

adopt modalities for academic theology and biblical studies to speak into new settings.

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Catholic Peacebuilding and Mining: Integral Peace, Development, and Ecology.
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Every day we engage over and over with the products of mining. For instance, according to Raymond Offenheiser, “There are 62 unique and irreplaceable metals in every cellphone” (222). Yet until recently Catholic theologians have paid little attention to mining. The present volume, an initiative of the Catholic Peacebuilding Network, supported by Notre Dame’s Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, seeks to remedy that deficiency. The book’s twenty-one authors explore numerous ethical issues from a variety of perspectives, impossible to summarize in a short review. The authors are especially concerned with the way mining causes or exacerbates violent conflict, but they also pay much attention to environmental destruction, global justice, and Indigenous rights. They focus almost entirely on the mining of metals and, except regarding uranium mining, concentrate on the Global South, the source of most mined metals.

The first of the book’s two parts includes case studies of mining and conflict in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Philippines, Peru, and El Salvador, as well as the response of the Catholic Church in each setting. In general, the church’s role is to accompany, educate, and advocate. In Peru it offers legal assistance to Indigenous people. The El Salvador study describes a unique success story, in which the church joined with civil society organizations to achieve a nationwide ban on the mining of metals, due to the threat it posed to the nation’s fragile water supply (as of spring 2023 the ban was in jeopardy from the Bukele government).

The second, considerably larger, part of the book consists of ethical and theological analyses, which I can only sample here. On the assumption that some mining is necessary (an assumption shared by all contributors), Tobias Winright sketches a theory of “just mining,” with rightness in undertaking mining, in the conduct of mining, and in dealing with the aftereffects of mining

corresponding to phases of just war thinking. Daniel Scheid and Anna Floerke Scheid draw on the “just peace” thinking of Glen Stassen and others and the integral ecology of Pope Francis to sketch principles and practices for “ecological just peace” in regard to mining. Law professor Douglass Cassel reviews existing human rights norms of international law as they pertain to mining and urges the church to make use of them while, when necessary, promoting efforts to give them legal force. In a similar vein, Offenheiser reviews progress made in agreements accepted by many mining companies, such as those calling for “free, prior, and informed consultation” with affected populations. He argues that the “soft law” of voluntary agreements should be turned into “hard law” by legislatures, with “consent” replacing “consultation.”

While Offenheiser argues that the church needs to develop rosters of advisers knowledgeable about the technical aspects of the mining industry, Vincent Miller urges the church to develop networks of solidarity that enable communication between the consumers of minerals and those whose lives and lands are affected by the mining process. At present, information communicated between them is mostly limited to what is conveyed through prices set by markets. Economist and theologian Albino Barrera argues that markets are efficient in allocating goods and services, but they do so “at the expense of neglecting or even working against other worthwhile socioeconomic goals, such as equity, social harmony, and sustainability” (169). Other institutions are necessary if markets are to operate in the interests of integral human development. Most radically, Clemens Sedlak contends that we must look at mining in the context of ultimate human ends, and maximization of profits is not one of them.

William Holden and Caesar Montevecchio relate mining to climate change. Renewable technologies to replace fossil fuels require many mined metals, but increased extreme weather endangers facilities for storage of mining waste. Nuclear power drastically reduces greenhouse emissions, but mining uranium for it leaves dangerous radioactive waste and facilitates the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Catholic Peacebuilding and Mining is a valuable contribution in a field that is increasing in importance as the world seeks to transition away from fossil fuels. Frequent subheads, cross-references among the articles, and a thorough index all assist the reader. The book will be especially helpful to teachers of Catholic social thought, who can assign individual essays from the open access online edition.

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