THE COVENANT
# QUARTERLY

*May/August 2019*

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## Comment

*Dominique DuBois Gilliard, director of racial righteousness and reconciliation for Love Mercy Do Justice, Evangelical Covenant Church, Chicago, Illinois*

Fifty years ago, one year after Dr. King's assassination, the Black Manifesto originated at the National Black Economic Development Conference that met in Detroit, April 25–27, 1969. The Manifesto assessed the harm black Americans had endured and demanded from white American churches and synagogues $500 million as reparation for their complicity in the historical and ongoing economic exploitation of black Americans. The Black Manifesto was aggressively circulated nationwide, within congregations and denominations. The Evangelical Covenant Church of America was presented with the Manifesto's demands by Herman Holmes Jr., director of the Midwest chapter of the Black Economic Development Conference, at its 1969 Annual Meeting.

This issue explores the origins of the Manifesto, the Covenant's response to its demands, and the shifting nature of our denominational identity in the summer of 1969. It begins with an article by Hauna Ondrey, assistant professor of church history at North Park Theological Seminary, that surveys the Covenant in 1969 and how its response to the Black Manifesto illuminates its position within the landscape of American Christianity at that time. The Covenant's response to the Black Manifesto offers insight into a denomination in transition, within a nation that was still lamenting, reeling from, and finding its way after the loss of one of its most esteemed leaders. Ondrey's article is followed by commentary on the Black Manifesto, written in 1969 by Worth V. Hodgin, director of urban ministries for the Central Conference; Robert L. Sloan Jr., chairperson of Community Covenant Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Wesley W. Nelson, professor of pastoral care

at North Park Seminary and director of evangelism for the Covenant; and Milton B. Engebretson, Covenant president. Originally published as the cover story of the August 1, 1969, *Covenant Companion*, they are reprinted here and annotated for contemporary readers.

Fifty years later, how do we reflect on this watershed moment in our nation's history, on the Black Manifesto, and on the Covenant's response to it? Are there lessons we can glean from this season in our denominational history and apply today, given the rising tide of racial animus? The issue concludes with the responses of nine denominational leaders, interpreting this history and its contemporary significance: Craig E. Anderson, retired Covenant pastor who attended the 1969 Covenant Annual Meeting as pastor of Oakdale Covenant Church in Chicago; Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom, professor of theology and ethics at North Park Theological Seminary, director of the School of Restorative Arts, and co-author of the Resolution on Antiracism adopted by the Covenant Ministerium in June 2019; Donn Engebretson, Covenant executive vice-president under President Glenn Palmberg, current major gifts officer, and son of Milton B. Engebretson, who served as Covenant president in 1969; Catherine Gilliard, superintendent of the Southeast Conference; Dominique DuBois Gilliard, director of racial righteousness and reconciliation for Love Mercy Do Justice; Jerome Nelson, retired superintendent of the Central Conference and the first African American to serve as a superintendent; Mary Miller, Covenant Living chaplain and the first female vice-president of the Covenant; David Swanson, pastor of New Community Covenant Church in Chicago, CEO of New Community Outreach, and co-author of the Resolution on Antiracism; and Lenore Three Stars, community leader for racial reconciliation.

We hope this issue contributes to our collective discernment as mission friends who have grown to become a multiethnic mosaic that is prioritizing practicing solidarity with our neighbors and striving to function as one interconnected body of Christ.

# The Covenant Responds to the Black Manifesto (1969)

*Hauna Ondrey, assistant professor of church history,*
*North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois*

## Introduction[1]

Fifty years ago, the Black Manifesto demanded $500 million from white American churches and synagogues as reparation for their complicity in the historical and ongoing economic exploitation of African Americans. In the wake of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the Black Manifesto confronted white Christians with the claims of black power and the charge of white guilt. Over the course of the summer of 1969, its clarion call "substantially changed the face of the race struggle. Manifesto-centered events caused greater vibrations in the US religious world than any other single human rights development in a decade of monumental happenings."[2] The Evangelical Covenant Church of America was one of the many Christian denominations confronted by the Manifesto's demands, as Herman Holmes Jr., director of the Midwest chapter of the Black Economic Development Conference, presented the Manifesto to the delegates gathered in Chicago at the 1969 Covenant Annual Meeting.

This article begins by describing the origin and reception of the Black Manifesto in the summer of 1969 and offering a snapshot of the Cov-

[1] My sincerest gratitude to Craig E. Anderson, Hazel L. Sloan, Herbert J. Hedstrom, Donald C. Davenport, David W. Kersten, and Timothy C. Ek for sharing their firsthand experiences with the material treated here and to Philip J. Anderson for his feedback on an earlier draft of this article.

[2] So concluded Robert S. Lecky and H. Elliott Wright, "Reparations Now? An Introduction," in *Black Manifesto: Religion, Racism, and Reparations*, ed. Lecky and Wright (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 3.

enant at that time. It then narrates the Covenant's response to the Black Manifesto at its 1969 Annual Meeting, traces into the late 1990s the evolution of the fund established in 1969, and finally evaluates denominational reception more broadly. The Covenant's response to the Black Manifesto offers a window into a denomination in transition within a nation in transition.

## The Black Manifesto: Origin and Early Reception

The Black Manifesto originated at the National Black Economic Development Conference, held April 25–27, 1969, at Wayne State University in Detroit. The conference was sponsored by the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), an ecumenical group organized in 1967 to coordinate faith-based community development efforts. By June 1969, IFCO membership reached twenty-five agencies, among them mission boards of the United Methodists, American Baptists, Roman Catholic Church, Lutheran Church in America, United Church of Christ, American Jewish Committee, Presbyterian Church, and Episcopal Church. On the second day of the conference, James Forman, director of international affairs for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), presented the Black Manifesto he had drafted, subtitled, "To the White Christian Churches and the Synagogues in the United States of America and to All Other Racist Institutions."[3] In his presentation, Forman prefaced the Manifesto with an introduction on "Total Control as the Only Solution to the Economic Problems of Black People." In this introduction Forman rejects Nixon's "black capitalism," insisting that as the "vanguard of the revolution," black Americans should be opposing American capitalism outright as oppressive imperialism. Black economic empowerment would come instead through total black control of the US government and means of production:

[3] The indispensable single volume for sources on the Black Manifesto is Lecky and Wright's *Black Manifesto*, and most contemporary surveys are derivative of this collection. It includes the editors' overview of the historical context and initial reception of the Manifesto ("Reparations Now? An Introduction," 1–33), a collection of official responses to the Manifesto, as well as a detailed timeline within appendices. It also includes the full text of the Manifesto including introductory remarks delivered at the conference, as Appendix 1, pp. 114–26. The Manifesto text, without its introduction, is available within the Archives of the Episcopal Church digital exhibit, *The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice*, available at https://episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/items/show/202, accessed April 8, 2019. On Forman himself, see his autobiography, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, rev. ed. (University of Washington Press, 1997).

> We live inside the United States, which is the most barbaric country in the world, and we have a chance to help bring this government down. Time is short…and it is time we stop mincing words. Caution is fine, but no oppressed people ever gained their liberation until they were ready to fight, to use whatever means necessary, including the use of force and power of the gun to bring down the colonizer.[4]

Forman directed the goal of total control to the conference itself: "We must begin seizing power wherever we are, and we must say to the planners of this conference that you are no longer in charge."[5] Rather than the (largely white) directors of IFCO, the black members of the conference would assume control, the former leaders submitting to their leadership and helping to implement the program Forman then described in the Manifesto proper. It began,

> We the black people assembled in Detroit, Michigan for the National Black Economic Development Conference are fully aware that we have been forced to come together because racist white America has exploited our resources, our minds, our bodies, our labor. For centuries we have been forced to live as colonized people inside the United States, victimized by the most vicious, racist system in the world. We have helped to build the most industrial country in the world. We are therefore demanding of the white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues which are part and parcel of the system of capitalism, that they begin to pay reparations to black people in this country.[6]

Forman set the total monetary demand at $500 million (later increased to $3 billion) and outlined a ten-point program for the centralized funds: four publishing houses (Detroit, Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York City); four TV networks (Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Washington DC); a

[4] "Black Manifesto," in Lecky and Wright, eds., *Black Manifesto*, 116. In describing the Manifesto, one risks duplicating responses that emphasized rhetoric over content. Yet it is essential to consider the full document to which churches were responding; its call for reparations cannot be extracted from the larger ideological context in which it was delivered.

[5] Ibid., 118–19.

[6] Ibid., 119.

research skills center; a skills training center (community organization and specific communication skills such as TV and radio); organization of welfare recipients; establishment of National Black Labor Strike and Defense Fund; establishment of an International Black Appeal for black business in the US and Africa; and a black university in the South. The Manifesto was adopted by the conference by a vote of 187 to 63.

Because no white reporters were admitted to the conference, many churches were unaware of its proceedings or the document it produced until the Manifesto's instructions were enacted that "On May 4, 1969 or a date thereafter, depending upon local conditions, we call upon black people to commence the disruption of the racist churches and synagogues throughout the United States."[7] On Sunday morning May 4, James Forman entered Riverside Church, a progressive, interracial church in New York City that benefitted from Rockefeller money. Forman read the demands of Manifesto and named Riverside's specific share as 60 percent of their annual income, as the organist tried to drown him out and pastor Ernest Campbell walked out with two-thirds of the congregation. After May 4, the entire nation had heard of the Black Manifesto. The BEDC, the organization that continued to oversee and fundraise for the United Black Appeal following the Detroit conference, came under FBI investigation soon after.[8]

Over the course of the summer that followed, Forman and other BEDC members would approach all major white Christian and Jewish religious organizations. Responses included both outright rejection and affirmation in principle, though the material response to the latter varied. Most groups who rejected the Manifesto entirely pointed to its call to revolution, by violence if necessary. Two days after Forman's delivering the Manifesto at Riverside, IFCO president Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum read a statement to the white caucus of IFCO, opposing the interruption of worship services as a violation of constitutionally assured freedoms of assembly and worship.[9] Tanenbaum referenced the Manifesto's most

[7] Ibid., 123.

[8] See United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Selection from James Forman FBI file, title page of Black Manifesto," *Queens College Civil Rights Archives*, https://archives.qc.cuny.edu/civilrights/items/show/106, accessed May 29, 2019.

[9] "Proposed Statement to Be Issued by Member Groups of IFCO, Read by Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, IFCO President, to White Caucus of IFCO, May 6, 1969." Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, Covenant Archives and Historical Library (CAHL), Chicago, Illinois.

revolutionary statements, together constituting "an ideological framework that creates serious problems of conscience for all who are committed to social reform through the democratic process."[10]

> The ideological preamble of the Manifesto calls for "the use of force and the power of the gun" to "bring this government down," for "armed confrontation and long years of sustained guerilla warfare inside this country," for "black domination" of America, for state socialism through revolutionary seizure of state power. Both the ideology and the rhetoric of this document read like a page out of Marxist-Leninist doctrine and the handbooks of Mao and Che Guevara for revolution by terror and violence.[11]

Tanenbaum expressed ongoing support for the founding goals of IFCO but "reject[ed] firmly and decisively the effort to impose on IFCO's program from the outside[12] revolutionary ideologies, racist theories, and submission to blackmail."[13] These were common concerns of church groups, particularly in the context of the Cold War, in many cases ending engagement before it began. On May 12, the Synagogue Council of America and the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council issued a statement that named both "the demands and the tactics [of the Manifesto] objectionable on both moral and practical grounds."[14] Most evangelical Christian groups followed this pattern.

Other groups separated demands from tactics, opposing the Manifesto's revolutionary rhetoric but acknowledging the gravity of the crisis giving rise to that rhetoric. However, support for the BEDC per se did not follow from this acknowledgment. Many groups referenced their existing efforts to address racial injustices; others committed to expanding such efforts in response to the Manifesto but channeled increased funds through their own structures rather than the BEDC.

Ernest Campbell, pastor of Riverside Church, addressed the nation on

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Forman was not a member of IFCO but was invited to the conference by IFCO director Lucius Walker.

[13] "Proposed Statement."

[14] "A Policy Statement by the Synagogue Council of America and the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council," in Lecky and Write, eds., *Black Manifesto*, 141.

his church's radio station on May 10,[15] the eve of the Sunday following the May 4 encounter. Campbell affirmed the validity of reparations and acknowledged the white church's failure to respond to the crisis it was complicit in creating. Campbell nevertheless rejected the revolutionary tactics of the BEDC and called on IFCO to clarify whether these were sincerely or rhetorically intended. Irrespective, Campbell warned white churches, "Let us react to the need and not confuse the issue by over-reacting to the tactics."[16] Riverside responded to the Manifesto's demands by designating an unspecified percentage of its budget to poverty alleviation, designated for its own programs rather than the United Black Appeal.[17]

By contrast, the Board of Directors of the National Committee of Black Churchmen (NCBC) issued a statement in support of the Manifesto at a May 7 meeting held in Atlanta. Hailing James Forman as "a modern-day prophet," the board affirmed its support of the Manifesto's demands. "We are mindful that the program proposed has troubled the waters of Siloam, yet we know that however much the churches may shake to the vibrations of its own cleansing the healing of Christ is working upon them."[18] Board members named American churches as "the conscious beneficiary of the enforced labor of one of the most inhuman forms of chattel slavery the world has ever known," both by direct ownership of slaves and by tithes gained through the profits of slave labor.[19] Moreover, they named white churches and synagogues "the moral cement of the structure of racism in this nation." The directors urged churches to recognize the demands of the Manifesto as a demonstration of "the authenticity of their frequently verbalized contrition and of their faith in the justice of God."[20]

> It is too late to call for propriety and moderation. A radical challenge has been placed before us on the threshold of a

[15] Ernest Campbell, "What Shall Our Response Be? Riverside Speaks First," pp. 127–32 in Lecky and Write, eds., *Black Manifesto*.

[16] Ibid., 132.

[17] Cf. similar responses from Archdiocese of New York, Appendix 5 in Lecky and Wright, eds., *The Black Manifesto*, "BEDC Demands Presented to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York," 144–45, "Response of the Archdiocese," May 21, 1969, 145–47.

[18] "Statement of the Board of Directors of The National Committee of Black Churchmen," no date. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

> summer of unmitigated discontent and crisis. That challenge must be met with an equally radical commitment to undo, as much as we are able, the injustices of the past and to eliminate the injustices of the present. The means are available. The will to use them now must not be withheld.[21]

Their position remained uncompromising. As negotiations among various Christian groups progressed through the summer, the NCBC grew increasingly skeptical regarding the sincerity of the white churches. In a June 26 statement to Arthur Flemming, president of the National Council of Churches, the NCBC stated unequivocally its support the BEDC and advised the National Council of Churches to do likewise.[22]

Yet very few groups gave directly to the BEDC's United Black Appeal. By May 1970, the BEDC had succeeded in raising only $300,000, of which only $100,000 had come to it directly.[23] A full $200,000 had been given by the Episcopal Church but channeled through the NCBC—the very thing the NCBC had opposed.

## The Evangelical Covenant Church of America in 1969

As it gathered for its eighty-fourth Annual Meeting in June 1969, the Evangelical Covenant Church of America was a church in transition. Only a generation prior had the denomination removed the word "Swedish" from its name (1937), and even after this decision a majority of congregations continued to operate bilingually. In 1934 the Los Angeles Swedish Tabernacle was actively debating whether to shift from Swedish to English.[24] In 1935 First Covenant of Omaha reported that it has solved the language problem, celebrating the collapse of barriers imposed by nationality.[25] Even then, however, it continued to offer a weekly service in Swedish. Only in 1955, fourteen years prior to 1969, had all Covenant publications been published exclusively in English.

[21] Ibid.

[22] "White Churchmen Have a Problem," Appendix 6 in Lecky and Wright, eds., *The Black Manifesto*, 148–49.

[23] "Black Manifesto's Birthday: Frosting on the Cake?" *Christianity Today* (May 22, 1970): 37.

[24] Emil E. Fredeen, "Swedish or English, Which?" *Covenant Weekly* 23 (June 12, 1934), 2, 8.

[25] A.N.O., "Omah, Nebr., Language Problem Solved," *Covenant Weekly* 24 (March 19, 1935), 3.

Though the denomination had grown beyond its Swedish ethnic envelope in the decades following its shift to English, especially in the 1950s, this growth was almost entirely among European Americans. In June 1969, the only formally affiliated Covenant congregations not of predominantly European ethnicity were First Evangelical Covenant Church in Anchorage, organized in 1961[26]; Iglesia Evangélica Misionera in La Villa, Texas, organized in 1950 and pastored by Nelson Eslava[27]; and Oakdale Covenant Church in Chicago, which had formally integrated five years prior. Its white pastor Craig E. Anderson was in the process of seeking a black co-pastor. At the start of 1970, Willie B. Jemison would begin his three decades of ministry at Oakdale, with Anderson stepping down later that year.

At the 1969 Annual Meeting, the first three Korean congregations were officially adopted into the Covenant—Korean Covenant in San Francisco and, in Chicago, Korean Central Covenant and Korean Evangelical Covenant[28]—as was Community Covenant Church, a self-described "multi-racial" congregation in Minneapolis, pastored by white minister Arnold R. Bolin and chaired by African American member Robert L. Sloan Jr.[29] Robert Dawson, the first black member of the ministerium, was in 1969 a licensed lay minister. He was in the process of bringing his Compton, California, church plant into the Covenant as Grace Covenant Church, the first predominantly black Covenant church outside of Chicago.[30] Only in 1972 would Alaska be transferred from World Mission to Home Mission and Howard I. Slwooko Sr. elected first native Alaskan

[26] Predominantly native congregations had existed in Alaska prior to its organization as a US territory, but in 1969 these were classified as mission churches and did not have delegate representation at Annual Meetings. First Covenant Anchorage is the only Alaskan church listed among formally affiliated Covenant congregations in the 1969 *Covenant Yearbook*. Pastored by white minister Roland J. White, it was comprised of both native and non-native white congregants.

[27] *Covenant Yearbook 1969*, 312. A second non-Swedish immigrant church organized in 1950 was the Estonian Covenant Church, formed by refugees following the Second World War. The striking fact is that there is no time in which the Covenant has operated fully in English; before it had fully transitioned from Swedish, new immigrant congregations were holding services in Spanish and Estonian.

[28] Korean Covenant in San Francisco, organized in 1966 and pastored by Ki Nam Lee; Korean Central Covenant in Chicago, organized in 1966 and pastored by Young Jae Lee; Korean Evangelical Covenant in Chicago, organized in 1968 and pastored by J. Inkyu Baik (*Covenant Yearbook 1969*, 210, 222).

[29] *Covenant Yearbook 1969*, 294.

[30] *Covenant Yearbook 1969*, xliii.

superintendent of the misson field.[31] Through the 1970s, licensed and ordained Covenant clergy serving in Alaska, both native and non-native, were listed as missionaries.

In the wake of the Holocaust, the Covenant had condemned racism, explicitly linking Nazi genocide and racism against African Americans in the United States.[32] It was noted in 1962 that resolutions in opposition to "racial discrimination, prejudice, and intolerance based on color, race, or creed" had been adopted by one of every two Annual Meetings since 1946.[33] In addition to adopting race relations as the issue of the year, the 1962 Annual Meeting "reaffirm[ed] its previous forthright stands against racial prejudice in every form" and resolved a number of "practical implications of this position," namely advocating for integration in voting rights, public schools, and public facilities and actively integrating Covenant churches. A final aspect of the 1962 resolution was "that major attention be given by the appropriate denominational agencies toward the development of a strategy for the 'inner-city' church in recognition of changing neighborhoods."[34] This latter call was answered over the next decade in various ways. In 1964 Joseph C. Danielson, executive minister of home mission, published a report on "Covenant Churches in Larger Metropolitan Areas since 1930," in order to understand and address the flight to the suburbs.[35] In the Central Conference, an Inner City Committee was formed in 1963, evolving into a Board of Urban Ministry 1966, with a full-time director position.

Resolutions continued through the decade, voicing Covenant support for Martin Luther King's non-violent direct action, repentance for racism, and commitment to active integration of schools, neighborhoods, and congregations. As with all Annual Meeting resolutions, these pointed to

[31] *Covenant Yearbook 1972,* 70, 147. Alaska became the eleventh regional conference of the Covenant on March 27, 2015, and Curtis Ivanoff its first conference superintendent.

[32] *Covenant Yearbook 1945*, 162.

[33] *Covenant Yearbook 1962*, 163.

[34] Ramelia Williams has traced the Covenant's engagement with the civil rights movement, primarily through the work of the Christian Action Commission and two congregational case studies, Community Covenant Church in Minneapolis and North Park Covenant Church in Chicago: "The Evangelical Covenant Church's Response to the Civil Rights Movement, 1963–1968," *Covenant Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (2016): 16–32. Cf. David Nystrom, "The Covenant Commission on Christian Action," *Covenant Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (1987): 5–35.

[35] Joseph C. Danielson, "Covenant Churches in Larger Metropolitan Areas since 1930," *Covenant Quarterly* (Nov 1964): 4–15.

a collective ideal. In reality some Covenant congregations took strong actions to ensure integration in their neighborhoods, schools, and congregations[36]; many congregations closed, as urban neighborhoods became increasingly African American, and white congregants joined the flight to the suburbs[37]; most Covenant congregations were geographically removed from these starker alternatives.

As the civil rights hopes of many were dashed with assassination of King in the spring of 1968, Covenant pastors turned increased attention to the black power movement. Richard Carlson, newly graduated from Union Theological Seminary and pastoring Douglas Park Covenant Church in Chicago, sought to interpret the movement to the Covenant in an August 1968 *Covenant Companion* article.[38] Even as he qualified the value as his article, written by a white man, he maintained that the outcome of the black power movement—whether it would be effective in ultimately securing authentic integration or whether it would end in violent conflict—was finally a white question, even a white church question.

> Shook by a conscious or unconscious guilt, we, the white church, might simply be frightened into inactivity, or we might repent and act. If we do act, the worst approach for us is to continue to ask how we can help the Negro and what we can do for him. To do so would indicate that we still see black men as children, as unfortunates, as welfare cases, as guilt-relieving objects. We should not even personally seek out blacks to help us "understand how they feel." If such encounters are to occur, let them be on black initiative. If we do want to encourage Black Power directly, we can provide financial backing to black capitalism but with no strings attached and with no expectation of great thanks.[39]

[36] See Williams, "Evangelical Covenant Church's Response"; Douglas Cedarleaf, "'Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done,'" *Covenant Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (2016): 33–44.

[37] See Kurt W. Peterson, "Transforming the Covenant: The Emergence of Ethnic Diversity in a Swedish American Denomination," *Covenant Quarterly* (2009): 3–36.

[38] Richard W. Carlson, "Second Thoughts on Black Power," *Covenant Companion* (August 1, 1968): 6–8; cf. Philip J. Anderson, "Called and Kept: Remembering Richard W. Carlson," *Covenant Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (2015): 4–20.

[39] Ibid., 8.

Carlson's article ended with a somber warning to the white church: "If the church does not respond affirmatively, responsibly, and actively to the phenomenon of Black Power, the consequences for our nation will be grave….Walls between men will become so imposing, hatred of men so intense, and frustrations of men so feverish, that violence will rule the land. And this 'government of the people' may well perish from the earth."[40] A year later, the Black Manifesto would require white churches to respond directly to the claims of Black Power, including the Covenant to which Carlson directed these portentous words.

## The Manifesto Confronts the Covenant: Annual Meeting 1969

With most white church groups, the Covenant became aware of the Manifesto through news coverage of the May 4 confrontation at Riverside Church. President Milton B. Engebretson immediately obtained a copy of the document and became "thoroughly acquainted with its content."[41] Within the Chicago area, BEDC Midwest director Herman Holmes Jr. began his work by approaching John Cardinal Cody on May 19 in Quigley Chapel. On May 22 Holmes issued specific demands to the Church Federation of Greater Chicago and the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Each of these groups rejected Holmes's demands.[42]

Worth V. Hodgin, director of urban ministries for the Central Conference since 1966, sent copies of the Manifesto, including its introduction, to Chicago area Covenant pastors on May 19.[43] In his accompanying memo, Hodgin encouraged pastors to read the document carefully and sympathetically. Conscious of the larger Christian denominations Forman and Holmes had approached, Hodgin anticipated that "smaller denominations like ourselves will also have to face this kind of direct confrontation. We need to be prepared to take a position." He offered to organize a panel for area pastors, if interest were expressed, with informed pastoral representatives from both the white and black communities. Sufficient

[40] Ibid.

[41] Milton B. Engebretson to Mildred Holmberg, July 17, 1969. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[42] According to a press release issued by the Church Federation of Greater Chicago, August 25, 1969. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[43] Worth V. Hodgin, "Memo to Chicago Area Pastors re Black Manifesto," May 19, 1969. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

interest led to a panel discussion June 2, 1969, at North Park Seminary.[44]

The eighty-fourth Covenant Annual Meeting was held June 18–22 on the campus of North Park College and Theological Seminary in Chicago. In the adoption of the agenda, delegates were notified of the possibility of a visit from a Black Manifesto representative, as well as a plan should such a visit take place. During the second business session of the meeting, Thursday afternoon of June 19, the Executive Board brought a preemptive recommendation, "pertaining to relief funds for black America."[45] The recommendation reads in full:

> Cognizant of and grateful for the quickening of compassion and concern for the black people in America today who have been shamefully suppressed whether by conscious or unconscious acts of the nation and at times even the Christian community, the Executive Board of The Evangelical Covenant Church of America, while not in sympathy with nor approving the philosophy and language of the National Black Economic Development Conference as stated in the "Black Manifesto," feels strongly that the Covenant has a responsibility before God and all men to help lift the burden of indignity imposed on the black communities of America and proposes the following recommendation for your adoption and resultant action:
>
> The Executive Board recommends to the Eighty-fourth Annual Meeting of The Evangelical Covenant Church of America that it urgently request its member churches to contribute the additional sum of one dollar [$6.95[46]] per member this year over and above the amount given last year to World

[44] Invited panelists were African American churchmen Luke Mingo, president of the Illinois Conference of National Baptists, and Phil Hurley, Methodist superintendent. They were joined by Doug Still from the Chicago Church Federation. "These men will be prepared to share with us the history of this development and also the response that it has had, particularly in the black community." Worth V. Hodgin, "Memo to Chicago Area Pastors re Black Manifesto," May 27, 1969. Record Series 6/1/2/1/33a, Box 13, Folder 10, CAHL.

[45] A change was made to the agenda to ensure that the Executive Board's recommendation could be addressed prior to budget approval. "Into All the World," *Covenant Companion* (July 15, 1969): 5.

[46] Dollar amounts in brackets and parentheses throughout indicate quantities adjusted for inflation to March 2019 value. US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator, https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

> Relief to be distributed through responsible agencies to help poverty-stricken black Americans. Such agencies and distributions are to be recommended by the Commission on World Relief. It further recommends that should receipts for World Relief during 1969 exceed the amount given last year and the additional $67,000 [$465,342.46] herewith requested, the overage be equally divided between the two causes; and that the one dollar per member a year request be continued until a total of $335,000 [$2,326,712.30] has been given.[47]

In the discussion that followed, a threefold amendment from the floor moved that the fund be incorporated into the coordinated Covenant budget for 1970 and the proportion set at 10 percent. Third, it proposed that the funds be overseen not by the Commission on World Relief but rather "a committee of Black Covenant men and women."[48] While the amender is not named, it is likely the proposed amendment reflected the desires of a larger group of Central Conference pastors who had met prior to the meeting to discuss the Covenant's response to pressing current issues. At the top of their list was "The Covenant's position regarding the Black Manifesto."[49] A "period of considerable discussion" led to the amender conceding to a lower proportion of 5 percent. The question was divided, and the 5 percent voted down, obviating the vote for incorporating the fund into the annual budget. By that point, the business session had overrun its allotted time, so further discussion and action were deferred to the following day.

Discussion continued on Friday afternoon, June 20, in the fourth business session. The Executive Board led with an amended recommendation that incorporated the proposal that the fund be overseen by a committee of black Covenanters. This amendment was approved by vote. Two further amendments were proposed. The first sought to expand the application of funds, asking that only 90 percent of the funds be designated specifically for African Americans; the second sought to limit the kinds of organizations that would receive funding. Both failed. The question

[47] *Covenant Yearbook 1969*, 157–58.

[48] The inclusive language is original. Otherwise, all other texts originally use the generic masculine.

[49] Memo from Jim Anderson, June 12, 1969. Document from personal collection of Herb Hedstrom.

was called, and the amended recommendation carried.

The business session continued. Delegates approved a coordinated budget of $1,791,000 [$12,439,229][50] and heard additional recommendations from the Executive Board and National Covenant Properties. Delegates adopted amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws, heard a report from the Board of Benevolence, and considered recommendations from the Boards of Christian Education, Ministerial Standing, and Directors of North Park.

At the end of Friday's business, Holmes arrived. As planned, the moderator allowed President Engebretson to introduce Holmes and give him the floor. The meeting minutes describe Holmes as thanking the delegates for their attention, describing the Black Economic Development Conference, and reading the Manifesto's ten demands. The *Companion* report of the Annual Meeting offers additional details, noting that Holmes

> spoke in explanation of the Manifesto, placing it in the context of the church's concern for faithfulness to Christ and for racial justice. After a brief introduction, in which he expressed gratitude for being allowed to speak and cautioned against hearing only the Manifesto's language, he summarized the intent of the document and read the 10 specific demands totaling $500,000,000 to come from all church bodies addressed.[51]

Neither the meeting minutes nor the *Companion* report note a specific portion of the Manifesto's total demands stipulated for the Covenant, as other groups had received. In a follow-up letter to Engebretson, however, sent "because your organization has expressed a desire to respond responsibly to needs of the black community," Holmes named the Covenant share as $50,000 plus various in kind contributions, such as the free use of office supplies, mailing lists, typing services, and visual aid equipment.[52]

After Holmes's presentation, delegates applauded, and many stood

[50] Had the amendment passed to dedicate a set proportion of the annual budget to the new fund, this would have entailed the goal of raising annually $179,100 for 10 percent or $89,550 for 5 percent. The $67,000 approved, therefore, comprised a little over 3.7 percent of the total budget adopted for 1970.

[51] "Into All the World," 5.

[52] Herman Holmes Jr. to Milton B. Engebretson, August 21, 1969. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

as Holmes exited the stage.[53] The moderator closed the session with prayer and adjourned the meeting until the following morning. In their survey of responses to the Manifesto, written July 24, 1969, Lecky and Wright singled out the Covenant's reception of Holmes as "the only BEDC encounter with a church which was not stormy at some point."[54] As delegates dispersed, Worth Hodgin and Craig Anderson continued conversation with Holmes at George's diner on Foster Avenue.[55]

What came of this meeting and its decision, and what does it reveal about the Covenant at this point in its history? I consider practical outcomes first, tracing the evolution and reception of the fund that was launched at the 1969 Annual Meeting. The final section offers some analysis of the Covenant's response to the Black Manifesto more directly.

## Outcomes: Evolution of the Fund

The inaugural committee met with President Engebretson on October 8, 1969, comprised of four African American Covenanters: Nathan Brown, member of Oakdale Covenant Church in Chicago, and first chair of the Covenant Board of Home Mission[56]; J. Ernest Du Bois, member of Emmanuel Covenant Church in Rochester, New York, and chair of the board of Christian education there; Robert Dawson, pastor of Grace Covenant Church in Compton; and Robert Sloan Jr., chair of Community Covenant Church in Minneapolis. The group established criteria for recipient organizations, deciding that funds would not be restricted to Covenant initiatives.

In preparation for the inaugural offering, collected during World Relief Week, November 23–30, President Engebretson encouraged Covenanters to give generously. Engebretson's *Covenant Companion* appeal introduced the committee members and their shared dreams for the services that could be supported with the offering (housing, job training, college preparation, cultural programs, etc.). He directly linked the fund to the larger racial conflict rocking the nation:

[53] "Into All the World," 5; Mildred Holmberg to Milton B. Engebretson, July 4, 1969. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[54] Lecky and Wright, "Reparations Now? An Introduction," 27.

[55] Author's conversation with Anderson.

[56] Newly formed, with the Board of World Mission, out of the former Board of Mission (though previously there had been distinct executive secretaries of home and world mission).

> This…could be the movement that would force open the gate to peace and understanding which is currently blocked by hatred, racism, and mistrust….We hold the key, in our small way, to share what we have been given, to demonstrate the love of Christ and to help improve the chances for peaceful, orderly development of the world, rather than for increased anger, rage, and violence. See that you excel in this hour of crisis.[57]

Covenanters responded with $16,452.73 [$111,528.45], a quarter of what was solicited. Though the inaugural proceeds fell significantly short of the appeal, the committee was hopeful. In the words of committee chair Nathan Brown, "Thank God, the door is open. The most successful way to do anything is to start small and grow big."[58] In presenting the committee report to the 1970 Annual Meeting, committee member Robert Sloan Jr., alluded to the parable of the mustard seed: though the fund had a modest beginning, over time it could grow and provide needed relief. "I am positive that the seed that was planted will bear fruit to the glory of God."[59] Likewise President Engebretson reflected, "Though the amount received was woefully short of that requested, we grew because we started."[60]

Others were less sympathetic in their interpretation of the fund's inaugural yield. In his *Covenant Companion* editorial of March 1, 1970, Jim Hawkinson claimed that the response "by any objective standard, was a failure." Hawkinson blasted the Covenant for the irresponsibility revealed by its mediocre contributions to the fund:

> The truth is that we never really took up the challenge presented to us by the 1969 Annual Meeting. Whether out of fear, prejudice, economic self-centeredness, or just plain lethargy, we have acted irresponsibly and need to be told so. To a world writhing in physical and spiritual anguish we offer little more than a cold shoulder. Stones for bread is what it

[57] Milton B. Engebretson, "See That You Excel," *Covenant Companion* (November 1, 1969): 10.

[58] Quoted in Milton B. Engebretson, "President's Report," *Covenant Yearbook 1970*, 8.

[59] *Covenant Yearbook 1970*, 169.

[60] Engebretson, "President's Report," *Covenant Yearbook 1970*, 8.

> amounts to, and disdain for God-given brothers and sisters appealing for freedom and a fair chance.[61]

While Hawkinson admitted it was unlikely any Covenanter would be *happy* with the results in principle, he insisted that, "insofar as we failed to respond to the appeals as we were able each of us must share the blame. A signal opportunity was missed, not because the church was uninformed—unless it was uninformed or misinformed at the local level—but because we just didn't care enough."[62] He concluded his piece and the *Companion* issue,

> The least that should be said is this: the time is past when we can whisper pious nothings in the world's ear and get away with it. Our proud and often haughty judgments on the needy of this earth and our easy disdain for their plight must seem at times like a stench in the nostrils of the Almighty. The time has come for us to quit playing games with world relief and aid to black America. What the situation requires is a new determination to offer our means ourselves now in Jesus' name. No more is asked of us. No less will ever be enough.[63]

The 1970 collection yielded less than the prior year, only $16,208.96. This limited success was attributed in part to confusion stemming from its collection on the same Sunday as the World Relief fund, in duplex envelopes. The Committee on World Relief reported that the total raised between the two funds was comparable to the prior year's World Relief offering, suggesting Covenanters had simply divided their giving between the two, rather than allocating additional resources to the new fund.[64] This was the second and final year that the fund would be designated exclusively for African American causes. At the 1970 Annual Meeting it was decided to expand recipients to all ethnic minority groups, and Herb Hedstrom, then co-pastor with Richard Carlson of Douglas Park Covenant Church in Chicago, was added as a member of the now-titled Committee for Disadvantaged Americans of Minority Groups.

At the 1971 Annual Meeting, the collection date was rescheduled for

[61] James Hawkinson, "Stones for Bread," *Covenant Companion* (March 1, 1970): 32.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] *Covenant Yearbook 1971*, 110–11.

Race Relations Sunday, the second Sunday in February, in order to avoid confusion with the World Relief collection and minimize competition between the two funds.[65] Publicity material and a sample sermon were also sent to pastors. The 1971 offering was somewhat more successful, reaching $20,307.72 [$129,380.03].[66] At the 1971 Annual Meeting of the ministerium, pastors completed a survey that sought to illuminate the poor congregational response, having ascertained that pastoral leadership "appears to be the major asset for a generous response."[67] Following that meeting, the ministerium as a body contributed $1,000 to the 1972 fund, which totaled $18,484.63.[68] The fund continued to struggle. The 1972 Annual Meeting moved the collection date a second time on recommendation of the Executive Board, with the hope "that more churches will be participating on a date convenient for their local schedule."[69]

These adjustments did little to bolster the fund's success. In his 1971 presidential report, Engebretson wrote, "The questions that stagger and leave me bereft of spirit, are simply: With all of our fine Christian members, why do we not grow? With our degree of affluence and talk of Christian compassion, why did we fall so far short of the mark in our one united opportunity to help disadvantaged Americans of minority groups?"[70] In 1972 Engebretson lamented, "The program is hardly launched among us. Three years have brought in only $59,000. It really could have been $150,000."[71] In fact it would have been $201,000, had the $1 per member goal been realized. Of the twenty years for which specific contributions are recorded in *Yearbook* reports (1969–1988), more than $2.7 million was raised, when each year is adjusted to March 2019 value.[72] On the one hand, this amount just surpasses the original $335,000 the 1969 decision set out to raise [$2,326,712.30], an amount reached in real dollars in 1980.[73] On the other hand, that amount was intended to be raised within five years. World Relief offerings yielded more within a

[65] Ibid.

[66] *Covenant Yearbook 1972*, 226.

[67] *Covenant Yearbook 1971*, 169.

[68] From three hundred churches and individuals. *Covenant Yearbook 1972*, 196.

[69] *Covenant Yearbook 1972*, 226–27, report given by secretary.

[70] *Covenant Yearbook 1971*, 16.

[72] *Covenant Yearbook 1972*, 76.

[72] $2,700,500.16, taking the 1987 offering as $62,000; that year the fund is reported as totaling "over $62,000," *Covenant Yearbook 1988*, 181–82.

[73] In other words, the church raised in twelve years what it had set out to raise in five. Within three years it had raised the $50,000 asked by Holmes. Of course these funds

mere three years: 1973, 1974, and 1975 offerings raised $2,763,659. The 1988 special offering was celebrated as "a record $66,229, also nearly $4,000 higher than ever before."[74] However, when numbers are adjusted for inflation, this represented the sixth highest offering—and the World Relief offering for the same year surpassed it by over one hundred times at $749,524.04 [over $1.6 million].[75]

In 1983 the fund was renamed Hands Extended Lifting People (HELP), "Because the previous name of the Special Committee was long and cumbersome."[76] By 1986 a single person chaired the committee, reporting to the Commission on World Relief, in order to save the expenses of assembling a full HELP committee.[77] The fund was formally moved under World Relief for a single year in 1988, to be moved again the following year to the oversight of the Commission on Urban and Ethnic Ministry.[78] Reporting on the 1990 collection, Commission chair Eric Newberg thanked vice-president Timothy Ek for his assistance in administration of the offering, contrasting this gratitude with a rebuke: "We wish we could offer similar thanks to local Covenant churches for their generous giving to provide funds for the many exciting HELP ministries, but we can't as of yet due to mediocre receipts."[79] Newberg reported the following year that "Giving to the HELP offering decreased significantly in 1991."[80] The HELP fund is not referenced in the 1993 or 1994 Yearbooks. In 1995, the Urban and Ethnic Commission divided into the Commission on Urban Ministry and the Commission on Ethnic Ministry, and the fund was seemingly absorbed into general denomina-

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were not directed to the BEDC, but the portion assigned by Holmes is indicative of the Covenant's small size relative to other denominations approached.

[74] Herb Carlson, "Report of Commission on World Relief," *Covenant Yearbook 1989*, 191.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Aaron Markuson, "Report of Special Committee on HELP," *Covenant Yearbook 1983*, 187.

[77] Author's conversation with Kersten. Cf. David W. Kersten, "Report of Special Commission on HELP," *Covenant Yearbook 1987*, 207–208; *Covenant Yearbook 1988*, 181–82.

[78] Eric Newberg, "Report of Commission on Urban and Ethnic Ministry," *Covenant Yearbook 1990*, 188. The Urban and Ethnic Ministry Commission was established as a special commission in 1980, moving to standing commission status in 1983.

[79] Eric Newberg, "Report of Commission on Urban and Ethnic Ministry," *Covenant Yearbook 1991*, 164.

[80] Eric Newberg, "Report of Commission on Urban and Ethnic Ministry," *Covenant Yearbook 1992*, 163.

tional administration. For the years 1994–1997, the HELP fund appears within a directory of "Programs to Help Congregations," as the appropriate recipient of "Gifts for Ministries of Compassion," under the subcategory of "Whole Life Stewardship and Discipleship."[81]

## Outcomes: Response to the Black Manifesto

While President Engebretson was insistent that the Covenant fund established in 1969 did not constitute a capitulation to the demands of the Black Manifesto, he admitted it may have been an indirect response to the issues the Manifesto highlighted.[82] Certainly this is the case: the visibility of the Manifesto and its aftermath made the demand for reparations from white churches and synagogues unavoidable. What does the Covenant's response to the Manifesto itself, if indirect, amount to? And what does this indicate regarding the Covenant's place within American Christianity at this point in its history?

First, the Covenant was unequivocal in its opposition to the revolutionary premises, tactics, and goals of the Manifesto. In all communications, President Engebretson was clear that the Covenant did not support a violent posture toward the US government. This was codified in the criteria established by the fund committee, which specified among other conditions that funds were to be received only by "agencies whose aims and purpose are supportive of the Constitution of the United States of America."[83] Engebretson provided more explicit assurance to one concerned correspondent: "The funds were distributed to organizations to help Black Americans, but each was thoroughly checked out first so as to be sure no funds were given to black militants."[84]

Given this stance, common among white groups, it is notable that Engebretson did not dismiss the Manifesto's central charge of racism. Many Christian groups—and most evangelical Christian groups—simply stopped at the Manifesto's revolutionary language. A *Christianity Today* article reporting on the Manifesto is headlined, "'Black Mani-

[81] In front matter of *Covenant Yearbook 1995*, *1996*, *1997*, *1998*, p. ix in all.

[82] Milton B. Engebretson to Oscar T. Backlund, June 27, 1969. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL. Cf. Engebretson, "The Annual Meeting Decision on Aid to Black America," *Covenant Companion* (August 1, 1969): 12, "All the publicity given the Manifesto by news media may have indirectly affected the timing."

[83] *Covenant Yearbook 1970*, 169.

[84] *Covenant Yearbook 1971*, 110–11.

festo' Declares War on Churches."[85] This was a direct quotation from the Manifesto.[86] Yet the very selection of this quote—focusing on the threat to white churches rather than white Christian complicity in black oppression—ignores the Manifesto's central point, indicative of the article that follows and representative of the evangelical response. The mainstream Covenant response is markedly different, following the mainline Protestant pattern.

While Engebretson was consistent in rejecting the Manifesto's revolutionary call, his references to the document are relatively neutral. Rather than focusing on rhetoric, his communications turn quickly to the reality of racism and the church's responsibility to resist it. His 1969 presidential report concluded with an acknowledgment of the church's complicity in the national sins of racism[87] and warned the church against allowing revolutionary rhetoric dissuade it from confessing its true sins and so finding renewal and unity.[88] Engebretson was well aware that the Covenant fund was misinterpreted as support for the BEDC—his files are full of letters expressing this misunderstanding. Even so, he insisted that the risk of misinterpretation did not justify inaction but was an inevitable consequence of any new venture.[89] Engebretson led the Covenant in following Campbell's encouragement to white churches, "Let us react to the need and not confuse the issue by over-reacting to the tactics."[90]

Yet the action the Covenant took was a rejection of the very substance of the Manifesto and not merely its rhetoric. In both private correspondence and private communications, Engebretson indicated clearly that the fund was not a form of reparations.[91] To *Chicago Today*, he stated

[85] Milton B. Engebretson to A.H. Kubli, April 1, 1970. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[86] "To win our demands we will have to declare war on the white Christian churches and synagogues, and this means we may have to fight the total government structures of this country." Lecky and Wright, ed., *Black Manifesto*, 124.

[87] Ibid., 19.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Milton B. Engebretson to Oscar T. Backlund, August 6, 1969. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[90] Campbell, "What Shall Our Response Be?," 132.

[91] See private communication to pastors immediately following the meeting ("the word 'reparations' does not apply to this action"), as well as his August 1 *Companion* report ("the word 'reparations' does not apply to the Annual Meeting's action"). Milton B. Engebretson, "President's Newsletter," 3, no. 7 (June 26, 1969), Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL; Engebretson, "Annual Meeting Decision," 12.

even more emphatically, "We are not in sympathy with the language, the philosophy, the tactics, or the ideals of the NBEDC. We do not believe in reparations. We'll not raise funds for the group."[92] Whereas Engebretson corrected many media portrayals as mistaken, he sent this article to concerned Covenanters as accurately representing the church's action and position.[93] I was unable to find any document in which Engebretson offered a rationale for this rejection.

The dominant Covenant response eschewed reparations not only in name but also the reparations paradigm as such.[94] The Manifesto named the American economy as the product of black slavery and ongoing economic disempowerment of African Americans. It named white Christians as the beneficiaries of this centuries-long system of exploitation and called on them to make material repair as a matter of justice. The Covenant fund was not an act of justice but charity. It addressed the problem of generic poverty rather than the unjust distribution of wealth as the consequence of the particular history of black oppression, with its corollary of white responsibility.[95] Engebretson called upon Covenanters to share "from what God has entrusted to our care,"[96] to give generously out of their abundance, with no acknowledgment that this very abundance was symptomatic of the systemic injustices the Manifesto named. This diagnosis is seen further in the parallels frequently drawn between global poverty addressed through World Relief and the Fund for Black Americans.[97]

When official communications hint at a more systemic or particular problem, this is usually framed in passive language. African Americans

[92] "New Black Manifesto Demands," *Chicago Today* (August 22, 1969).

[93] Engebretson, "Annual Meeting Decision," 12. Engebretson to A.H. Kubli.

[94] "The moral logic of reparations is not charity, but justice," Jennifer Harvey, "White Protestants and Black Christians: The Absence and Presence of Whiteness in the Face of the Black Manifesto," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 39, no. 1 (2011): 143; cf. Harvey, *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2012).

[95] See for example, Milton B. Engebretson to Rev. Oscar T. Backlund, August 6, 1969. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[96] Engebretson, "Annual Meeting Decision," 12; cf. Milton B. Engebretson to H.W. Glass, August 29, 1969. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[97] E.g., "But we would like the amount to equal what we do for those living in poverty in other countries. We want only to share our affluence which is admonished by word and example in the New Testament." Milton B. Engebretson to H.W. Glass; cf. Engebretson, "See That You Excel," 10.

are described as “one minority group within our nation *long subjected*, at best, to a position of secondary standing in American life”[98]; the problem they face “the burden of indignity *imposed on* black communities in America”[99]; “the poverty in which many negroes live and the indignities which many *are forced* to endure.”[100] The frequently used shorthand “poverty-stricken” also captures this passive framing. Through the fund established, Covenanters sought, through their voluntary generosity, to be part of the solution; they did not see themselves in the problem—they did not see themselves as debtors.

The BEDC and NCBC were both abundantly clear that actions such as the Covenant’s—managing the money they raised rather than giving it to the United Black Appeal—were a rejection of the Manifesto and a continuation of the power imbalances it sought to correct. That President Engebretson was aware of these arguments is evidenced by a December 8, 1969, letter from Holmes retained in Engebretson’s files. Holmes begins the letter by insisting on the reparations framework: “It is critical at this point to remind you that the demands to contribute to the Black Appeal Fund are based on the real needs of the Black Community for self-determination and for relief of the oppression and deprivation resulting from 400 years of prejudice and discrimination.”[101] Holmes goes on to insist upon the inadequacy of any program that maintains white agency in mediating funds rather than relinquishing that power. “We insist that the traditional piecemeal tokenism of private and public efforts to alleviate the conditions of Black people are ineffective, insufficient and insulting to the dignity and sense of dignity of Black people.”[102]

The resolution adopted in 1969 had, by amendment, placed the fund under the leadership of black Covenanters. The *Companion* contribution of Wesley W. Nelson, North Park Seminary professor of pastoral studies, insisted on the importance of this: “To pay no attention to the demands of the Black Manifesto, to insist on distributing funds without consulting black leadership…would be no less responsible then.”[103] Yet

[98] *Covenant Yearbook 1970*, 8, my emphasis.

[99] Engebretson, “President’s Newsletter.”

[100] Engebretson, “Annual Meeting Decision,” 12.

[101] Herman Holmes Jr. to Milton B. Engebretson, December 8, 1969. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Wesley W. Nelson, “Financial Control,” *Covenant Companion* (August 1, 1969): 10.

the specificity of both the fund's leadership and recipients was quickly expanded—a logical progression from the Covenant's focus on generic poverty rather than particular historical injustices. At the 1970 Annual Meeting, the fund's scope was broadened to encompass all "disadvantaged Americans of minority groups." Recipients would range from Casa Central in Chicago to the American Indian Council of Santa Clara Valley, California. An expansion of leadership followed, as Herb Hedstrom was added to the committee in 1971.[104] By 1972, two of four committee members were African American (J. Ernest Du Bois and Willie B. Jemison); when the fund was relocated under World Relief, it was overseen by a committee that alternated between predominantly and exclusively white Covenanters. In these ways, ultimately none of the Manifesto's objectives was positively answered—something no official statement claimed to be doing in any case.

Yet alongside these official rejections, many Covenanters *did* support reparations. In a memo to Chicago area pastors following Holmes's first presentations of the Manifesto in Chicago, Worth Hodgin admitted his initial reflexive dismissal of the idea of reparations, but he demonstrated self-reflection and the ability and willingness to consider the black experience that made reparations reasonable rather than unreasonable. "Reparations are a new idea for us. My first inclination was to react to the whole idea as a preposterous hoax. However, there are a large group of responsible, but angry men who see this action as most reasonable. Consequently, it is important for us to try to understand what they are saying to us."[105] This is important background information for Hodgin's *Companion* article. He modeled to Covenant pastors a kind of conversion, the willingness to consider an alternate viewpoint and reconsider his own reflexive response, even his own framework of what was reasonable.

In his *Companion* piece, Hodgin explained the idea of reparations, commending it as a preeminently reasonable, historically, politically, and theologically. He discussed historical and ongoing implications of white racism and the white church's oppression of black Americans, citing the Kerner Commission report,[106] to conclude that "In face of the

[104] *Covenant Yearbook 1971*, 110–11.

[105] Nelson, "Financial Control," 10.

[106] The Kerner Report was published in 1968 by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, commissioned in 1967 by President Lyndon Johnson in the wake of racial riots July 1967. The report asked three questions: "What happened? Why

facts the idea of the churches paying reparations is neither offensive nor ridiculous."[107] After offering a series of historical examples of reparations paid, Hodgin concluded with the specifically theological significance of reparations.

> Reparations are an essential part of the idea of Christian repentance….No institution in American society has confessed its guilt as often as the church. It has written ten thousand empty pronouncements regarding social justice. If reparations are really an acceptable form of repentance, then white American churches have the duty to express their sincerity by repaying their debts which have accrued through slavery and black subjugation.[108]

Hodgin was explicit in fully embracing the paradigm of reparations, including its presupposition of white agency and responsibility and the unjust distribution of resources.

> If the involvement of the American churches in slavery and their subsequent exploitation of blacks is fact, and if, despite our theology and ethics of integration, the white religious community was unable to make it work, then a deep spiritual and material injury has been committed upon black people in this nation. The white church cannot push aside the bold fact of its burden of guilt.… The Manifesto calls for reparations from the white churches as an effective redress for their share in the institution of slavery and benefits of black oppression.[109]

He construed the wealth of white Americans as ill-gained and therefore a source of judgment rather than as just possessions to be generously and voluntarily shared. Following the NCBC, Hodgin's conclusion put Forman in the stream of prophets: "It may be that with all his militancy and rudeness, James Forman is being used by God to declare to the churches,

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did it happen? What can be done to prevent it from happening again?" The report's "basic conclusion" was that "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." Read the full report at http://www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/docs/kerner.pdf.

[107] Worth V. Hodgin, "Reparations," *Covenant Companion* (August 1, 1969): 8.

[108] Ibid., 15.

[109] Ibid., 8.

'this night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'" [Luke 12:20].[110]

Hodgin's article reflects the commitments of a broader group within the Covenant. Most larger denominations with European roots had strong black caucuses of pastors advocating for the Manifesto. No comparable structure existed in the Covenant in 1969. In fact, this is the first period in Covenant history it was even possible to assemble the committee of black Covenanters that gathered October 1969. That black leadership was insisted upon—the only point consonant with the spirit of the Manifesto—evidences the internal influence of a cadre of white pastors who advocated for the denomination's active, informed opposition to structural racism—Douglas Cedarleaf, Dewey Sands, Richard Carlson, Herb Hedstrom, Craig Anderson, Worth Hodgin, and many others.[111] Though marginal, it was possible for this group to shape the denomination's response because space was created in which their voice could be heard, both on the floor of the Annual Meeting and in denominational publications. It is highly significant that Hodgin's "case for reparations" was published alongside President Engebretson's rejection of reparations in the pages of the *Covenant Companion*.

### Conclusion: On the Threshold of What?

Milton Engebretson's 1969 presidential report concluded: "If the sobering events of our time are successful in bringing the Church of Jesus Christ to its knees in repentance before God, resulting in the salvation of the lost and reclamation of the needy, we of the Covenant may be standing on the threshold of our finest hour."[112] While the degree to which the church was brought to its knees in repentance is open to debate, there is no doubt that 1969 constitutes a threshold in Covenant history.

Wesley Nelson also placed the Covenant at a threshold moment, in his contribution to the August 1, 1969, *Companion* series on the Manifesto. The aspect Nelson highlighted was the beginning of black Covenant leadership. His point is worth quoting at some length:

[110] Ibid., 15.

[111] Including lay Covenanters. One Covenanter sent a check of $52 directly to President Engebretson to support the fund at a rate of $1 per week rather than year. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[112] *Covenant Yearbook 1969*, 19.

> The Covenant Church now has one of its finest opportunities to enter into conversation with the black leadership. Our immigrant background disassociates us from much (but not all) of the tensions from slavery days. The fact that we are somewhat disassociated from traditional American church life, that we are a small group, and that we have practically no endowments or large commercial holdings, makes us much less of a threat to the black man. It doesn't make us any less racist, but it makes it much more difficult for us to exercise our racism, and we can face the issue with Christian weakness. To work with black leaders in the distribution of fund we have raised could open the doors of mission in a way we have never known before. Here is an area that the Holy Spirit could bless. As we work side by side, God can work and Christ can become Lord and Savior of many people, both black and white, and a whole new relationship could develop. Of course it involves a risk. Faith always involves risk. Shall we take this risk, launch out and permit this to become one of our most glorious hours?[113]

Fifty years after the Covenant's first committee of black Covenanters, how has the partnership begun in 1969 been stewarded?

The committee of black Covenanters that was formed in 1969 to oversee the Covenant fund would not have been possible prior to that decade. But this would change. In January 1970 Willie B. Jemison would begin his three decades of ministry at Oakdale Covenant Church, joining Robert Dawson in the Covenant Ministerium. He and Dawson would be followed in the ministerium by Donald C. Davenport (1978), William M. Watts (1978), Jerry Mosby (1980), Melvin Dillard (1982), Robert Owens (1988), Henry Greenidge (1988), Anton Davis (1988), and Bennie Simmons (1989),[114] with many others following under their collective mentorship.

Numbers offer one metric, but only one. The Manifesto raised pointedly the question of power. In 1992, following consultations called by President Paul Larsen (Engebretson's successor in 1986) in the wake of

[113] Nelson, "Financial Control," 10.

[114] Dates indicate the first year each individual is recorded in the *Yearbook* as holding a Covenant credential.

protests of the Rodney King verdict, the Covenant Constitution was amended to stipulate that every administrative board have at least two members who were African American, Latino, Native American, Korean, or Vietnamese.[115] Also formalized after this consultation was the formation of the Black Pastors' Council, "to support and develop African American Churches and Ministers in the context of its community and culture."[116] In 2004 the Five-fold Test named power sharing as essential to true ethnic diversity, asking "Are the positions and structures of influence (boards, committees, and positions at both the conference and denominational level) influenced by the perspective and gifts of diverse populations?"[117]

This piece of the Covenant's past is not simply of historical interest but presents the denomination with an ongoing challenge, a challenge that our diversity alone does not meet. The Covenant must continue to wrestle with what responsibility demands of us today. This is one of many reasons we've asked a group of respondents to join in communal historical interpretation and reflect on ongoing implications of this history.[118] Fifty years ago, the Black Manifesto called white churches to responsibility. Fifty years later, the call stands.

[115] *Covenant Yearbook 1993*, 2:223. Following a policy that focused Covenant ministry on four ethnic groups, Hispanic, Korean, African American, and Native/Eskimo. This was originally adopted in 1982 as a mission strategy of the Department of Home Mission (which merged with the Department of Evangelism the following year to become the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism), and subsequently ratified by the Commission on Urban and Ethnic Ministry and adopted by the Executive Board. Discussions of the policy repeatedly clarified that this was not intended as exclusionary but as a commitment to providing necessary support: "While this policy will not exclude other ethnic groups, it is intended that deliberate steps will be taken to service these four ethnic groups including some affirmative actions in membership on Covenant boards and commissions, publication of material in languages other than English, and provision of pastoral leadership and fellowship for persons in ethnic Covenant congregations" (Robert C. Larson, "Board of Home Mission," *Covenant Yearbook 1982*, 144). In 1988 Vietnamese was added as a fifth ethnic group.

[116] "Purpose Statement, Black Pastors' Council of the Evangelical Covenant Church," June 22, 23, 1992. Record Series 1/2/7, Box 35, Folder 11, CAHL.

[117] "The Five-fold Test," available at https://covenantcompanion.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Five-fold-Test.pdf, accessed September 13, 2019. This has recently been expanded with a sixth dimension, "practicing solidarity," and named more explicitly "The Six-fold Test for Multiethnic Ministry." See https://covchurch.org/resources/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2011/10/5-Six-Fold-Test.pdf.

[118] See "Fifty Years Later: Commentary on the Covenant's Response to the Black Manifesto," *Covenant Quarterly* 77, nos. 2–3 (2019): 45–74.

# Covenant Commentary on the Black Manifesto (1969)[1]

These texts originally appeared in the August 1, 1969, issue of the *Covenant Companion*, following the 1969 Covenant Annual Meeting approval of a recommendation brought by the Executive Board to establish a fund for "poverty-stricken black Americans"[2] in response to the Black Manifesto. The *Companion* issue began with the text of the Manifesto,[3] followed by commentary by Worth Hodgin, Robert L. Sloan Jr., and Wesley Nelson. Text introducing the Manifesto and commentary disclaimed, "It should be understood that this presentation is neither a commendation nor a condemnation of the document. The views expressed in the commentary are personal views, elicited and graciously supplied in the interest of clarifying some of the issues involved. No official position with regard to 'The Black Manifesto' is intended or supplied" (p. 4). President Milton Engebretson's report on the Covenant fund followed.

Texts are reprinted here in their original order; language has been lightly edited in conformity to current conventions.

[1] Reprinted from the *Covenant Companion* (August 1, 1969): 8–10, 12, 15. Introduction and annotations by Hauna Ondrey.

[2] For minutes pertaining to the recommendation, amendment, and adoption of the new fund, see *Covenant Yearbook 1969*, 157–58, 164–65. A fuller account with analysis is provided in Hauna Ondrey, "The Covenant Responds to the Black Manifesto (1969)," *Covenant Quarterly* 77, nos. 2–3 (2019): 3–30.

[3] Minus its original introduction. This version is accessible through the Archives of the Episcopal Church digital exhibit, *The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice*, https://episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/items/show/202. For full text of the document, see Robert S. Lecky and H. Elliott Wright, ed., *Black Manifesto: Religion, Racism, and Reparations* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 114–26. For further information on the Black Manifesto, see especially this volume and its appendices.

# Reparations

*Worth V. Hodgin, director of urban ministries for the Central Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church of America*[4]

The Black Power movement, clearly observable by mid-1966, with its emphasis upon pride, self-determination, and black solidarity, completed the destruction of integration as the controlling idea of the black community (but not the white community) in the US. It is time for white churchmen to face this fact. The black quest for integration has come to an end. If it ever rises again it will not be within the framework of white control and the subordination of blacks. The Black Power movement was the reality from which the Manifesto emerged.

The fact is, as Malcolm X made clear, white Christians never really believed in integration. The desperate appeals of black leaders like King, Wilkens, and Young, received only token responses from the church.

If the involvement of the American churches in slavery and their subsequent exploitation of blacks is fact, and if, despite our theology and ethics of integration, the white religious community was unable to make it work, then a deep spiritual and material injury has been committed upon black people in this nation. The white church cannot push aside the bold fact of its burden of guilt.

This is the message of the Black Manifesto and subsequently of the black caucuses of nine (including Roman Catholic) predominantly white denominations. The Manifesto calls for reparations from the white churches as an effective redress for their share in the institution of slavery and benefits of black oppression. To this point Dr. Luke Mingo, a warm evangelical and president of the Illinois Conference (150,000 member-

[4] Worth V. Hodgin (1920–2011) was originally ordained in the Wesleyan Church and transferred his congregation (Rocklin Covenant Church, California) and ordination to the Covenant in 1949. He served churches in California and Washington before becoming director of urban ministry for the Central Conference in 1966.

ship) of the National Baptist Church, stated in Chicago recently, "While we disagree with the revolutionary rhetoric of Forman, black evangelicals are united with him on the central issue of the Manifesto. The danger is, that white people will get 'hung-up' on the rhetoric of the Manifesto and will not deal with the real issue."[5]

It is no secret that the white church has been and is today deeply entrenched in the system of white oppression. Many of the laymen who sit on the governing boards of wealthy white churches are the absentee owners and directors of those structures which have kept black people in deprivation and powerlessness. Many white home owners refuse to sell to black buyers. Many white churches own thousands of acres in the South where black sharecroppers, desperately in need of land, are being forced off into the already crowded urban ghettoes. The Kerner report states: "what white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."[6] In face of the facts the idea of the churches paying reparations is neither offensive nor ridiculous.

However foolish the Manifesto's demands may seem, the concept of reparations has by no means been rejected in modern times. According to *Encyclopedia Americana*, reparations are a form of compensation to repair or mend for injury to another, and are usually monetary in form, paid out of political interest or out of moral duty and concern for the general welfare.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica*, reports that Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and the United States received reparations from Japan after the hostilities of 1864; Spain from Peru in 1869; and the United States again from China in 1900. West Germany assumed the liability of two billion dollars for victims of the Nazi persecution.

Gordon C. Bjork, in the June 24, 1968, issue of *Christianity and Crisis*, writes, "The estate of one generation in our society is passed to

[5] Hodgin organized a panel discussion for Chicago area pastors, held June 2, 1969. Mingo was a panelist. See Ondrey, "The Covenant Responds," 13–14.

[6] The Kerner Report was published in 1968 by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, commissioned in 1967 by President Lyndon Johnson in the wake of racial riots July 1967. The report asked three questions: "What happened? Why did it happen? What can be done to prevent it from happening again?" The report's "basic conclusion" was that "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." Read the full report at http://www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/docs/kerner.pdf.

the next after the subtraction of liabilities incurred. By the same logic the debts incurred by our white forefathers in the deprivation of Negroes by slavery and discrimination calls for the repayment of debts from our massive inheritance. It is a repayment of accrued liabilities because part of the inheritance was accumulated by the systematic under-payment of a minority that was suppressed by law and violence."[7]

Dr. Ernest Campbell, minister of Riverside Church, was the first churchman, following the publication of the Manifesto, to point out the theological meaning of reparations. "From the beginning," he wrote in the June 1 issue of *Tempo*, "The Christian church has taught that restitution is an essential part of penitence. You don't simply say, 'I'm sorry' to a man you've robbed. You return what you stole, or your apology takes on a hollow ring…."[8]

Repentance is sorrow for sin against God and involves a purpose of amendment. It is clear that such amendment is related to the concept of reparations. Reparations are an essential part of the idea of Christian repentance.

Campbell goes on to say, "Reparations, restitution, call it what you will. We subscribe to the conviction that given the heinous mistreatment that black people suffered in this country at the hands of white people in the slave economy, and given the lingering handicaps of that system that still works to keep the black man at a disadvantage in our society, it is just and reasonable that amends be made by many institutions in society—including, and perhaps especially, the church."[9]

No institution in American society has confessed its guilt as often as the church. It has written ten thousand empty pronouncements regarding social justice. If reparations are really an acceptable form of repentance, then white American churches have the duty to express their sincerity by repaying their debts which have accrued through slavery and black subjugation.

The great wealth that churches have accumulated (C. Stanley Lowell estimates church assets at 160 billion dollars), has become a liability.

[7] Gordon C. Bjork, "Poverty, Race, and Social Justice," *Christianity and Crisis* (June 24, 1968): 147.

[8] Ernest Campbell, "Wherein Lies the Shame? A Parish Minister Speaks to the Challenge," *Tempo* 1, no. 16 (June 1, 1969): 5. Available at https://archive.org/details/pts_tempocouncilchur_3439_v1tov3.

[9] Ibid., 5, 9.

God's word to the Laodiceans is appropriate for us, "I am rich, I need nothing…but you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked" [cf. Revelation 3:17].

The time may be at hand for the cleansing of the temple. Scripture warns, "judgment is to begin in the household of faith" [1 Peter 4:17a]. It may be that with all his militancy and rudeness, James Forman is being used by God to declare to the churches, "this night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" [Luke 12:20].

# Force and Violence

*Robert L. Sloan Jr., chair of Community Covenant Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota*[10]

When we as Christians deny a segment of our community an opportunity to voice their dissent and injustices against oppressing conditions, we generate new grievances and new demands.

The appearance of the Black Manifesto challenging the church to economic action has created bitterness and resentment among churchmen, both laity and clergy. It is hard to decide whether this bitterness is racist in nature, or solely in resentment to militant groups outside the church. If we are concerned about the violent language of the Manifesto, I feel we are only looking for patches in the robe of Christianity.

No American, white or black, can escape the consequences of the continuing social and economic decay that will ultimately lead to violent disorder. We can no longer repress the symptoms of violence. We must look at our attitudes toward the poor and our motivation as it relates to others in terms of business practices. Violence never brings permanent peace and it solves no social problems; it merely creates new and more complicated ones. Martin Luther King pointed this out very clearly when he said, "Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue."[11]

From our history of slavery the black man has had to react to violent

[10] In addition to serving as chair of Community Covenant Church, Robert L. Sloan (1935–) was a charter member of that congregation and had attended the 1969 Annual Meeting as its delegate. Sloan was a member of the original committee of African American Covenanters selected to oversee the fund established at that meeting and brought its inaugural report to the 1970 Annual Meeting. He would go on to serve on many Covenant boards, including the Boards of Benevolence and of Church Growth and Evangelism.

[11] Martin Luther King Jr., "The Quest for Peace and Justice," Nobel Lecture, December 11, 1964.

repressive measures forced on him by our racist society. Segregation and poverty are forced on our black youth so as to destroy opportunity, enforce failure and dependence on welfare. Resentment against society in general, and white society in particular, is the result. This leads us to question ourselves.

We as Christians must decide which is worse: the violence in the street or the problems that have sent the radical into the street to react violently. Violence should not be mentioned or condemned as a tool of change because it is in opposition to change. It creates fear, bitterness, and resentment.

It is regrettable that the wealth and power of the "church" has not, to this day, come out as a leader of this country's oppressed minorities. If the "church" does not participate actively in the struggle of an oppressed people for economic, technological, and social justice, it will lose the loyalty of millions. Therefore, we can no longer remain silent behind our stained-glass windows.

In 1967 we were forced to take note of a polarization of our community into two separate societies, one white and one black, separate and unequal.[12] Due to the continued breakdown of interracial communication, we may now be faced with a more violent situation than we faced in the summer of 1967.[13]

We have seen the ghetto created by the exodus from the inner city to the suburbs by some of the more affluent. This exodus has brought about the rape of the inner-city tax base, educational and technological facilities, and in their place has been left decay.

In the early years of the civil rights struggle, the black man could not perceive victory in a violent struggle. He was unarmed, unorganized, untrained, and most important, psychologically unprepared for the violent spilling of blood. There is no principle or code to which a man with honor or integrity may subscribe. Some of the more radical are saying, "The principle of self-defense should be applied if attacked."

Some of us Christians who search for an excuse to condone lack of action and non-participation in a troubled world can look at the Black Manifesto as a justification for apathy.

[12] This is the language of the Kerner Commission report. See n. 6 above.

[13] Violent protests marked the summer of 1967, climaxing with rioting in Newark and Detroit in July. See Kerner Report.

Those of us who are concerned about action to eliminate injustice, as pertaining to blacks, have mingled feelings about a Black Manifesto telling us how we should implement our economic resources. However, we rejoice that the Black Manifesto has shed light on the deprivation in the community.

We as Christians ought to go forward with a renewed sense of zeal because we have been challenged to action leading to the betterment of our brotherhood.

May God grant that our action lead to increased dignity for all of mankind.

# Financial Control

*Wesley W. Nelson, professor of pastoral care, North Park Theological Seminary, director of evangelism, Evangelical Covenant Church of America*[14]

The question of who shall be responsible for distributing any funds raised for the black community is one that will require the most careful consideration from every angle. Premature judgments and tendencies to over-simplify this issue can be very harmful to the entire Christian cause. There is a great deal of information that must be gathered before decisions can be made.

It would seem, for one thing, that if we appropriate the funds we should determine how they are to be spent. Responsible action should require that we be assured of responsible distribution of the funds we have appropriated. But there are a number of special situations that prevail in relation to the black community that make this matter quite complex. We are still woefully ignorant of the real issues related to race. In spite of what we may think, none of us is free from concepts and feelings that make it difficult to make decisions with complete objectivity. In order to make sure of such objectivity, therefore, distribution of funds must be done in close consultation with the black community itself.

We, as Christians, are understandably disturbed by what seems to us to be the subversive nature of some of the documents in which demands for funds are made. We cannot escape the responsibility of doing all we can to make sure these funds will not be diverted into channels which will subvert the cause for which Christ gave his life. This in itself will require

[14] Wesley W. Nelson (1910–2003) was professor of pastoral studies at North Park Theological Seminary (1960–1976) and director of evangelism for the Covenant (1968–1973), prior to which he had pastored Covenant congregations in San Pedro, Stockton, and Oakland, California; Tacoma, Washington; and Chicago, Illinois.

careful investigation. In our attempt to understand the issues we must not be unaware of the conditions under which this language was produced. We must remember that the Negro was brought from his country by violence, by people who raised no questions about subverting *his* values. We must remember that the church did not consistently take a stand against slavery. The church has generally shown little understanding of the problems even of innocent children growing up in the ghetto, and it has not been consistent in its insistence on equal rights for the Negro. The black race, seeing all this, has now become strong enough to begin to assert its demands. Against this background, we can hardly expect anything but revolutionary language.

Black leaders have said that the purpose of the revolutionary language was to get the attention of the white man. When we see the issue through the eyes of the black man, we find it to be far more complex than we had thought, and we must seek to discover whether the black leaders who eventually come to control propose a revolution which will merely change the status quo and guarantee full equality with the white man, or whether they are actually bent on destroying the present order and taking full control of government and economic institutions.

We have an interesting parallel in the case of the Russian Revolution. In 1905 the workers made certain demands of the Czarist government. By modern standards those demands were very moderate. However, the Czarist government was threatened by the revolutionary nature of the demands, rejected them, and in the conflict that followed many of the workers were killed. Had the government sought to understand the workers and to concern themselves with their problems, there would probably have been no Communist Revolution. Since the church supported the government, the Russian Revolution was godless and anti-church. To pay no attention to the demands of the Black Manifesto, to insist on distributing funds without consulting black leadership, to turn the funds over to the black community without concern for their proper use, would be no less [ir]responsible then.

The Covenant Church now has one of its finest opportunities to enter into conversation with the black leadership.[15] Our immigrant background disassociates us from much (but not all) of the tensions from slavery

[15] For a snapshot of the demographics of Covenant congregations and ministerium in 1969, see Ondrey, "The Covenant Responds," 9–13.

days.[16] The fact that we are somewhat disassociated from traditional American church life, that we are a small group, and that we have practically no endowments or large commercial holdings, makes us much less of a threat to the black man. It doesn't make us any less racist, but it makes it much more difficult for us to exercise our racism, and we can face the issue with Christian weakness. To work with black leaders in the distribution of funds we have raised could open the doors of mission in a way we have never known before. Here is an area that the Holy Spirit could bless. As we work side by side, God can work, and Christ can become Lord and Savior of many people, both black and white, and a whole new relationship could develop. Of course it involves a risk. Faith always involves risk. Shall we take this risk, launch out, and permit this to become one of our most glorious hours?

[16] The swell of Swedish immigration post-dated the Civil War. Fewer than 15,000 Swedes emigrated prior to 1865; by contrast half a million arrived in the United States in the fourteen-year period between 1879 and 1893—a full half of the total number that emigrated between 1850 and 1930.

# The Annual Meeting Decision on Aid to Black America

*Milton B. Engebretson, president*[17]

The Annual Meeting took action to request all Covenanters to give one dollar [$6.87[18]] this year to help alleviate suffering and conditions of poverty currently being experienced by some black Americans, and to continue the same request each year until a total of $335,000 [$2,301,558.65] has been given. The funds received are to be distributed through responsible agencies to be determined by a committee of black Covenanters appointed by the Executive Board. This, in essence, is what was decided.

What does this action mean?

It means that we have been awakened to a crying human need within the boundaries of our own country. Having become increasingly aware of the poverty in which many Negroes live and the indignities which many are forced to endure, the Annual Meeting decided to try to do something about it. It also realized regretfully that very little has been done heretofore. We also know that we can help by sharing with them from what God has entrusted to our care, and that helping them is consistent with the teachings of the New Testament. "But if anyone has the

[17] Milton B. Engebretson (1921–1996) was the sixth president of the Covenant (1967–1986). Prior to assuming this position, he had served as Covenant secretary (1962–1967) and pastored Covenant congregations in Kansas and Minnesota. Engebretson was the first Covenant president who was not Swedish American as well as the first not born into the Covenant. As such he "was a Covenanter by choice and adoption and not by birth. He was hence closer to the growing number of adopted Covenanters than his predecessors." Karl A. Olsson, *A Family of Faith* (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 1975), 129.

[18] Bracketed dollar amounts indicate sums when adjusted for inflation to March 2019 value, US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator, https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and truth (1 John 3:17–18).

It means that we are concerned enough to act.

The delegates realized that to act on this issue at this time would be a bit risky. The Covenant's motives for asking her people to give could be interpreted by some as bowing to the threats of black militants or submitting to demands for reparations made by the National Black Economic Development Conference in the "Black Manifesto." The action taken can in no way be construed as any such response. In fact, the preface to the recommendation stated clearly that we were, "not in sympathy with nor approving the philosophy and language of the Manifesto."[19]

A representative from the NBEDC made an appearance at the meeting and was given time to present his cause. *But our action had been taken before he came. So the word "reparations" does not apply to the Annual Meeting's action.* All the publicity given the Manifesto by news media may have indirectly affected the timing, but the Covenant first showed its concern when it raised $5,600 [$38,473.82] at last year's banquet for "Operation Bootstraps" in Chicago.

News reports have, however, already misrepresented our action and intentions and will probably do so again. Perhaps this is the price that must be paid to extend a helping hand in this age of controversy and deeply-felt sentiments.[20] The delegates, by their strong affirmative vote on the action, declared themselves willing to take that risk in order to get started with help, and I am proud to be numbered with them.

[19] *Covenant Yearbook 1969*, 157. Though Engebretson frames misinterpretation as a possibility, he knows well from letters already received that the fund has been viewed precisely in this manner, with some correspondents threatening discontinuance of financial support in consequence. In his responses to letters charging the Covenant with supporting "communist," "anti-American," and "militant" groups through the NBEC, Engebretson consistently affirmed the Covenant's action. To one concerned Covenanter, for example, he wrote, "I am, however, glad that the threats against the government and the church by their group did not deter the Covenant from taking a firm stand." Milton B. Engebretson to Mildred Holmberg, July 17, 1969. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[20] The Covenant was featured in the *Chicago Daily Defender* of June 23, 1969, primarily to serve as a foil to the negative response of the Catholic archdiocese in Chicago. The article quotes Holmes, "The Catholic Church of Chicago brags of having more than 90,000 black members, but still refuses to deal with the demands of the Black Manifesto, which was created to meet the needs of the black community" (Joseph L. Turner, "Militant Raps Cody Reparations Stand"). Reportedly, Holmes found this response

It means that the Commission on World Relief is authorized to do its best to call to our attention the needs and request all Covenanters to share. The request is voluntary and the goal reachable. The $67,000 [$460,311.73] can be given in addition to the $61,000 [$419,089.78] anticipated again for world relief. I am glad for the action that was taken.

Our mission is the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in accordance with the precepts laid down by Christ and his apostles. Our prime objective is still, and I trust always will remain, bringing people to Christ for salvation. But if I understand the New Testament correctly, one of the first projects undertaken by the apostles was to solicit funds to help the needy.

Our action also gives credence to the historical fact that evangelicals both started and promoted benevolent work in this world. Check out the origin of orphanages, hospitals, the YMCA, and the Salvation Army. We, at this Annual Meeting, picked up the lead, the consequences of which could yield tremendous results to the glory of Jesus Christ and the enhancement of the image of his church on earth.

I trust the foregoing gives some clarity on the matter. We want all to be conversant with the facts, as some news releases may variously report our action.

The amount requested can be attained. In fact, if you will put that dollar aside when you finish this article, to hold for the day of offering, the job will be half done by nightfall.[21]

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especially incomprehensible when contrasted with the response of other denominations. He referenced his interaction with the Church Federation of Chicago and the Covenant: "The Evangelical Covenant Church," Holmes said, "which is historically Swedish, and has only 50 black members out of 65,000 in the Chicago area [in fact 67,000 members in all of US and Canada in 1969], invited me to come and read the Manifesto to them. I was warmly received, and the Manifesto was accepted: they even made me a voting member of their organization's decision-making body." The clipping was sent to Engebretson from Craig Anderson via Wesley Nelson, with Anderson's suggestion that the Covenant might be wiser to leave inaccuracies uncorrected. Memo from Wesley Nelson, Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[21] For response to the fund, which fell far short of the initial optimism Engebretson expresses here, see Ondrey, "The Covenant Responds," 17–22.

# Fifty Years Later: Commentary on the Covenant's Response to the Black Manifesto[1]

*Craig E. Anderson, retired Covenant pastor,*
*former assistant superintendent of the Central Conference of the*
*Evangelical Covenant Church, Plantation, Florida*

Hauna Ondrey's careful research and winsome writing is an important contribution to a small but significant chapter in Covenant history. "Small" because the event and its influence are all but forgotten today; "significant" because it signaled, I believe, both a growing openness and commitment to issues of justice in the Covenant Church and a more diverse, socially aware Covenant. As I remember the Black Manifesto and its presentation at the 1969 Annual Meeting, several aspects stand out fifty years later.

In 1969 I was a student pastor at Oakdale Covenant Church on Chicago's South Side. I was very inexperienced to be sure but, like many of my seminary classmates, impassioned not only about the gospel but also about racial justice. We had studied the great Hebrew prophets, read the books of Martin Luther King Jr., Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and perhaps even Carmichael and Hamilton's *Black Power*.[2] We felt the pain, anguish, frustration, and anger of many in the black community over "a dream deferred," to recall Langston Hughes's memorable words. These

[1] This and the following responses reflect on the two articles that with it comprise volume 77, nos. 2–3 of the *Covenant Quarterly*: Hauna Ondrey, "The Covenant Responds to the Black Manifesto (1969)," 3–30, and "Covenant Commentary on the Black Manifesto (1969)," 31–44. Both can be accessed at http://covquarterly.com.

[2] Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967).

writings had left their mark. We were also influenced by our North Park Seminary formation, with its openness to truth no matter its source. We were shaped by faculty mentors like Donald Frisk, F. Burton Nelson, Earl Dahlstrom, Henry Gustafson, Fredrick Holmgren, Sigurd Westberg, and Wesley Nelson, who believed deeply in the gospel of God's grace and its far-reaching implications for our life in the church and world.

The Covenant heroes, if I dare call them that, in the events Ondrey describes were Milton B. Engebretson, president of the Covenant, and Worth V. Hodgin, director of urban ministries for the Central Conference, though I don't think we realized it at the time. There were other prophetic voices then and in the years that followed: Douglas Cedarleaf, Dewey Sands, Arnold Bolin, Wesley Nelson, Irving Lambert, Jean Lambert (Irving's daughter), Richard Carlson, and Sally Johnson, to name but a few of an ever-expanding list. Engebretson anticipated Holmes's arrival at the Annual Meeting and worked with the Executive Board to craft a gracious rather than reactionary response to the appeal. Engebretson saw the truth beyond the Manifesto's politicized and polarizing rhetoric and recognized the opportunity for a courteous Covenant response. Though he avoided overt mention of reparations, his reasons, I believe, were more political than philosophical.

Many of us Covenant pastors saw the call for reparations not as an unfair requirement for Americans several generations removed from slavery, or for Swedish Americans, most of whom immigrated here well after the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, but as an unpaid bill that America owed to our black brothers and sisters. We saw, and still see, reparations as an expression of justice and a tangible expression of our repentance, a penance if you will, for America's communal sins *whether we were the perpetrators or not*. If we, as an immigrant church, shared in America's blessings, then we must also embrace America's liabilities and seek forgiveness and healing for America's original sin. There could be no cheap grace.

Ondrey singles out Worth Hodgin who courageously set forth the case for reparations in the *Covenant Companion*, a stance that, incidentally, had its accompanying cost. Hodgin, like Wesley Nelson, was known for his deep commitment to evangelism but was equally devoted to racial righteousness. As a young pastor at an integrated Covenant church, I was grateful for the unwavering friendship, support, and encouragement he gave me. I loved the man. We approached the issues of the day with the same outlook and disposition. Many of us like Hodgin, though uncom-

fortable with the document's harsh tone, did not reject the Manifesto as out of hand. My guess is that this too was the opinion of the handful of black Covenanters in our midst at that time.

Hodgin and I had coffee with Herman Holmes Jr. after his presentation to the assembly. Though steadfast in his support of the cause he represented, we found him to be gracious and affable in contrast to the exacting tone of the Manifesto itself. And Hodgin and I concurred that Holmes was pleasantly surprised by the reception he received. The standing ovation when he completed his presentation showed empathy for the petition and its cause and a shared hope for a more just and equitable America and church. Regrettably, the financial response by Covenanters to the fund's appeal was disappointing, as Jim Hawkinson pointed out in his fine *Companion* editorial, "Stones for Bread," and as President Engebretson voiced in remarks at subsequent Annual Meetings. Ondrey indicates that this was probably due to Covenanters' failure to separate need from tactics in the Manifesto itself.

I have never understood white Christians' reticence in admitting complicity in the injustices perpetrated on black America nor our hesitation to accede to the fairness of reparations. Our tendency to claim innocence in matters of racism seems rather out of place for Christians who believe in the subtlety of sin but also in God's abundant grace and forgiveness. Even if we have no animus or prejudice on a personal level toward African Americans, we white Americans have all benefitted from structural racism. Why not simply confess our duplicity and receive God's forgiveness? Confession of sins for failures personal or communal, "known or unknown, remembered or forgotten," is not a negative but a positive act, and a bedrock of our theology. And once forgiven, to become "drum majors for justice," as Martin Luther King Jr. described himself.

Though the financial fulfillment of commitments made at the 1969 Annual Meeting was disappointing, I think the Covenant response to Herman Holmes Jr. and the Black Manifesto revealed deeper realities. It made visible a growing acknowledgment of our sharing in the sins against black America. It also revealed a Covenant temper of hospitality, largesse of spirit, and hope for both fairness and a welcoming posture to America's diversity. It also signaled the continuance of a seismic change in the old conflict that pitted evangelism against social action. Rather than seeing the two in opposition, the Covenant was growing in its awareness that these were two sides of the same gospel coin. I think all of this helped set the agenda for an increasingly inclusive Covenant Church, like the

one we see today, even as we long for a more expansive inclusion for tomorrow. These things do not happen apart from leadership, and in 1969 Engebretson, Hodgin, and others provided it.

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I am grateful to the editor of the *Covenant Quarterly* for the opportunity to reflect on the Covenant's response to the Black Manifesto. My entry takes the form of an ethical analysis of violence and oppression. I conclude that the Covenant's responses demonstrated some sympathy for the demands of the Black Manifesto yet also contributed to racial oppression and misunderstood the Covenant's complicity in violence, rendering the denomination unable to consider the good news of reparations.

Any system of historical and ongoing oppression such as racism requires four forms of support: ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized. Ideological oppression requires ideas that are normalized in widespread beliefs that one group is superior to another.[3] An example of this is the view that the US is superior or that white working class people are racist or sexist.[4] Institutional oppression includes the use of social, political, or economic power to support the ideology of a superior group. For example, African Americans are twelve times more likely to be wrongly convicted of drug crimes than whites (institutional oppression),[5] while over 90 percent of those who decide which TV shows are aired, which books we read, and which news is covered are white

[3] Cf. Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2019), 32. Charles and Rah call these mediating narratives that provide "fuel for dysfunctional systems." Their work goes into depth regarding the connection between toxic narratives and diseased spirituality as they adapt and reinforce systems such as racism and white supremacy in the United States.

[4] For an excellent analysis of the class ideologies present in liberal white professionals, see Joan C. Williams, *White Working Class: Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2017).

[5] Tanzina Vega, "Black People More Likely to Be Wrongly Convicted," *CNN Politics* (March 7, 2017), https://www.cnn.com/2017/03/07/politics/blacks-wrongful-convictions-study/index.html, accessed September 21, 2019.

(institutional superiority).[6] Interpersonal oppression finds expression in individual members of a dominant group mistreating those within an oppressed group: sexist jokes, gendered stereotypes, or dehumanizing language such as "illegals." Internalized oppression occurs when oppressed people *believe* ideologies about their inferiority because these ideologies are reflected in institutions and interpersonal interactions.

The above forms of oppression are root causes of violence. Because oppression is often invisible to dominant groups, the dominant culture labels as violent or militant peoples who make their oppression visible through resistance. The original name of the Black Panther Party was the Black Panther Party of Self-Defense. Their Ten-Point Platform was based on the repayment of the promised forty acres and a mule[7] in the form of fair access to housing, education, and safety against police brutality. Many Panthers exercised their second amendment right to carry guns. The Panther's effectiveness in making institutional oppression visible, joined with their resisting internalized oppression by physical and other methods of power, gained them the label militant—even before members carried guns—because the Black Panthers were not afraid to engage in violence.[8]

This example demonstrates how ideologies of oppression supported by institutional power cause violence, especially when they are resisted or exposed. It is misleading to conclude that the Black Panthers were violent without making visible the ideological oppression in the narrative of white superiority, the institutional oppression of the LAPD, and the internalized oppression that Black Power actively resisted. Myopic

[6] Robin Diangelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 31.

[7] "Forty acres and a mule" refers to the compensation promised by Special Field Order 15 to each freed African American family following the Civil War. However, rather than being used for black settlement as promised, the 330 miles of land was returned to white ex-Confederate landowners.

[8] The outcome of the primacy of militant labels, rather than viewing Panthers as advancing black flourishing, was the escalation of state-sanctioned violence. In 1969, four days after Fred Hampton was killed by a raid of the State's Attorney's tactical unit, the Los Angeles Police Department initiated an assault on the LA Black Panther office. Eleven Panthers were in the office. They defended their lives against two hundred LA officers; no one was killed, remarkably. The raid was justified based on false information provided by the FBI. Equal Justice Initiative, "Los Angeles Police Attack Black Panthers in Violent Raid," *A History of Racial Injustice*, available at http://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/dec/8, accessed September 21, 2019.

labeling, e.g., "Panthers are militant," conceals the root causes of violence and the most powerful forms of oppression.

Notably, the commentary on the Black Manifesto published in the August 1, 1969, *Covenant Companion* names ideological oppression such as racism. It also acknowledges interpersonal forms of oppression.[9] Yet institutional oppression goes largely unrecognized, and internalized oppression is misconstrued. For example, the consistent opposition to threats of violence against the US government reveals the inability to see institutional violence perpetrated by the US government. The result is that in most of the clergy responses violence is imputed to blacks and benevolence to whites. In this way, the Covenant was complicit in racial oppression by protecting two forms of it—institutional and internalized.

The Covenant was unique among evangelicals in its openness to financial giving, however. Covenant leadership's sympathetic response to the social claims of the Manifesto is distinct from most evangelicals who dismissed the Black Manifesto's claims outright and who were outraged by the demands of the Black Economic Development Conference. The Covenant made clear that the claims of the Black Manifesto were in fact very legitimate, as seen in the *Covenant Companion* and the Annual Meeting recommendations.[10]

On the surface, one might conclude that churches such as the Covenant who responded positively to the financial demands but rejected what they perceived as violent methods acted ethically. Yet the primary impetus behind the Black Manifesto was an *amending of power*, underscored by the Manifesto's appeal to reparations. Reparations is an acknowledgement of a history in which white America, in the words of the Manifesto, "exploited [the] resources, minds, bodies, [and] labor" of black people who have been "victimized by the most vicious, racist system in the world" in order to build and benefit from what has become "the most industrial country in the world." Reparations assumes that, beyond harm done to African Americans through slavery and its legacy of social institutions such as mass incarceration, repair is needed between people groups, and part of that repair is sharing power.[11] Finally, reparations is an opportunity for

[9] Cf. Wesley W. Nelson, "Financial Control," *Covenant Companion* (August 1, 1969): 10.

[10] For more on this, see Ondrey, "The Covenant Responds," 13–17.

[11] It is important to note that the Black Manifesto *never* demands white churches to give up all financial or other kinds of power. The fact that the Manifesto asks only $15 per black citizen underscores that it comes from a place of sharing—forty acres and a mule is not a request for everything.

the relationship between institutionalized oppression and internalized oppression to be interrupted. Reparations is the space where the possibility for healing—even flourishing—is born.

The clergy responses to the Black Manifesto published in the *Covenant Companion*, in combination with the broader Covenant responses to recommendations by the Annual Meeting for financial giving, offer an important lens for examining racism in the Covenant today. Rather than critiquing Covenanters in the past for not exposing institutional forms of violence or not recognizing the effects of internalized oppression, I commend Covenant churches today to receive this historical lens as an opportunity to assess our gaps around racial consciousness and abolish destructive behaviors that reinforce white cultural power.[12] Perhaps, this historical lens might even serve as a prophetic call from the past to revisit to good news of reparations.

*Donn Engebretson, major gifts officer and former executive vice-president, Evangelical Covenant Church, Chicago, Illinois*

It is a comfort, and yet a cold comfort, that to some degree the Evangelical Covenant Church and its leaders were ahead of other similar evangelical faith groups in responding to the claims of the Black Manifesto in 1969. I believe it would be remiss not to acknowledge and give thanks for progress, however small, in addressing the profound legacy of toxic systemic racial injustice in the United States. There was limited yet nevertheless important progress to celebrate, both in 1969 and today.

However, Hauna Ondrey's outstanding study of the Covenant's response to the Black Manifesto of 1969 demonstrates all too clearly the profound grip the enemy and the enemy's powers of racial division continue to hold on Christ's church in the United States—and how the Covenant Church remains in that same grip. I grieve the window this paper gives into the way the church too often marches to the tunes of toxic secular polarization rather than to the strains of a life guided by

[12] See also the Resolution on Antiracism passed by the Covenant Ministerium (by 84 percent) in their 2019 Annual Meeting. The resolution includes laments and practices for white clergy to raise racial consciousness and address sins of racism. Available at https://www.eccclergy.org/resolutions, accessed September 22, 2019.

God's righteousness as found in Scripture.

Again, I am grateful that the leaders of the Covenant, including my father, Milton Engebretson, chose an active financial response to the Black Manifesto and chose a path of limited engagement rather than outright, wholesale rejection to the Manifesto's claims. I am grateful that the representative from the Black Manifesto, Herman Holmes Jr., found the Covenant Annual Meeting to be a relatively welcoming place in contrast to other hostile church environments. I am grateful that thoughtful Covenanters brought an amendment to the motion to raise funds requiring black leadership be engaged in the distribution of those funds. I am also deeply grateful that there were Covenant voices that gave expression to the realities of racial injustice that were the genesis of the Manifesto.

But as Ondrey's careful study demonstrates, the response of the Covenant Church, as recorded in the actions of the Annual Meeting, failed to address the core issues of racial injustice that are so deeply ingrained in the United States, issues with which the Manifesto confronted the Covenant directly. President Engebretson hoped that "generosity" would create a new day of opportunity for addressing America's tragic legacy of racial oppression. But he and the voting delegates sadly rejected the Manifesto's call for a response rooted not in generosity but in justice. Without a profound recognition of the history and ongoing oppression of people from the African diaspora, the destructive consequences of that oppression continue generation to generation. This was tragic in 1969, and it is tragic today.

Richard Carlson's *Companion* article, written a year before the emergence of the Black Manifesto, was indeed prophetic. Carlson anticipated that, "Walls between men will become so imposing, hatred of men so intense, and frustrations of men so feverish, that violence will rule the land. And this 'government of the people' may well perish from the earth."[13] Today we see tragic and profoundly accelerated levels of racial division in the United States, fueled by a toxic polarization that is cynically used and fueled by our leaders to build their own base of power. These angry and divisive movements that have captured much of the evangelical church in the US are entirely and tragically in opposition

[13] Richard W. Carlson, "Second Thoughts on Black Power," *Covenant Companion* (August 1, 1968): 8.

to even the most elemental tenets of God's word, the Bible. The events reported in Ondrey's paper are tragic in that an opportunity to turn and repent was lost in 1969, and in many ways is still being lost today. Lost opportunities for the people of God are always opportunities for the forces of division fueled by our enemy who seeks only to "steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10). May this article be another opportunity for the Covenant to reflect, to turn, and to repent.

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Fifty years ago, in 1969, Richard Nixon had begun his presidency of the United States, and the country was still in deep pain and outrage because of the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr., and Robert Kennedy, the year before. Fifty years ago, white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues rejected the Black Manifesto because of its call to revolution "by any means necessary." Fifty years ago, the Black Manifesto was presented to the delegates of the eighty-fourth Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

At that meeting, the Black Economic Development Conference's (BEDC) Midwest director, Herman Holmes Jr., cautioned Covenant delegates not to be distracted by the Manifesto's harsh language, but instead to respond to its request for reparations as expressed in the ten-point document. The delegates applauded, and survey responses reported the Covenant's reception of Holmes as "the only BEDC encounter with a church which was not stormy at some point."[14] Delegates were hospitable and convicted that something should be done, yet subsequent efforts to actualize annual fundraising goals were unsuccessful, leading Covenant leaders to proclaim that the church had missed a real opportunity to respond to the national crisis of systemic racism.

Fifty years later, this nation remains deeply polarized and traumatized by a growing internalized narrative about racism that communicates that

[14] Robert S. Lecky and H. Elliott Wright, "Reparations Now? An Introduction," in *Black Manifesto: Religion, Racism, and Reparations*, ed. Lecky and Wright (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 27.

it is acceptable to distance, disassociate, and disengage from any responsibility to fix our unjust framework of racial hierarchy. In January of 2019, HR 40 was reintroduced to request the establishment of a commission to examine the institution of slavery in the United States and its early colonies and recommend appropriate remedies. Every year since 1989, Representative John Conyers Jr.—a lawyer and ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee—has introduced HR 40, and no action to form a commission has been taken. Every year, for the past thirty years, this bill has been introduced for action and no action has been taken. Let that sink in! This year, Representative Sheila Jackson Lee introduced a revised version of the bill.

The church is called to be "in" but not "of" this world. God's plan, Jesus's ministry, and the Holy Spirit's work continue to be about the liberation, restoration, and reconciliation of humanity to God and to one another. That work extends from creation in the garden in Genesis to every nation, tribe, people, and language depicted in Revelation 7:9–10. As messengers of God and disciples of Jesus who are empowered by the Holy Spirit, we have been given the ministry of reconciliation to make right what is wrong in this broken world. Two guiding documents in this journey for the Covenant are our Six-fold Test[15] and the 2019 Antiracism Resolution passed by the Covenant Ministerium.[16] These documents mark and monitor our church's journey through three movements in response to the demands of the Black Manifesto.

Liberation, restoration, and reconciliation are three movements that require the Covenant to do the hard work of confession, forgiveness, and repentance. We live in a unique time in history as disciples of Christ who have been given the ministry of reconciliation. God's journey includes a diversity of voices to model the Revelation vision of being both witnesses and agents of God's love to, for, and in the world. When one part of the body is being targeted through systemic racism and marginalization, the whole body must mobilize in response.

James Forman writes in the Manifesto, "for centuries, we [black people] have been forced to live as colonized people inside the United States,

[15] See https://covchurch.org/resources/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2011/10/5-Six-Fold-Test.pdf. The six areas are population, participation, power, pace-setting, purposeful narrative, and practicing solidarity.

[16] See n. 12.

victimized by the most vicious, racist system in the world."[17] As agents of God's restorative justice, we in the church must not only know this broken history but also name through confession the many ways in which the church is the "moral cement of the structure of racism in this nation,"[18] as we implement God's plan for restoration together. Liberation is a movement that begins with an understanding of how something became broken in the first place. In the struggle for equity and justice, having a historical understanding of the effects of slavery provides significant keys to determining what is needed to repair the imbalances produced by a system that benefits some and marginalizes others. A critical part of this historical work is naming through confession how our human experience was broken, as well as our call to do the rebuilding work together. From understanding and confession, the church moves to "the challenge of a radical commitment to undo, as much as we are able, the injustices of the past and to eliminate the injustices of the present. The means are available. The will to use them now, must not be withheld."[19]

Fifty-one years ago, Richard Carlson, a Covenant pastor and later North Park Seminary professor wrote, "Shook by a conscious or unconscious guilt, we the white church, might simply be frightened into inactivity, or we might repent and act."[20] Carlson outlined the worst approach for white Christians ("to continue to ask how we can help the Negro and what we can do for him") and named the necessary means for moving forward in response to the demands of Black Power that would be embodied in the Manifesto a year later: "provide financial backing to black capitalism, but with no strings attached and with no expectation of great thanks."[21] In essence, we all have work to do, but it is different work for black Christians than for white Christians—but it is work that we are called to do together as Christ's church. Carlson's article ended with these words: "If the church does not respond affirmatively, responsibly,

[17] For the text of the Black Manifesto, see the Archives of the Episcopal Church digital exhibit, *The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice*, available at https://episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/items/show/202, accessed September 30, 2019.

[18] "Statement of the Board of Directors of the National Committee of Black Churchmen," no date. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Carlson, "Second Thoughts on Black Power," 8.

[21] Ibid.

and actively to the phenomenon of Black Power, the consequences for our nation will be grave.…Walls between men will become so imposing, hatred of men so intense, and frustrations of men so feverish, that violence will rule the land. And this government of the people may well perish from the earth."[22] Fifty years later, we are living into the reality of these prophetic words.

Restoration is the second movement of the Black Manifesto. The ten-point document gives voice to restoration owed in the amount of $500 million, with $50,000 being the portion Holmes assigned to the Covenant. Although raising this amount was possible, as evidenced by the parallel amounts raised for the World Relief fund, it took the Covenant three years to do so. In a March 1970 editorial in the *Covenant Companion*, Jim Hawkinson wrote:

> The truth is that we never really took up the challenge presented to us by the 1969 annual meeting. Whether out of fear, prejudice, economic self-centeredness, or just plain lethargy, we have acted irresponsibly and need to be told so. To a world writhing in physical and spiritual anguish, we offer little more than a cold shoulder. Stones for bread is what it amounts to, and disdain for God-given brothers and sisters appealing for freedom and a fair chance.[23]

This marks the role of forgiveness in the movement of restoration. Along with repair, Hawkinson reminded Covenanters that "insofar as we have failed to respond to the appeals as we were able, each of us must share the blame. A signal opportunity was missed, not because the church was uninformed—unless it was uninformed, or misinformed, at the local level—but because we just didn't care enough."[24] God's plan for restoration is only possible through forgiveness. Asking for forgiveness for inaction, forgiveness for remaining uninformed, and forgiveness for not caring enough, moves us deeper in our work of understanding the broken history that must be healed. This understanding entails naming and dismantling structures designed to benefit some and exclude others and making the steps of healing accessible to everyone to fully liberate through restoration. If we fail to restore, we also fail to be reconciled.

[22] Ibid.
[23] James Hawkinson, "Stones for Bread," *Covenant Companion* (March 1, 1970): 32.
[24] Ibid.

Reconciliation is the call, work, and ministry of the church. Missing from the public witness is what this authentic ministry of reconciliation actually looks like. Fifty years later, we still struggle with the paralysis of the church and the causes of our immobility and silence. Fifty years later, we have a much clearer history of what needs to be done, but the question remains: Is it our will to do what needs to be done? With guiding documents and measurable markers for our journey together, will the Covenant Church be able to offer an authentic witness of reconciliation? Fifty years ago, Hawkinson wrote, "The time has come for us to quit playing games with world relief and aid to Black America. What the situation requires is a new determination to offer our means ourselves now in Jesus' name. No more is asked of us. No less will ever be enough."[25] Fifty years from now, what will our witness be?

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Hauna Ondrey's article contextualizes the Covenant's response to the 1969 Black Manifesto. Her article carefully describes where the ECC was in its own transition as a denomination when presented with the Manifesto and elucidates how white denominational leadership engaged, processed, and responded to the Manifesto. Before responding directly to Ondrey's article, I would be remiss if I did not briefly outline the black experience in the United States leading to the Manifesto and connect this legacy to the Manifesto and its aggressive language. I want further to link this history and the ethos of the Manifesto to present-day struggles for racial justice arising from the black community. This background and context are just as important as the framework Ondrey provides for understanding the ECC's response to the Black Manifesto.

**Slavery (1619–1863).** The black experience in the United States began with two and a half centuries of chattel slavery, slave lineage passed down through the matrilineal line at birth, making female slaves vulnerable to rape and forced reproduction from owners. In many states this practice persisted until Juneteeth, June 19, 1865.

[25] Ibid.

**Dred Scott Case (1857).** In this case the US Supreme Court ruled that no black person, whether free or slave, could claim US citizenship, rendering black residents unable to petition the court for their freedom.

**Convict Leasing (1865–1921).** This exploitative system existed legally until 1921 but persisted illegally in practice until 1941. Known as "Slavery by Another Name," convict leasing was enabled by the loophole in the Thirteenth Amendment, which legally outlawed slavery in the US, "except as a punishment for crime."

**Lynching Era (1877–1952).** 1952 is the first year since 1877 in which the US could record that no black person was lynched. Conservative estimates state that at least 5,500 black people were lynched over this period.

**Plessy v. Ferguson (1896).** This US Supreme Court decision upheld the constitutionality of racial segregation under the "separate but equal" doctrine.

**Jim Crow Era (1877–1968).** Jim Crow laws were a collection of state and local statutes that legalized black subjugation, racial segregation, and socioeconomic disparities.

**Red Summer (1919).** Red Summer refers to a series of approximately twenty-five anti-black riots that erupted in 1919 in major cities across the nation, including Houston, East St. Louis, Chicago, Washington DC, Omaha, Charleston, Tulsa, and Elaine, Arkansas.

**Desecration of Black Wall Street (May 31–June 1, 1921).** Greenwood, Oklahoma, was a suburb of Tulsa known as "Black Wall Street." An armed white mob of five thousand—hundreds of them deputized by the police—descended on Greenwood the night of May 31 and into the next morning, looting and burning to the ground thirty-five square blocks that housed hospitals, schools, churches, and 1,265 African American homes. The mob killed 300 African Americans, injured 800 more, and destroyed 150 businesses, accruing $1.8 million in damages (about $26.24 million in today's dollars).

**Murder of Emmett Till (1955).** Emmett Till was a fourteen-year-old African American from Chicago who was lynched while on summer vacation with his family in Money, Mississippi. Carolyn Bryant, a white cashier at a local grocery store, falsely charged Emmett with making sexual advances at her. Bryant's lie led to a group of white men gruesomely mutilating and murdering Emmett.

**The War on Drugs/Mass Incarceration (1971–present).** Since its launch in 1971, the War on Drugs has been the primary driver of the unprecedented growth within the US criminal justice system. In the US

today, it is predicted that one in three black men will spend time behind bars, and one in eighteen black women. Although black Americans are no more likely than whites to use illicit drugs, they are six to ten times more likely to be incarcerated for drug offenses. Consequently, black Americans make up roughly 6.5 percent of the American population but 40.2 percent of the prison populace. In 2016, twelve states had prison populations that were over 50 percent black: Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. In Maryland, 72 percent of the prison population was black.

The polarizing language of the Black Manifesto flowed from this history of oppression and systemic injustice. As Dr. King said in an interview with Mike Wallace, September 27, 1966, "I contend that the cry of 'black power' is, at bottom, a reaction to the reluctance of white power to make the kind of changes necessary to make justice a reality for the Negro. I think that we've got to see that a riot is the language of the unheard." While I understand how the language of the Manifesto prohibited some potential allies from joining the cause, I believe those individuals were missing the forest for the trees.

I appreciate the Covenant's maturity in 1969, authentically considering the Manifesto's content amid its polarizing language. Many contemporary leaders do not embody this disciplined compassion, as evidenced by responses we've witnessed in the era of Black Lives Matter. Covenant leaders set an important precedent for us in their response to the Manifesto. They illustrated that one must not agree with every single detail, claim, tenant, or tactic of something—be it a movement or the language of a manifesto—in order to affirm the truth that movement or manifesto seeks to expose. In a nation where black people have been legally reduced to property, rendered three-fifths of a person, and financially exploited to make the nation's economy the greatest in the history if the world, joined with the history surveyed above, calls to consider reparations, the question of whether Black Lives Matter, and the demands of the Black Manifesto are all logical. Furthermore, they are all laments rooted in theological truths. As Worth Hodgin ultimately concluded, "In face of the facts, the idea of the churches paying reparations is neither offensive nor ridiculous."[26]

[26] Hodgin, "Reparations," 8.

I am exceedingly impressed by Worth Hodgin's leadership. Hodgin embodied Philippians 2 by publicly wrestling with the concept of reparations—which he initially dismissed as "a preposterous hoax"—and arriving at the affirmative declaration that, "Reparations are an essential part of the idea of Christian repentance."[27] Hodgin showed a Christlike disposition in his humble leadership, moving from his own perspective to a place where he could consider the subject from the standpoint of his neighbor. He wrote, "However, there are a large group of responsible but angry men who see this action as most reasonable. Consequently, it is important for us to try to understand what they are saying to us."[28] This humility should be a Christian hallmark and an ECC virtue. When Philippians 2 informs our disposition, we are better neighbors and more faithful disciples of Christ.

Additionally, I appreciated the *Covenant Companion*'s willingness to print Hodgin's "case for reparations" alongside President Engebretson's thoughts on reparations despite their disagreement on the subject. This serves as a beautiful model for what constructive disagreement among denominational leadership could, and should, look like. The ECC should be intentional about drawing from both leadership examples today, amid the racial animus that continues to paralyze far too many, the political polarity that divides us, and the continued theological dismissal of reparations as biblically illegitimate and theologically unwarranted (Luke 19, Matthew 3:8, Acts 6:1–7).

Ondrey correctly critiques President Engebretson for his failure to respond to the Manifesto on its own terms, his inability to see the ECC as beneficiaries of systemic racism, and consequently his inability to see a denominational response as an act of repentance or justice in light of systemic sin. Yet I still want to note that I appreciate his ability to nevertheless rightly conclude "that the Covenant has a responsibility before God and all men to help lift the burden of indignity imposed on the black communities of America."[29] While Engebretson chose the comfort of compassion in the face of being charged to respond with justice, I am grateful that his leadership helped the Covenant reject the apathetic response many other denominations elected.

[27] Ibid., 15.

[28] Worth V. Hodgin, "Memo to Chicago Area Pastors re Black Manifesto," May 19, 1969. Record Series 1/2/6, Box 3, Folder 11, CAHL.

[29] *Covenant Yearbook 1969*, 157.

Furthermore, I appreciate that Engebretson concluded his 1969 presidential report with "an acknowledgment of the church's complicity in the national sin of racism and warned the church against allowing revolutionary rhetoric to dissuade it from confessing its true sins and so finding renewal and unity," as Ondrey reports.[30] I express my appreciation not to valorize or completely absolve Engebretson but because I honestly do not know whether, if presented with such a strong manifesto today, we Covenanters would be able to consider its truth beyond its charged language—much less that we would commit to raising $2.3 million for a cause many regarded with suspicion.

We would do well to be more intentional about exploring, celebrating, and canonizing our prophetic legacy of white leaders who took countercultural stances of faithfulness regarding racial justice. Covenant voices like Douglas Cedarleaf, Dewey Sands, Richard Carlson, Herb Hedstrom, Craig Anderson, Worth Hodgin, David Kersten, Mary Miller, Evelyn Johnson, Dick Lucco, David Swanson, Tammy Swanson-Draheim, Daniel Hill, and Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom and many others should be household names and models of what faithfully pursuing racial justice as a white leader looks like. I especially appreciate the prophetic words of Jim Hawkinson who wrote, "The truth is that we never really took up the challenge presented to us by the 1969 Annual Meeting. Whether out of fear, prejudice, economic self-centeredness, or just plain lethargy, we have acted irresponsibly and need to be told so."[31] We need truthtellers among us, people who will hold us accountable while speaking the truth in love.

I appreciate Ondrey's conclusion,

> Yet the action the Covenant took was a rejection of the very substance of the Manifesto and not merely its rhetoric.…It named white Christians as the beneficiaries of this centuries-long system of exploitation and called on them to make material repair as a matter of justice. The Covenant fund was not an act of justice but charity. It addressed the problem of generic poverty rather than the unjust distribution of wealth as the consequence of the particular history of black oppression, with its corollary of white responsibility.[32]

[30] Ondrey, "The Covenant Responds," 23.
[31] Hawkinson, "Stones for Bread."
[32] Ondrey, "The Covenant Responds," 24.

In this way, the Covenant not only missed a chance to be a pace-setting denomination regarding its commitment to racial justice; it also enacted a very problematic erasure of the black freedom struggle. When charged with the particularity of concerns arising from black oppression, the Covenant found it more palatable to shift the conversation to marginalization in general, expanding the fund and its beneficiaries, rather than sticking with the particular charges of the Black Manifesto. This response has strong parallels to proclamations that "All Lives Matter" in response to the declaration that "Black Lives Matter." Finally, the Covenant's refusal to contribute the funds it raised to the BEDC's United Black Appeal, as the Manifesto specified, illustrated that the ECC believed that the creators of the Manifesto could not be trusted to most faithfully steward the funds.

Ondrey concludes that, "Through the fund established, Covenanters sought, through their voluntary generosity, to be part of the solution; they did not see themselves in the problem—they did not see themselves as debtors."[33] This remains the case far too often. We must stop confusing, and conflating compassion, mercy, and justice. The myths of innocence and exceptionalism are extremely dangerous. Both prohibit us from seeing and understanding how we too harm our neighbors, through what we do and through what we leave undone. We may be well intentioned and still cause harm. We see this in our response to protests over systemic injustice today, be it protest over water rights, tribal land, sexual assault, police brutality, the separation of families at the border, gun violence, or the economic exploitation of our incarcerated sisters and brothers. Our responses, or lack of response, our civic engagement around these issues, and spiritual framework regarding these issues all profoundly matter. The revelation of our connection to these injustices should lead us to confession, lament, and repentance. We must acknowledge that all have sinned and fallen short—there is blood on our hands, too, individually and collectively as a denominational family. And Scripture calls us, both individually and collectively, to discern how the Holy Spirit is leading us to partner with God in the work God has already begun and is still actively engaged in: restoring all things to God.

[33] Ibid., 25.

*Mary Miller, lead chaplain, Covenant Living of Cromwell, Cromwell, Connecticut*

The year 1969 was a finale for the turbulent sixties. Our country knew despair over the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., anger over the Vietnam War, shock over the women's movement, violence against civil rights participants, and widening conflict over the have and have nots. The phrase "doing CD" (civil disobedience) was used by activists to heighten awareness of any number of causes. This was the state of the nation when the Black Manifesto appeared.

Combative language used in the Manifesto's demands should not be a total surprise considering the murders of civil rights leaders, lynching of black men, and Ku Klux Klan bombings of churches and burnings of homes and crosses. The propriety of the ecumenical church quickly threw out those words of righteous outrage. With them it threw out acknowledgment of US history and its systems of injustice. Embedded in that history is an understanding of reparations. "America was born with two birth defects—slavery of Africans and genocide of first peoples."[34] Birth defects do not magically disappear.

The comedian Trevor Noah, raised during apartheid in South Africa, was stunned to meet US citizens who denied the existence of racism in this country and in themselves. "America is weird," he said in an interview, "because someone can be offended more by being called a racist than being a racist. There is a lack of acknowledgement that African Americans are working from a place of deep oppression, and if there is no system where we are working to reform people or try to have a discussion, then that racism is not going to go anywhere."[35] As James Baldwin wrote, "People who shut their eyes to reality invite their own destruction, and anyone who insists on remaining in a state of innocence long after that innocence is dead turns himself into a monster."[36]

The deep dynamics of injustice mandate Christian discipleship. I have declared in sermons, "We are all racist, sexist, and classist."[37] These are

[34] Marian Wright Edelman in a speech to the Hartford Interfaith Clergy Association, November 9, 2015.

[35] Trevor Noah, Nightline interview with Norah Roberts, ABC News (2017).

[36] James Baldwin "Stranger in the Village," *Harper's Magazine* (October 1953).

[37] Based on the seminal book of Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (Random House: Toronto, 1981).

matters for our discipleship to Christ who spoke much about oppression, especially in the parable of the good Samaritan and Matthew 25. The Black Manifesto demanded repentance of the primal sin of enslavement as well as its consequential systems. No one can erase or undo centuries of slavery, but to acknowledge it notes ownership in it, inviting foundational repentance and, ultimately, recommitment to addressing its consequences.

Despite good-hearted intentions, the Covenant fund begun in response to the Black Manifesto attended to the consequences of slavery rather than admitting to the original sin. Giving money to address economic, educational, medical, and religious poverty is good. Widening leadership and donating to appropriate church programs is good. If more money had been given it would have been even better.

It is notable that Forman rejected the language of capitalism that was common at that time. Based on economic competition, capitalism has winners and losers. When that competition has rigged resources, opportunities, and systematic biases, it cannot be relied on. The Manifesto's list of corrections to racism described the heart of the matter. Reparations are a result of historical and ongoing racism.

I marvel at the vulnerable, growing, and inquiring spirituality present in the leadership of Worth Hodgin and Wesley Nelson. I doubt they had heard of reparations before. Their personal spiritual journey toward inclusion modeled a Covenant ethos. They led with the Spirit's generosity and grace. In an era where lines were drawn in the sand declaring moral rightness, they were motivated instead by righteousness. May God raise up more leaders in their example.

That the country in 2019 does not have race imbedded in public history classes is remarkable. Attempts to convey historical knowledge that encompasses the full diversity of America—including race, class, and gender for starters—are spotty. Although white secondary school graduates likely know African Americans were enslaved, Harriet Tubman ran an underground railroad, and Martin Luther King Jr. was a great leader, most of us know little of the whole complex chronology of our country.[38]

In April of this year, the Connecticut House of Representatives

[38] For example, is Sally Hemings's secret brick cell in Monticello a white historical fact, a black one, or an American one? And how do people learn that she was Martha Jefferson's half-sister?

approved a bill mandating and funding a course in every Connecticut high school to teach black and Latino history (Connecticut HR 7082). Many argued it would be better to infuse this into all public school history courses, but this bill is seen as a corrective first step. That it is an elective is telling. Fountain of Life Covenant Church's Nehemiah Center offers a class on African American history called "Justified Anger." Understanding of the history entails a necessary discussion of reparations.

Based on Deuteronomy 15:12–15, Ta-Nahesi Coates provides a moving and logical presentation of "the Case for Reparations."[39] It was good to see him in the discussion of national HR 40 in June 2019. This bill, first introduced by Representative John Conyers in 1989, was repeated annually until Conyers's 2017 retirement. The next year another from the committee forwarded the bill. It is "to establish a commission to study and consider a national apology and proposal for reparations for the institution of slavery" (HR 40).[40] This is the first year that arguments supporting even discussion of the bill made it to national visibility. (One can only wonder if there was any discussion on Bishop Desmond Tutu's recommendation that the US would be helped if we set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission as South Africa did at the end of apartheid.)

In 1970 I began studies at a state university before Black Studies and Women's Studies were developed. I have never had a class in either. Books and boundlessly patient men and women of many ages and hues have loved and challenged my growth in racial reconciliation—often at their sacrifice. Any growth is sporadic, not systematic, and I have a long way to go. The Covenant Church and nation do, too.

[39] Ta-Nahesi Coates, *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy* (New York: One World Publishing, 2017), chapter 6.

[40] HR 40, Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act, Congress.gov, available at https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/40.

*Jerome Nelson, former superintendent of the Central Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church, Gary, Indiana*

I was not affiliated with the Covenant when it was presented with the Black Manifesto in June 1969. Our church in Gary, Indiana, was adopted into the Covenant in 1986. Covenant pastor Willie Jemison had recruited us to join this white denomination that was intentionally trying to be a diverse denomination and where being black was fine. The first time I heard a detailed explanation of the Black Manifesto was in the fall of 1969 from Angela Davis. At the time I was the president of the Black Student Union at Purdue University and a Black Panther Party sympathizer.

I was intrigued by the Black Manifesto when I read it but also a little taken aback and offended by certain aspects. It was obviously influenced by the Black Power movement, Malcolm X, the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., the Black Panther Party, and the civil rights movement. I wondered why James Forman was acting alone rather than as part of a team or group. He was not a member of the National Black Economic Development Conference but was just speaking for them. When I met him, Forman was the executive secretary of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. I was surprised at the appeal to violence. The demand for white churches and Jewish synagogues to pay reparations to black people in this country confused me: why hadn't Forman included the broader society and government? And the call to arms for blacks in the United States to set up a black-led socialist government made no sense to me; it could never happen in America. But I understood the need for the land bank, the television stations, and the radio stations.

In regard to the divisive issue of reparations for slavery, my position puts me at odds with some black groups, leaders, friends, and associates. The subject of reparations is high in the public consciousness due to several new developments. For one, of the issues was addressed recently by the United States Congress. The US House of Representatives Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties held a hearing on a bill to establish a commission to study a national apology and proposal for reparations for the institution of slavery.

There is no doubt that the black community needs repair as a result of 246 years of violent servitude, followed by decades of Jim Crow. The problem is that reparation is very complex, with few people coming to a consensus as to how it should look. This nation became one of the richest

on the planet due to four hundred years of free labor. Along with it has come the atrocious treatment of blacks in this country, from the inception of slavery to the present day. Institutional racism and its attendant maltreatment have impacted every aspect of black society.

*All* black people in the United States have been and are subjected to previous and current adverse whims of institutional racism, white supremacy, socio-economic violence, and other systemic barriers that contribute to a lower quality of life for all of America's darker citizens. My interest in the Black Manifesto was fueled not by its rhetoric or demands but by my belief, which I still hold, that the Christian church in America should have always done more in fighting injustice.

Over the past twenty-five years, we in the Covenant Church have passed at least six resolutions related to criminal justice, racial righteousness and reconciliation, ministries of mercy, and poverty: Racial Reconciliation (1995), Call for Bringing Economic Hope to the Poor (1999), Call for Ministries of Mercy in Jesus' Name (1999), Our Relationship with the Poor (2003), Racial Righteousness (2008), Criminal Justice (2010).[41] Did we as a denomination ever truly take up the challenge of any of these resolutions? I call all of these "promises made but not fulfilled."

We have done a good job of being compassionate and merciful. Compassion is identifying with and joining in the suffering of others; mercy is extending God's unconditional love. But when it comes to justice, we could do much, much better. Justice is joining God in making things right, correcting what is wrong. In doing justice we ask, Why does this brokenness exist? How do we address the causes?

I truly understand the frustration and disappointment expressed by Jim Hawkinson in his *Covenant Companion* editorial of March 1, 1970, titled "Stones for Bread." Hawkinson was speaking to the failure of the fundraising efforts in response to the Black Manifesto request. In castigating Covenanters for their paltry giving, he wrote, "A signal opportunity was missed, not because the church was uninformed—unless it was uninformed or misinformed at the local level—but because we just didn't care enough." His editorial concluded,

[41] For full text of many resolutions see https://covchurch.org/resolutions/ as well as the F.M. Johnson Archives and Special Collection's Frisk Collection of Covenant Yearbooks, http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/npu_covyb.

> The least that should be said is this: the time is past when we can whisper pious nothings in the world's ear and get away with it. Our proud and often haughty judgments on the needy of this earth and our easy disdain for their plight must seem at times like a stench in the nostrils of the Almighty. The time has come for us to quit playing games with world relief and aid to black America. What the situation requires is a new determination to offer our means and ourselves now in Jesus' name. No more is asked of us. No less will ever be enough.[42]

At this year's Annual Meeting of the Covenant Ministerium a Resolution on Antiracism was passed to reaffirm the biblical call of the 2008 Resolution on Racial Righteousness. Wouldn't it make God happy if we fulfilled our promise this time?

*David Swanson, pastor, New Community Covenant Church, CEO, New Community Outreach, Chicago, Illinois*

The demand of the Black Manifesto was clear: $500 million given by white churches and synagogues as reparations for those African Americans who have been "exploited and degraded, brutalized, killed and persecuted." But perhaps what is most clear throughout the Manifesto is the insistence that white Christian and Jewish institutions bear a particular responsibility to repair the material impact of racism.

In their various responses to the Black Manifesto, Covenant leaders revealed several assumptions about the denomination's role in addressing racial inequities. These responses are notable for what they reveal about the lens through which we observe similar conversations about racial injustice and repair today. After all, the debate about whether reparations are owed to African Americans is an ongoing one. Ta-Nehisi Coates's 2014 *Atlantic* article, "The Case for Reparations," placed the debate on center stage, making the point that it is possible to calculate the financial impact of racially motivated housing discrimination.[43] And recently, for

[42] Hawkinson, "Stones for Bread."

[43] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *Atlantic* (June 2014), available at https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/.

the first time, a House of Representatives subcommittee held a hearing to consider studying the need for reparations.[44] How the Covenant engaged these difficult topics fifty years ago can help us see how we are engaging similar realities today.

Three broad assumptions are evident in the Covenant response to the Black Manifesto that have relevance today: the priority of appearance, the identity of the denomination, and the center of need.

The Manifesto's language is intentionally direct, a product of its revolutionary times and proximity to black nationalist ideology. It repeatedly addresses "the racist white Christian Church" and makes clear the intention to disrupt church services with force. In their own ways, each of the four Covenant responses published in the August 1, 1969, *Companion* addresses how the denomination's association with the Manifesto will appear. Worth V. Hodgin quotes Dr. Luke Mingo of the predominately African American National Baptist Church, whom he assures the reader is "a warm evangelical."[45] While agreeing with the aims of the Manifesto, Dr. Mingo disagrees with its "revolutionary rhetoric" and fears "that white people will get 'hung-up'" on it. Robert L. Sloan Jr. notes the "violent language" of the Manifesto,[46] while Wesley W. Nelson acknowledges that some will be "understandably disturbed by what seems to us to be the subversive nature of some of the documents."[47] President Milton B. Engebretson feared that some would view the denomination as "bowing to the threats of black militants."[48]

While each of the respondents went on to affirm the basic fairness of the Manifesto's demands, each felt the need to identify and, in some cases, distance themselves from its language. In their concern about appearance, about how it would look to be seen supporting a document that was so explicit about white Christian racism, we can draw parallels to similar contemporary concerns. In recent years our society has debated the motives of a black quarterback kneeling during the national anthem to protest instances of police brutality, the merits of stating plainly that

[44] Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "At Historic Hearing, House Panel Explores Reparations," *New York Times* (June 19, 2019), available at https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/19/us/politics/slavery-reparations-hearing.html.

[45] Worth V. Hodgin, "Reparations," *Covenant Companion* (August 1, 1969): 8.

[46] Robert L. Sloan Jr., "Force and Violence," *Covenant Companion* (August 1, 1969): 9.

[47] Nelson, "Financial Control."

[48] Milton B. Engebretson, "The Annual Meeting Decision on Aid to Black America," *Covenant Companion* (August 1, 1969): 12.

black lives matter, and the humaneness of separating migrant children from their parents at our southern border. Too often our responses to these important moments have shown a greater concern for our appearance—of associating our churches with seemingly controversial people or demands—than with the lived experiences of those suffering injustice.

In his response, Wesley W. Nelson reveals another of the Covenant's assumptions that persists to this day, that our distinct identity sets us apart from other predominately white Christian institutions. He writes, "Our immigrant background disassociates us from much (but not all) of the tensions from slavery days. The fact that we are somewhat dissociated from traditional American church life, that we are a small group, and that we have practically not endowments or large commercial holdings makes us much less of a threat to the black man." Courageously, he goes on to note that none of these things "make us any less racist."[49]

Nelson's assertion about the denomination's distinctiveness resonates with my own anecdotal experiences. Over the years I've heard it said that it is our immigrant story, our roots in Pietism, our relatively small size, and our existence outside of mainstream evangelicalism that make us different from other majority white denominations. But all of these self-understandings mistake the nature of racial whiteness and the ways racial inequity is perpetuated today.

White Covenant people and congregations have benefited, and continue to benefit, from the nation's racial hierarchy. That the Covenant was not organized before slavery was abolished makes us no less complicit in structures of racism and white supremacy. In my own city of Chicago, I think about white suburban churches—and, if I'm very honest, more recent urban church plants like my own—which benefitted from white flight from the city toward federally subsidized suburbs sustained by government-backed mortgages. African Americans were systematically excluded from these suburbs and loans and, because the vast majority of wealth in this nation is generated by home equity, today face a massive wealth gap. Regardless of how white Covenant people see ourselves, we continue to benefit from the same racist system identified by the Black Manifesto.

Finally, while the Covenant respondents all believe that the denomination should engage with the need identified by the Manifesto, they

[49] Nelson, "Financial Control."

center that need outside of the denomination. Nelson sees the Manifesto as having opened "the doors of mission in a way we have never known before."[50] Engebretson frames the denomination's financial responsibility alongside the apostles' first project "to solicit funds to help the needy."[51] By centering need outside of the Covenant, these leaders betray two assumptions. First, they imagine the Covenant as exclusively white. There is no internal repair to be done because, as a white institution, no black people within the denomination have been harmed by its racism. Second, while the respondents are admirably willing to acknowledge white Christian racism, they do not acknowledge how this sinfulness is evidence of their own need. By categorizing their response as compassion and mission, they miss the opportunity to confess their own need for reconciliation.

Each of these instincts remains with us today. While the Covenant is far more racially and ethnically diverse now than it was in 1969, we remain culturally white in our imagination and assumptions. We often expect people of color to assimilate to white norms and customs. And while we are quick to talk about our efforts to love mercy and do justice, rarely have I heard these efforts expressed as evidence of our own need for reconciliation and repair. It is possible, though, that we could pursue the work of racial justice not only because of the harm that exists in the world, but because of the profound need for equity that exists within our church.

Though I have identified how the blind spots of Covenant leaders in 1969 help us see our own similar deficiencies today, we can be thankful that these leaders willingly engaged a document that was considered controversial among their mostly white peers. It was courageous for Hodgin to confess that "the white church has been and is today deeply entrenched in the system of white oppression."[52] Unfortunately, his analysis remains as true today as it was then. Unfortunate as well is how rarely we hear this truth so plainly spoken. I pray that we white Covenant pastors and denominational leaders will take the baton from that previous generation, learning from their missteps and building on their courage. We could then become a closer reflection of the historical Covenant instinct to reflect God's friendship with all who fear him.

[50] Ibid.
[51] Engebretson, "Annual Meeting Decision."
[52] Hodgin, "Reparations."

*Lenore Three Stars, community leader for racial reconciliation,*
*Spokane, Washington*

*Mitakuyapi, Wicahpi Yamini emaciapi.* My relatives, my name is Lenore Three Stars. I am Oglala Lakota, one of the seven bands of the *Oceti Sakowin* (Seven Council Fires), also known as the Great Sioux Nation. I was born on Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, where my father was born. My mother is Minnecoujou Lakota from the Cheyenne River Reservation, also in South Dakota. This means that our ancestral lands include *He Sapa*, the Black Hills, where our creation story lives. I introduce myself this way because kinship is of primary importance in the Lakota family system.

Before the subject of reparations is discussed, it is important to first consider worldviews. You have one. When I addressed you as *mitakuyapi*, "my relatives," I was reflecting a Lakota worldview that we are all related. We are related to Creator, to each other, and to all creation, human and nonhuman, including the land. Lakota call the earth *Ina Maka*, Mother Earth, denoting a deep and honoring relationship. The goal is to be a good relative, so that we can live in the harmony of right relationship. When this right relationship of harmony is broken, we must try to find a restoration of balance. I make this point because most of the misunderstandings I have had in culture and theology were based on a difference of worldviews, between an indigenous worldview and a Euro-western worldview.

An indigenous worldview includes a theology of the land that Euro-western worldviews do not. I imagine that at one time the settlers had a deep connection to their ancestral lands. But that relationship was severed when they left their homelands, and I have to think that it caused unresolved "land trauma" for them. They tried to fill that void with a quest for property by taking our ancestral lands. But only a relationship to the land will satisfy the spirit.

Indigenous peoples are connected to their ancestral lands in a reciprocal relationship. Each creation story for Native peoples locates them in a particular place, which is their land covenant. This sense of place is foundational to Native identity and spirituality. The land is a deep connection to place—it is not portable.

This land relationship leads us to understand why monetary reparations does not fully fit a Native sense of justice. Milton Engebretson characterized African Americans as "one minority group within our nation

long subjected, at best, to a position of secondary standing in American life."[53] Of course, this can also be said of Native Americans. We have both experienced a violent history of racial oppression in the United States, marked by white Christian complicity.

The Black Manifesto demanded a particular amount of monetary reparations from white churches as a just response. As Ondrey's article pointed out, there is a reasonable basis, historically, politically, and theologically for such reparations for African Americans. I believe in the reparations paradigm and can support my black relatives in this. Yet for Natives, I believe that any just response must come from the United States government based on a treaty relationship. The United States made hundreds of nation-to-nation treaties with Native nations and kept none. Justice is not defined only by money but by honoring the legal and moral obligations spelled out in treaty terms. Let it be said that treaties were signed by Native nations under duress in order to survive. When possible, however, it was critical for Natives to reserve their sacred homelands in the treaties.

For instance, the Black Hills were promised to the *Oceti Sakowin* (Sioux Nation) in a provision of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. These terms were intentional and important to the Oceti Sakowin because that land is sacred. He Sapa is where our creation story tells us that we emerged, from the place we call "the heart of everything that is." For the Oceti Sakowin, He Sapa is the specific homeland that we are responsible to care for, as it cared for us for millennia. It is our land covenant with Creator. To not be able to live out that responsibility is a coerced disobedience.

In 1874, Custer's expedition found gold in the Black Hills and the treaty was breached in favor of army protection for incoming miners. In 1980, the Supreme Court ruled that the United States took this land without just compensation and awarded $17.1 million to the Sioux. Yet, this form of capitalism has not been a resolution in this case. In spite of uncommon poverty (e.g., over half of the residents of Pine Ridge Reservation live below the poverty line), the Sioux tribes have continually refused the money. They say that He Sapa was never for sale—that would be like selling your mother. With interest, the award has grown to about $1.3 billion, and it remains unclaimed for reasons that don't make sense in a western worldview. Monetary reparations do not fit Native ideas of

[53] *Covenant Yearbook 1970*, 8.

justice when it comes to sacred land.

With respect to the lingering question of racism in the church, I've been the lone Native in many Covenant circles for decades. As a denomination that has grown in wealth and size, I wonder what the Covenant will do to help change that. I have some thoughts. I think that it is one thing to accommodate Native identity by affirming *imago Dei* and quite another to share the socioeconomic power and alter the church structure. Could we welcome indigenous theologians to the leadership table, regardless of western credentials? Given the Covenant's emphasis on planting churches, could we include planting indigenous-led ministries into sustainability using Native cultural standards that take time? Here is what I trust: the resurrected Creator Jesus will put Ina Maka right again. Our relative is groaning and awaiting liberation and healing right alongside us. From a Lakota perspective, life is a sacred circle. It is not about a linear orthodoxy; it is about a continuous orthopraxy of being a good relative. In that worldview, reparation is an integral part of reconciliation, a lifestyle of seeking to restore balance and harmony.

# Book Reviews

*Anthony Emerson, associate minister, Mosaic Community Covenant Church, director of spiritual life,*
*The Brookwood Community, Houston, Texas*

*Paul Koptak, emeritus professor of communication and biblical interpretation, North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois*

*Andrew Wickersham, ambassador Warren Clark fellow,*
*Churches for Middle East Peace, Washington, DC*

*Jesse Slimak, lead pastor, Bethany Evangelical Covenant Church,*
*DuBois, Pennsylvania*

**Joel Edward Goza, *America's Unholy Ghosts: The Racist Roots of Our Faith and Politics* (Cascade Books, 2019), 232 pages, $22.40.**

There are several specific things that the church can do. First, it should try to get to the ideational roots of race hate." This suggestion from Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Stride Toward Freedom* begins Joel Goza's *America's Unholy Ghosts* and serves as the organizing principle of Goza's work. Writing as a white pastor in Houston's nearly all-black Fifth Ward, Goza argues that the post-civil rights era narrative of racial evolutionary progress remains hollow; the roots of the racism-weed have never been pulled from American society or from the white church and have choked, or at least marred, attempts to grow toward racial equity. With this in mind, Goza seeks to trace the roots of the American system of racism through a close reading of three key philosophers: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Adam Smith. Together these philosophers' ideas form much of America's racist root system, including three critical political lies and

three crucial religious lies that America and its church have bought into.

First, Thomas Hobbes *imagined* a racist world order built on rational thought. Out of the fear of war and poverty, Hobbes posited the goodness of rational, as opposed to religious, totalitarian power that protects its justifiably self-interested citizens. This led to the first political lie—that the purpose of government is not achieving the common good but protecting individuals' self-interest—as well as the first religious lie—that Christians can be in right relationship with God without being in right relationship with the poor. For Hobbes, religion consisted solely of knowledge of God and obedience to rulers.

While Hobbes's hope for a totalitarian power proved too crude for European elites, John Locke took many of his ideas for society and *institutionalized* an aristocratic world order. This involved selling Hobbes's belief that economics is necessarily a moral-free math and is unrelated to fostering equity. Locke also proposed the second religious lie: religion is only about saving souls and should in no way affect societal arrangements.

Finally, Adam Smith *ingrained* hard-hearted ideologies into modern society. Due to his Stoic philosophical commitments, Smith told the third political lie—justice is only contractual and retributive—and the third religious lie—indifference to injustice is no threat to one's relationship with God.

After covering how these ideas have impacted the United States and its churches, Goza concludes with lessons learned from the Prophetic Black Church on how to live in the face of racist systems, including the necessity for right Christian living of intimacy with the poor and the oppressed, the importance of treating every person with dignity as created in the image of God, and the call to persevere in self-sacrifice and to reject self-interest.

*America's Unholy Ghosts* has only two minor weaknesses. It occasionally makes assumptions about recent events and political figures that not every reader will agree with, and it does not seriously engage theologians or philosophers outside of King and the book's "unholy trinity" of philosophers, though the latter issue is more a gap than a weakness.

But the book's imperfections are miniscule in comparison to its strengths. *America's Unholy Ghosts* is unique; it consists of a close reading of three vitally important philosophers and an intimate look at contemporary racial injustice and how these philosophers helped form it. It is powerful; its explanatory scope in regard to our recent and current racial reality is at times staggering. It is beautiful; it is organized elegantly,

written with passion and wit, containing delightful turns of phrase, and it makes the ideas of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century political philosophers engaging and relevant. Finally, it is wise; Goza identifies hidden problems and gleans from the best of the Prophetic Black Church tradition in response.

*America's Unholy Ghosts* is a book that is foundationally important for those seeking racial righteousness. In it, Goza compellingly exposes the roots of the American racist system and, more importantly, is able to point his readers in the right direction in response, namely, self-sacrificial intimacy and solidarity with the racially oppressed. The ideas here are original, the insights fresh, and the truths prophetic.

ANTHONY EMERSON

**Ellen F. Davis with Austin McIver Dennis, *Preaching the Luminous Word: Biblical Sermons and Select Homiletical Essays* (Eerdmans, 2016), 332 pages, $33.**

Ellen Davis is the Amos Ragan Kearns Distinguished Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke Divinity School. She has been writing about preaching for some time, asking us to read great sermons of the past from Lancelot Andrewes, John Donne, and George Herbert. In this collection of her own sermons and essays we find not only another exemplar for preaching but biblical theology that nurtures. It is spiritual reading that speaks to the depths of our souls.

It is also a memoir of Davis's growth as a preacher. Five homiletical essays trace that growth, or six if you count her general introduction, "On Not Worrying about Sermon Illustrations." There Davis marks two encounters in 1983 that changed her approach to preaching. First, she found that Donne's sermons modeled biblical preaching with a focus on one text, references throughout the canon, and spare use of brief illustrations. "Here was a style of preaching that was theologically probing, emotionally engaged, eloquent, even entertaining—and entirely focused on the Bible" (p. xxii). Second, a comment Krister Stendahl made at lunch following his Yale Beecher Lectures confirmed what she was learning from Donne: "Be careful about using an example that is too good, too 'unforgettable.' If your preaching is doing what it should do, then people probably won't remember what you said, and it doesn't matter. Your goal should be that the next time they turn to that part of the Bible, *it* will say a little more to them" (p. xxiii).

This idea carries through the rest of Davis's essays, especially the first, "Witnessing to God in the Midst of Life." A comment from a student in an Old Testament survey course clarified the issue: the preachers she had heard set out an ideal from the New Testament and urged listeners to live into it. Given the earthy nature of the Old Testament, how could one do the same there? Davis came to see both Old and New Testaments as more realistic than idealistic and decided that she would preach from the lives of people who walked with God.

In a series of Davis's sermons that follow, Moses "sees" a burning bush and the suffering of the Hebrew people as God sees them, a worthy model. Yet he forfeits the royal palace when he kills the Egyptian and is not allowed to enter the promised land as Israel's leader—hardly an ideal story. Likewise, Moses is a model of humility when he returns from the mountain with shining face yet sits with the people to teach them Torah. He loses that humility when he asks, "Shall we bring forth water" (not "the Lord") and pays the price, but he does not stop leading or holding fast to God. Therefore, Davis concludes, humility is God-awareness, so Moses is rightly called the humblest of persons, second only to Jesus.

"Holy Preaching: Ethical Interpretation and the Practical Imagination" takes its cue from George Herbert's advice that country preachers should "stop trying to impress their people and move them to repentance and an all-involving commitment to the Christian life" (p. 89). Holiness requires imagination, new ways of thinking that enable one to read the text and live into what one finds there, because the two are intimately related. Davis's sermons on Psalms offer fear of the Lord as solace for the fears and heartbreaks we will encounter.

Two more essays explore genres by way of representative books. Biblical wisdom guides our explosion of knowledge; the Book of Proverbs "forces us to look at how our relationship with God is expressed through myriad daily social practices, including economic practices" (p. 152). The whole of Isaiah grounds vocation in a vision of God's holiness; lectionaries and sermons fall short when they celebrate "God with us" (Emmanuel) without remembering God's justice and righteousness. So, in a sermon celebrating a friend's ordination, she tells him to keep his own vision clear so he can lead the church in seeing God.

Davis's final essay on preaching New Testament texts is titled "Preaching in Witness to the Triune God." The central themes that run through the two Testaments should be sounded regularly, so while Davis asks for preaching from the "first 75 percent of the Bible" (p. 245), she advises

preachers to dive in anywhere and direct listeners' attention to the whole. An Easter sermon reflects on the resurrected Jesus's request for something to eat, remembering that "Whenever Jesus eats, revelation happens." Just ask Levi the tax collector and Simon the Pharisee (p. 272). But there is more here: the Lord who need not ask Israel for the flesh of bulls or blood of goats (Psalm 50:7–13) asks for food (Luke 24:41). He stands there, human and hungry, once again identified with those who go without.

The sermons were collected and introduced by a preaching pastor, Austin McIver Dennis. In an afterword, Dennis quotes a Duke student who had just heard Davis preach: "She never wastes a word" (p. 317). True as it is, readers could take her erudition, word craft, and plain common sense as the sources of her preaching power. As the book proves, Davis knows better.

PAUL KOPTAK

**Mae Elise Cannon, ed., *A Land Full of God: Christian Perspectives on the Holy Land* (Cascade Books, 2017), 295 pages, $30.**

For evangelicals who are unsure how a biblically informed Christian should approach the complexities of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, *A Land Full of God: Christian Perspectives on the Holy Land* offers a nondogmatic way to engage with multiple perspectives. This most recent book edited by Mae Elise Cannon, an ordained minister in the Evangelical Covenant Church and executive director of Churches for Middle East Peace, is a compendium of personal reflections on the conflict in the Holy Land. The volume features notable evangelical voices, including Jim Wallis, Tony Campolo, Shane Claiborne, Dale Hanson Bourke, and Lynne Hybels, as well as a few prominent Catholic and mainline Protestant leaders such as Pope Francis and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Each of the book's seven sections presents a diverse collection of essays organized around a distinct theme relating to Christian peacebuilding in the Holy Land. Sections one through four offer a compelling argument for why Christians should care about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, addressing pressing theological questions about the relationship between the church and the Jewish people, the historical role of Christian Zionism, and a political lens for understanding the conflict. The last three sections examine what a Christian vision of peace should look like, how Christians should build relationships with people who hold different perspectives, and how Christians can become advocates for Israelis and

Palestinians in the United States.

This is a much-needed book for an increasingly polarized age. Rather than simply adding one more beginner's guide to the history, politics, and human rights issues of the conflict, this book offers the reflections of those whose lives have been deeply moved by the human suffering they have witnessed in the Holy Land. These essays provide glimpses into the hearts and minds of authors with vastly different approaches to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, providing space for conflicting views without appearing in any way disjointed. The editor's perspective is quite apparent throughout without being overbearing. The entire project is premised on the belief that it is possible for Christians to be pro-Israeli, pro-Palestinian, and ultimately pro-peace.

*A Land Full of God* is a valuable resource for Christians who feel overwhelmed by the complexities of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land remains as popular today as it was centuries ago, and often Christians return home with a conflicting mix of emotions. This is just the book needed to help returning pilgrims grapple with what they have experienced and come to terms with what they can do to work for peace in the Holy Land.

ANDREW WICKERSHAM

**Todd Wilson and Gerald Hiestand, eds., *Becoming a Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities for Church Leadership* (IVP Academic, 2016), 217 pages, $25.**

Editors Todd Wilson and Gerald Hiestand are cofounders of the Center for Pastor Theologians (CPT), the goal of which is "to resurrect [the] ancient vision of the pastor as a theologian—not an end in itself, but for the renewal of theology and thus the renewal of the church in its ministry and mission to the Word" (p. 2). Their edited volume *Becoming a Pastor Theologian* offers papers from the first annual CPT conference, held in 2015, and follows their thought-provoking book *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Zondervan, 2015). Their earlier text traced the bifurcation of academic theology from the life of the church, a development they named in this volume "a tragic division of labor that continues to bedevil the Christian ministry and the church" (p. 2). If their first volume argued persuasively that the pastor's identity as theologian must be reclaimed for the health of both church and academy, this second volume attempts to embody that vision.

*Becoming a Pastor Theologian* consists of a brief but helpful introduction, followed by fifteen essays organized into three sections: (1) The Identities of the Pastor Theologian, (2) The Pastor Theologian in Historical Perspective, and (3) The Pastor Theologian and the Bible.

The first section is outstanding. Several essays respond to critiques of Wilson and Hiestand's vision that the work of the theologian or the work of the pastor alone is too demanding to make expectations of effective pairing realistic. Hiestand, for example, in his own contribution to this section, "The Pastor Theologian as Ecclesial Theologian," notes that such critiques would be valid if pastor theologians did theology as the critiques envision it—yet this simply assumes the problematic theological framework that the CPT seeks to correct! Theology should not be synonymous with academia; pastors are uniquely positioned to make robust, ecclesially directed contributions to theology.

Peter Leithart's essay, "The Pastor Theologian as Biblical Theologian: From the Church for the Church," is excellent. Leithart describes theological work as an extension of the pastoral vocation, pursued within the worshiping community. His comments are particularly apropos for those who preach: "Ecclesial biblical theology must orient its hermeneutics toward homiletics" (p. 16), and "the pastor theologian's most important theological publication is the sermon delivered to the local congregation" (p. 19).

I did not find the second section on historical perspective, to be particularly helpful. This group of essays reads like biographical sketches from admirers rather than fleshing out how historical figures' contributions to ecclesial theology could inform contemporary pastor theologians.

The third and final section was fairly eclectic. One notable essay was Laurie L. Norris's, "The Female Ecclesial Theologian." Norris argues for the importance of women's voices in this discussion. Notably this essay was the only contribution by a woman in the entire volume. Given the repeated emphasis on the theological contributions pastors are uniquely positioned to make, it was sadly ironic that this "unique position" was so homogenous. The vision of the Center for Pastor Theologians and the ecclesial theology it seeks to produce would be better served by including more diverse voices.

Despite these flaws, this book is a helpful addition to the case for pastor theologians. The essays by Hiestand and Leithart alone make it worthwhile reading. Overall I recommend the entire volume as a helpful contribution to the compelling vision of what a pastor theologian

is and to inspire the reader to reclaim and advance this needed vision. Unfortunately the path being cleared has been neglected during modernity with the thick, untended weeds of a theologically anemic pastorate and a pastorally anemic academy. Although the term "pastor theologian" may seem an oxymoron to many, the contributors of this volume show the term should in fact be seen as redundant.

JESSE SLIMAK

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