political appearances, indicating who is capable of speaking, what they are able to say, and what can become a matter of dispute."[3]

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1 See Dom Helder Camara, *Spiral of Violence* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1971).

2 Martin Luther King, Jr, "September 27, 1966: MLK—A Riot Is the Language of the Unheard," 60 Minutes YouTube video, 4:30 (quote found at 1:49), posted March 15, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_K0BWXjJv5s.

3 Joseph J. Tanke, *Jacques Rancière: An Introduction* (London: Continuum International, 2011), 45–46.

It assumes a determined social distribution based on a particular social contract that one must follow and by which one must abide.[4] As Joseph Tanke summarizes in his *Jacques Rancière: An Introduction*, "It attempts to contain, manage, co-opt, and undermine the basic 'dispute' [*litige*] about the constitution of the community."[5]

Rancière uses the term "politics," on the other hand, to describe the actions of those who make themselves count when they otherwise have not counted in the basic structure or constitution of society. "Politics," in other words, is a term reserved for when the marginalized insert themselves into the conversation.[6] Actions are "political" when those who have been excluded from the assumed social construct assert themselves as equal claimants, thus re-ordering (i.e., re-structuring) society and the relations within. "Politics" is antagonistic to "policing;" it refers to the disruption of the status quo that the "police" seek to maintain. Such a disruption, notes Rancière, becomes manifest "in a series of actions that reconfigure the space where parties, parts, or lack of parts have been defined."[7]

Rancière suggests that "politics" is the activity that arises from truly democratic forms of organization and practice.[8] It inevitably disrupts the social presumptions of the way in which power has been organized, how places and roles have been distributed, and how systems legitimize this distribution.[9]

Working for Peace Is Being Political

When we work for peace and justice (as though peace can be properly understood without the presence of justice!), we confront and disrupt systems that perpetuate injustice, violence, and oppression. In doing so, our work is political. It disrupts the systems that have been in place (i.e., the status quo) and reorganizes the ways in which we relate to one other.

When we decide to follow Jesus, we are called to embody and enact an alternative (or, perhaps better said, "original") form of power. Jesus's promise of power (Acts 1:8) is akin to Rancière's understanding of "politics." We protest

4 Watch Trevor Noah's excellent monologue regarding the "social contract" after the murder of George Floyd, at "Trevor Noah Explains How Society Has Broken Its Social Contract on Black America," *The Daily Show* YouTube video, June 3, 2020, 6:45, https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=QSyPy9vdA_s.

5 Tanke, *Jacques Rancière*, 45.

6 Take, for example, the hemorrhaging woman who is healed in Mark 5:21–43.

7 Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement, Politics, and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1999), 30.

8 Tanke, *Jacques Rancière*, 43.

9 Rancière, *Disagreement*, 28.

the "policing" realities of death that plague our world, and we expose the contingencies on which such logic rests. And we reassert our own political agency when we embody now the future God desires for this world.

May God give us the strength and the power to challenge systems of oppression in our quest to embody God's peaceable and just kingdom in the here and now.

Over Coming

Carol Tobin

The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not katelaben *[understand/comprehend/overcome] it.*

—John 1:1–5[1]

you, darkness, could not stand
under His coming over
more than that, you fell flat

upended by One not comprehended
whose silver beam streamed
through your tightened fist . . . (you missed!)

you came up empty-handed
while light not apprehended
surged forward undeterred

a Word as it were
undisturbed in a shirt pocket
Were He as a hobbit to clutch for greed or for profit
you, darkness, would have had Him in hand

Carol Tobin presently serves with Virginia Mennonite Missions (VMMissions) as a mission advocate and content editor for their quarterly publication, Transforming. *She and her husband, Skip, are part of the Early Church community in Harrisonburg, VA. Memorizing scripture and writing poems are significant ways she ingests the potency of God's word into her life. She wrote this poem in April 2017.*

1 See various translations of the Greek word *katelaben* in John 1:5, such as "understood" (AMP), "comprehended" (KJV and NASB 1995), and "overcome" (NRSV and NIV).

but lacking a hold
the hand that you played
to your great dismay
became a public display
and He over came

Came overly big and overly bounding
with so much zeal
that the tables keeled over
and teacups went flying
while His tail whipped wildly

He came drenched and dripping
from the waters of Jordan
and shook life all over us
He over came

The Sanctuary of the Streets

Raising Kids in Protest and Faith

Lydia Wylie-Kellermann

I've watched my dad get arrested dozens of times. I've held my children up to the police car window to wave goodbye to him. I've bailed him out. I've sat in courtrooms. I've vigiled outside jail cells, first as a child and now as an adult.

My dad is always just one of a communal ragtag team of organizers, storytellers, musicians, artists, legal observers, marchers, dancers, medics, drummers, and deep listeners—a chorus of voices coming together to create poetry, to create protest in an even larger movement for justice.

Inevitably, the moment arrives. Time stops and breath slows.

Handcuffs emerge following police warnings, and the chained protestor is ushered to the police car. No matter the person, tears well up within me. Spirit seems to run through my whole body. Others begin to applaud, and I cannot join for fear I will collapse weeping. Not with grief but with joy. Joy that comes only when we have courage to expose the pain and the truth. It is powerful to see bodies given in struggle, to see freedom claimed as an act of freedom, and to see ancestors and generations present in those chains.

It is holy and sacred. One of those rare moments where spirit is undeniably present in the working of our lives.

It is church.

In 2018, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival organized six weeks of protests that included civil disobedience at state capitols around the country. I spent those weeks protesting at the capitol in Lansing, Michigan. My two-year-old companioned me. He passed around the mic at the morning nonviolence trainings. He expertly drew over the carefully plotted maps that contained direct action plans (covering up any trace or possibility of conspiracy charges). He distributed water under the beating sun to folks blocking doors. And when things got tense and I needed to be ready to move at a moment's notice, I strapped him to my back. Often he would fall asleep ushered

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Lydia Wylie-Kellermann is a writer, activist, and mother in Detroit, MI. She is the editor of Geez magazine*, a print magazine at the intersection of art, activism, and spirit. She is also the editor of the new book* The Sandbox Revolution: Raising Kids for a Just World.

into dreams by the sung strands of "Somebody's hurting my people, and we won't be silent anymore."

Learning by Walking

I too had been lulled to sleep by lullabies on the streets. I was first carried in utero, then in a stroller, then by my own feet or sometimes bike or roller blades. As a child, I had learned the geographical and political landscape of this same place by walking the trodden streets with signs or songs or snacks. And one day, I carried my own boys in utero, then pushed their strollers. Now I pack helmets and bicycles.

For me, this place is Waawiyatanong (where the waters go round)—named and continually loved by the Anishinaabe peoples—now known as Detroit, Michigan. My waters broke only miles from where my mother's water broke. The waters of home returned to the earth. These are the lands that have nourished our bodies and the lands I hope to nourish with my life.

It is always the same streets, the same buildings, and—while the struggles or chants may shift with time—ultimately it is the same struggle. The weight of my feet upon this pavement has educated me, formed me spiritually, and deepened my commitment to this community and place that I love.

Parenting on the Picket Line

These patterns of justice and protest stem back to my parents and the ways they intentionally chose to raise my sister and me. For them, having kids was not a reason to flee from the risks of resistance but an opportunity to welcome us deeply and lovingly into that struggle.

I grew up participating in Christian traditions that followed the liturgical year. I learned the rhythms of those seasons through where we put our bodies. Each Monday of Advent, as we waited in darkness for the birth of Jesus, we made the long drive to Williams International, where we would stand—clad in snow pants and mittens—on the side of the road. Inside, people were building cruise missile engines. Outside, we were holding candles and hungering for a world without war-making. We would spend Good Friday walking the streets of Detroit asking, Where is injustice and crucifixion happening in our moment and place? I learned that our sacred stories were inseparable from the seasons of the earth and the church. I learned to embody those stories with my own body by placing it in the street. Because of that, my faith could never be separated from justice.

When I was in third grade, a newspaper strike took place in Detroit. Every Thursday morning during the strike my parents pulled us out of school to join the protests. My sister and I would make up chants and draw protest signs. As we played hooky from school, we learned that showing up for our community

and understanding local struggles was just as much a part of our education as sitting at a desk. And we learned that our beings, voices, and presence as children mattered.

When I was four, my parents went to Palestine with an interfaith human rights delegation. I stayed behind with my grandma. Before they left, my dad pulled out a cassette player and recorded a love letter to me. In the language a four-year-old could understand, he spelled out his love, their reasons for going, and why it mattered. He also explained that their travels through the West Bank into Gaza could be dangerous. Throughout my childhood, my parents told us the hard truth of injustice. They found words we could understand and trusted our hearts to hear them.

It was not always easy for my parents; they ached with questions, wondering if they were laying too much upon their children. I hold my own fears with my kids. Sometimes the world feels so bleak and the truth too painful. Sometimes the risks seem too large or too scary. Yet I try to hold onto the fact that when I look back at my own parents, I hold nothing but deep gratitude for the unconventional parenting decisions they made in speaking truth to their children. I want to keep listening to them as teachers inspiring me toward truth, risk, and courageous action.

Listening to the Lingering Questions

The work of protest is never done without discernment, scrutiny, critical analysis, and lingering questions. Resistance in the street is not the whole of the work. Justice must be demanded, built, and created from every angle, drawing on the skills of many—from the streets to the neighborhood community centers, the courtroom to the sanctuary, the classroom to the front porch, the halls of power to the encampment beside the freeway. The work is long and wide, but when thousands (or even just a few) begin to sing in the street, the sound reverberates through our very core. The power of community is palpable. Those moments give us courage and strength for the coming days, when righteous rage pours out through bodies into the loving arms of community. When Earth holds that rage, without murmurings of domination or dehumanization. This is medicine.

To honor those who risk arrest, we must also acknowledge the blatant racial disparities in our criminal justice system. Not all bodies are treated the same in handcuffs. Not all people can risk a misdemeanor. Not all folks can afford to be away from their families for even a short time. Questions must be asked. Tensions must be held. And movement must be built with a place and honor for every person. For each of us holds a piece of the work that it takes to bring down systems of domination and create something beautiful to rise up from the ashes—something rooted in imagination, justice, and community.

Honoring Their Voices

I love that so much of my work as a parent of two beautiful children is to nurture their consciences and beings as they navigate their place in the ecosystem of what it means to be human. Their protest signs, held in place by masking tape, cover the wall along our stairway entrance. Through crayon and marker, I am already seeing their voices grow and shift. I still delight in a sign my now five-year-old drew with abundant color a few years ago. It simply says, "I Love Eggs." My work is to honor their voices, trust what they have to say, and welcome them into the great and ancient community of prophetic protest.

It's not always easy. It requires work and energy and imagination that are often hard to come by in the early years of raising kids. Sometimes the best work I can do is pack snacks and mittens and diapers, only to arrive thirty minutes late to a forty-five-minute vigil. Yet, we keep showing up. We bring our bodies and our hearts. We stand as witness. We stand as a reminder that we are not alone.

I want my kids to know struggle, to feel the power of voice and community, to be white bodies fighting for racial justice, to join deep roots and wide rivers of nonviolence, to be washed over by one another's courage and imagination, to be nourished by the joy alive when the masses cry out for liberation. So that when they go home, justice flows into the rest of the day and the rest of the work now and always.

Between Memory and Oblivion

The Protests in Colombia and Their Challenges for the Church

César Moya

This summer, on July 20, Colombia's national Independence Day, the country lived through another day of social protests. Although the memory of this day 202 years ago continues to be replicated annually—telling the story of Columbia's independence from Spain and the beginning of the decolonizing stage of national history—the majority of Colombians are not celebrating.

Throughout Colombia's history, the country has maintained social inequality and elites have continued to raise the "flag" of sustained violence on the "flagpole" of corruption. The desire expressed in the famous phrase of the national anthem—"in the furrow of sorrows the good now germinates"—seems like a utopian vision in the country that takes its name from the Italian explorer Christopher Columbus. The peace expected with the signing of the Peace Agreement seems to have been lost.[1] These and other no less important reasons make the social mobilizations and riots led by young people in the streets unstoppable.

César Moya has a PhD in theology from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands. He is coordinator of the Latin American Network of Anabaptist Studies (RELEA—Red Latinoamericana de Estudios Anabautistas), and writes for the Latin American Biblical Interpretation Magazine (RIBLA— Revista de Interpretación Bíblica Latinoamericana). *He served with Mennonite Mission Network in Ecuador between 2000 and 2014 and is the author of several books and articles related to the topics of biblical hermeneutics, reconciliation, and peace. He is currently professor of Bible and theology and a researcher at the Reformed University in Barranquilla, Colombia. This article was translated by Isaiah Friesen.*

1 After fifty years of armed conflict, on November 24, 2016, the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) signed a Peace Agreement, which included the following points of agreement: (1) comprehensive rural reform, (2) political participation, (3) end of the conflict, (4) solution to the problem of illicit drugs, (5) victims, (6) implementation, verification, and endorsement. For more information, see Special Jurisdiction for Peace, "Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace," November 24, 2016, accessed October 8, 2021, https://www.jep.gov.co/Marco%20Normativo/Normativa_v2/01%20ACUERDOS/Texto-Nuevo-Acuerdo-Final.pdf?csf=1&e=0fpYA0.

Colombia's ongoing struggle toward full decolonization has presented the country's churches with the challenge of constructing peace and the task of reconciliation. Unlike any recent time in the country's history, its churches—both national and international—have had to speak out before the government and society in general. They have had to take sides in favor of life.

In light of this unique time in the Colombian church's history, the purpose of this article is to answer the following two questions: (1) How is social protest related to decolonization and peacebuilding in Colombia? (2) What challenges does social protest present for the church? These questions are addressed by reviewing the role of each the following actors within this context of social protest: youth, indigenous people, the church, the National Strike Committee, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. This material then serves as the basis for locating social protest within the perspective of epistemologies and theologies of the South[2] and identifying resulting challenges for communities of faith.

The Context of the Colombian Protests

Social protests express both the people's rejection of coloniality[3] and their discontent with government policies that do not meet their expectations in terms of well-being in all areas. And although in the global context these protests are not a newly occurring phenomenon, it seems that in the past decade, as a whole they have increased in frequency and sense of urgency. Boaventura de Sousa Santos notes:

> There is a "wave of popular demand" of a new type that we have been witnessing since 2011 throughout the world . . . popular, indigenous and peasant mobilizations and rebellions against neoliberalism and capitalism in Latin

2 The expression *epistemologies of the South* references the epistemological variety of the world, conceives of the South as symbolic, and has as its purpose the restoration of the damage generated by coloniality. For more on this subject, see Boaventura de Sousa Santos and María Paula Meneses, "Introduction," in *Epistemologies of the South: Perspectives*, eds. Boaventura de Sousa Santos and María Paula Meneses (Madrid: Akal, S.A., 2014), 7–17.

3 Coloniality is based on "the imposition of a racial/ethnic classification of the world's population" as a pattern of power in all areas of existence and in social relationships. Thus, this coloniality of power has implications in the capitalist world in relation to the universal social classification of the world; political and geocultural articulation; the world distribution of work; gender relations; cultural or intersubjective relationships; and exploitation and domination. Colonialism, on the other hand, is a structure of domination/exploitation held by a population of another identity based in another territory. For more on this concept, see Aníbal Quijano, "Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social," in *Epistemologías del Sur (Perspectivas)*, eds. Boaventura de Sousa Santos y María Paula Meneses (Madrid: Akal, S.A., 2014), 67–107.

> America . . . popular mobilizations of the Arab Spring, from the indignants of southern Europe (Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy), the Chilean student movement in 2012, the Occupy movement in North American cities, the #YoSoy132 movement against electoral fraud in Mexico, and the most recent street demonstrations in Brazil against the increase in transport rates in 2013 and projected beyond.[4]

Added to the above are, among other events, the recent demonstrations in the United States as a public outcry against the death of an African American man at the hands of a policeman,[5] the protests in Chile in 2019 that ended with the call for a new constitution,[6] the protests in Ecuador in response to the government's economic measures in the midst of the pandemic,[7] and the protests in Colombia last year prompted by the health crisis and the massacres in the rural areas.[8] It is against this background that the social mobilizations have been taking place in Colombia this year. These mobilizations, which, as of the writing of this article, have continued in various regions and at varying levels of intensity for three months (since the outbreak of the national strike at the end of April 2021) are socially significant for the country.

Although injustice and violence have consistently run throughout the republican life of Colombia, serving as an indicator of popular dissent, the recent social turbulence is a reaction to the Tax Reform project imposed by the state in order to receive money to rescue the Colombian economy from the ravages

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4 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Las revueltas mundiales de indignación: Su significado para la teoría y la práctica," in *Revueltas de indignación y otras conversas*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Bolivia: Stigma, 2015), 14.

5 Audra D. S. Burch et al., "La muerte de George Floyd reavivó un movimiento; ¿Qué sigue ahora?," *New York Times*, April 22, 2021, accessed August 6, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/es/2021/04/22/espanol/george-floyd-black-lives-matter.html.

6 "Protestas en Chile: El gobierno anuncia que convocará un nuevo Congreso Constituyente," BBC News Mundo, November 11, 2019, accessed August 6, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-50370470.

7 "Crecen las protestas en Ecuador contra el paquete de ajuste del Gobierno," Télam, May 25, 2020, accessed August 6, 2021, https://www.telam.com.ar/notas/202005/468024-crecen-las-protestas-en-ecuador-contra-el-paquete-de-ajuste-del-gobierno.html.

8 Catalina Oquendo, "Las protestas callejeras se reactivan en Colombia tras meses de parálisis por la pandemia," *El País*, September 21, 2020, accessed August 6, 2021, https://elpais.com/internacional/2020-09-21/la-violencia-policial-y-las-matanzas-en-el-campo-potencias-las-protestas-en-colombia.htmlLas%20protestas%20callejeras%20se%20reactivan%20en%20Colombia%20tras%20meses%20de%20par%C3%A1lisis%20por%20la%20pandemia.

of the COVID-19 pandemic.[9] Demonstrators took to the streets against this reform, in Bogotá as well as all the capital cities of the Colombian departments.

Cali, the city of greatest importance in the west, is where the most human rights violations and murders of civilians have occurred during the protests—with the participation of the police. As Carlos Rojas, Secretary of Security for the city of Cali, reports: "In the south of the city we had a real scene of confrontation and almost an urban war where many people not only lost their lives, but we also had a significant number of injuries."[10] This situation is linked to the systematic murder of social leaders in all regions of the country; the massacres of young people and peasants; the war between drug trafficking gangs; the incursions of dissident groups of the Signatories of the Peace Agreement, formerly FARC; and the actions of the National Liberation Army (ELN, Ejército de Liberación Nacional).

Though these reasons would be enough to justify protests, it doesn't stop there. According to the study carried out by the Colombian Platform for Human Rights, Democracy and Development (PCDHDD, La Plataforma Colombiana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo),[11] poverty, inequality, hunger, unemployment, health, and the situation of women in Colombia before and after the pandemic are all factors contributing to the relationship between the dissatisfaction of citizens—regarding their economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights—and social protests in the country.

The Role of Youth

Young people have been the main protagonists of the protests in Colombia in recent months; they have been the ones taking to the streets and raising their voices for themselves and others. Their energy and enthusiasm shows that there is hope amid the chaos that seems to reign in the country. At the same time, however, because the young people are the ones putting their lives on the line, they have become the martyrs of these riots, and their fathers and mothers are mourning them.

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9 For more about the Tax Reform, see Daniela Blandón Ramírez, "Así es la reforma tributaria propuesta por el Gobierno de Colombia," *Frances 24*, April 16, 2021, accessed August 6, 2021, https://www.france24.com/es/programas/econom%C3%ADa/20210416-colombia-explicacion-reforma-tributaria-ivan-duque-impuesto-valor-agregado.

10 "Colombia: Al menos 13 muertos en jornada de protestas en Cali," DW, May 29, 2021, accessed August 8, 2021, https://www.dw.com/es/colombia-al-menos-13-muertos-en-jornada-de-protestas-en-cali/a-57713485.

11 See the data in "¿Por qué protesta la gente en Colombia?," PCDHDD, June 28, 2021, accessed August 8, 2021, https://ddhhcolombia.org.co/2021/06/28/informe-por-que-protesta-en-colombia/.

The NGO Temblores[12] reports that "between April 28, 2021, and June 26, 2021, there were at least 4,687 cases of violence by the police (not including cases of disappearances)."[13] And according to INDEPAZ,[14] from April 28 to July 21 of this year most of the homicide victims from the protests have been young people. In June, Alvin Góngora reported:

> In the last week, the cruelty of the State organisms has increased. Now we are finding bodies in a bend in the Cauca River, not far from Cali. Or dismembered. Lying around. Young people just out of adolescence. Álvaro Herrera, a music student at the Universidad del Valle (Cali), survived and said that he heard when the agents who were guarding and torturing him wondered aloud if it would not be more convenient for them to disappear him.[15]

Despite martyrdom, the majority of young people consider protests to be having positive effects. In this regard, a study by the Universidad del Rosario, El Tiempo, and Cifras y Conceptos found that "for 71% of the country's youth, social protest generates positive results: to be able to be heard, to demonstrate the discontent of the people, to seek changes and improvements in the political, social and economic spheres, and to ensure the rights to equity, justice, equality, truth and peace."[16]

Likewise, it is striking that, contrary to what the television media is portraying, young people are rejecting violence in their demonstrations in the streets. The study of the "Regional Panorama of the Third Measurement of the Great National Survey on Young People" shows that "seven out of ten young people reject violence and vandalism during the national strike, which is about a month

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12 "Comunicado a la opinión pública y a la comunidad internacional por los hechos de violencia cometidos por la Fuerza Pública de Colombia en el marco de las movilizaciones del Paro Nacional," Temblores, June 28, 2021, accessed August 9, 2021, https://www.temblores.org/comunicados.

13 See the data about the violence during the protests in "Comunicado a la opinión pública y a la comunidad internacional por los hechos de violencia cometidos."

14 "Listado de las 80 víctimas de violencia homicida en el marco del paro nacional al 23 de julio," INDEPAZ, July 23, 2021, accessed August 9, 2021, http://www.indepaz.org.co/victimas-de-violencia-homicida-en-el-marco-del-paro-nacional/.

15 Alvin Góngora, "Ni mártires ni chivos expiatorios: Llanto por la juventud colombiana," *ALC comunicación*, June 23, 2021, accessed August 10, 2021, https://alc-noticias.net/es/2021/06/23/ni-martires-ni-chivos-expiatorios-llanto-por-la-juventud-colombiana/?fbclid=IwAR1YKKsIP-zdFiPgstBqew7cSQ2X3yfHaZOEUS5VOWseAXL-ft-M9cD3e44Q.

16 Francisco Javier, "Los jóvenes en Colombia aprueban el paro, pero rechazan el vandalismo," *Valora Analitik*, May 2, 2021, accessed August 10, 2021, https://www.valoraanalitik.com/2021/05/27/jovenes-colombia-aprueban-paro-nacional-rechazan-vandalismo/.

in continuation since its first demonstration on April 28, 2021."[17] Though the young people are embracing nonviolence, they are not doing so passively. Rather, they are carrying their nonviolent approach with them into demonstrations against the policies and actions of the government that threaten the lives of citizens.[18]

In Cali, where protests have left the most young people martyred,[19] youth have organized themselves in various "lines" to resist the violent excesses of the police force:

> In the "front line" are those who take the shots. They stand in front of the police tank and in front of the water jet. Then there is the "second line," whose members are in charge of throwing stones, returning the capsules with tear gas launched by the riot police and throwing sticks. In the "third line" there is a group of people whose mission is to distract the authorities, reduce the field of vision with lasers and paint bombs. The "fourth line" collects the injured and transports milk to reduce the effects of gases and water. Finally, the "fifth line" evacuates those who fall in combat. All the lines are connected to each other.[20]

Some have accused the young people of being summoned to action by a political party, in addition to receiving that party's financial support. In response, the young people have stated that they are neither with the right nor with the left. They note that what happens in Cali—as in the rest of the country—is the product of a government that has not taken them into account.[21] De Sousa Santos describes the protests this way:

> Another distinctive feature is that [the protests] take place outside of every organization, be it partisan, union, guild or any social movement, which in other words means that they take place outside of all institutions or the mechanisms and spaces available to regulate political participation.[22]

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17 Javier, "Los jóvenes in Colombia aprueban el paro."

18 Javier, "Los jóvenes in Colombia aprueban el paro."

19 "Los jóvenes colombianos resisten en una protesta que 'no es de nadie,'" Agencia EFE, accessed August 10, 2021, https://www.efe.com/efe/america/sociedad/los-jovenes-colombianos-resisten-en-una-protesta-que-no-es-de-nadie/20000013-4543755.

20 "Los jóvenes colombianos resisten"

21 "Los jóvenes colombianos resisten."

22 De Sousa Santos, "Las revueltas mundiales de indignación."

The Role of Indigenous Peoples

The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia has called on its indigenous peoples and nations of the national territory to participate in the *National Minga*[23] "to advance in the defense of life, peace, justice, autonomy and a good life for all Colombians."[24] The indigenous *Minga* have carried out significant and symbolic acts of dignification such as the demolition of statues alluding to the "conquerors," including Sebastián de Belalcázar in Cali, Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada in Bogotá, and the "discoverer" of America—Christopher Columbus—in the city of Barranquilla. The *Minga* have also actively participated in the national strike in all regions of the country,[25] expressing themselves mainly through roadblocks. The blockades, which led to the lack of food in the cities—especially in Cali[26]—also stoked already-present violence and stigmatization against indigenous people.[27]

The violent responses against indigenous people and communities in the city of Cali were led by armed civilians. According to indigenous senator

23 The word "minga" comes from the Quichua *mink'a* that refers to community agricultural work carried out by the indigenous people of the Andean area for the benefit of the entire community. However, the expression has taken on a broader meaning: it not only is a form of community work but also involves mechanisms of social mobilization and political action, as well as being a tool to preserve historical memory. See Oscar López Cortés, "Significados y representaciones de la *minga* para el pueblo indígena Pastos de Colombia," *Psicoperspectivas: Individuos y Sociedad* 17, no. 3 (2018), accessed October 7, 2021, https://www.psicoperspectivas.cl/index.php/psicoperspectivas/article/viewFile/1353/934.

24 See "Se aviva la llama de la Minga Indígena Nacional en el marco del Paro Nacional: Por la Vida, la Paz, el Buen Vivir y la Unidad del Pueblo Colombiano," ONIC, May 12, 2021, accessed August 12, 2021, https://www.onic.org.co/comunicados-onic/4262-se-aviva-la-llama-de-la-minga-indigena-nacional-en-el-marco-del-paro-nacional-por-la-vida-la-paz-el-buen-vivir-y-la-unidad-del-pueblo-colombiano; and the documentary by Natalia Romero Peñuela and Camila Granados Arango, "Paro Nacional 2021: ¿Por qué la Minga Indígena es fundamental en el diálogo para resolver la crisis?," *El Espectador*, May 23, 2021, accessed August 13, 2021, https://www.elespectador.com/colombia/paro-nacional-2021-por-que-la-minga-indigena-es-fundamental-en-el-dialogo-para-resolver-la-crisis/.

25 "Se aviva la llama de la Minga Indígena Nacional en el marco del Paro Nacional."

26 Santiago Torrado, "Civiles armados disparan a grupos indígenas y el caos se apodera de Cali», *El País*, May 10, 2021, accessed August 12, 2021, https://elpais.com/internacional/2021-05-10/civiles-armados-disparan-a-grupos-indigenas-y-el-caos-se-apodera-de-cali.html.

27 "Colombia: Llamado urgente a cesar la violencia contra Pueblos Indígenas en el marco del Paro Nacional," Amnistía Internacional, May 9, 2021, accessed August 12, 2021, https://www.amnesty.org/es/latest/news/2021/05/colombia-llamado-urgente-cesar-violencia-contra-pueblos-indigenas/.

Feliciano Valencia, "The wealthy families of Cali in conjunction with the police . . . fired indiscriminately against the indigenous guard and the community."[28] And according to the Association of Indigenous Cabildos of Northern Cauca (ACIN, Asociación de Cabildos Indigenas de Norte del Cauca), these attacks, which left people injured by firearms, were carried out in the company of state forces.[29]

But why are the indigenous people protesting? According to academics Fernando Urrea y Enrique Rodríguez, some of the reasons are related to racism toward indigenous people and the class struggle that the city of Cali has historically experienced. And Noelia Campo, an indigenous leader from Cauca, points out that the purpose of the mobilization was to support the marchers, de-escalate the conflict, and be a mediator between the "front line" and the Armed Forces; it was a humanitarian act of solidarity, complete with the cultural elements of the indigenous people—bartering of food, songs, dances, and an assembly to listen to young people. Valencia notes that although the indigenous people have similar requests to the rest of Colombians, they also have specific requests for the government: stop the killing of social leaders; implement what was agreed upon in 2019 and 2020, including agreements about mining projects in their territories; end the armed conflict in their territories; and follow through on the Peace Agreement.

The Role of the Churches

The churches played an important role in the face of the country's crisis and the violence carried out by state forces that, after a week of protests, had resulted in injuries and fatalities.

From the Catholic standpoint, the Episcopal Conference responded by putting out a statement that rejected "violations of human rights, acts of vandalism, blockades impeding mobility and food supply, the disappearance of people, attacks against the physical integrity of any person, the damage caused to public and private property."[30] They also expressed pain for the victims of the riots; denounced the abuse of force; demanded the right to protest and an end to the murders; and urged reconciliation, peace, and dialogue to overcome the situation.[31] In addition, the Episcopal Conference, together with the United

28 Santiago Torrado, "Civiles armados disparan a grupos indígenas y el caos se apodera de Cali," second paragraph.

29 Torrado, "Civiles armados."

30 Diego Aguilar, "Iglesia Católica pide diálogo social para enfrentar crisis de orden público," *W Radio*, May 5, 2021, second paragraph, accessed July 23, 2021, https://www.wradio.com.co/noticias/actualidad/iglesia-catolica-pide-dialogo-social-para-enfrentar-crisis-de-orden-publico/20210505/nota/4132366.aspx.

31 Aguilar, "Iglesia Católica pide diálogo social."

Nations and upon invitation, served as a mediator between the government and the National Strike Committee.[32]

International church organizations[33] also issued a statement urging the Colombian government to stop the spiral of violence against the civilian population, not to suppress the protests, and to listen to the people. In their letter, they mentioned the number of deaths and disappearances and insisted on the cessation of violence by the police and the creation of reforms to the state security apparatus that would guarantee constitutional rights. In addition, they emphasized the need for openness to dialogue, to not stigmatize the marchers—youth and indigenous people—to prosecute those who disappeared people and committed homicides in the protests, and to implement the Peace Agreement.[34]

The importance of international solidarity is confirmed by de Sousa Santos:

> We are in a decade where social struggles are going to need a lot of international solidarity. We have to know what is happening in other countries so as not to be so alone in our struggles, in our countries. Many times we think that we are alone, and we are not: there are other struggles in other countries.[35]

The need for solidarity is true not just for the international church organizations but also for the local churches in Colombia, which have not come to a consensus regarding their pronouncements. In a May 9, 2021, meeting between President Duque and representatives of religious movements,[36] for example, some of the churches expressed their support for the government amid the pro-

32 Natalia Tamayo Gaviria, "'La protesta social no es un problema de orden público': Monseñor Héctor F. Henao," *El Espectador*, May 18, 2021, accessed July 24, 2021, https://www.elespectador.com/politica/la-protesta-social-no-es-un-problema-de-orden-publico-monsenor-hector-f-henao/.

33 The letter was signed by the respective secretaries general or representatives of the World Council of Churches, ACT Alianza, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Lutheran World Federation, Anglican Communion, World Methodist Council, Latin American Episcopal Council, and World Association for Christian Communication.

34 "Carta de las organizaciones internacionales de Iglesias por las actuales protestas y conflictos sociales en Colombia," DIPAZ, May 21, 2021, accessed July 25, 2021, https://dipazcolombia.org/carta-de-la-organizaciones-internacionales-de-iglesias-por-las-actuales-protestas-y-conflictos-sociales-en-colombia/.

35 De Sousa Santos, "Las revueltas mundiales de indignación."

36 The list of attendees can be found at "Duque se reúne este domingo con sectores religiosos, de salud y víctimas," Radio Nacional de Colombia, May 9, 2021, accessed August 11, 2021, https://www.radionacional.co/actualidad/ivan-duque-reunion-representantes-religiosos-victimas-sector-salud.

tests and the strike.[37] In addition, although the statement signed by the majority of leaders of churches and other religious movements at the meeting contained seven points[38] regarding the necessity of dialogue for unity and overcoming violence, it also included a striking recognition of institutionality:

> We express our support for the institutional framework in the effort to advance dialogue processes that allow progress in solving the needs of the poorest, as well as the total rejection of any form of violence, wherever it comes from . . . which has indeed severely affected Colombians in recent weeks.[39]

The issue with this type of declaration is its implication of unconditional support for government institutions. This is especially problematic during the present period of human rights violations. The statement is also inadequate in its lack of direct denunciation of the violence exercised by state apparatuses, and its lack of demand for accountability for the state's violations of human rights. This is due in part to shady political deals negotiated by evangelical parties with the current government to avoid taxes being imposed on their houses of worship.[40]

Yalile Caballero, president of the Mennonite Church of Colombia, also spoke at the meeting:

> The Mennonite Church of Colombia today says we do not agree with the bills they are developing, with the reform they are proposing. We know that reforms must be made, we need them, but please review, in the past, what reforms have been made that could be reversed, such as the one taken from the tax reform and the 2018 law in which financial institutions benefited. . . . Today the people are tired, today the people demonstrate because they do not want to continue this way; we represent the people as well.[41]

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37 See "Los líderes religiosos apoyan a Duque y piden el levantamiento de los bloqueos en Colombia," Europa Press, May 9, 2021, accessed July 25, 2021, https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-lideres-religiosos-apoyan-duque-piden-levantamiento-bloqueos-colombia-20210509221852.html.

38 See "Declaración conjunta entre los líderes religiosos y el Gobierno Nacional, en el encuentro con el señor Presidente de la República, Dr. Iván Duque Márquez, para avanzar en una Agenda sobre lo Fundamental," Presidencia de la República de Colombia, May 9, 2021, accessed August 9, 2021, https://idm.presidencia.gov.co/prensa/Paginas/Declaracion-conjunta-entre-los-lideres-religiosos-el-Gobierno-Nacional-210509.aspx.

39 "Declaración conjunta entre los líderes religiosos y el Gobierno Nacional."

40 Ferney Yesyd Rodríguez Vargas, "Los cristianos que no condenan la violencia policial," *Las 2 Orillas*, May 11, 2021, accessed August 9, 2021, https://www.las2orillas.co/los-cristianos-que-no-condenan-la-violencia-policial/.

41 Fernando San Miguel's Facebook Page, May 9, 2021, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/luisfernando.sanmiguelcardona/videos/1911188375687290/.

Amid the crisis, the churches not in alignment with the government issued official pronouncements that have not only national but also international repercussions:

- The Mennonite church statement rejects militarization in different parts of the country to control protests, condemns the excessive use of police force, denounces human rights violations, and urges the national government to dialogue with the actors of the strike.[42]
- The Assemblies of God church claims the right to protest, condemns the violation of human rights, invites dialogue between different actors, and urges that the excessive use of force not be applied.[43]
- The Methodist church denounces the government's economic measures, its silence in the face of massacres and other murders of human rights defenders, its laziness in the implementation of the Peace Accords, its corruption, and its ineptitude before the crisis. The Methodist statement also affirms opposition to violence, support for protesters, and a call for dialogue.[44]
- The Latin American Lutheran Synod[45] invites dialogue between the government and the sectors that have spoken out in search of solutions.
- The Colombian Baptist Denomination urges the government to dialogue and to guarantee life and peaceful demonstration. It also calls the community in general to opt for reconciliation.[46]
- The peace commission of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia denounces the government's political, social, and economic reforms. The commission also condemns the institutional violence and the poor im-

42 Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia, accessed October 13, 2021, http://www.mcclaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/COMITE-NACIONAL-IMCOL-PARO-NACIONAL.pdf.

43 Iglesia Asambleas de Dios Facebook Page, May 11, 2021, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/AsambleasdeDiosColombia/.

44 Iglesia Colombiana Metodista's Facebook Page, May 5, 2021, accessed July 30, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/icmetodista/photos/pcb.1451611308519508/1451608848519754.

45 Sínodo Luterano Latinoamericano's Facebook Page, May 5, 2021, accessed July 31, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/SILULAT/photos/pcb.131152392397957/131152349064628/.

46 Denominación Bautista Colombiana's Facebook Page, May 7, 2021, accessed July 31, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/DenominacionBautista/photos/a.10150615374672372/10159384538837372/.

plementation of the Peace Agreement but invites dialogue.[47]

- Other national and international entities made similar statements on social networks.[48]

These statements include biblical references that connect with the churches' various demands and hopes:

- "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan" (Prov 29:2).
- "Then the Lord said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings'" (Exod 3:7).
- "This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord, and was saved from every trouble" (Ps 34:6).
- "But truly God has listened; he has given heed to the words of my prayer" (Ps 66:19).
- "Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice. At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks" (Prov 1:20–21).
- "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chr 7:14).
- The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever" (Isa 32:17).
- "Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.' He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out'" (Luke 19: 39–40).

In these biblical texts, the prophetic voice is perceived as opposing the government—criticizing it as perverse, oppressive, responsible for the pain of the

47 Comisión de paz de la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia's Facebook Page, May 9, 2021, accessed July 31, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/IglesiaPresbiterianaColombia.

48 Among these are statements from the Corporación Universitaria Reformada (Baranquilla), Justapaz, DiPaz, Articulación Continental de las Comunidades de Base, World Christian Student Federation, Centro Regional Ecuménico de Asesoría y Servicio, Consejo Interreligioso de Colombia, Mennonite World Conference, World Council of Churches, ACT Alliance, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Lutheran World Federation, Anglican Communion, World Methodist Council, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (CELAM), and World Association for Christian Communication, as well as other international organizations like the United Nations. The Colombian Mennonite denomination (IMCOL) also released a joint statement signed by several congregations, church agencies, and individuals in Colombia, Mexico, and Germany.

people, and neglecting to practice justice. On the flip side, the texts also express the trust that the people and the church have in God; God hears the people's cry, knows their sufferings, and frees them from their anguish. These texts also place a demand on the people—that of wisdom (which is essential during protests). They also place a demand on the church—to not be silent in the face of injustice. Finally, the challenge remains for everyone—that of conversion.

Most of the biblical texts included in the churches' statements refer to the Old Testament. On the one hand, this selection of texts highlights the churches' awareness that as long as there is no justice there can be no peace. It also indicates that although the church and the people fervently yearn for peace, it seems that the ruling classes do not.[49] On the other hand, reliance on Old Testament texts makes it difficult for the churches to find texts in the New Testament that can be applied to the current critical situation in Colombia. In particular, biblical texts referring to reconciliation and forgiveness are absent.

In addition to authoring public written statements regarding the country's current situation, the churches, especially the young people, have taken to the streets with banners and chants for peace and justice. The actions of two religious leaders in particular—one in Bucaramanga and the other in Cali—have garnered significant attention.

The first of these leaders, Álvaro Prada Vargas, is an Anglican priest who intervened when members of the Anti-Riot Police Squad pursued several protesters and used excessive force against the young people. When the young people sought refuge in the Industrial University of Santander (UIS) in Bucaramanga, the police closed them in and did not let them leave for several hours, even though some of them needed medical attention. Faced with this situation, Vargas led a "humanitarian corridor" so that the young protesters could receive assistance.[50]

The second leader is Luis Miguel Caviedes, a Methodist pastor. In addition to being in the "front line," he has accompanied people in legal and human rights issues together with the Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace and other collectives of lawyers. He has also assisted threatened youth and people who have been injured or captured by the police. In addition, he has provided humanitarian, psychosocial, and psychospiritual assistance.[51] Because of

49 The benefits granted to the ruling classes through the war in Colombia have served as a disincentive for making peace.

50 Miguel Ángel Espinosa, "El sacerdote que logró mediar entre el Esmad y estudiantes en la UIS," *El Tiempo*, May 20, 2021, accessed August 1, 2021, https://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/santander/paro-nacional-sacerdote-que-medio-con-el-esmad-en-bucaramanga-589768.

51 Julieth Narváez, "Entrevista—Es necesaria la reconciliación frente a lo que está sucediendo," *La palabra*, June 10, 2021, accessed August 2, 2021, http://lapalabra.uni-

his involvement in such matters, he has received threats and been the target of multiple assassination attempts.

The National Strike Committee

The National Strike Committee,[52] which speaks on behalf of the labor organizations, announced reasons[53] for rejecting the proposed Tax Reform. "This reform," they stated, "threatens the economic stability of workers, pensioners, the middle class and low-income people."[54] They also observed that a reform is needed in which "those who have the most, pay the most, and that, in the end, benefits in a real and palpable way the most needy social class in the country."[55] In the broader context, Colombia's social struggles have been fueled by economic measures, human rights violations, and the lack of implementation of previous agreements.

On April 28, the committee called a national strike (supposedly following the biosafety protocols in place for COVID-19). The demands of the strike agenda included two reforms: (1) the "Reform to the Health System," aimed at consolidating the privatization of health services,[56] and (2) the Labor Reform.[57]

valle.edu.co/entrevista-es-necesaria-la-reconciliacion-frente-a-lo-que-esta-sucediendo/.

52 Made up of the following labor organizations: Central Unitaria de Trabajadores-CUT, Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia-CTC, Confederación General del Trabajo-CGT, Federación Colombiana de Educadores-Fecode, and Confederaciones de Pensionados CPC y CDP.

53 To read these reasons in detail, see "Las 11 razones de las centrales sindicales para oponerse a la Reforma Tributaria," Agencia de Información Laboral-AIL, April 16, 2021, accessed August 5, 2021, https://ail.ens.org.co/noticias/las-11-razones-de-las-centrales-sindicales-para-oponerse-a-la-reforma-tributaria/.

54 For more information, see "Las 11 razones de las centrales sindicales."

55 "Las 11 razones de las centrales sindicales."

56 Jennifer Restrepo de la Pava, "Nueva reforma a la salud en Colombia, ¿Maquillaje de la Ley 100?," *Universidad de Antioquia*, May 10, 2021, accessed August 6, 2021, https://www.udea.edu.co/wps/portal/udea/web/inicio/udea-noticias/udea-noticia/!ut/p/z0/fYyxDsIwEEN_haUjuqOUAGPFgIQYGBBqs6BTE-CgzbVJQHw-LQyIhcXys2yDhg-K0owefKbI4qnsutToulqt0kme4RZUpzNUum83T9XR_QNiA_l_oH_jadToHXYm-L9hmhaMVHqu_GUoIUfukijf34QUdOIldMIcH32rGRofWNg1RsDZkEvT2Jb2gch-jNob7p8Ad3BxC0!/.

57 Carmen Menéndez, "Paro Nacional en Colombia: El Congreso retira la polémica reforma sanitaria," *Euro News*, May 20, 2021, accessed August 6, 2021, https://es.euronews.com/2021/05/20/paro-nacional-en-colombia-el-congreso-retira-la-polemica-reforma-sanitaria.

Several weeks after the start of the protests, the National Strike Committee[58] met with the national government and presented the following list of demands:

> Withdrawal of bill 010 on health and strengthening of a massive vaccination; basic income of at least a monthly legal minimum wage; defense of national production (agricultural, industrial, artisanal, peasant); subsidies to MiPymes [Micro-, Small- and Medium-scale Enterprises] and employment with rights and a policy that defends food sovereignty and security; free tuition and no to hybrid learning; a non-discrimination policy regarding gender, sexual and ethnic diversity; no privatizations and repeal of decree 1174; stop forced eradications of illicit crops and aerial spraying with glyphosate.[59]

Due to past excesses of the police force against the protesters, the committee also asked for guarantees regarding the protest: "Stop the violence against the protesters, refrain from declaring the State of Internal Commotion, withdraw the Army and the Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (ESMAD) completely and that President Iván Duque unequivocally condemn the abuses by the police force."[60] The committee also urged the government to not only not tolerate but also identify and prosecute the perpetrators of violent acts, including members of the police who violated human rights.[61] However, further mistrust was generated because the president announced a plan to unblock the roads using the police[62] and because not all the protesters felt represented by the National Strike Committee.[63]

Despite these obstacles, the National Strike Committee achieved demands such as the withdrawal of the first Tax Reform proposal and free public higher education. The latter is considered an achievement of great magnitude within the broader history of accomplishments in Colombia. In addition, the commit-

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58 Made up of "la Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT), la Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia (CTC), la Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CGT), la Confederación Democrática de los Pensionados (CDP), la Confederación de Pensionados de Colombia (CPC), la Federación Colombiana de Trabajadores de la Educación (FECODE), la Cruzada Camionera, la organización Dignidad Agropecuaria, la Asociación Colombiana de Representantes Estudiantiles (ACREES) y la Unión Nacional de Estudiantes de Educación Superior (UNEES)." See Karen Sánchez, "¿Qué es, qué pide y a quiénes representa el Comité del Paro en Colombia?," *Voz de América*, May 20, 2021, accessed August 8, 2021, https://www.vozdeamerica.com/america-latina/que-es-que-pide-y-quienes-representa-el-comite-del-paro-en-colombia.

59 Sánchez, "¿Qué es?"

60 Sánchez, "¿Qué es?"

61 Sánchez, "¿Qué es?"

62 Sánchez, "¿Qué es?"

63 Sánchez, "¿Qué es?"

tee recently filed ten bills before Congress to benefit the majority of Colombians affected by COVID-19 and the economic crisis.[64]

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)

After several weeks of insisting to the Colombian government that they be allowed to enter the country, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) paid a visit to Colombia and confirmed what at first the government had denied—that during the protests beginning on April 28, human rights were violated. This is mentioned in the report "Observations and recommendations of the IACHR's working visit to Colombia, held from June 8 to 10, 2021."[65]

The report refers to police abuse, gender violence, ethnic-racial discrimination, violence against journalists and medical organizations, illegal arrests, reports of disappearances, military interventions, use of military jurisdiction in the face of human rights violations by the police, violations of fundamental rights, and damage to the property of third parties, among other issues. For each of these issues, the report also includes recommendations, which the IACHR expects the government will implement.

Between Memory and Oblivion

The results of this brief study show us that the crisis in Colombia, manifested in the strike that began on April 28, 2021, reflects a tension between *memory* and *oblivion*. *Memory* is necessary not only of those in recent times who have been victims of the decisions and actions of the government and the state apparatus but also of those who have been victims since the "cry of independence" from the Spanish yoke on July 20, 1819. These victims, past and present, are demanding their rights. *Oblivion*, alternatively, is the path of the ruling classes and other sectors of society—included among them a certain sector of the church—which have not become conscious of what independence from coloniality means. As de Sousa Santos states:

> Our societies are normally divided between two types of people: those who do not want to remember and those who cannot forget. . . . Those who were and are victims of suffering, genocide, oppression, violence. . . . But the

64 For more information, see "Conozca los proyectos de ley que presentó el Comité Nacional de Paro en el Congreso," Agencia de Información Laboral-AIL, August 9, 2021, accessed August 15, 2021, https://ail.ens.org.co/noticias/conozca-los-proyectos-de-ley-que-presento-el-comite-nacional-de-paro-en-el-congreso/.

65 Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, "Observaciones y recomendaciones de la visita de trabajo de la CIDH a Colombia realizada del 8 al 10 de junio de 2021," June 2021, accessed August 2, 2021, https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/ObservacionesVisita_CIDH_Colombia_SPA.pdf.

> other side of critical thinking is anticipation, the idea that we deserve a better society and that we should fight for it. That is why we must see the impact of these movements and these organizations and uprisings in critical thinking, as well as their impact in our own countries.[66]

We must remember human rights violations, but these abuses are not what originally generated the social protests. Rather, the protests are grounded in a people's indignation in the face of the historical and ongoing coloniality that refuses to give them free passage to live a dignified life within a country that provides equal opportunities for all, respects people's rights, and complies with agreements.

Despite their outrage, however, not everyone seems to agree on the country's vision. Instead, people seem to be pulling their own way. De Sousa Santos highlights this concern.[67] People know what they don't want but not what they do want for everyone. They are aware that they can have another world, but they are unable to define it. And although they hold some aspects in common for a vision of the nation, it seems that each movement wants something different. Hence, although the protests start with a small demand, within a few days the demands often radically expand. For instance, protests in Colombia that began against the Tax Reform evolved into a great number of demands.

What *is* clear is that there are two enemies against which everyone is fighting: immense social inequality and the dictatorships of the financial markets, combined with the absence of representative democracy. These enemies are the octopuses through which coloniality navigates, and whose tentacles reach all areas of the life of our people. Therefore, it is not enough to be independent from the oppressive domination of a foreign nation; it is also necessary to make epistemological breaks with the forms of knowledge that have captivated the minds of our people. We must break from what made us increasingly individualistic, insensitive, competitive, and disrespectful of otherness to the point of believing that taking the lives of others is something natural—a belief that is reflected in the moment of electing those who govern and in how those elected leaders use their power.

Within this destructive milieu, an epistemology for peace is urgent. As Muñoz states: "A epistemological turn is needed: to think with new elements of judgment, which implies deconstructing and reconstructing our thinking; changing the epistemological (knowledge), axiological (values), anthropological (culture), and ontological (philosophy) presuppositions."[68] In other words, an interdisciplinary approach is necessary to build other forms of knowledge that

66 De Sousa Santos, "Las revueltas mundiales de indignación," 20.

67 De Sousa Santos, "Las revueltas mundiales de indignación," 20–24.

68 Agustín Angarita Lezama, *Epistemología para la paz. Ensayo* (Ibagué, Colombia: Caza de Libros, 2016), 34.

resist the dominant colonialist thought. The South must be allowed to speak after so many years of silence imposed by the thought generated in the North.[69]

In a crisis like the one Colombia is experiencing in the post-agreement period, it is important not to idealize peace as a state without conflict or violence, because this expectation would bring even more frustration to the table. For this reason, we agree with the concept of *imperfect peace*,[70] which is an alternative to the traditional conceptions of peace, usually termed as negative, absence of war; or positive, total peace, without violence, perfect, utopian. In contrast, imperfect peace is a way of recognizing the diversity and complexity of human beings in all areas, which, in turn, makes conflict inevitable. Imperfect peace includes "all these experiences and instances in which conflicts have been peacefully regulated; that is, in which individuals and/or human groups have chosen to facilitate the satisfaction of the needs of others, without any cause beyond their will preventing it."[71]

In this way, peace should be understood not only from diverse perspectives but also from diverse spaces where conflict is expressed. Therefore, it should be understood that what is done in Colombia by indigenous communities, young people, students, social movements, human rights commissions, churches and other religious movements, the National Strike Committee, international entities, and even the government itself, among others, contributes in one way or another to an imperfect peace. Of course, amid all this complexity there are peace initiatives, many of them made invisible by the mass media. Hence, an invitation and challenge for us is to identify those signs of peacebuilding in the midst of social upheavals. Social aid, support for victims, demands of the government, requests for international support, the formation of dialogue committees and agreements are all efforts to build peace, even if it is an imperfect peace.

Thus, social protest as part of decolonization processes is not disconnected from peacebuilding. Protest is necessary because it reveals the injustices that exist in society and the violence that these injustices generate. It also makes the victims visible, brings to mind the events that led to independence, and keeps alive the struggles to decolonize thought and build new epistemologies for peace in the South.

In the midst of social protest, churches have played an important role, although a faction of them (as noted earlier) have opted to align themselves with

69 Pablo Gentili, "Inventar otras ciencias sociales," in *Construyendo las Epistemologías del Sur: Para un pensamiento alternativo de alternativas*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2018), 14, http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/se/20181203040213/Antologia_Boaventura_Vol1.pdf.

70 Francisco Adolfo Muñoz, ed., *La paz imperfecta* (Granada, España: Universidad de Granada, 2001).

71 Muñoz, ed., *La paz imperfecta*, 38.

the government. This indicates that religion and theology have been instruments of coloniality of our people. In other words, religion and theology have served to strengthen epistemologies that promote the elimination of cultural, religious, and thought diversity in an attempt to homogenize the people. So it is that social protest also challenges the church.

Among the *epistemologies of the South* are also included the *theologies of the South*. Juan Tamayo[72] considers these theologies to be part of what has been called the *decolonizing turn*, and he views them as not only emergent but also postcolonial. He argues that with the conquest of Latin America came a paradigm shift that eliminated cultural and religious plurality while imposing Christianity—along with political domination and social order—which occurred by means of the *sword and the cross*. The shift was so complete that for four centuries an "illiberal, counterrevolutionary, patriarchal and colonial"[73] Catholic Christianity prevailed. Therefore, a first challenge for the church is to assume a mission without the character of conquest.

Within the theologies of the South are emerging theologies that develop with new subjects—the poor and oppressed, women, indigenous peoples, black communities, queer people, and the earth itself—that break with systems of exclusion. This results in the emergence of liberation theologies, feminist theologies, Indian theologies, Afro-descendant theologies; gay, lesbian, and queer theologies; and ecotheology, among others.

Within these emerging theologies are *postcolonial theologies*, which have tended toward the deconstruction of paradigms imposed throughout history and have attacked the entire way of life and thought of the original communities; that is to say, they are theologies that analyze the repercussions of colonialism and aspire to decolonize theological thought in relation to gender, ethnicity, class, religion, and sexual identity. In addition, they are in close relationship with social movements and questions, including, among other missiological aspects, the mandate of Matthew 28:19 to "make disciples of all nations."[74]

The church, then, as it participates in the protests, faces the existing coloniality. The church cannot forget the history of marginalization, exclusion, and oppression of our people. This means that it cannot be neutral in the face of the violence suffered by the victims, whatever the origin of that violence. Neither can it favor a *status quo* or the *establishment* under the colonial hermeneutic of unconditional obedience to state authorities. The church, however, should also be a peacebuilder, given the essence of its foundation, which is Christ.

This tension between standing with the victims and being a peacebuilder is the great challenge facing the church in contexts of conflictual protests. It is

72 Juan José Tamayo, *Teologías del Sur: El giro descolonizador* (Madrid: Trotta, 2017).

73 Tamayo, *Teologías del Sur*, 42.

74 Tamayo, *Teologías del Sur*, 66–68.

a challenge because, on the one hand, there is no peace without justice, and the victims cry out for justice. On the other hand, ethical implications of peacebuilding and reconciliation processes call for perpetrators to offer reparation, restitution, and clarification of the truth of their actions, among other obligations. In other words, the challenge for the church is to be a bridge between one and the other, in such a way as to fulfill what the Scripture says about Christ as the builder of peace: "In his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace" (Eph 2:14–15).

The actions of the church in contexts of social protest lead to an affirmation that the peace it proclaims—and seeks to build—oscillates between memory and oblivion. Jesus and the early church took this memory into account in their proclamation of the good news (Luke 4:16–21, Matt 23: 29–31, Acts 2:36, 1 Thess 2:14–15, among others). In other words, if the church does not take the side of those who suffer, it can easily forget the reasons for the people's struggles and demands. It can also forget the way of the cross and walk in a *cheap grace*. If the church does not take the side of the victims, it becomes vulnerable to the temptation to serve the gods of power and money. Thus, this article begins with the premise that the church must build peace. To do otherwise would lead to a false peace.

Decolonizing through Social Protests: Reaching for Imperfect Peace

Two questions generated this writing about social protests in Colombia: 1) How is social protest related to decolonization and peacebuilding in Colombia? (2) What challenges does social protest present for the church?

This article affirms that social protest in Colombia and the Global South is an expression of the decolonizing struggle that the people are facing as they strive to regain their autonomy and recognition in their own aspects of culture, thought, and way of living in peace—albeit what will always be an imperfect peace. The political situation in Colombia has mobilized various sectors of civil society, especially young people, students, indigenous people, human rights defenders, social movements, unions, neighborhood organizations, and churches. The resulting demonstrations have been visible in critical moments related to governmental decisions affecting the dignity and rights of the people. The positive impact of such mobilization in Colombia can be seen in the accomplishment of the people's health and labor reforms resulting from protests against the government's Tax Reform proposal.

Protests of such great magnitude challenge the churches to rethink theologically and praxically what it means to build peace in these contexts. Some

churches have taken ambiguous positions regarding the promotion and defense of life and the construction of peace. Others remember alongside the victims while still others are tempted to forget the history that is at the root of the people's demands. This forgetting is an accomplice to the injustices that people have experienced ever since the declaration of independence from Spain. Hence, the churches must opt for the victims, side with them, and accompany them in their search for truth and reparation. When this is not materially possible, it can be done symbolically, especially in the context of the Peace Accords after a prolonged armed conflict.

The role of communities of faith in the construction of imperfect peace should be to serve as a bridge between victims and perpetrators, without neglecting the ethical implications and risks that this entails. This bridge-building role should also include seeking international solidarity.

Facing the challenges of the recent three-month period of social protest in Colombia should also prompt the churches, their pastors, their leaders, and their members to learn how the state is organized and how it works, as well as what the duties and rights of the citizens are. In other words, churches would be well-served to acquire civic competencies that give them the tools to face moments such as those experienced in Colombia where fundamental rights written in the Political Constitution of Colombia[75] have been violated. In this way, they will leave indifference aside, recover the memory that is generating the outcry of the victims, and strengthen their work for peace with justice.

75 These fundamental rights include the right to protest, the right to life, the right to peace, and the right to freedom of worship, among others. See the Political Constitution of Colombia of 1991, Title II: Rights, Guarantees, and Duties, Chapter I, "Fundamental Rights," https://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Colombia/colombia91.pdf.

Mennonites in Vietnam during the American War

Luke S. Martin

North American Mennonites who went to Vietnam in the mid-twentieth century under the auspices of service ministries inevitably became embroiled in the issues related to the all-encompassing American political and military involvement in Vietnam. The Mennonites' ongoing presence in Vietnam gave them a unique platform from which to view and critique the development and expansion of the American war. This article describes how these Mennonites, though initially hesitant to speak publicly to national and international issues, found a voice to speak out against the overwhelming horrors of the war and its violation of the basic tenants of the gospel of Jesus Christ.[1] Rather than remain silent, they chose to address the violence of the American military policies in Vietnam and to call for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Mennonites Arrive in Vietnam: The Pre-Vietnam War Years

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) was the first Mennonite organization to send personnel to Vietnam; in 1954 they entered South Vietnam following the signing of the Geneva Accords that brought the French Indochina War to an end.[2] MCC coordinated its aid programs with the Vietnamese government

Luke Martin and his wife, Mary, served in Vietnam from 1962 to 1975 with the Vietnam Mennonite Mission (Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions & Charities). From 1973 to 1975, Luke was also the Vietnam representative for Mennonite Central Committee. He can be contacted at lukmarpa@gmail.com.

1 Since numerous published papers have already focused on MCC's response to the war (see Perry Bush, "Vietnam and the Burden of Mennonite History," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 17, no. 1 [Spring 1999]: 5–27; David E. Leaman, "Politicized Service and Teamwork Tensions, Mennonite Central Committee in Vietnam, 1966–1969," *Mennonite Quarterly Review 71* [October 1997]: 544–70), this article gives primary attention to the responses of Vietnam Mennonite Mission personnel, of which I was one.

2 The area comprising Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos came under the control of the French colonial government in the late nineteenth century. The early twentieth century saw many Vietnamese independence movements, with the communist-dominated Việt Minh prevailing. After Germany seized France in 1940, Japanese forces occupied Viet-

in Saigon and with US Operations Mission (USOM)—later the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Three years later, in 1957, the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities (EMBMC)[3] sent missionary personnel to Vietnam. Representing Vietnam Mennonite Mission (VMM), missionaries saw their task as evangelism and establishing churches. They engaged in evangelistic ministries, student work, and community services in Saigon—and later in Cần Thơ.

MCC began by distributing emergency relief aid to displaced persons. Soon after, while continuing limited aid assistance, the organization developed a medical program at a leprosarium of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA)[4] in Vietnam's Central Highlands. In 1960 MCC established a hospital in central Vietnam in partnership with the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECVN), the CMA-founded church.

Personnel from both Mennonite agencies interacted significantly with one another. During an extended Vietnam visit in 1959, MCC's Executive Secretary William Snyder and EMBMC's Secretary Paul N. Kraybill clarified a relationship that would enable two separate Mennonite agencies to work together in Vietnam with overlapping concerns, vision, and goals.[5] Except from 1966 to 1972, when MCC was part of the large Vietnam Christian Service, MCC personnel often met together with missionaries in weekly fellowship meetings in Saigon.

MCC administrators and personnel were not unaware of the political implications of their Vietnam ministries. However, there is no indication that the central office in Akron, Pennsylvania, anticipated the major warfare that would break out in Vietnam a few years after MCC began its ministries there. MCC executives had been told by their Washington contacts that they were "needed"

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nam. After Japan surrendered, the Việt Minh leader, Hồ Chí Minh, proclaimed independence on September 3, 1945. French refusal to accept their independence led to warfare in 1946, ending with a cease-fire agreement in July 1954 (Geneva Accords) that provided a temporary division between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North) and the State of Vietnam (South) until nationwide elections within two years. The State of Vietnam was under the weak control of Emperor Bảo Đại, who named Ngô Đình Diệm as prime minister. The following year, Diệm defeated the emperor in a referendum and proclaimed the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) with himself the president.

3 Now Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM).

4 Christian & Missionary Alliance (CMA) entered Vietnam in 1911, leading to the formation of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECVN). In 1940 there were 123 member churches. In 1975 there were 54,000 baptized members in 510 churches. See Scott W. Sunquist, ed., *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 277–78.

5 William. T. Snyder to MCC Board Chairman Christian. N. (C. N.) Hostetter, Jr. and MCC Akron staff Robert W. Miller, J. N. Byler, and Willis Detweiler, June 8, 1959.

in Vietnam to help the new government care for displaced persons.[6] Delbert Wiens, the leader of the first MCC team in Vietnam, was told by Vietnamese government personnel of the importance of their presence in the country. James Stauffer, before going as the first Mennonite missionary, observed that southeast Asia was a "battleground" between the various forces of nationalism, communism, and Christianity.[7] When asked to describe the contributions of the Protestant Christian church to Vietnam in 1958, MCC representative Willard Krabill noted that the church was "one of the major bulwarks against the spread of totalitarian communism" in the country.[8] In spite of all this, neither MCC nor VMM personnel viewed their work in Vietnam in political terms.

Just prior to this, the United States had fought an ideological war against communism in Korea that had ended in 1953 with an uneasy truce. American political sentiments were not well-disposed toward an atheistic communist ideology of the Soviet Union or the recent People's Republic of China. Yet the Mennonite church's peace stance did not view Vietnamese communists as enemies. The spirit in which MCC administrators, field personnel, and the tens of thousands of its supporting constituency were responding to physical needs followed MCC's motto—"In the name of Christ."

The United States had provided most of the war matériel during the latter part of the French Indochina War and continued providing military and political support to the new government in the South. President Ngô Đình Diệm's refusal to permit general elections led to guerilla military activity against his government in 1957 by a communist-led coalition of forces, pejoratively called Việt Cộng. This led to the establishment of the National Liberation Front (NLF) in 1960. When the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) was formed in 1962 to direct the war, there were already 3,200 US military advisors there.[9] Increased military activity and internal turmoil precipitated a coup d'état against the president of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) in November 1963 and the installation of a military government. Following the Tonkin

6 Snyder to Orie O. Miller, June 23, 1954, saying that William McCahon of Foreign Operations Administration (FOA) "definitely wants voluntary agencies to help." A Snyder letter to Joan Kain, Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid, September 16, 1954, states that Orie O. Miller was told in Saigon that MCC's assistance was important because "Vietnam needs visible signs of foreign interest and concern."

7 Stauffer, "The Challenge of Viet-Nam," *Missionary Messenger* (March 1957), 8.

8 "The Work of the Protestant Churches in Viet Nam," a 1958 report requested by Richard W. Lindholm, a researcher from Michigan State University. Willard Krabill wrote that their objective was "to serve the needs of a suffering people regardless of creed, . . . to strengthen the Vietnamese church for the tasks it faces, . . . and to acquaint the Vietnamese . . . with the essence of the Christian gospel." Krabill became a critic of US policies.

9 John S. Bowman, ed., *The World Almanac of the Vietnam War* (New York: Bison, 1985), 54–55, gives an excellent chronology of the war.

Gulf incident[10] in August 1964, the US Congress adopted the Southeast Asia Resolution and US forces began bombing North Vietnam.[11]

During the late fifties and early sixties, Mennonite personnel in Vietnam, through interacting with Vietnamese colleagues and reading local newspapers, had been quite aware of the growing guerrilla activity, the military responses of the American and South Vietnamese governments, and the implications of this for their ministries. Letters home and reports were filled with descriptions of the expanding war. Yet both MCC and VMM personnel believed that it was inappropriate to comment publicly about American-Vietnamese political issues from Vietnam. In giving MCC permission to begin a program in 1957, President Diệm had stipulated that the organization not "incite or make propaganda for anything against the Vietnamese laws."[12] And in 1964, the Mennonite Mission was authorized to be "active only in purely religious activities."[13]

The Vietnam War Commences: How Should American Mennonites Respond?

In 1965 the war in Vietnam expanded rapidly. After NLF attacks on US military advisors' barracks in February, the United States responded with sustained bombings over North Vietnam and, in March, introduced combat-ready Marines into central Vietnam. By mid-year, B-52 saturation bombings had begun on suspected insurgent areas in the South.

When General William Westmoreland took command of US military forces in 1964, he adopted a strategy of attrition against the Viet Cong, and "body count" became the measure of the conflict. Villages in the countryside were bombed and napalmed; noncombatant men, women, and children were dying.[14]

We missionaries did not subscribe to a "just war" doctrine articulated by philosophers and embraced by many religious bodies, that spells out when and how political entities may engage in military activities. However, as the brutal, inhumane American weaponry continued raining down death on Vietnam's

10 The United States claimed that Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) forces had attacked US naval ships in the Tonkin Gulf.

11 There are many excellent histories of the war: see Frederik Logevall's *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 2012) and *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Another is Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Viking, 1983).

12 Order No. 165-YT of The President of the Republic of Viet Nam, April 20, 1957.

13 Letter from Premier Nguyễn Khánh, September 18, 1964, in Martin, *Vietnam Presence*, 150.

14 Nick Turse, *Kill Anything That Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam* (New York: Henry Holt, 2013).

countryside, affecting noncombatants, including families and friends of our staff, we missionaries decided in August 1965 that we needed to issue a public statement concerning the war. We asked James Metzler to prepare a draft.[15]

Metzler had written several essays published in the EMBMC journal, *Missionary Messenger*, criticizing the American involvement in Vietnam and explaining how our country's actions were complicating our sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the May 1965 issue, Metzler declared that the Mennonite position of conscientious objection to war was untenable unless we resisted the atrocity the United States was perpetrating on the Vietnamese people. "Silence can only mean consent—where there is opportunity to speak," he wrote.

We still had questions. For example, to whom should we address the statement? We missionaries had been schooled in a two-kingdom theology—the kingdom of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of the world. Most Mennonites understood this to mean that the church should stay out of the political arena; it certainly should not attempt to speak to government, which had a God-given duty to maintain order in an imperfect world. While we affirmed the more recent Mennonite statements that the church might speak to the government on moral issues,[16] we knew that not everyone in our supporting constituency embraced those views. It did not seem appropriate for us, as aliens, to speak publicly against the Vietnamese government. But we could speak to what the United States was doing. Our Christian faith obligated us to speak out against the immorality of the war. Jesus's story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) clearly taught us to care for victims of tragedy; certainly it was incumbent on us to try to prevent others from being harmed.

Reviewing James Metzler's draft statement, Mission Council members decided that our statement would be addressed to the church in the United States.[17] VMM secretary Everett Metzler corresponded with Paul N. Kraybill, EMBMC Secretary, about our decision to issue a statement. While Kraybill was sympathetic, he counseled: "To make a statement is a rather precarious proposal unless . . . you are in a position of being publicly misunderstood. . . . One has the feeling that when you begin to make statements, you are almost forced to continue that pattern or your silence will be construed to mean something that you had not intended."[18]

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15 Minutes of the Vietnam Mission Council (VMC), August 11, 1965; the VMC included ordained missionaries James Stauffer, Everett Metzler, James Metzler, Luke Martin, and Donald Sensenig.

16 See Perry Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998).

17 VMC Minutes, September 8, 1965.

18 Paul N. Kraybill to Everett Metzler, September 10, 1965.

We continued working on a statement. When Kraybill learned that the Peace Problems Committees of the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church were planning a special joint issue on Vietnam in both *Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite* papers, he asked us to send the statement, noting that it "could have a very meaningful contribution."[19]

The "Statement of Concern" released in early December 1965 was quite mild. Addressed to "Christians everywhere and especially with the Mennonite fellowship," it described the suffering of the Vietnamese, who had no voice in choosing their fate, and it questioned the legitimacy of the American military intervention. It expressed concern that "the communication of the Gospel [was] made more difficult" because Asians identified Christianity with Western nations.[20] The statement asked for prayer that the church in Vietnam would "be faithful in suffering." It was clear that we did not support American military policies—even if many missionaries of other agencies did.[21]

The most opportune time for making statements, however, had likely already passed. What is now known is that "by the early spring of 1965 the last chance to prevent another full-scale war in [Vietnam] had passed."[22] Positions on both sides had hardened. President Johnson had conducted a thorough review of the conflict and decided to send more combat troops in an effort to defeat the NLF forces.[23]

With the expansion of the war and the increased violence against the civilian population, Church World Service (CWS), the service agency of the National Council of Churches—the largest ecumenical body in the United States—proposed working with MCC, which already had a decade of experience in Vietnam. This led to the formation of Vietnam Christian Service (VNCS) in January 1966, a joint agency of CWS, MCC, and Lutheran World Relief, with MCC as the administrative leader. By year's end, MCC had assigned forty of the sixty-four VNCS international volunteers in South Vietnam—doctors,

19 Kraybill to Metzler, November 27, 1965.

20 Vietnamese generally associated Protestant Christian faith with the United States and Catholicism with France.

21 "Statement of Concern by Vietnam Mennonite Mission Council—December 1965," A Vietnam Presence website, Appendixes A 2–3, http://www.avietnampresence.com/.

22 Logevall, *Choosing War*, 335.

23 On June 2, 1965, William Snyder, MCC's executive secretary, wrote to President Johnson expressing concern for "human suffering" and urged a negotiated settlement. Both the General Conference Mennonite Church (July 15, 1965) and Mennonite Church (August 25–27, 1965) adopted statements on Vietnam at their summer conventions.

nurses, social workers, agriculturalists, and other personnel—working alongside Vietnamese staff in refugee camps and other areas of need.[24]

The decision to form VNCS was not easily made. MCC Vietnam director Paul Longacre had attended meetings with US officials in Saigon who emphasized that assistance to refugees is part of psychological warfare—popularly called "winning the hearts and minds" of the people.[25] Longacre feared that a large joint service program would rally American Protestants to support US goals in Vietnam and do little to stop the cause of human suffering. In helping the refugees, he said, "we will be making it more palatable for the US and South Vietnam to create more of the same."[26] While Robert W. Miller, MCC's Asia director, shared Longacre's concerns, he also noted the view of Stephen Cary—with American Friends Service Committee—who said it was important to place civilian service personnel to show that there are Americans other than military forces.[27]

Just two weeks before signing the Memorandum of Understanding with the two other bodies, Snyder expressed reservations about MCC leading Vietnam Christian Service:

> Frankly, I am somewhat apprehensive whether we can, as an historic peace church, lead the Protestant forces as we have been asked to do in Vietnam. If we pull out all the stops in our criticism of US government foreign policy by asking withdrawal of United States from Vietnam, I think we will likely pull apart from the larger body of Protestants who presently want to work through us. On the other hand, if we are somewhat moderate in tone, I believe that we may have an opportunity to influence these denominations on a scale that we have not hitherto had opportunity to do. It is clear to me that our words and our deeds in Vietnam must go together and that the acid test of what we say . . . must be what we do in Vietnam and in our own communities.[28]

MCC related closely to the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECVN) from the beginning of its Vietnam ministry. Consultations with *Tin Lành*[29] Church leaders and CMA officials had indicated a strong preference for having MCC

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24 The VNCS story is briefly told in Midge Austin Meinertz, ed., *Vietnam Christian Service: Witness in Anguish* (New York: Church World Service, 1975).

25 Martin, *Vietnam Presence*, 193.

26 Longacre to R. Miller, October 6, 1965.

27 R. Miller to Longacre, September 28, 1965.

28 Snyder memo to the Special Task Force, December 22, 1965.

29 *Tin Lành* means "Evangelical." It is considered the main "Protestant" church in Vietnam.

administer a joint program rather than having the US National Council of Churches initiate a separate program through Church World Service.[30]

A few of us missionaries with good language skills gave part-time assistance to VNCS. Everett Metzler set up a program for new personnel to receive two months of introductory language study. Atlee Beechy, college professor and MCC board member who had extensive relief experience in Europe after World War II, became the first director of Vietnam Christian Service. Longacre served as his associate. Beechy widely voiced his concerns about the war. In a memo to the head of USAID Vietnam, Beechy said that VNCS had "a responsibility to work toward peace."[31] He wrote regularly to the congressional representative from his home district, calling attention to the many civilian casualties, expressing concern that the US Administration was following a hard line against North Vietnam while saying it was prepared to negotiate.[32] In a conversation with an up-country veteran missionary who thanked God for good weather to help "our boys blast those Viet Cong," Beechy asked, "How will the Viet Cong who are killed in the raids hear the Good News?"[33]

We missionaries had opportunities to interact with hundreds of students every year—high school and university students as well as civil servants. Though aware that teaching English could be seen as cultural imperialism, missionaries were able to help those eager for language skills to seek employment or pursue higher education.[34] Students were invited to Bible classes—taught in English or Vietnamese—where teachers focused on the life and teachings of Jesus, sharing their faith in a gospel of love and peace. Among advanced students, teachers often discussed current affairs, including the ever-present war. While not criticizing the Vietnamese government, we discussed the implications of military service with those who committed to following the way of Jesus.

By the end of 1966, the United States had stationed 280,000 US military troops in Vietnam with 95,000 additional soldiers on ships or stationed in Thailand.[35] When the news came out that evangelist Billy Graham was planning a Christmas visit to the US soldiers, Paul Leatherman, the VNCS executive

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30 R. Miller in early April spoke with Rev. Đoàn Văn Miêng, President of the ECVN, and with Grady Mangham, CMA Vietnam chair. Later, Miller and his father, Orie Miller, met with CMA leaders in New York. (R. Miller to Longacre, June 8, 1965.)

31 Beechy memo to Charles Mann, March 28, 1966.

32 From March 26, 1966, letter to John Brademas, representative from Indiana's Third Congressional District.

33 Beechy, *Seeking Peace: My Journey* (Goshen, IN: Pinchpenny), 82.

34 Some classes used the simple stories of Jesus created by missionary linguist Frank C. Laubach; see, for example, Laubach, *The Master Speaks: Jesus Tells His Own Story* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino, 2013).

35 Bowman, *World Almanac*, 158.

director who had replaced Beechy, arranged with the head chaplain at Saigon's "Pentagon East"—the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam—for a meeting with Graham.

Graham met with the VNCS group on December 21.[36] At that meeting, Leatherman described VNCS's philosophy of service. Longacre then expressed our concern at what the overpowering military and economic might of America was doing to the moral fiber of the people, what it was doing to the conscience of Americans, and how it was hindering the work of world evangelism insofar as American Christians were supporting this policy. Neil Brendon gave several illustrations of what was happening in Vietnam and how Vietnamese felt about what the United States was doing there.

Graham said it was clear that America "is not a Christian nation," implying that no one should confuse American policy with Christianity. He said that during his student days he was "nearly a pacifist." After seeing how Nazi Germany treated Jewish people, he now agreed with those who were saying that Communism must be stopped in Vietnam or it would spread to the whole of Southeast Asia. The responsibility of the church, he said, is to evangelize, then instruct the believers in Christian living and in serving the needs of others

Graham claimed that he had never made a public statement on American Vietnam policy. He also said that he had come to Vietnam to minister to GIs in the same way that he was conducting his evangelistic campaigns.[37] While we were disappointed that Graham was not sympathetic to our perspective, we had presented a concern that he would not hear from US military officers—the plight of an innocent suffering people.

The year 1967 was intense for VNCS. Amid increased fighting and VNCS personnel gaining experience in assisting the tens of thousands of displaced people, many personnel were raising serious questions. MCC Executive Secretary Snyder and William Keeney (MCC Peace Section) visited Vietnam in May of that year. Six months earlier the United States had consolidated all the field operations of USAID, CIA, and the Joint US Public Affairs Office into the Office of Civil Operations (OCO) to facilitate their "pacification program." Now at the time of their visit, President Johnson further militarized American operations by ordering that OCO be placed under the military command of General Westmoreland as Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development.[38]

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36 The group consisted of Paul Leatherman, Paul Longacre, Luke Martin, Lance Woodruff, and Neil Brenden.

37 Paul Leatherman, *A Full and Rewarding Life: A Memoir* (Lititz, PA: P. Leatherman, 2006), 33; L. Martin memo to P. N. Kraybill, "VNCS interview with Dr. Billy Graham, December 21, 1966," December 24, 1966.

38 "The Office of Civic Operations and Rural Support (CORDS)," National Archives, Military Records, https://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/

To work closely with USAID under military control was fraught with moral challenges. Snyder and Keeney met with OCO deputy director, L. Wade Lathrum, who told them that he was "unhappy" with the Mennonite position on the war but felt that VNCS was "doing a service the government cannot do and so [he] tolerate[d] the dissent."[39] He declared that the new governmental structure would not negatively affect voluntary agencies like VNCS. His argument was not very convincing, however.

VNCS work in Quảng Ngãi Province included a feeding program for thousands of displaced persons, using supplies provided by USAID. Team members, led by Canadian David Neufeld, met regularly with local provincial officials to brainstorm possible developmental programs. In a May report to the Saigon office, Earl Martin wrote: "Identities continue to trouble us. Who are we as a Christian presence here? Who are we in relation to other governmental agencies working in Vietnam?" With USAID intent on coordinating all refugee programs, he suggested that VNCS might focus on medical, educational, and agricultural programs rather than on feeding programs.[40] Aware that USAID was pleased with the VNCS feeding program and had proposed that VNCS develop a countrywide program, most team members signed a letter to Paul Leatherman expressing "misgivings" about "a contract with CORDS which would identify VNCS with the total military effort."[41]

MCC's Executive Committee did reject USAID's proposal in order to "maintain a VNCS identity and integrity to the greatest degree possible in the face of strong military control of South Vietnam by the United States forces."[42] Yet two of the Quảng Ngãi team held another view. One wrote: "To me it is a sad day when our primary concern is our 'identity' rather than meeting the needs of the people. As long as people are in need and there is someone to help, I don't care who gets the credit for the job. My primary concern is not to further the political position of VNCS or to spend a great deal of time establishing our 'image' if it detracts from the job of meeting and helping those in need."[43]

James MacCracken, the executive director of CWS, the largest VNCS partner, would have agreed. Although the National Council of Churches, CWS's

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civil-operations.html.

39 Keeney Report to MCC Peace Section, "Trip to Vietnam: May 1–16, 1967," May 22, 1967.

40 E. Martin Program Report, June 19, 1967.

41 July 12 letter regarding a "VNCS-CORDS Feeding Contract," signed by Pat Hostetter, Earl Martin, Tharon McConnell, David Neufeld, Sue Neufeld, and Sanford Stauffer.

42 MCC Executive Board Minute 12f, May 26, 1967.

43 Fred Gregory, July 28, 1967, report to Jerry Aaker. The other person was Robert L. Miller.

parent body, opposed American military intervention in Vietnam, MacCracken said it was not appropriate for CWS to associate with either a hawk or dove stance. He said that CWS endeavored to minister to acute human need without regard to "the accident of geography, race, or religion." When VNCS was formed, he noted, they already recognized that they would have to rely heavily on the American government for logistical support.[44]

Doug Hostetter, MCC's volunteer in Tam Kỳ, just a bit north of Quảng Ngãi, was also making waves. Hostetter had developed an educational program using high school students to teach village children who were unable to go to school. His friendships within the local community and visits to villages under partial NLF control attracted the attention of the local CORDS colonel, who asked US Deputy Ambassador Henry Koran to remove Hostetter from Tam Kỳ. Leatherman met with Ambassador Koran, who charged that Hostetter was criticizing US policies in contacts with local USAID personnel and subversively working against US policy and objectives in his relationships with area Vietnamese.[45] Leatherman asked Hostetter to come to Saigon for consultation and possible reassignment. However, in an unpredictable turn of events due to the illness of a team member, Hostetter returned to Tam Kỳ.

The nonsectarian International Voluntary Service (IVS) was facing similar pressures. Fully funded by USAID, their staff were now working under the umbrella of the US military command. VNCS Director Leatherman, IVS Chief of Party Don Luce, and the head of another agency met with US Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker at the embassy on September 14, 1967, to protest the pressure to become part of the American "team." They insisted on freedom to determine their own programs in consultation with Vietnamese authorities. Bunker told them that voluntary agency personnel did not have the right to oppose US or Vietnamese government policies, and said that no aid could be given to the Viet Cong. Leatherman made it clear to the ambassador that the Christian church did not have enemies.[46]

Within a week of this meeting with the ambassador, Luce—together with many other IVS staff members—wrote to President Johnson, calling the war "an overwhelming atrocity." He stated that they were "finding it increasingly difficult to pursue quietly [their] main objective: helping the people in Vietnam. . . . Thus, to stay in Vietnam and remain silent is to fail to respond to the first need of the Vietnamese people—peace."[47] They presented their letter to the embassy

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44 Quoted by Longacre in a letter to Sam Hope, September 6, 1967.

45 Leatherman confidential report, August 10, 1967.

46 Leatherman, *A Full and Rewarding Life*, 31; Leatherman to Longacre, "Meeting with Ambassador Bunker," September 16, 1967.

47 Don Luce, *Vietnam: The Unheard Voices* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 19–20.

and sent it to *The New York Times*. Four top IVS personnel resigned, including Luce and two Mennonite volunteers—area team leaders Gene Stoltzfus and Willy Meyers.[48]

MCC's Executive Secretary Snyder also told the Southeast Asia USAID administrator in Washington that transferring USAID's program to CORDS put "subtle and indirect pressure for voluntary agencies to gear their programs toward military goals."[49] Clarification came with a CORDS response in early November, saying that US policy is "to respect the sovereignty and independence of operation of all voluntary agencies. . . . Although CORDS personnel are responsible for assisting the [government of Vietnam], . . . such *coordination should be carried out in such a way as to preclude charges of interference in and control of Volag activities*."[50]

During our year's home leave from mid-1967, Mary and I were invited to speak in congregations that supported EMBMC ministries. We were generally given a receptive hearing as we described the human suffering and death and the physical destruction caused by superior American firepower. Although sympathetic to the time-tested commitment to nonresistance and non-involvement in governmental politics as generally practiced within the Mennonite Church, we were compelled by our Vietnam experience to more actively oppose US military policies. The gospel stories of Jesus required an interpretation adequate to the situation in which we had been living. The story Jesus told his inquirer who asked, "Who is my neighbor?" not only called for binding up the wounds of the injured man but also asking, "What must be done to prevent the robbers from beating up and killing others who come down the road?" We were more concerned with orthopraxis than orthodoxy (terminology we did not use at the time).

That year I traveled to Washington, DC, to join tens of thousands demonstrating against the war. Initially disturbed to see a contingent of marching anarchists, I asked myself why I was in such company. I quickly resolved this concern, however; I did not need to agree with all the views of others. Had Jesus not reprimanded John who found fault that someone driving out demons was not following them? Jesus declared: "Whoever is not against us is for us!" (Mark 9:40). I was more than willing to join with persons of other political views or faiths in trying to stop the American reign of terror in Vietnam.

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48 Luce, after a speaking tour in the United States, returned to Vietnam and worked with other agencies there. In 1970 he led an American congressman to uncover the "tiger cages" on Côn Sơn prison island. See Ted Lieverman, "The Transformation of Don Luce," *HistoryNet*, https://www.historynet.com/transformation-don-luce.htm.

49 Snyder memo to James M. Grant, October 5, 1967.

50 L. Wade Lathrum letter on Voluntary Agency Support to CORDS deputies, November 11, 1967 (emphasis is in the original).

When James and Rachel Metzler had been on home leave the previous year, James had accompanied two Eastern Mennonite Seminary professors in January 1967 to a Washington, DC, gathering of the Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam (CALC) protesting the war.[51] He was among thirty-some signers of a February 2 full-page advertisement of the CALC statement in the area newspaper, drawing criticism from some local Mennonite church leaders.

Troubled by the unrelenting violence of the American war of attrition, the Mennonite missionary team in Saigon in October 1967 prepared a statement for our local Vietnamese community that read, in part: "We are deeply moved by the tremendous suffering and grief being endured by many Vietnamese people. We believe that the military force causing most of this hardship is not in their interest and cannot solve their problems."[52]

After this Vietnamese language statement was posted in the Mission's student center, some Vietnamese staff members feared they might be questioned by authorities for involvement in political activities and asked that it be taken down. The statement was then given only to persons who asked why we missionaries had come to Vietnam.

Some who related closely to MCC, the Mission, or the developing Mennonite church did not share our perspective regarding the American military power. Nguyễn Vân Ninh, MCC's interpreter and administrative assistant for many years—who moved from the North to Saigon in 1955—surprised persons on a 1969 visit to MCC's home office in Akron, Pennsylvania, when he gave "a strong statement of support for the Saigon government."[53] As part of Vietnam's growing middle class, his family was not unusual in being concerned about the the revolutionaries potentially coming to power.[54]

A Letter from Mennonites in Vietnam to American Christians

In December 1967 the missionary team released a *Letter from Vietnam to American Christians*, which expressed concern for the suffering of the Vietnamese people caused by US military forces. We said that while we did not condone "the atrocities and terror of the other side," "the US and Allied forces

51 James Metzler diary, January 31, 1967. Metzler loaned me his diary for my research and retains it in his possession.

52 A Vietnam Presence website, http://www.AVietnamPresence.com/appendixes, E 8.

53 Longacre to E. Metzler, September 15, 1969.

54 Robert (Bob) W. Miller came to Vietnam in September 1968 as VNCS's third director. When he asked office secretaries to type Atlee Beechy's report of visits with NLF representatives, the secretaries were so upset that Bob burned all the papers; to advocate accommodation to "the other side" was considered a criminal offense (Martin, *Vietnam Presence*, 343–44).

are causing most of the devastation." We expressed concern about American church leaders supporting the war and that "our president" had prayed for God to "bless 'our pilots' on their missions of destruction."[55]

Paul Kraybill affirmed the positive tone of the VMM draft statement. However, he questioned the frequent use of "our" in referring to the United States as our country, our nation, our leaders, or our president.[56] Everett responded that while we may disavow personal guilt, as Americans we cannot fully disassociate ourselves from American policy "until we no longer call the US 'our' country."[57]

During the lunar New Year on January 30, 1968 (*Tết Mậu Thân*), South Vietnam and the American military establishment were stunned when the NLF forces and People's Army from the North attacked Saigon and more than one hundred cities and towns throughout the South in a coordinated general offensive. William Snyder and Atlee Beechy had arrived in Vietnam a few days earlier to attend a planned VNCS conference. It was soon learned that several CMA missionaries were killed in the mountain city of Ban-Mê-Thuột and six MCC personnel were trapped in Hue. Though vehicles with the VNCS logo were parked outside their house, they were not harmed by People's Army troops. Only after nine days were they able to report that they were safe.[58] While the Tet Offensive led to massive casualties for the Viet Cong forces, it unmasked the false claim that the "enemy" was being defeated. It also led to President Johnson's announcement two months later to stop bombing and begin negotiations with the other side.

Virginia pastor Eugene Sauder printed twenty thousand copies of the *Letter* released by the missionaries. Five thousand copies were distributed at a second mobilization meeting of Clergy and Laymen Concerned in Washington, DC, on February 5 and 6, 1968, only days after the start of the Tet Offensive. Souder received permission from the Sergeant at Arms at the US Capitol to distribute the letter to all the congressional offices. Some legislators expressed appreciation for it.[59] Published in the January 15 *Gospel Herald* and the March *Missionary Messenger*, the *Letter* was also endorsed by EMBMC President H. Raymond Charles as he called for a "Day of Prayer" for Vietnam.[60]

In May the continuing Tet Offensive saw additional attacks that devastated a blighted area adjacent to the Mennonite community center, resulting in hun-

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55 A Vietnam Presence website, http://www.AVietnamPresence.com/appendixes, F 9. The letter is reproduced in the present issue of *Anabaptist Witness*.

56 Kraybill to E. Metzler, November 22, 1967.

57 E. Metzler to Kraybill, December 19, 1967.

58 Omar Eby, *A House in Hue* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1968); Mark Bowden, *Huế 1968* (New York: Atlantic Monthly, 2017).

59 Author conversation with Eugene Souder, October 15, 2011.

60 Letter to Lancaster Mennonite Conference leaders, February 27, 1968.

dreds of houses bombed to dislodge the insurgents. VNCS worked with the Mennonite Mission to assist a hundred families to rebuild. Many months later we found in an unused mailbox two undated letters, both carrying the seal of the local sector of the Liberation Front. The first letter encouraged a center staff person to treat the poor fairly. The other letter, addressed to the directors, was quite warm with praise, expressing gratitude "for the charitable work" in helping families rebuild.[61] In a letter to Kraybill, Everett Metzler wrote: "At least we are known to the other side in a way that we wish to be known."[62] We received no further NLF communication.

James Metzler, a member of our missionary team, felt that the *Letter* expressing opposition to American policy was hardly an adequate response to the American war. In a letter to Kraybill, he wrote:

> I believe the time is fast approaching, if not already here, when we must disassociate ourselves from this evil campaign—for our personal consciences' sake as well as a witness to true Christianity. . . . I already feel as though I do not belong here: the entire spirit and atmosphere which envelops us all is totally foreign to our own spirit. . . . We simply have not been able to stand apart from it. . . . Our very presence in the midst of this military-political-social struggle implicates us directly with what our nation is doing.[63]

As this conviction grew, Metzler began conversations with Kraybill about transferring to a new assignment outside Vietnam. Kraybill offered understanding to Metzler, yet encouraged him "not to take steps that [would] jeopardize the witness and conviction of others" who had not come to the same position.[64] Following the Tet Offensive, which devastated areas of Saigon, Metzler and the other missionaries joined VNCS staff in offering significant assistance to victims of the conflict. Then, in 1970 with little publicity, the Metzler family transferred to the Philippines.

In an article written after the war, titled "Vietnam: I Wouldn't Do It Again," Metzler discusses the problems associated with an American-based mission seeking to evangelize in an area dominated by US military forces. He says that we might have made a significant witness for the integrity of the gospel if our

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61 A Vietnam Presence website, http://www.AVietnamPresence.com/appendixes, H 13–14.

62 E. Metzler to Kraybill, February 18, 1969. Translated texts of the two letters are also archived.

63 J. Metzler to Kraybill, October 31, 1967.

64 P. Kraybill to J. Metzler, November 22, 1967.

entire missionary team had publicly left Vietnam in protest of the war because of our American identity.[65]

Although we could identify with Metzler in his decision to resign and leave, team members believed that staying in Vietnam enabled us to continue a Christian witness and to speak against the war's evils with greater clarity—to our friends in Vietnam, to our American church constituency, and to the American public.

This *Letter* eventually got the attention of the wider evangelical community in the United States. Several prominent leaders asked CMA for their position on US Vietnam policy. In response to one such inquiry, Franklin Irwin, CMA field director, expressed support for American policies: "The Vietnamese asked us to come and help them drive back an invader who was trying by murder, force, and war to subjugate all the peoples of South Vietnam," he wrote. For America to desert this "gallant, little nation [that was] fighting for its life and freedom" would be both immoral and unChristian.[66]

Grady Mangham, CMA Asia Director, in his response to an inquiry from Donald McGavran, Professor of Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, CA), supported continuing America's war policies. Although aware of the atrocities and horrors of the war, he was convinced that the alternative—a communist rule—was "frightening, almost unthinkable."[67] Earlier Mangham had written to Louis L. King, CMA Chairman, that the United States "must support the South Vietnamese people in their resistance against a Communist takeover."[68]

The Mennonite missionary team in Saigon also received responses from four other missionaries, ranging "from mild disagreement to rather violent disagreement." Some expressed appreciation while not fully agreeing. Others felt that such statements only encouraged the "enemy" and shortened the time "for Western missionaries to preach the Gospel in Vietnam."[69]

Would it have been a most faithful Christian witness for Metzler to publicly denounce the US policies and leave Vietnam in 1967? Or for the whole missionary group to do this together? Who in Vietnam, the United States, or the world community might have taken notice? How would it have been understood? How would this have affected the witness of the Mennonite missionary team? Is the gospel preached by Western missionaries a compromised gospel? Perhaps

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65 James Metzler, "I Would Not Do It Again," *Mission Focus* 6, no. 2 (November 1977): 1–3.

66 B. Violet James, "American Protestant Missions and the Vietnam War" (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1989), 231.

67 James, 231.

68 James, 228.

69 E. Metzler letter to Kraybill, April 4, 1968.

rather than voluntarily leave we might have spoken more forcefully about the murderous strategy and tactics of the American military forces; this could have resulted in being denied visas by the Saigon government.

We cannot ignore the issue James Metzler raised in 1957 about the appropriateness of an all-American Vietnam Mennonite Mission team in a country dominated by the American empire. We did attempt to internationalize our personnel.[70] In previous eras much mission work was done throughout Africa and Asia in lands by missionaries from those colonial nations. We may rightly question the role of French missionary Mngr. Pigneau de Behaine in securing French political and military help to save the Nguyễn Dynasty in Vietnam in 1787, yet this assisted a persecuted Catholic Church in regaining its strength.[71] Our American citizenship gave us both advantages and disadvantages.[72] We could and did speak to Vietnamese friends and students about the devastation caused by the American military forces; if they publicly expressed those views they would have been suspected as NLF sympathizers and arrested.

When President Johnson on March 31, 1968, announced a unilateral halt on bombing North Vietnam, with preparations to "move immediately toward peace through negotiations," MCC Executive Secretary Snyder telegrammed the president, saying: "Your decision to move toward the conference table by ordering the cessation of bombing in most of North Vietnam is a step that we strongly endorse."[73]

The Paris Peace Talks did not convene until January 18, 1969, two days before Richard Nixon's inauguration. In his inaugural address, Nixon referred to possible "years of patient and prolonged diplomacy" before attaining peace.[74] There would be 27,000 additional GIs killed—along with hundreds of thousands of conscripted soldiers from both North and South Vietnam and large numbers of civilians—in the four years before the peace agreement would take effect on January 27, 1973. After building up and supplying the Republic of Vietnam military forces, the United States withdrew its combat troops. Amid ongoing warfare, Mennonite missionaries and MCC personnel continued to

70 VMM invited Arno and Jacqueline Thimm (Martin, *Vietnam Presence*, 229). MCC had a more international team with Canadians, Americans, one Japanese, and two Indian team members.

71 Piero Gheddo, *The Cross and the Bo-Tree* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1970), 7.

72 Compare Acts 16:35–39, where Paul appeals to his Roman citizenship during his efforts to expand the church.

73 Snyder telegram to President Johnson, April 2, 1968.

74 "Richard Milhous Nixon: First Inaugural Address–Monday, January 20, 1969," Bartleby.com, http://bartleby.com/124/pres58.html.

write letters to the White House and to congressional persons, and engaged in conversations with the embassy in Saigon in an effort to end the conflict.[75]

Four missionaries—Donald Sensenig, James Stauffer, James Metzler, and Luke Martin—were among nearly fifty persons who signed *A Letter from Vietnam*[76] prior to the October 15, 1969, Moratorium Day in the United States, calling on the US government to end the war. Portions of this letter were printed in an independent Vietnamese language newspaper with names of the signers. A prominent *Tin Lành* lay leader told Stauffer that more American missionaries should have signed this letter. He claimed that the majority of persons in the *Tin Lành* Church were behind our efforts to stop the war.[77]

In May 1972, Donald Sensenig drafted a letter to President Nixon, signed by all the missionaries in Saigon as well as several MCC volunteers, calling on the president to cease "hostile action by all US military forces," which might become "the catalyst that begins the long, painful way toward change and compromise."[78] In his cover letter to the EMBMC office, Sensenig wrote that this "is only one small attempt to allow justice, mercy, and faith to contend with violence in our national life."

> "The whole gospel for the whole man" expresses the goal of our witness as Christians, as well as the desire of our hearts for our own lives. . . .
> The [attached] letter might not contain "the whole gospel"; but we believe the gospel underlies its appeal . . . to government leaders, and to the public at large, to recognize sin and unrighteousness and judgment at work in our government's actions.[79]

This letter was published in *Gospel Herald*, the Mennonite Church periodical at that time. Delton Franz, the director of MCC's Washington, DC office (established in 1968), commented on "the wide circulation" of the letter. "I think our Mennonite constituency has received considerable insight from the perspective of EMBMC mission personnel on the scene. We were able to share copies of the letter with government officials."[80]

Yet there were Mennonite critics, like the editor of a small paper who said it was unfair to criticize the United States without speaking to the other side,

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75 Several of these are in www.aVietnamPresence.com/appendixes. Sensenig drafted a May 6, 1972, letter to Nixon; James Stauffer, Donald Sensenig, Luke Martin, and Tom Spicher (MCC) met with ambassador Ellsworth Bunker on May 26, 1972.

76 http://www.AVietnamPresence.com/appendixes, I 15. Fifteen VNCSers and many Quakers also signed the *Letter (Martin, Vietnam Presence, 369).*

77 James Stauffer letter home October 28, 1969.

78 Letter to President Nixon, http://www.AVietnamPresence.com/appendixes, 26.

79 Sensenig to EMBMC Publicity Office, May 8, 1972.

80 Delton Franz to Titus Peachey, June 30, 1972.

and who implied that the South would live under a communist government if America's policies failed.[81]

One must ask what our statements of protest against the American war accomplished. Though we did not end the war our voices joined with a myriad of other voices calling for an end to the conflict. We cannot claim to have stopped the fighting, but we know we would have been unfaithful to God's call in our lives had we not spoken.

When MCC withdrew from the VNCS coalition on January 1, 1973, and set up their office in the Vietnam Mission office, our two North American Mennonite teams interacted much more with one another. This encouraged planning for a joint fellowship conference of MCC personnel, Mennonite missionaries, and Vietnam Mennonite church leaders in early February 1974 for mutual encouragement. Our Bible studies and discussions were based on John Howard Yoder's newly published (1972) *The Politics of Jesus*.[82]

A couple of months later, in April when MCC board member Robert Kreider and his wife, Lois, came to Vietnam for two weeks, the MCC team was defining "peace and reconciliation" as its primary objective. Kreider understood what team members were saying—MCC would "need to be flexible, Spirit-led, with an accent on being a friendly presence, listening, talking, and judicious reporting." MCC would "continue a diversified program sensitive to the changing political climate" of Vietnam and would include "advocacy for those who suffer in silence—the political prisoners." MCC would continue some of our medical services and attempt new programs such as removal of unexploded ordnance. We would gather stories from the people—and of war suffering. Through literature and dialogue, we would "continue to seek ways of sharing the gospel of peace and reconciliation."[83]

In late 1973, through a VNCS contact, Pat Hostetter Martin visited a paralyzed woman chained to a hospital bed. Đặng Thị Hiền had been arrested and tortured after meeting an alleged NLF agent. When Hostetter Martin later accompanied a *New York Times* reporter to meet Hiền, secret police took them to the police station for questioning. This incident inspired a series of *Times* articles on political prisoners.[84] Mary Martin accompanied Hiền's mother to visit Hiền after she was taken back to prison.

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81 Sanford Shetler in *Guidelines for Today*, July–August, 1972.

82 Martin, *Vietnam Presence*, 465. See John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994). (The first edition was published in 1972.)

83 "Asia Africa Report, Robert and Lois Kreider," September 4, 1974, 17.

84 David K. Shipler, "Tortured Woman Bewildered by Plight," *New York Times, August 18, 1974,* https://www.nytimes.com/1974/08/18/archives/tortured-woman-

Robert W. Miller, now at MCC Akron's Asia desk, visited Vietnam in November of that same year. Two of us accompanied him to the US Embassy to speak to Ambassador Graham Martin about the large number of political prisoners being held in Vietnam's prisons. The ambassador denied that Vietnam's government held any political prisoners.[85] We submitted the detailed story of Hiền's case together with a file Max Ediger had obtained that listed 264 political prisoners who were being held in Saigon's Chi Hòa Prison—just several blocks from our office. This government document clearly labeled them as political prisoners. The ambassador never acknowledged receiving our materials.[86]

Ediger in 1973 began working with Buddhist and Catholic clergy in a small, low-key MCC program assisting political prisoners. Although missionaries had Catholic and Buddhist friends, we did not have significant relationships with leaders of their communities.[87] However, on the occasion of a visit by Goshen College professor of religion Norman Kraus in December 1974, we invited the Venerable Thích Quảng Độ, Secretary General of the Institute for the Dissemination of the Dharma, to meet with us. He emphasized the foundational need to "think peace," which would find expression in positive actions.[88]

A few months later, in March and April of 1975, as the Republic of Vietnam was on the verge of collapsing, nearly all missionaries and representatives of dozens of American voluntary agencies prepared to leave the country. When the war ended on April 30 with the surrender of the South Vietnam forces, four MCC personnel remained, delivering a loud, silent protest that they were not part of the American establishment that had sought to control

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bewildered-by-plight-a-cautionary-glance.html; Martin, *Vietnam Presence,* 460, 463, 484–85.

85 Max Ediger and Luke Martin accompanied Miller (Martin, *Vietnam Presence*, 456).

86 The file was prepared by Max Ediger and Luke Martin (Martin, *Vietnam Presence*, 462–63).

87 To have done so would have raised our political profile. Buddhist protests against the government of President Diệm, a staunch Catholic, had led to Diệm's downfall in 1963. Most Buddhist leaders advocated peaceful accommodation with the warring parties; opponents claimed this would only lead to a communist-controlled government. A proposed "Third Way" was rejected by the Saigon government and never gained enough strength. See Sophie Quinn-Judge, *The Third Force in the Vietnam War: The Elusive Search for Peace 1954–75* (London: Oxford University Press, 2017).

88 L. Martin to home, December 21, 1974; J. Stauffer to home, December 29, 1974. After the end of the war, Thích Quảng Độ refused to become part of the government-sponsored Buddhist group and continued leadership in the United Buddhist Church well into the twenty-first century. He was arrested frequently and isolated by the government.

Vietnam for two decades.[89] James Klassen gave significant support to the young Mennonite Church during the following year.[90]

Reflecting on North American Mennonite Service in Vietnam

How do we missionaries reflect personally on the years spent in Vietnam? Certainly we tried to be faithful to our Christian calling. We taught, preached, and tried to live out the Good News of love, peace, and freedom in Jesus Christ. We did not hesitate to teach Jesus's command to love in all relationships. To young men subject to military service, we taught the imperative of love and encouraged them to embrace the way of peace, even amid suffering. Some found ways to avoid going into the armed forces. To those who were pressed into military service, we continued to give pastoral care.

Our Vietnam Mennonite Mission approach to evangelism was definitely different from the approach of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Southern Baptist Convention, and other mission agencies. Given the overwhelming American political and military presence in Vietnam, we practiced friendship evangelism rather than a more aggressive stance.[91] As part of that approach, we developed a student center and a social service center that provided much-appreciated services to many people. We tried to live out the work of Christ as that which dissolves hostility between people and establishes a community of peace such as described in Ephesians 2:11–22. After a congregation formed in Saigon's twin city of Gia Đinh, we established a congregation-based Bible school focused on biblical literacy, church history, and leadership training.

In spite of their different orientation, Mennonite missionaries formed close relationships with many *Tin Lành* pastors and church members, and VMM

89 Max Ediger, James Klassen, Earl Martin, and Yoshihiro Ichikawa. Klassen describes this in *Jimshoes in Vietnam* (Herald, 1986), and Martin in *Reaching the Other Side*, (New York: Crown, 1978). Martin left Vietnam in October 1975, Ediger and Klassen in the spring of 1976, and Ichikawa in late 1976.

90 James R. Klassen, "Walking with Vietnamese Christians," *Mission Focus* 6, no. 2 (1977): 4–8.

91 In a critique of evangelical ministries, Reginald Reimer praised Mennonite missionaries in Vietnam for "carrying on an exemplary ministry of social service. Their peace witness provided a much-needed dimension to the total impact of foreign Christians in a war-torn country. [The Mennonite missionaries] were better identified with the Vietnamese people than many missionaries of other societies." Yet he concluded that their "motivation to win Vietnamese to Christ seemed crippled by a touch of 'presence theology,'" which emphasizes "being" Christians in the world and doing good works but "hesitates at the point of gospel proclamation, and eschews 'persuading' men to become Christians." See Reginald Reimer, *The Protestant Movement in Vietnam* (MA thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1972) 162–63.

wanted to work closely with the *Tin Lành* Church. Members of the *Tin Lành* Executive Committee clarified in 1959 for EMBMC Secretary Kraybill that this meant working separately yet in close fellowship.[92] For example, Mennonite missionaries often attended *Tin Lành* Church services, even their conferences. And *Tin Lành* pastors and lay leaders were invited to preach in our meetings, often giving invitations for people to confess faith in Jesus. In 1963, the *Tin Lành* president preached at the dedication of the Mennonite student center and office, and many *Tin Lành* pastors attended. The following year, in 1964, Edgar Metzler (MCC Peace Section) gave a presentation on "The Christian and the State," and, again, many *Tin Lành* pastors attended.[93] We also arranged for several visiting Mennonite theologians and Bible teachers to give addresses to students at the *Tin Lành* Theological Training Center in Nha Trang.

From the beginning of its ministries in Vietnam in 1954, MCC carried out relief programs with the *Tin Lành* Church and, in 1960, began a joint medical program with the church at Nha Trang in central Vietnam. MCC staff members generally held deep respect for the commitment of *Tin Lành* Christians, whose church claimed to adhere to a strict non-involvement in political issues. In a 1971 newspaper interview, the church president, Rev. Đoàn Văn Miêng, expressed a hope that the country's two sides would soon come to a peaceful agreement.[94] However, many urban *Tin Lành* pastors supported the American military policies, fearing that an American defeat would mean a communist government with restricted religious freedom.

After becoming independent from VNCS in 1973, MCC worked less closely with the *Tin Lành* Church.[95] In 1975, a small number of *Tin Lành* pastors fled Vietnam. When several of these pastors were interviewed in the United States a year later they indicated little understanding of Christian pacifism as expressed by Mennonites. Most of them strongly disapproved when they learned that the Mennonite missionaries and MCC staff were opposed to US political and military policies in Vietnam; they equated this perspective with a pro-communist stance.[96]

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92 Martin, *Vietnam Presence*, 86–89.

93 Several younger pastors at the event expressed agreement with the biblical interpretation that Christians could not participate in military service.

94 Luke S. Martin, *An Evaluation of a Generation of Mennonite Mission, Service and Peacemaking in Vietnam 1954–1976* (unpublished report, July 1977), 123. The Evaluation was written as the final report for the Vietnam Study Report, which had been commissioned by MCC, MCC Peace Section, and EMBMC in March 1976. The Vietnam Study Report is available in the MCC Archives.

95 Martin, *Vietnam Presence*, 454–56.

96 Reg Reimer, "Report on Interviews with Several Former Evangelical Church of Vietnam Leaders–June 1976," quoted in Martin, *Evaluation,* 124.

An additional layer impacting American responses to the Vietnam War was the sea change of American culture that rolled into the United States in the sixties and seventies. Some Mennonites remained committed to a way of living anchored in the traditions that had shaped them in past generations. Others became allied more with an American Evangelicalism. For many Mennonites, an evangelical Christian faith meant living as disciples of Jesus, calling others to faith and good works. This included finding a public voice to speak against the violence of the militarism, racism, and materialism.

Mennonite missionaries and MCC personnel came to realize that being Americans in Vietnam during this era held political implications that compelled us to speak out for peace and justice. We recognized that as committed citizens of God's eternal kingdom we had both an opportunity and responsibility to address societal issues when people were being harmed. We viewed Jesus responding to the critical needs of the people he met and saw that his call to love was paramount. Persons emerged out of the Vietnam-era crucible giving leadership to various ministries nationally and internationally: they networked and lobbied in Washington, DC, and at the United Nations; worked with Christian Peacemaker Teams; joined restorative justice programs; cleared landmines; and served in pastoral ministries.

From our time in Vietnam we learned that a church faithful in missions will want to adequately prepare messengers with a clear understanding of and commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ so that they can take that commitment into whatever social and political environment they go. In an era of American dominance throughout the world, the American Mennonite church does not need to declare a moratorium on missions. To the contrary, there are many examples today of multiethnic international teams proclaiming the Good News of Jesus. As with the Mennonite missionaries in Vietnam, this frequently involves partnering with Christians in their local communities, where the mission could well include speaking to "the principalities and powers" that oppose the gospel's call to love, justice, and peace.[97]

97 The Vietnam Mennonite Church is itself a good example of mission, including in its partnerships with MCC (until 2021) and Eastern Mennonite Missions (ongoing since 1997). See Luke Martin, Nguyen Quang Trung, Nguyen Thanh Tam, and Nguyen Thi Tam, "The Mennonite Church in Vietnam," in *Churches Engage Asian Tradition*, eds. John A. Lapp and C. Arnold Snyder (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2011), 315–36.

Addendum:
Letter from Vietnam to American Christians

December 1967
Dear American Christians:

We, the Mennonite missionaries in Vietnam, have been engaged in church and service programs in the Saigon area since 1957. In recent years we have seen the suffering of the Vietnamese people increase incredibly. As Christians, we too feel compelled to declare our concern for the moral issues involved in our country's action here.

It is not our aim to speak as political commentators or final authorities. Even statistics often seem misleading in this divided, confused situation. We wish rather to share our impressions gathered from what we have seen and heard while working with Vietnamese people. For we sense that American Christians are not aware of the feelings and dilemma of the general population here.

The Nature of the Conflict

Perhaps the most crucial issue lies in understanding the nature of this struggle. To speak of supporting a free, independent people in their fight against external communist aggression does not describe the conflict we sense. The more we learn of its historical development and social dimensions, the more troubled we become with this assumption.

A century of Western colonialism, an eight-year battle for independence, a temporary partition of the country, a national election never permitted: these are but a few of the historical facts which lie in the background. From their perspective it is possible for the other side to feel they are fighting a second time for what they won from the French, but were denied through a treaty which was never carried out.

Another decisive factor is social reform for the peasant people, the 80 percent who have the least but suffer the most. They know that many who now are supporting U.S. policy also sided with the French earlier in the war. They associate the Saigon government with maintaining aristocratic and Western interest. And the United States is viewed as preserving the privileged minorities who attract little support.

Thus despite our government's stated intentions, most Vietnamese apparently see America as only replacing France; the feeling of being used still pervades their life and spirit. The growing presence and power of foreigners once more causes the spirit of nationalism to burn brighter among the opposition elements. Even many who earlier favored America's assistance are now fearful of domination and destruction, feeling the "medicine" is worse than the "disease."

The Means to the End

But all these basic issues become overshadowed by the war itself and the way it is being conducted. Our leaders acknowledge that the key to victory is winning the loyalty of the country people; yet most of America's energy and resources is expended in massive destruction of their life, property, and social order. We believe that such primary reliance on military force is insuring defeat of the goals being sought.

It is obvious to the Vietnamese that U.S. and Allied forces are causing most of the devastation and disruption. This side has thousands of planes plus warship, tanks, etc., while the VC have none of these. Even most Americans have seen and heard enough of forced evacuations, bombed villages, defoliated fields, burned people, prostitution, inflation, corruption, etc., to sense the cumulative impact of all this in a country more populous than California yet not half as large. As a Vietnamese friend summarized it: "Vietnam is dying."

We do not condone the atrocities and terror of the other side. But can these acts justify a multiplication of them many times over by the Western forces? For three years the U.S. military has capitalized on its overwhelming, superior firepower to destroy guerilla fighters living among the people. Yet the most apparent result—besides the dead and maimed—is increasing hostility and resistance. As fast as they are killed, others rise up in their places. Victory for our leaders seems dependent on killing off enough people to crush all opposition.

According to the Saigon government, nearly one-fourth of the South Vietnamese people have been uprooted, many of them forced into inhumane existence. While this removes their support from the guerrillas and creates convenient free-bombing zones, it also is a mortal blow to the whole society. For today millions of Vietnamese are dependent on American handouts even for their daily rice. The assumption that one can build while destroying the very structure he must build upon appears fatal.

The Impact on Our World

We are also concerned because the country people being disregarded here represent the tragic plight of many Asians. What are the 250 million people of India who live in breadlines on four dollars a month concluding about America's concern? Our nation's expenditure of billions of dollars and thousands of young lives for destructive purposes will be judged in light of such appalling need. They are asking for justice and progress; we send troops and bombers. To whom will they turn?

Moreover, the world gets the impression that the Christians' God is behind our country's action in Vietnam. They see pictures of church leaders and chaplains with the U.S. troops and hear that our president prays to God to bless

"our pilots" on their missions of destruction. Since we are generally regarded as a Christian nation, Christianity itself is entangled in America's military ventures and political policies.

This is a call to all Christians to become aware of the image being given to our faith. We sense a continuing rejection of this religion of the wealthy, white, warring West, for which we all bear responsibility. We fear that nations may close their doors and multitudes will be deaf to God's call because of the American Christians' participation in and support of this war.

Conclusion

In light of these serious offenses against social justice, human life, and the Christian faith, we therefore plead for:

- A true consideration for the interests and needs of the Vietnamese majority.
- A change of heart which will not only admit but also accept the consequences of past failures and mistakes against these people.
- A change of policy and tactics which will show [the Vietnamese] that our primary concern is for their own well-being, self-respect and independence.
- A tolerant spirit which would not force others to line up with us, but rather seek to understand their feelings and views.
- A fresh demonstration of our confession that in Christ there is no East or West.

Signed: James K. Stauffer, Everett G. Metzler, Luke S. Martin, James E. Metzler, Don M. Sensenig, S. Luke Beidler

Originally published by the Committee of Concern on Vietnam, Harrisonburg, VA, December 1967.

New Day

h. j. Recinos

on this long-awaited
day we greeted the
sun eager to tell it
the different story
we carried like an
overburdening cross
the length of these four
years. we woke today
full of prayer, breathing
hope, weeping for the
the missing and catching
the fierce shouts of history
remade though dark hate
still looms in the air until
together we bring it to its
knees to beg forgiveness.
today, after a threatening
storm, we watched the
celebration, the stories
great women bring to
keep the nation whole,

Harold Recinos is Professor of Church and Society at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University (Dallas, TX). As a cultural anthropologist, he specializes in work dealing with undocumented Central American migrants and the Salvadoran diaspora. He has published numerous articles and chapters in collections and has authored twenty books, including fourteen collections of poetry. His most recent poetry collections are Wading in the River *(Resource Publications, 2021) and* After Dark *(Resource Publications, 2021).* Cornered by the Dark *will appear in November with Iron Pen, an imprint of Paraclete Press.*

the dreams that loathed
human beings made when
conquered, dispossessed,
put in chains, beaten, lynched
and at last so free. today,
hatred could not find a place
in the heart of the nation's
second Catholic president,
Dixiecrat politicians were out
of lies, and blue eyes were
removed from the flag to
have it wave the colors that
sweep across mountains, are
in every valley, and stretch
from sea to sea. today, we
took the first step toward
truth and removed masks
of grief to begin the long
walk to heal a broken nation,
hold the wicked accountable,
and claim the dream that keeps
us struggling to make a more
perfect union, again.

Book Reviews

Review Essay:
The Enduring Protest of Christian Socialisms:

Vaneesa Cook, *Spiritual Socialists: Religion and the American Left*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2019. 272 pp. $49.95. ISBN: 9780812251654.

Philip Turner, *Christian Socialism: The Promise of an Almost Forgotten Tradition*, Cascade, Eugene, Oregon, 2021. 236 pp. $29.00. ISBN: 9781725259409.

Roland Boer, *Red Theology: On the Christian Communist Tradition*, Haymarket, Chicago, Illinois, 2020. 294 pp. $19.60. ISBN: 9781642593723.

Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, 3rd ed., University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2021. 496 pp. $29.95. ISBN: 978-1-4696-6372-2.

Socialism is having a moment in the West. To be sure, that moment is shared along with a number of movements protesting the present social, political, and economic order. The rising polarization of social movements is contributing to a haze of understanding around just what is meant by the term socialism within this milieu. If you listened to Fox News or various alt-right media outlets, you would understand that a vote for Joe Biden was a vote for socialism. Left-leaning activists and academics, on the other hand, were trying to clarify that Biden was simply an extension of the capitalist status quo.

Churches have also taken sides. Duke sociologist Mark Chaves notes that churches have become more explicitly political since 1998, with left-leaning churches showing dramatic increases since 2012.[1] Recently, many of the most active political expressions have included explicitly Christian expressions, whether marching on Capitol Hill on January 6 or in the streets supporting Justice for Black Lives Matter.

A number of recent publications have attempted to shed some light on the relationship between Christianity and socialism, demonstrating a long and diverse history of engagement. I will briefly summarize three such books, saving

1 Eric Ferreri, "In Trump Era, More Progressive Churches Get Politically Active," Duke Today, September 15, 2020, accessed April 19, 2021, https://today.duke.edu/2020/09/trump-era-more-progressive-churches-get-politically-active.

a fourth—the one with the least religious focus, *Black Marxism*—for the end. What we find in these sources is diversity, not only in understanding socialism between the right and left wings of contemporary politics but also *within* expressions advocating for socialism. One common strand within that diversity, whether embracing or denouncing socialism, is an acknowledgment that socialism stands as some form of protest over the present state of the world.

Of the four books reviewed here, *Spiritual Socialists* by Vaneesa Cook and *Christian Socialism* by Philip Turner are the most tightly focused in terms of time and place. *Christian Socialism* names an identified movement in England that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, while "spiritual socialists" is a term Cook gives to a group of individuals in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century. These movements filled the space between left-leaning liberalism, on the one side, that focused on individual rights as well as the belief in incremental, even inevitable, progress and, on the other side, the more radically oriented Marxists, who sought revolutionary overthrow of economic and political structures.

These works reflected clear divergences in both understanding and focus of study. On the American side, this ranged from distrust of political institutions, as seen in Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker movement, right up to the "Kingdom" politics (and policies) of the eventual vice president of the United States Henry Wallace. For Cook, a common core can be found in the fundamental commitment to change in individual lives and the belief that from this change small seeds of the Kingdom could grow. So while spiritual socialists might have used laws and policies to address what they considered to be a social problem, they did not understand the laws and policies as ends in themselves; for them, it was important to understand God's Kingdom as *separate* from specific political forms. The Christian Socialists of England were mostly ministers and academics who focused on matters of moral regeneration and social duties instead of focusing on institutional changes in law or economics. Many of them explicitly rejected support of state socialism. For them, moral persuasion and education served as the primary agents of change and formation through the activity of the church. Common to both movements was a sort of idealism that believed the church could express its values outside the influence of existing social structures. That is, the church, either in thought or deed, needed to maintain clear boundaries from that of the world and its structures.

This tight and focused picture of socialism and Christianity in England and America at the turn of the twentieth century stands in contrast to Roland Boer's sprawling account of what he calls the Christian Communist Tradition. In *Red Theology*, Boer begins with the *locus classicus* of the tradition being found in the call to have all things in common as recorded in the book of Acts. To be clear, Boer is not claiming an exhaustive account of this tradition. He acknowledges

that various times and places have been well documented elsewhere, such as the liberation theology and politics of many Latin American church movements.

After addressing aspects of the Apostle Paul's political theology, Boer spends most of his time on the period of the Reformation to the present day. He speaks to two major themes in the Christian Communist Tradition: (1) the common critique and protest of the state of the world and (2) the political ambivalence within the biblical and theological tradition through which runs various forms of protest. This ambivalence, he states, could lead groups to communal escapism or revolutionary violence. Here Boer maintains that the Bible does not definitively answer the question of politics or protest but rather contains fragments and gestures of various forms and expressions regarding such. He traces the impulse of Acts 2 and 4 through monastics, revolutionaries, and reformers who all had their own way of temporarily resolving the political ambiguities and contradictions of the Christian tradition. Moving into the modern period, Boer takes seriously the theological convergences and divergences of Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels, as well as the Christian influences at the margins of the Russian Revolution.

What is most interesting about these three books is how each charts its particular understanding of Christian-inflected socialism into the present. *Christian Socialism* affirms the church's call to refrain from directly engaging matters of social policy and politics and to focus instead on the work of cultivating social ideals rooted in understanding oneself in need of grace and therefore ill-equipped to bestow salvation to self and others—instead, viewing salvation as a gift that can only be given by God. (It should be noted that Boer's notion of grace actually *enhances* one's freedom to engage politically). Turner concludes with sustained attention on British theologian John Milbank, who advocates for a virtue ethics that relies on transcendence outside the all-encompassing pressures of our current socioeconomic forces. Milbank, while offering practical critiques of contemporary society and some outlines of potential policy changes, reaffirms that, in the end, "common good" is a gift of the church still to come and so one must faithfully wait and cultivate virtues in the meantime.

Spiritual Socialists ends with a focus on the role of race in America in the past fifty years, in the midst of individual minority groups gaining political power through self-identification with movements such as the Black Panther Party or the American Indian Movement. Through the figures of Pauli Murray and Cornel West, Cook offers the image of spiritual socialists attempting to transcend theologians such as James Cone, whose agenda was felt to be "too particularist and too much about power." In line with Turner's account, Cook concludes by clarifying the legacy of spiritual socialism as a grassroots vision of the Kingdom of God that must grow *up* rather than be enforced from the top down.

In stark contrast, Boer concludes *Red Theology* with a tour of Asia—namely, China and Korea. In these final chapters, he offers a rare, and likely controversial, look at how Christianity came to the East and the political consequences of this expansion, such as the simple translation of the name of God into the vernacular causing a confrontation with the Chinese dynasty. During the Taiping revolution, the biblical tenets of material distribution and equality became a source for organizing society. In the twentieth century, several Chinese Christians continued to develop revolutionary models from their understanding of Jesus and the gospel. These writers did not abandon the "spiritual" element but understood that the spirituality of Christianity inevitably leads to revolution in the face of imperial violence and injustice.

In the context of North Korea (DPRK, Democratic People's Republic of Korea), Boer identifies the relationship between state socialism and the church in the wake of the Korean war—a period in which Christians tended to focus their energy on rebuilding the nation as opposed to fixing bombed churches. This relationship with the state has continued into the present, with active work toward Korean unification. Boer concludes with the question of what would happen if Christian communism *actually* gained power. Forcefully pushing past Turner and Cook, he explores the manner in which one must think beyond both cultivating virtues and performing critique, by acknowledging that after the Exodus the Israelites needed to understand what it was to live in the land. Here Boer opens the possibilities of collaboration as seen between China and Korea, as well as possible models that were explored during the German Democratic Republic in East Germany.

To summarize, Turner and Cook outline traditions that used the message of the gospel to protest the material, political, and economic realities of their time and place. Both traditions set boundaries with respect to their understanding of Christianity because *to engage too closely* in their protest would, in their view, threaten to compromise or contaminate the gospel. Boer is less hesitant in this regard as he tries to interpret the theology of existing historic events while taking seriously theology and political power in the present. He is interested not in preserving orthodoxy but in creating openings for new alliances. Here, he relays a mess of expressions carrying the communist impulse from monastic to revolutionary to collaborative.

At this point, I suggest a fourth recent publication—Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism*, originally published in 1983 then revised and updated as a third edition in 2021. Subtitled *The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, the book charts the lives of Africans since their arrival in the Americas, describing their responses to conditions of slavery and its afterlife. Robinson rigorously denies that either Europe or Christianity served a key role in the formation of this unique tradition. Rather, he describes the tradition as evolving from the "accretion, over generations, of collective intelligence gathered from struggle."

Beginning with a critique of European radicalism and its incipient racism, Robinson documents the erasure of African history in Western consciousness. He then undertakes an archaeology of the Black Radical Tradition, beginning with the expressions of early maroon communities, who had escaped from slavery, then moving to the full-scale revolution in Haiti. Continuing to excavate, Robinson describes experiments in nationalism and internationalism in the United States and then shifts to a more detailed engagement with three key figures of the twentieth century: W. E. B. Du Bois, C. L. R James, and Richard Wright.

In Robinson's account of the Black Radical Tradition, there is no question of preserving canonical purity or of questioning in principle what it would mean to be in power. One simply worked and acted and thought from where one was. Everything of value was formed, tested, and ultimately forged in the struggle—including full-scale victories, as in Haiti, and various collaborations with communism and socialism as well as experiments with nationalism and internationalism.

Black Marxism is duly recognized for demonstrating both to the West and to the Western church how deeply race is implicated in the formation of the modern world. *Black Marxism* also stands on its own merit as an example of navigating history, theory, power, and practice, with the knowledge that doing so involves neither purity nor neutrality. Robin D. G. Kelley in his preface to the third edition lists scores of modern Black movements and concludes that "all these movements and thinkers have, at one time or another, engaged, embraced, or were influenced by Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism*." This accretion of knowledge was at work on plantations as well as in escape and rebellion, and is now also present through organizing on the streets. It worked in the church and outside of it. It explored well-being within the capitalism of America, traveled to Russia to explore communism, and figured its own plans along the way. Because of the questions of survival that pressed daily, this tradition was never afforded the luxury of asking questions of purity.

In this way, *Black Marxism* and the Black Radical Tradition remain a clarion call to the church in how it understands its relation to the world. If most iterations of socialism are ultimately a form of protest, then they would do well to learn from *Black Marxism* specifically and the Radical Black Tradition in general. This tradition rejects the orientation of the Christian Socialists that eschew struggle as a direct form of knowledge and formation. Similarly it challenges spiritual socialists in their general avoidance of particular forms of power that arise at sites of resistance, as well as their avoidance of expressions such as the Black Panthers or even the work of James Cone. Finally, there is some convergence with Boer's own work of recovering and articulating the Christian communist tradition as he allows struggle and ambivalence to be necessary parts of on-the-ground knowledge and organization.

For Boer the challenge from Robinson is more straightforward: *Black Marxism* demands that race be understood as central to any conversation around economics and politics. (Nowhere does Boer address the issue of race as it relates to either Christianity or communism.) Robinson notes that Lenin did take the Black population in America seriously as an important group to add to the movement of communism. Robinson is also clear, however, that Black leaders began to realize that a Marxist response to present conditions always fell short in addressing the role race played in forming the world order. With Richard Wright there is a level clarity in the Black Radical Tradition understanding "that it was necessary that Blacks transform the Marxist critique into an expression of their own emergence as a negation of Western capitalism." (299) The reality of being Black became inseparable from the response to capitalism. It is no longer excusable, if it ever was, to omit an analysis of or grounding in race related to economic and political structures.

Overviewing these recent interventions is the question of how the church should engage present issues of race, politics, and economics. Even *within* the divisive and often dismissed category of socialism, the church is far from being uniform in agreement. This is important to understand as churches, particularly left-leaning ones, increasingly engage in various forms of protest within the political realm. Boer's assertion of the fundamental ambivalence of Christian political theology is important here. There is no inspired or self-evident path. You can find precedent or justification for nearly any political form, whether from the Bible or church history. Rather than lament this, we can take our cue from the Apostle Paul's exhortation to "judge for yourselves" (1 Cor 11:13). I would argue that this sort of material responsibility is reflected in the Black Radical Tradition and is precisely what the church needs.

Common to all varieties of Christian socialism is a critique and protest of the world as it is. And that protest must include a thoroughgoing protest of the church's own supremacist legacy,[2] which is still lived out implicitly or explicitly by many of the Christian socialisms. Christian supremacy must be traced back to the very first formations of the church. In its political ambivalence, neither the Bible nor the gospel necessarily lead to the supremacist legacy of the church, but such a legacy can indeed be traced to the church's earliest formation. In

2 Amaryah Shaye Armstrong notes in her theological work on Cedric Robinson that when the Christian Left tries to claim a progressive agenda as the heart of the gospel there remains a risk of "erasing both the history of Christian order as the maintenance of racial order, and the black radical work that went into making black life theologically meaningful, valuable, and a source of theological knowledge." Armstrong, "Christian Order and Racial Order: What Cedric Robinson Can Teach Us Today," *The Bias Magazine: The Voice of the Christian Left*, June 3, 2020, accessed August 31, 2021, https://christiansocialism.com/cedric-robinson-racial-order-christianity-socialism/.

the same way that Robinson's pursuit of race carried him to the formations of Western modernity, so too must Christians pursue their protest as deep as the logic carries them.

To critique and protest the world (a deeply biblical and Anabaptist posture) means reckoning with the world the church has had a critical role in birthing. We can no longer assume in advance we will know what Good News will look and sound like other than witnessing its fruit among those who have been abused by the world. Many Christian socialist traditions, however, continue to preserve some notion of Christian purity or supremacy within their theological understandings and expressions. The church has still not learned to take its cue from expressions like the Black Radical Tradition—a tradition that never understood itself outside the existing powers of the world but rather learned to fashion a message of protest in the struggle and then was willing to continue learning. It is well past time to discard supremacist theology and take our cue instead from the Black Radical Tradition.

The church does not need to fear contaminating or misrepresenting the gospel for Christ. Socialism is not a compromise of the gospel, but neither is it self-evidently equated with the gospel. Socialism reflects an impulse of protesting a world that refuses to share and that punishes with poverty. Socialism becomes part of the gospel—it becomes Good News—when it meets Christ in the places of celebration and the struggle for another way.

David CL Driedger *is Associate Minister of First Mennonite Church of Winnipeg.*

Aaron Griffith, *God's Law and Order: The Politics of Punishment in Evangelical America*, Harvard University Press, Boston, 2020. 335 pp. $35.00. ISBN: 9780674238787.

At the crux of *God's Law and Order*, author Aaron Griffith narrates "a massive change in the evangelical approach to the crime issue" (95). Billy Graham looms large in Griffith's account. While Graham's early engagement with prisons emphasized individual conversion as the Christian response to crime, the 1960s facilitated a growing enthusiasm for the state's role in enforcing the law through policing and incarceration. In step with the emerging political stardom of J. Edgar Hoover, Barry Goldwater, and Richard Nixon, Graham and other evangelicals—including the National Association of Evangelicals—played a central role in the origins and expansion of "law and order" politics in the United States.

Griffith is familiar with evangelicalism. Like me, he was an undergraduate at Wheaton (Illinois) College, an evangelical institution where, also like me, in 2005 he attended a student chapel session that was host to Burl Cain, who was

then the warden at the Louisiana State Penitentiary. I remember being drawn to Cain's folksy storytelling and horrified at his Christian justification for serving as state's executioner for those condemned to death (to paraphrase: if the state's going to kill someone, it should be a Christian who does it). I was not then a Mennonite, but I credit Cain for stoking in me an increasing suspicion of Christian-sanctioned state violence that eventually drove me into the open arms of Anabaptism.

Cain frames Griffith's account of *The Politics of Punishment in Evangelical America*. He represents a contradiction in evangelical concerns about crime and punishment—concern for the victims of law-and-order politics, coupled with overwhelming support for the very system that renders people its victims. In stark terms, "[Cain] was the facilitator of the spread of the gospel even as he presided over the execution process, including the lethal injection of his brethren" (261). Cain aptly shares a name with the biblical Cain, who was also the willing agent of his own brethren's death. Griffith's style is understated, and he leaves the obvious question unasked: Can Cain's "gospel" really be called good news?

The unasked question haunts the pages of this book.

Griffith leaves no doubt about evangelicalism's troubling role in shaping the United States's punitive carceral system, even while he works hard to show the complexities of the story. On the one hand, there are people like Consuella York, an African American Baptist laywoman who ministered at Cook County Jail in the 1950s. York represents for Griffith a persistent evangelical impulse toward compassionate prison ministry. Tom Skinner, on the other hand, demonstrates the possibility of an evangelical systemic critique. Skinner, a Black evangelist from Harlem, leveled a prophetic challenge against the racism intrinsic to white evangelical attitudes toward law and order: "The police in the black community become nothing more than the occupational force present . . . for the purpose of maintaining the interests of white society" (146). Skinner preached to a young, mostly white evangelical audience in 1970 in my current hometown of Urbana, Illinois. He publicly challenged Billy Graham for his harmful views on matters of race and the law.

But for Griffith, it is perhaps Chuck Colson who best represents evangelicalism's capacity to bring together compassionate prison ministry (concern for the individual) and prison reform advocacy (systemic critique) under one tent. Colson, who was incarcerated for his role in the affairs of the Nixon administration, experienced firsthand the dehumanizing effects of a US prison. After his release, he founded Prison Fellowship ministry and organized political power for prison and criminal justice reform, a combination often lacking in evangelical circles.

While Griffith offers these examples to show diversity within evangelicalism's engagement with the criminal justice system, they also serve as exceptions to the evangelical rule. Indeed, their respective fates illustrate how little room white evangelicalism allows for dissent. According to Griffith's own narrative,

York is a marginal figure to begin with, Skinner was roundly dismissed for challenging white evangelical racism, and Colson eventually made accommodations to align with the power forming around Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. Colson's criminal justice reform agenda—including support for Anabaptist modes of restorative justice—got swallowed up by evangelicals' comfort "with America's capacity to mobilize violence" (247) and evangelicals' waging of cultural wars over things like gender, race, abortion, and the military.

Griffith's desire to show the complexity of the story sometimes conflicts with a more robust critique of the dominant impulses within white evangelicalism, leaving key questions unasked and unanswered: Why do white evangelicals today overwhelmingly support political movements that promote (carceral) punishment as society's best response to crime? Why do they presume that our society's definitions of crime are static and natural, rather than decisions to exercise particular modes of state control? Griffith insists that outcomes like these were "not a foregone conclusion" (95), yet that assessment belies his own data, which shows how critiques and alternative approaches were summarily ignored, rejected, or co-opted by the movement. Reading *God's Law and Order* left me asking whether evangelicalism is simply incompatible with a non-punitive (or even modestly less punitive), racially just approach to crime.

Those who follow this trajectory will find significant theological work to do. In the first chapter, for instance, Griffith mentions the history of lynching and its connection to "sacred concepts like sin and atonement" (20) but does not return to it in detail. The question remains: How might evangelicalism's commitment to penal substitution (not to mention its corresponding conversionist soteriology) undergird a theology of punishment? It's hard to reconcile Colson's advocacy for restorative justice with a doctrine of divine redemption that demands the punitive execution of a brown-skinned convicted criminal named Jesus.

A similar question could be asked about white evangelicalism's relationship to state power. Evangelicals past and present have invoked Romans 13 ("Let every person be subject to the governing authorities . . .") to justify harsh law enforcement, capital punishment, punitive sentencing, and the now-widespread use of incarceration in response to immigration, among other things. This appeal persistently avoids the reality of criminalization: crime is a fluid concept always being defined and redefined by the "governing authorities." Given Griffith's observations that white evangelicalism predictably sides with definitions of crime that protect white interests and disproportionately harm People of Color, we might conclude with Skinner that white evangelicalism is more concerned with "social control" than "preaching the gospel" (146).

In the end, Griffith paints a challenging portrait of the relationship between white evangelicalism and the state's mechanisms for punitive justice. With him, I would hope for an evangelical "conversion" on criminal justice, but I'm left

with the impression that white evangelicalism has little room for dissenting views on racism or state power, and I'm also left wondering why. Griffith's work may be best read alongside authors like Anthea Butler or Kelly Brown Douglas,[3] whose accounts of white evangelical thought, white supremacy, and justice can help make sense of the present moment.

Michael B. Crosby *pastors at First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana, Illinois.*

Elaine Enns and Ched Myers, *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization,* Cascade, Eugene, Oregon, 2021. 426 pp. $38.00. US ISBN: 978-1-7252-5535-7.

Healing Haunted Histories weaves together the stories of Indigenous peoples of North America with those of Russian Mennonites who now find themselves in these lands. It is a practical handbook for those on a journey of healing and reconciliation. While it has application for all settlers, it is especially relevant for those of Anabaptist ancestry.

The book is a combination of a family memoir, a decolonization workbook, and a critical theological analysis. In tracing her own ancestor's migration and settlement journeys, Elaine Enns explores histories of trauma and resilience in her family and in the wider Mennonite community. She treats these stories with tenderness and grace but does not let the Mennonite community off the hook: there is a tremendous response-ability among Mennonites to be taught by the experiences of trauma and persecution, and to use this learning to deepen relationships with Indigenous people. Mennonites must acknowledge and heal from their own painful past in order to not carry these wounds into their relationships with Indigenous people. Those who heal from their own experiences and from participation in colonization can begin to work in solidarity with First peoples. For Mennonites, reconciliation must involve a deep reckoning with the past and dealing with the haunted histories of Anabaptists before coming together in joint healing with First Nations peoples.

To organize the book, Enns and Myers have created a framework of Landlines, Bloodlines, and Songlines. Through the concept of *landlines*, the authors explore how experiences of displacement and settlement have shaped both Indigenous and Mennonite peoples. They follow this by looking at *bloodlines*—

3 See Anthea Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020); and Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* (New York: Orbis, 2015).

the social and generational factors that shape particular responses to trauma and assimilation. And they present a vision for how *songlines*—the cultural and spiritual gifts and traditions imbedded in both Mennonites and Indigenous peoples—help build resilience and create new narratives of hope and restored relationship.

In *Healing Haunted Histories*, I learned how Indigenous peoples and Mennonite Settlers have become interconnected. I grieved the ways that my own ancestors have unknowingly participated in colonization. For me this book was very helpful because it presented a clear structure and process for the work of decolonization in my life. As a descendant of Dutch and German Mennonites who settled in Russia and then on the Canadian Prairies, I gained a greater understanding of how to situate myself in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission processes currently underway in Canada. Settlers have come to Canada from many different places and contexts, and the journey that my Mennonite ancestors have taken to these lands requires a particular approach to racial reconciliation and healing. My faith distinctives also invite me to have a particular Anabaptist-flavored response to injustice, involving restorative solidarity.

I especially appreciated the theological interlude where Enns and Myers revisit the Gospel story from Luke 9, where Jesus sends out the twelve disciples on a "missions trip." The authors provide a fresh interpretation of this passage that emphasizes how the good news of the gospel heals, liberates, and restores. I learned from their remarkable re-telling of the story how Jesus's commissioning of the disciples contrasts with the concept of Manifest Destiny that characterized missions and colonization in North America. Enns and Myers highlight how Jesus specifically taught his disciples to enter a community as a humble guest, to share the gospel in a way that honors and elevates the customs of the host community, and to graciously leave the community untouched if it rejects the gospel message. I found myself wishing I had read the Luke 9 passage with this lens many years ago.

Healing Haunted Histories is an accessible book that provides useful tools for Mennonites who want to face the legacy of settler colonialism and to dismantle colonial relationships. The reader is warned: "A discipleship of decolonization is both demanding and liberating" (24). Enns and Myers have provided a thorough process for looking at both Mennonite history and the Mennonite present through a restorative justice model that gives hope for renewed relations.

Jen Kornelsen *lives in Winnipeg, Treaty 1 Territory, and studies theology with NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community. Jen finds a lot of life in her neighborhood house church, "Many Rooms" (Evangelical Mennonite Conference), in being outside, and in living creatively.*

Denise M. Nadeau, *Unsettling Spirit: A Journey into Decolonization*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2020, 348 pp. $39.95. ISBN: 978-0-2280-0157-7.

> *By an "unsettled spirit" I mean one that has to constantly re-examine its understanding and to revisit, reinterpret, and renew its relationship with the spirit world. . . . This has been . . . about how I understand, think, and live in the world with the earth.* (254–55)

Unsettling Spirit is an account of the author's journey into decolonization. Denise Nadeau's purpose in writing this book is to expose the ways in which the project of colonization has seeped into her very being, and then to offer insights about how to move into being a decolonized person. It is an honest, refreshing accounting of a complicated life.

Nadeau has organized her writing into five distinct "parts" through which she weaves the narrative of her own life experiences: (1) colonization's connections to Christianity; (2) white supremacy's impact on how settlers move through the world; (3) the need for settlers to understand their relationship to the past and to the land they are living on; (4) the gift of relationships with Indigenous peoples; and (5) a call to the liberating practice of "returning to the heart," where we can "move beyond judgement and division to see our essential oneness with all living beings" (257).

I was drawn to read Nadeau's book after participating in two events this past year. The first was the annual conference of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America-Bautistas por la Paz, at which the plenary speaker was Puerto Rican scholar Luis Rivera-Pagán. The conference pointed me to Rivera-Pagán's book *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas,*[4] which outlines the ways the church was complicit in the historic role of religion in conquest. Learning about this history deepened my desire to dissociate from the Christian tradition, especially the institutional church.

Nadeau recounts similar struggles throughout her journey with the Roman Catholic Church. Her attention to the ways in which evangelism perpetuates a colonizing mentality and practice is insightful and damning, but she chooses not to abandon the faith she was brought up with. Instead, she explores her faith in relationship to her work with Indigenous communities, where she is opened up to the reality that "God's spirit is present in all cultures—the spirit was at work in the world before Christ" (48). She also becomes keenly aware of the need for the work of missions in the Christian church to be about how to address colonization, the power imbalances inherent in church structures, and the harm the church has inflicted upon Indigenous peoples (50).

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4 Luis N. Rivera-Pagán, *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas* (Louisville: Westminster, 1992).

The second event I participated in this year was a book club initiated by Steve Heinrichs in which we read *Canada at a Crossroads: Boundaries, Bridges, and Laissez-Faire Racism in Indigenous-Settler Relations* by Jeffrey S. Denis.[5] This book unsettled me deeply as I have always believed that relationships and education could be our way out of the mess of deep injustice that is so present in Canadian society. The book is a sociological study that exposes the lie of the claims that are part of a "Canadian" sensibility—that we are somehow different from other colonizers. The only way out of the mess we are in is to deal with the racial inequality that is deeply imbedded in the White Supremacist state of Canada. The state's engagement in apologies and reconciliation statements while it continues to disrespect Indigenous law[6] exposes its true nature—colonial to the core.

A commitment to the Christian faith has been a part of me for over forty-five years, and I was looking for something to somehow keep me grounded in that faith. Something in me does not want to let go of that grounding, even though my deepening understanding of colonization has shaken that commitment. At the end of the book study on *Canada at a Crossroads*, I was given a copy of Nadeau's work, and it has renewed hope in me that my life has not been a bad joke. There is so much in Nadeau's story that I can identify with—her informed critique of colonialism and capitalism, her struggle with the white savior complex, and desire to understand where her people come from, to mention a few. I am grateful for her careful study, her thorough research, and her accessible writing style.

Nadeau ends the book with a discussion about the heart, drawing on her own experience with Indigenous ways of knowing, Judaism, Zen Buddhism, and somatic training, all of which refuse binary understandings of heart and mind and instead embrace an embodied understanding of the relational nature of all beings. I come away encouraged to continue finding "fellow travellers in many traditions who see that the way through is on the path that embraces the spirit dimensions of life" (261).

Teresa Diewert *is partner of Dave, mother of three, grandmother of seven, living on the unceded, traditional territory of the Kwantlen, Musqueam, Katzie, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, Qayqayt, and Kwikwetlem peoples (under the colonially imposed name of Surrey, British Columbia).*

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5 Jeffrey S. Denis, *Canada at a Crossroads: Boundaries, Bridges, and Laissez-Faire Racism in Indigenous-Settler Relations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020).

6 We witnessed this disrespect for Indigenous law last year when the Royal Canadian Mounted Police invaded unceded and sovereign Wet'suwet'en territory to make a path for a pipeline project.

Kent Roach, *Canadian Justice, Indigenous Injustice: The Gerald Stanley and Colten Boushie Case*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2019. 309 pp. $34.95. ISBN: 9780228000730.

In early 2020, when Joel Bernbaum, Yvette Nolan, and Lancelot Knight created *Reasonable Doubt*, a docu-drama that ran in Saskatoon's Persephone Theatre, the audiences were thrown into a maelstrom of emotion. The play's theme was an explanation of Indigenous relations in Saskatchewan in the wake of the Stanley-Boushie trial. Viewers left troubled and perplexed, with few answers but a profound insight into the two sides of justice: one for Indigenous peoples and one for Settlers.

Reasonable Doubt is, for the stage, what *Canadian Justice, Indigenous Injustice* is for the pen—an uncovering of the inequities in our midst. The author is Kent Roach, the Prichard-Wilson Chair in Law and Policy at the University of Toronto, a member of the Order of Canada, and author of seminal books on Canadian criminal justice. He does not pound out his message; instead, he tells us a story, whose words reveal and show that the Stanley-Boushie case is one hundred and fifty years in the making.

Will Brown has cleverly designed the cover jacket that shows the Battleford Courthouse divided down the middle—one side red and one side white—an ominous indication of what the book might be all about.

In August 2016, a twenty-two-year-old Cree man, Colten Boushie from the Red Pheasant Reserve, was shot dead by Gerald Stanley, a white farmer from nearby Biggar, Saskatchewan. In February 2018, an all-white jury in Battleford, Saskatchewan, acquitted Stanley of murder and manslaughter charges. The trial left Canadians bitterly divided.

So, what is *Canadian Justice, Indigenous Injustice* all about? It is not a commentary or an opinion piece. It is instead a search, a huge effort to discover why the results of the Stanley-Boushie trial turned out as they did. The audience Roach is writing for would include someone like me with not a lick of knowledge of law but with a desire to understand what Canadian justice is all about when it relates to Indigenous peoples. The 300-page search is done with utmost care that includes 800 footnotes and a full index that gives any critical reader confidence that the author is telling a valid story. Roach is a scholar, but his genius is that he understands how important it is to tell a story. He allows the dozens of cases he cites to be the links that chain one event to the next. And when the book is finished, there is a solid chain. Indeed, the book's ten chapters are arranged with events that begin with the signing of Treaty 6 (1876) and end with the aftermath of the 2018 trial.

Roach's first link establishes that Treaty 6, signed in 1876, was flawed with fundamental translation difficulties and cultural misunderstandings. Big Bear wanted a treaty "that would make our hearts glad" (19), and Alexander Morris

was absorbed with "the Queen's Law that punishes murder with death" (19). The differences would soon become apparent. The Battleford court trial in 1885, just a kilometer from where the Boushie-Stanley trial was held, convicted eight Indigenous men of insurrection, denying them legal counsel and translation services in the process. They were hanged and their bodies not returned to their families but buried in a secret place. *The White Man Governs* (34) principle would soon become an established pattern. In both the Battleford 8 trial and the Regina Riel trial, all jurors were white.

One hundred thirty-three years later, another all-white jury would acquit a white man of murder and manslaughter. Colten Boushie and his friends entered the Stanley farm on August 9, 2016, with the intent to steal a vehicle. In the bizarre events that followed, Gerald Stanley shot Boushie in the head with a handgun, killing him. Eighteen months later, when the trial would take place in Battleford, a number of key events had already occurred there. Roach carefully examines the method of jury selection, particularly the practice of *peremptory challenge*, whereby the prosecutor and the defense can challenge jurors. Stanley's defense team objected to thirteen jurors. The end result was that an all-white jury was selected that would determine whether a white farmer with a stash of guns in his possession would be found guilty of second-degree murder or manslaughter.

Roach shows us with repeated examples that *peremptory challenges* have been used that resulted in all-white juries. In those cases, the white defendants were acquitted. Roach suggests the results are not *wrongful convictions* but rather *wrongful acquittals*.

If jury selection was a controversial issue, then a second sticky issue was the *hang-fire* phenomenon that defense lawyer, Scott Spencer, took up. It is the argument that, in rare cases, a gun does not fire immediately when the trigger is pulled. While there are cases where a gun has fired with a half-second delay, Stanley maintained that his gun fired thirty seconds later, something he claimed resulted in the accidental killing of Boushie. The jury may have been convinced.

Chief Justice Martel Popescul, who presided over the trial, banned television coverage in order to reduce tensions. But his banning of the visible eagle feather that the Boushie family brought to the court created doubt about bias. Belinda Jackson, Colten Boushie's friend, was the only witness to the actual shooting. When she could not recall if one shot or two shots were fired, her testimony was suspect. Roach cites other trials where credibility of Indigenous persons is considered suspect.

Premier Wall made initial calls for anti-racial biases, and his successor, Premier Moe, followed suit. But the mood of rural Saskatchewan farmers, with their belief that guns protect against theft and robbery (especially before the RCMP arrive), was, and is, strong. Roach calls it a "phantom self-defense argu-

ment" (168) "that might lead to a belief that a farmer's farm property trumps a thief's life" (168).

Following Stanley's acquittal, Roach asks, "Can we do better?" Prime Minister Trudeau introduced Bill C-75, legislation that banned *peremptory challenges*. But fundamentally, Roach concludes that until justice is served and outcomes like that of the Boushie-Colten case are an aberration and not a run-of-the-mill occurrence, there will be *Indigenous injustice*.

I attended the lecture at the University of Saskatchewan in 2019 when Roach spoke about the complexities of law and politics. He argued that it takes good legal minds to do many things. But he said only courageous politicians can effect change that will result in the removal of systemic bias in the legal system. I went away wondering when those courageous messianic politicians would arrive. Then I reflected that ordinary people like me can empower young politicians who will someday rise to become courageous game changers.

Jake Buhler *was a school principal for fifteen years before serving with Mennonite Central Committee for six years managing Indochinese refugee programs in Thailand. He then worked for the Canadian Government in Vietnam and Thailand on poverty alleviation programs for fifteen years. He and his wife, Louise Wiebe Buhler, have two grown daughters. Jake currently lives in Saskatoon, is a member of Osler (Saskatchewan) Mennonite, and is active in all things Mennonite.*

Harold R. Johnson, *Peace and Good Order: The Case for Indigenous Justice in Canada*, Random House, Toronto, 2019. 160 pp. $24.75. ISBN: 978-0771048722.

First of all, let it be clear that I have not attended Harvard Law School. And I have never studied law, except for the book of Leviticus. I *have* been in prison on several occasions—as a visitor/advocate. And I have attended court on many occasions—accompanying persons who requested my support. Those cases ranged from minor theft to traffic charges to murder and rape. I have been chairperson of the board of a Legal Aid Society, chairperson of the provincial association of Legal Aid Boards, and a member of the provincial Legal Aid Commission. I was expelled from the commission on a technical matter: I reported that a certain resolution I presented to the commission was "unanimous" rather than "carried." These experiences give me some insight into our "justice" system.

From my experience, Harold Johnson is not exaggerating in his assessment of Canadian law and the justice system and how it is failing Indigenous peoples. I have seen police officers, police chiefs, defense lawyers, prosecutors, and, yes, even judges, at their very worst. I have also seen some at their very best. I once had a judge turn to me and ask: "Reverend Neufeld, what do you think I should

do in this matter?" I learned that law and Canadian justice are not synonymous with truth. It is from this background that I venture to make a few comments on this book.

First, speaking of backgrounds, author Harold Johnson's is impressive. He moves from the trapline to a uranium mine, to university, to law school, and finally to Harvard—the top of the law ladder—to the courts as a lawyer, and back to the trapline. Johnson has seen a lot. And I am inclined to agree with his assessment that if Indigenous peoples are to experience and practice "Peace and Good Order," a different path from the current "justice" system must be chosen. Johnson argues that the treaties—those solemn covenants made between Indigenous peoples and the Crown—provide justification for it. Holding the promises of the past, he clearly articulates that legal path forward. Whether that path can be negotiated is another matter.

Indigenous persons in Canada are ten times more likely than a white person to be shot and killed by a police officer. Ten times. I believe, with Johnson, that we need fewer police and more trauma councilors. In ever so many situations, four to six uniformed, heavily armed officers in black is not a solution. In fact, it creates a bigger problem. We've known this for decades. Sixty years ago I was an officer serving under the child welfare act. I remember visiting a family where a psychotic parent posed a threat to security. I asked an unarmed plainclothes detective to accompany me. He was trained to deal with situations like that and was not an immediate visual threat.

For Johnson, the shooting of twenty-two-year-old Colton Boushie (Biggar, Saskatchewan) and murder of fifteen-year-old Tina Fontaine (Winnipeg, Manitoba) represent the great inadequacy of the Canadian "justice" system. The question remains, Can the world wait for us to slowly scratch away at "improving" our system, or is a radically different culture of justice needed? For Johnson, it's the latter. The Indigenous community can establish their own jurisdiction in the matter of law. And they must.

The radical adversarial posture of the current legal system—of both prosecution and defense—distorts the scene from the very beginning of any judicial procedure. The judge is mandated to rule on the basis of the evidence presented. In practice, that often means that the lawyer exercising the greatest creativity with the facts wins. Perhaps that's why Johnson declares so boldly: "I feel ashamed of [my] time involved with the justice system," and "I view my time as a defence lawyer as a failure."

I agree with Johnson that the current administration of justice is not a solution. It is part of the problem. And we need to address it, with urgency, because the Indigenous community suffers tremendously under its oppressive weight. Indigenous women, for example, now account for 42 percent of women in federal custody. Forty-two percent. (Indigenous people only comprise 4 to 5 percent of the total population in Canada.) This needs to change. And that change

will benefit not only Indigenous peoples but also the many non-Indigenous peoples who are hurt by the systemic problems within our legal system.

For Johnson, our prime focus should be on healing and reconciliation, not punishment. I think many of us in the Peace Church would agree. We need to challenge lawyers and judges in our midst to dare to speak out in an effort to move from punishment via incarceration to something that seeks to restore loving behavior to those who have "fallen short." As a church, we should become more informed on justice matters and then humbly seek to become an agent for radical change, following all those change-agents—Indigenous, black, yellow, and white—who are leading such critical efforts even now.

David Neufeld *has a degree in theology, not law. A former pastor, David served in Leamington and Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, and in North Battleford, Herschel, Fiske, and Aberdeen, Saskatchewan. Whether in Vietnam or India with Mennonite Central Committee or in Canada, he has always been active in community development. Now eighty-two years of age and retired, David lives with his wife, Sue, at Bethany Manor in Saskatoon, where he occasionally gets to preach to other old people who generally live above the law.*

Juan Francisco Martínez and Jamie Pitts, *What Is God's Mission in the World and How Do We Join It?* Herald, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 2021. 87 pp. $12.99. ISBN: 978-1-5138-0566-5.

My husband, Todd, and I served in China with Mennonite Church Canada International Witness. When we were back in North America speaking in churches we noticed two distinct groups of people within the congregations we visited: One group was so excited to see us; they had been praying and giving generously for the ministry in China, and they held us up on a completely undeserved pedestal. The other group either skipped church the Sunday we spoke or directly confronted us to explain that mission work is colonial and evil. We often wondered if either group really understood what we were actually doing, or even what "mission work" meant.

Martínez and Pitts have a message for both of these groups and for the entire church: "It is not that the church has a mission, but that God's mission has a church. . . . God invites us to be part of the task" (40). This ambitious addition to the series *The Jesus Way: Small Books of Radical Faith* seeks to identify the incarnational mission of God in Jesus, outline the history of mission, and address key issues in mission. It goes in-depth on two main themes—incarnational mission and the church as missional community.

In the book *Calloused Hands, Courageous Souls*, Robert J. Suderman says that the Good News cannot be Good if it doesn't fit into all cultures in all plac-

es of the world, and it cannot be News if it doesn't challenge all cultures in all places of the world.[7] Martínez and Pitts point out that "because humans both reflect the fact that we are God's creation and are harmed by sin, our cultures and our churches also reflect both" (48). For them it follows that "there is no Christian culture or Christian nation" (48) and that "incarnational missionaries live in this tension between adaptation and confrontation" (51).

In our first orientation on our way to China in 1991, the late Atlee Beechy, Professor Emeritus of Goshen College, said, "When you get to China, take off your shoes. You are standing on holy ground." He made it very clear to us that God had been at work in China long before we would arrive there and God's work would continue long after we left. Our job was to see what God was doing and be signposts to God's work. Martínez and Pitts add to this understanding, saying that as signposts we make visible what God is doing in the world through "communities of intentional invitation where mission is a natural part of who we are and how we understand our reason for existence in the world" (43).

For Martínez and Pitts, the church is mission: "God's mission is at the core of what it means to be a community of believers in Jesus Christ" (41). This link between God's mission and our vision of what it means to be church is not new. I am reminded of Anicka Fast's 2016 article in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, "The Earth Is the Lord's: Anabaptist Mission as Boundary-Crossing Global Ecclesiology." Fast writes:

> An older generation of North American Mennonite mission scholars and historians, younger voices speaking largely from within a Mennonite World Conference context, and a variety of thinkers from the Global South are all richly expressing the key Anabaptist conviction that ecclesiology and missiology are essentially connected.[8]

This is an energizing view of what it means to be a church! Consider how Emmanuel Katongole—a Ugandan Catholic priest and professor at the University of Notre Dame—understands the implications of this vision: "The goal of mission is not primarily aid (humanitarian assistance); it's not even partnership. We engage in mission to establish friendships that lead to the formation of a new people in the world."[9]

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7 Robert J. Suderman, *Calloused Hands, Courageous Souls: Holistic Spirituality of Development and Mission* (Moravia: World Vision, 1998), 58.

8 Anicka Fast, "The Earth Is the Lord's: Anabaptist Mission as Boundary-Crossing Global Ecclesiology," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 90, no. 3 (July 2016): 357.

9 Emmanuel Katongole as quoted in Fast, "The Earth Is the Lord's," 371.

Friendships and the Formation of a People

The goal is not for mission to build the church but for the church to form a new creation. Mission is integral to that purpose as it is formational to the community that engages in it.

It is on this point that I would have been interested to hear more from the authors. In what way does mission change the church? What happens within individuals, congregations, and larger church bodies as they seek to participate in God's mission? Mutual transformation takes place when deeper understandings about what it means to follow Jesus arise through interaction with the other. There is something holy about the space where we meet together from differing cultures and backgrounds. How is this important in the formation of the new creation?

During a recent online conversation between the Colombian Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church Canada, Pastor Patricia Rosero from the Iglesia Cristiana Menonita Santa Marta (Usme, Cundinamarca) said, "The aspects of our faith that we don't put into practice will remain ignored, neglected or spiritualized; they will never come alive." Do we believe that God is active in our world, healing and reconciling? That belief comes alive in a personal way when we seek to join God's mission in the world.

To those who put the mission workers of our church on a pedestal and for those who throw up their hands that mission is colonial, this book is a profound reminder of who God is, who Jesus is as God's mission incarnate, and where the church fits into God's mission in the world. It is an excellent resource for study and discussion in congregations that likely include members of both groups.

After twenty-five years of living and working in China, Jeanette Hanson, *Director of International Witness for Mennonite Church Canada, is copying the Chinese three-generational living style in Rosthern, Saskatchewan.*