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Letter From the Editor

To all of our amazing supporters of Christian Peacemaker Teams:

I want to take a moment to thank you all for continuing to be a part of the work that we do. You stand in solidarity with communities around the world who dedicate themselves to the nonviolent struggle for their lives and their rights. You lend your voice to amplify theirs, so that they are able to speak to your faith communities, your home towns, your political leaders.

As a part of this, thank you so much for continuing to read and engage with the reports, stories and poetry that our teams share. I know that sometimes these stories can be painful to read, and sometimes they can make us uncomfortable. We always welcome questions and discussions about any of the content that we share. If you wish to learn more about, or challenge, anything that you read in this newsletter, please do not hesitate to reach out. My inbox is always open!

Thank you for opening yourself to pain and discomfort as you read the difficult stories of the oppression that our partners work tirelessly against. Thank you for listening to their voices, so that you can help us to make sure they are heard.

IN PEACE,
CAITLIN LIGHT, CPT COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR
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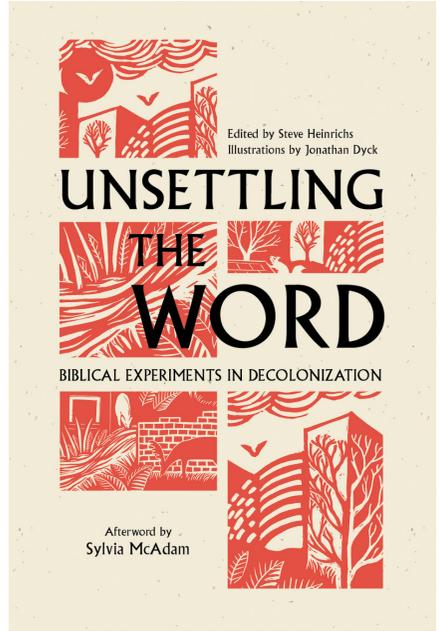
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BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT

Unsettling the Word: Biblical Studies and Indigenous Justice

For generations, the Bible has been employed by settler colonial societies as a weapon to dispossess indigenous and racialized peoples of their lands, cultures, and spiritualities. Given this devastating legacy, many want nothing to do with it. But is it possible for the exploited and their allies to reclaim the Bible from the dominant powers? Can we make it an instrument for justice in the cause of the oppressed? Even a nonviolent weapon toward decolonization?

In *Unsettling the Word*, more than 60 indigenous and settler authors come together to wrestle with the scriptures, rereading and re-imagining the ancient text for the sake of reparative futures.



Among these contributors are CPTers Steve Heinrichs, who edits the book, Peter Haresnape and Kathy Moorhead Thiessen. Lisa Martens, a CPT alum, also provides a reflection.

Created by Mennonite Church Canada's Indigenous-Settler Relations program, *Unsettling the Word* is intended to nurture courageous conversations with the Bible, our current settler colonial contexts, and the Church's call to costly peacemaking.

Contributors include:

Marcus Briggs-Cloud, Kathy Moorhead Thiessen, Kwok Pui-lan, Christina Conroy, Leah Gazan, Joerg Rieger, Norman Habel, Stan McKay, Rachel and Chris Brnjas, Jennifer Henry, Lori Ransom, Rebecca Voelkel, Peter Haresnape, Robert O. Smith, Susanne Guenther Loewen, Carmen Landsdowne, Cheryl Bear, Joshua Grace, Rarihokwats, Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, Joy De Vito, Tamara Shantz, Marc H. Ellis, Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, Sara Brubacher, Benjamin Hertwig, David Driedger, Pekka Pitkanen, Celine Chuang, Alain Epp Weaver, Musa W. Dube, Katerina Friesen, Anita L. Keith, Derrick Jensen, Roland Boer, Neil Elliott, Daniel Hawk, Randy Woodley, Lisa Martens, Tobin Miller Shearer, Walter Brueggemann, Miguel A. De La Torre, Vivian Ketchum, James W. Perkinson, Sara Anderson, Deanna Zantingh, Peter C. Phan, Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, Bob Haverluck, Mark Bigland-Pritchard, Chris Budden, Ellen F. Davis, Rose Marie Berger, Wes Howard-Brook, Gerald West, Julia M. O'Brien, Dan Epp-Tiessen, Ryan Dueck, Mitzi J. Smith, Sylvia McAdam, Robert Two Bulls, Ched Myers, Jonathan Dyck, Sarah Travis, Ralph Armbruster-Sandoval, Kyla Neufeld.

There will be a Toronto Book Launch on **25 June at 7:00 p.m.** at Church of St Stephen in the Fields.



A villager from Sarkan telling CPTers about the bombing by the Turkish warplanes.

They Are Killing Us Because We Are Kurds

By CPT Iraqi Kurdistan Team

They were four friends: Bezhan Mustafa, Mohammad Ismail, Darbaz Mohammad and Sherko Mahmud. Two of them were cousins. Two graduated from the college of law to become protectors of people through law, and two were Peshmergas (Kurdish soldiers).

On March 21, they celebrated the festival of Newroz in a popular mountain valley, together with thousands of others. Newroz celebrates the coming of a new year and commemorates the people's liberation from tyranny.

Bezhan, Mohammad, Darbaz, and Sherko left the Newroz celebration and arrived in the night at their summer house in the village of Sarkan. According to the accounts of their neighbors, the four young men made a fire, grilled meat on the hot coals, and sang joyous songs.

At 1:15 a.m. that night, a Turkish warplane dropped a bomb that ended the lives of the four friends. "When I arrived, I saw pieces of their burned bodies spread around, mixed with shreds of blankets and fragments of the house. I could not even recognize the bodies. I then collected the remnants and put them in the back of the pickup truck," a Sarkan village elder told CPT.

"We could not believe this happened. Sarkan has never been bombed," kak Mustafa, father of the 20-year-old Bezhan who was killed in the Turkish airstrike, said to the CPTers. Still in shock, he added, "They were in no way connected to the PKK. We were very close with my son and shared about everything." He went on angrily, "They are killing us because we are Kurds. Please tell them: Why are they killing us? What did we do?"

Bezhan's mother talked with CPTers at her home, telling them the tragic story about the death of her son and his friends. With tears streaming from her eyes, she shared how much she loved her son and how much her son loved his friends. She also talked about the other mothers who lost their sons in this bombing by Turkish warplanes. She explained that friends are eager to visit and stay in their homes, but they no longer feel safe to go to their villages due to the Turkish bombing. With



The father of one of the bombing victims telling CPTers about his son.

anger and sadness, she told CPT that no one is stopping Turkey from killing Kurdish people.

The Turkish state has bombed villages within Iraqi Kurdistan for years in a campaign against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), an armed Kurdish resistance group. The constant fear of being bombed at any time has been the reality for many living in the border region, and new areas have been bombed in recent months. Thousands of families of traditional farmers and shepherds live under the continual threat of death, injury and the destruction of their livelihoods.

Bombing civilians is a violation of basic human rights of people to live in peace and without fear. It is also a violation of the international humanitarian law. In this case, as well as many others documented by CPT, the Turkish state has committed a war crime in Iraqi Kurdistan. Turkish airstrikes often do not distinguish between civilians and combatants. They often target civilian settlements and crops, killing or wounding civilian inhabitants of ancestral lands.



The diocese of Barrancabermeja provided the families of the victims' burial plots, at the Garden of Silence cemetery, where eight of the returned remains are buried. Photo: Caldwell Manners/ECAP

“We are fighting against the biggest monster, that is, the government.

By Caldwell Manners, CPT Colombia

Luz Almanza, Jaime Peña and Rocio Campos have more in common than living around the same football field, the site of one of Colombia's most horrific massacres. On 16 May 1998, all three lost a family member. Their relentless search for the disappeared and their defiance of state impunity is what binds them.

Within the space of about an hour, in the southeastern Comuna 7 of Barrancabermeja, 40 armed men — a mix of right-wing paramilitary, police, state intelligence (DAS) and military personnel — killed seven people and disappeared 25. The United Self-Defense Forces of Santander and Cesar (Autodefensas Unidas de Santander y Cesar - AUSAC), a regional paramilitary group, conducted a coordinated massacre to purge the city of guerillas and their sympathizers in what marked the beginning of the paramilitary takeover of the oil capital.

All three recount feeling little anxiety when they saw state armed forces. They assumed it was a search operation, a common occurrence in a neighborhood controlled by left-wing guerrillas at the time.

Almanza was at a fundraiser bazaar, located at the northern corner of the football field. The armed men surrounded the field at 9:20 p.m. and began pulling people out onto the field from the surrounding shops and stalls. Mario Jaimes Mejía, a paramilitary commander, also known as “El Panadero,” stood in the middle of the field and began shouting, “Depart, guerillas, sons of bitches! Today you all die! The war has come to you!”



*Luz Almanza, 48, poses for a portrait with a picture of her husband, Ricky Nelson García.
Photo: Caldwell Manners/ECAP*

He then ordered approximately 100 people to lie face down as masked men began identifying alleged guerilla members and loading them onto two trucks. Pedro Julio Rendón refused to cooperate. His throat was slit on the spot.

Witnessing this brutality, Almanza recalls, “I got scared. The police are killing us — the army is killing us.”

She began to lead people to shelter in her house nearby and kept thinking to herself, “This was my peace, that [my husband] was not here. My family and brothers had not come to the bazaar.” Just as she got home, she was told that the paramilitary group had taken her husband, Ricky Nelson García, from his motorcycle workshop.



Around the corner, Jaime Peña had just gone to bed. His son, Jaime Yesid Peña, 16, was in the front yard with his friends when a barking dog awakened him. “I was shocked by the way he barked,” the father recalls. “I got up and from the door I saw my son being taken away. There was a guy behind him pointing a rifle at his back. I shouted, ‘Hey Yesid, what’s going on?’ He tried to answer me, but the guy did not allow him. He pushed the rifle deeper into his back and pushed him.”



Rocio Campos lays out images of her brother that she often carries along with her.
Photo: Caldwell Manners/ECAP

A block away from the gunfire, Daniel Campos was getting ready to teach waltz lessons for a quinceañera party and had gone into a neighbor's billiards parlor to use their cassette player. Rocio Campos, his sister, was a couple houses down the street when she heard her brother shout, "Why are you pushing me? Don't push me, I haven't done anything. Look, I have my papers here!"

She managed to shout through the window, "Let him go, bastard!" Daniel's captor hit him with the butt of the gun on the back of his neck, knocking him to the ground. This was the "worst pain" to see him "get hit unjustly," and hear her brother say, "Do not hit me. I haven't done anything!"

These were the last moments Luz Almanza, Jaime Peña and Rocio Campos saw their husband, son and brother. By 10:20 p.m. the armed men had left, and the families of the victims began the search for their loved ones.

To read their full story online and follow it into the present day, please visit: <https://bit.ly/2L83KfF>



Photo: Caldwell Manners/ECAP

The Mystery of Love

By Jhon Henry, CPT Colombia Team

1
How much pain have we had to endure
How much pain will we have to endure
If, for the sake of losing, we have lost everything,
even life.
If, for the sake of winning, we have won everything,
even a life.

2
When does one lose? When does one win?
Do you know? If our lives went by in the struggle,
In a struggle, in our struggle for freedom,
That freedom that was never ours,
That freedom that they tore away from us,
that freedom that we tore away from them.

3
They have told us that it is alright to die,
To die for something just, but how many years are just?
If our yesterday is the same as our tomorrow,
if our future doesn't go forward

If this is alright then I prefer life,
that life which we have lost,
that life which we have gained.

4
If, as you look at the heavens you wonder,
“Why Lord, why have you abandoned me?”
Be certain for the truth He has already given to you,
that the love that you have breathed is the answer,
the answer in the silence, the answer without an answer.

5
Accursed mystery of love, hidden mystery
that hides behind our struggles,
that hides behind our lives.
Mystery that inspires me, mystery that you breathe,
you are our life, you are our life.

6
And if they ask me, why have I lived,
why have I lost,
At this very moment I would reply, for the sake of love,
for the sake of love I have lost everything,
for the sake of love I have gained everything,
everything that matters to me,
everything does in fact matter.

7
My land and my culture, my life and my family,
that which does matter, that which matters to us,
oh hidden mystery, accursed hidden mystery,
that obliges us to move, that obliges us to see ourselves,
mystery of love, mystery of terror.

8
Because of you I have seen without seeing, because of you I have died without wanting,
Because of you I have lost everything, because of you I have gained everything,
Because of you, because of you who hides yourself in my land,
who hides yourself in my plot,
Mystery of love that flows through our lives,
who gives life to life, and more life to our lives.

9
We have filled the earth with our tears, with our sweat.
We have filled the earth with our love,
we have filled the earth with our life,
with that life that is love and with that love that becomes life.

10
Thanks to life, thanks to love,
Thanks to God who gave us his love,
Thanks to God who demanded love from us.
And because of him we have filled the earth with love.
So much love, so much pain, so much life, so much death.
Thanks to God because he is love
and there is no other way to see him than through love.



Participants sit in the midst of a protest against the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline.
Photo: Christine Boyle

Green, White, Red, and Black

By Rebaz Khorseed

It was all green, like a big beautiful canvas illustrated by a great artist. You didn't need to drive five hours to get to a cabin to enjoy fresh air. Or to feel the soft touch of grass under your feet, or to experience the look of never ending treetops from a hillside that you drove up to in your gas guzzling 5.7L truck.

Then the white man decided mother earth is not good enough. He wasn't happy to make enough food to keep you fed, to make enough clothing to keep you covered in the rain, and build enough shelter to keep you warm. No, the white man decided he should produce 100 times more than you need, give you a hundred types of bread and twice as many varieties of meat from locked up, tortured animals. They knew you definitely wanted that 50" smart TV, the view of that apartment on the 30th floor, and of course, that new shiny iPhone.

Eventually, the white man decided that everything should be white. Africa, Asia, and Australia became white. Turtle Island was made white too. In fact, it was the first green, the greenest of them all, to be painted white. That's why it is now the whitest, white like the ivory for which the white man drove the majestic elephants to edge of extinction!

But green didn't become white all of a sudden. The white man decided that their industrial revolution needed to be fed the black gold, no matter what, even if it meant the blue marble needed to be covered in red from pole to pole. So he did exactly that: he killed who he could with his guns, and annihilated the rest with the germs he brought along; after all, to the white man, *a good Indian is a dead Indian*.

Now he got all that he wanted: the precious black, the shimmering yellow, and all the other shiny things he found after he ripped the belly of mother earth open, and let her black blood cover her face. It doesn't matter if the vein of that black ooze lies under the Red's ancestors' final resting places; they will bulldoze it. The white man doesn't care if you are a grey haired Salish grandmother praying to the creator to stop this desecration of the land they call the Kinder-Morgan project, or a proud young Anishinabek water protector screaming at the top of your lungs (but Line 3 will poison our rivers all the way to the Mississippi!). Nor does he lose sleep if you are a Dakota Chief protesting at Standing Rock, for he will make sure no rock is left unturned. He wants the black and he will continue suffocating mother earth with that black liquid, because that's the way to continue spreading the white man's vision, a white globe!

You might continue believing in him because he attends your church, and he enchanted you with the lies of economic development, GDP surpluses, and tax cuts. And if that is not enough to make you fall for his false prophecies, he will keep apologizing for what he did to the land and its peoples, with tears in his eyes and RECONCILIATION on his tongue all the while he swear that colonization is over.

Or you might finally wake up and realize it is a unapologetically a white mess, and it is about time for the white to clean it up, or the boat will sink with everyone in it, including the white man himself.

The Festival of Ramadan

By CPT Palestine Team

CPT Palestine team was happy to be able to experience the Islamic holy month of Ramadan in al-Khalil (Hebron), standing with the Palestinian community in celebrating this holy month.

To celebrate Ramadan, al-Khalil has set aside the pain of the Occupation as far as possible and donned a joyful and festive look. It is, as Rumi says, "the sunlight dancing as one with the shadows." Ramadan lights dangle decoratively from ornate strings of flickering yellow, green, and red. Shops reopen after the breaking of the fast with vendors selling colorful, attractive and enticing sweets of different hues, shapes and sizes. The city is alive and there is an air of celebration at all hours of the night. A festive atmosphere welcomes thousands of pious men,



A vendor in the Souk offers a wide array of colorful sweets for Ramadan.

women and children who flock to the Ibrahimi Mosque, especially on Fridays for the noon prayer.

In our desire to understand Ramadan, we spoke to a few local people about what Ramadan means to them. Ramadan is the most sacred month of the year for Muslims, who believe it was during this month that God revealed the first verses of the Quran, Islam's sacred text, to Mohammed, on a night known as "The Night of Decree." It is meant to be a time of spiritual discipline — of deep contemplation of one's relationship with God, extra prayer, increased charity and generosity, and intense study of the Quran.

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam, along with the testimony of faith, prayer, charitable giving, and a pilgrimage to Mecca. The practice of fasting serves spiritual and social purposes: to remind people of their human frailty and dependence on God for sustenance, to show what it feels like to be hungry and thirsty so one feels compassion for (and a duty to help) the poor and needy.

Leila, one of the local Muslim women in the Souk, shared her understanding of fasting. She said that food is not everything in life, and that fasting is a symbol of emptying oneself to be close to Allah, who is the life energy of the soul. There is also the added sense of community and support in the knowledge that all are fasting together.



As well over 3000 people gather to pray for Ramadan, the people praying overflow into the street outside of the Mosque.

Muslims are also encouraged to try to curb negative thoughts and emotions like jealousy and anger. Some people also choose to give up or limit activities like listening to music and watching television, often in favor of listening to recitations of the Quran.

For Palestinians, the Occupation affects the celebration of Ramadan in a negative way. On May 18, the First Friday in Ramadan, thousands of Palestinians made their way through Israeli-installed military checkpoints to Ibrahimi Mosque in Occupied al-Khalil (Hebron) for the noon prayer. Between 11:30 a.m. and 12:50 p.m., approximately 1700 men, 600 women, 300 girls and 2000 boys passed through two or three checkpoints depending where they came from. Before entering into the mosque itself, they were obligated to pass another checkpoint. Young adult males were body-searched or forced to take off their belts before passing through the metal detector at the checkpoint, causing delays. A drone, presumably from the Israeli forces, flew overhead the whole time, filming; at one time, the drone filmed directly over a group of men standing outside for prayer. The overall military presence creates a sense of fear and uncertainty, which is not totally erased even during this festive season.

Despite the Occupation, for the people in Hebron Ramadan is a time of celebration and joy to be spent with loved ones, culminating in the three-day Religious Festival of Eid-Al-Fitr.



CPT Canada marshals a counter-protest in London, ON, August 2017.

Interrupting Racism

By CPT Canada Team

In the past few years, CPT Canada has watched with alarm as white supremacy and the alt-right have surged in Canadian mainstream society. Throughout Ontario, groups like Pegida, Soldiers of Odin, C-3, Proud Boys, and many more have been gathering at city halls, handing out Islamophobic leaflets and preaching the importance of “European Nationalism”. These hate groups continue to grow and have begun disrupting community events, political discussions, and workshops on anti-racism.

In response, CPT Canada in 2017 became a founding member of Solidarity Against Fascism Everywhere (SAFE), an ad-hoc committee comprised of concerned individuals and organizations formed to plan counter-protests to these white supremacist gatherings. Fearing disruptions and needing a trained nonviolent response, groups have begun to reach out to CPT in order to provide accompaniment, nonviolent intervention, and de-escalation for their events, avoiding the involvement of the police. Involving the police often leads to racialized people being unfairly targeted and can lead to an escalation of violence rather than de-escalation.

Recently, CPT was invited to provide this support at the Winchevsky Center on behalf of the United Jewish People’s Order for a workshop on Creative Resistance to the Alt-Right. A few weeks later, CPT provided similar support for the Canadian Friends of Sabeel as they hosted Palestinian liberation theologian Naim Ateek for a public event in Toronto. At both events we were grateful that there were no disruptions.

However, this is not always the case. As Ontario prepares for an election in early June, CPT was asked to provide support for an interfaith all-candidates meeting in Toronto on May 24, 2018. Four CPTers attended the event with the purpose of providing de-escalation skills if the meeting should be disrupted. The evening began smoothly, but when New Democrat Party (NDP) candidate Rima Berns-McGown referred to the existence of systemic racism in Canada, someone from the crowd started yelling that Canada is not racist. CPT approached the man and politely directed him to stop yelling. After he interrupted Berns-McGown a second time with a similar outburst, CPT identified the man as a known Islamophobe from Toronto who spent 9 months in jail for distributing Islamophobic leaflets. He has repeatedly harassed members of an Islamic family, is known in the Jewish community as being anti-Semitic, and his Facebook page calls for banning all flags from the Middle East being raised in Canada.

The man remained relatively quiet following his second warning but continued to target Berns-McGown by coughing when she spoke. Berns-McGown is originally from South Africa and identified herself at the beginning of the meeting as half Jewish and half Muslim.

In the final minutes of the discussion, while a different candidate was speaking, the man jumped up and started shouting against Islam and anyone that would call him racist. CPT surrounded the man and directed him to leave. Several people from the audience got up to confront him, some even reaching to grab him. CPT urged them to remain seated and not touch him to avoid further escalating the situation. CPT was successful in escorting the man outside without the involvement of the police or anyone getting hurt.

CPT Canada is committed to confronting the rise of white supremacy. We will continue to show up to counter protests, provide de-escalation and marshalling support at events, and provide trainings on how to recognize and stop racism in your community.

For more information, contact canada@cpt.org.



Pictured: CPTers and partners at a protest against the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline. Photo: Christine Boyle

It's not too late to join a 2018 delegation!

Engage directly with CPT's work and meet our amazing partners.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
SOLIDARITY

20-30 July

IRAQI KURDISTAN

22 September-6 October

PALESTINE/ISRAEL

7-21 August
22 October-5 November
30 November-14 December

To learn more, visit <http://cpt.org/participate/delegation> or email delegations@cpt.org.



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Pictured: CPTers and partners at a protest against the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline. Photo: Christine Boyle

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