

Developing a “More Honest” Political Theology?

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes discourse within the field of Canadian Mennonite political theology since 1970, characterizing such discourse as an ongoing attempt to develop a “more honest” political theology. It traces the trajectory of this theology by describing briefly the impact of John Howard Yoder’s project on Canadian Mennonites, followed by a description of A. James Reimer’s attempt to call Mennonites to be more honest about their political commitments. Further, the paper highlights several current threads in contemporary Mennonite political theology that, while susceptible to making theology superfluous, nonetheless display an intensified honesty, a clarified vision, and a search for truthfulness.

While Ted Regehr’s volume of the *Mennonites in Canada* trilogy is primarily historical in its pursuits, issues that concern political theology are far from absent. Rather, many of the political themes taken up by Regehr have remained central to Canadian Mennonite political theological reflection since 1970: struggles that accompany Canadian Mennonite transformation while seeking to resist total assimilation into worldly society; ongoing internal dissent regarding the nature of Mennonites’ relationship to the state; an evolving Mennonite view of the nature of Christian political responsibility; the change from sectarian, separatist postures to more interventionist, charitable, and supportive roles within society; issues that accompany the pursuit of “Native Ministries” and the attendant groping toward an understanding of indigenization, along with a growing awareness of the fraught nature of colonialism and imperialism.¹

¹ T. D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto, ON: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1996), 3, 4, 49-56, 78, 332ff., 376. This article originated as a presentation for a conference entitled “A People of Diversity: Mennonites in Canada since 1970.” Held in Winnipeg (November 15-17, 2018), the conference was described in part as a virtual fourth volume of the three-volume series *Mennonites in Canada*, of which Regehr’s volume was the third.

In this article I will look at how some questions and issues have been pursued by paying attention to the discourse within Canadian Mennonite political theology. My characterization of this discourse since 1970 is that it as an ongoing attempt to develop a “more honest” political theology.” This way of putting the matter draws on the important work of A. James Reimer in his posthumously published *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology*. In response to a well-known book by John Howard Yoder, *Being Honest in Just War Thinking*, Reimer considered naming his own project “When Law and Civil Institutions are Just: Honesty in Pacifist Thinking.”²

Yoder’s book exemplifies the author’s long-term engagement with issues of peace and war, and displays the remarkable level of seriousness with which Yoder takes people with whom he disagrees. Often in theological (and other) arguments we try to convince others by solidifying their arguments, attacking them, and so on. It is no different with those who embrace pacifism and those who embrace the Just War tradition. But Yoder goes to extraordinary lengths both to understand and to explain the view that he does not personally hold. He explicated its finer points in his teaching, public presentations, and various publications. To be sure, he engaged in much of this kind of work in order to promote peace, but he also intended that people who disagreed with him would recognize and embrace their own positions more honestly. Defeat of the opposition was not his primary point or aim; rather patient, vulnerable pursuit of understanding and faithful action is what is at stake. Thus, for Yoder, continued relationship, necessary change, future discussion, and conflict patiently pursued remain as possibilities.³

Reimer picked up on this notion of honesty but turned it reflexively inward to a consideration of Mennonites, arguing from a theologically-derived politics that they need to be more honest about their involvements and embeddedness within broader society, and as a result embrace a more positive view of law and civil society than they have done so far.⁴ This initiative—to be more honest—has been extended since the publication of

² A. James Reimer, *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology: Law, Order, and Civil Society*, ed. Paul G. Doerksen (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 3.

³ The most important source in this regard is John Howard Yoder, *When War Is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984).

⁴ Reimer, *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology*, 2.

Reimer's book, and is pursuing important directions that include calls for courageous and radical openness, self-reflexive vulnerability, penitence, openness to changing theology, and to ever-deepening and dispossessive Christian faith.

What I see developing is a political theology that finds its way by faith in Jesus Christ within a fallen world, one in which we Mennonites are haltingly acknowledging our deep complicity—while becoming more aware of the danger of leaving our faith and theology behind just when that theology calls us to embody our faith more authentically. In this essay I will trace the trajectory of what I view as a more honest Canadian Mennonite political theology by describing the impact of Yoder's project on Mennonite thinking. Next I will describe Reimer's attempt to have Mennonites be more honest about their political commitments. Then I will identify several threads in contemporary Canadian Mennonite political theology that, while susceptible to making theology superfluous, nonetheless display an intensified honesty, a clarified vision, and a search for truthfulness.

The Politics of Jesus as Shaping Vision

Any attempt to understand, trace, or describe the development of Mennonite political theology in Canada since 1970 requires taking note of the work of Yoder, since "Anabaptist political theology in our time has been most influentially articulated in [his] writings. . . ."⁵ However, this attempt is complicated by the disturbing, ongoing revelations of the violence he perpetuated⁶ that have put our political theology into a "new discursive environment" which must struggle with the rhetorical, epistemic, and sexual violence of Yoder himself.⁷ Central to his influence was the 1972 publication of *The Politics of Jesus*.⁸ His political theology made an impact on a number

⁵ P. Travis Kroeker, "Messianic Political Theology: Yoder Contra Redekop," *Direction* 38, no. 1 (2009): 58.

⁶ Rachel Waltner Goossen, "'Defanging the Beast': Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder's Sexual Abuse," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89, no. 1 (January 2015): 7-80. It is important to note that while Yoder's work exerted considerable influence, it was significantly contested and critiqued before the exposure of the extent of his sexual violence.

⁷ Maxwell Kennel, "The Architectonics of Hope: Violence, Apocalyptic, and the Transformation of Political Theology," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 36 (2018): 316.

⁸ John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans,

of key areas as part of what has been called the “emergent tradition”—a tradition that “rejects politics as statecraft and envisions the church as a concrete public, political space in its own right.”⁹

Here I want to identify the key dimensions of Yoder’s contributions to Canadian Mennonite political theology, beginning with his reading of the Old Testament, which centers on what he calls “the diaspora vision” originating in the Abrahamic call and culminating especially in the ministry of the prophet Jeremiah (an “antiroyal” reading).¹⁰ This reading signals Yoder’s interest in how Israel and, subsequently, Christian believers find their place in society as pilgrims, exiles, or resident aliens. Yoder’s reading of the New Testament focuses on the cross of Jesus Christ. He maintains that Jesus led a life that challenged the powers that be, which led to his being crucified as a political criminal. The resurrected Christ calls into existence a church community that is to live according to this cruciform pattern; Yoder calls this “the politics of Jesus.” Yoder insists that a close study of the narrative account of the Gospels will reveal a social ethic for Christians today, and not a way of ignoring or relativizing Jesus’ message and life. This narrative will not allow a focus on the cross to be pushed into the realm of pastoral care, other-worldly irrelevance, or irresponsibility. It is the cross and not the sword, suffering and not brute force, that determine the meaning of history. The triumph of right is assured because of the power of the resurrection, not because of any other calculus. Thus “the relationship between the obedience of God’s people and the triumph of God’s cause is not a relationship of cause and effect but one of cross and resurrection.”¹¹

Yoder sees the church community as paradigmatic in incarnating the logic of cross and resurrection; the order of the faith community constitutes

1972); 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994). Most of Yoder’s work appeared in the form of essays, some of which were subsequently anthologized by editors, or collected and published as books by Yoder himself. Countless secondary sources in the form of essays, dissertations, books, chapters, and articles directly engage his work.

⁹ Daniel Bell, Jr., “State and Civil Society,” in *Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 433.

¹⁰ For a discussion of this “anti-royal” reading, see Paul G. Doerksen, *Beyond Suspicion: Post-Christendom Protestant Political Theology in John Howard Yoder and Oliver O’Donovan* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2010), 36-50.

¹¹ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 232.

a public offer to all of society. The church is a vision of the kingdom come, but there is no separate authorization for secular society, which has a mandate from God to provide space for the church to fulfill its mission.¹² That ecclesial mission is shaped, in Yoder's view, by apocalyptic and prophetic literature that strike down our confidence in system-immanent causal explanations, either for the past or for the future, that are based on human decisions. Yoder sees Christendom as an era of the church's unfaithful acquiescence to the temptations of secular power, a time of formation of a specious symbiotic relationship between the church and secular power—a phenomenon he labels "Constantinianism."¹³ Finally, his political theology leads him to reject killing and war in favor of pacifism, although he engages the Just War tradition seriously in calling it to be honest to its own best impulses. Pacifism is not a principle that Yoder is committed to apart from his understanding of discipleship, nor does it lead him to withdrawal from the world. He does not begin with pacifism and then seek to justify it theologically. Rather, his theological understandings lead him to pacifism.

In sum, Yoder's work might be described as a theological reframing of political responsibility in a messianic, cruciform, apocalyptic mode.¹⁴

Reimer's Call for "More Honesty"

Yoder's body of work (both its content and its method) has deeply influenced Canadian Mennonite political theology, thanks to its nearly uncritical embrace; its broad dissemination through teaching and scholarship; its being generative of material for further exploration in directions and situations not explicitly addressed by Yoder; and, in fewer instances, its serving as a foil to those who resist some dimensions of his work and warn of its inherent dangers. As a way of displaying some of these dynamics, I turn now to A. James Reimer, whose political theology is, among other things, an effort to move beyond Yoder.

¹² John Howard Yoder, *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*, trans. Timothy Geddert (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003). See especially the essay "The State in the New Testament."

¹³ John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1984). See especially "The Constantinian Sources of Western Ethics," 135-47.

¹⁴ I have dealt with these and other themes in Yoder's political theology in Doerksen, *Beyond Suspicion*.

Reimer's theologically conceptualized political theology can be described as "a theopolitical project that will serve as an alternative Anabaptist vision to that of John Howard Yoder, whose work Reimer has often criticized even while acknowledging its importance . . . [I]t might also be accurate to say that Reimer is seeking to provide what he considers a more orthodox version of *The Politics of Jesus*. . . ."¹⁵ Reimer focuses on the necessity for those in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition to take seriously not only the biblical-Trinitarian foundations for all Christian social ethics but also the importance of astute, faithful engagement by Christians in public-institutional life, including the political realm.¹⁶ He understood himself to be working as a Mennonite, but not limited by that tradition or beholden to take only its sources into account.

My concern here is to recognize the constructive nature of Reimer's work. Reimer intended to develop a fully conceptualized political theology, one that was to be fully conceptualized in its *theological* dimensions:

I urge Mennonites and others in the Historic Peace Church tradition to overcome their frequently dishonest disjunction between abstract theories of pacifism and non-resistance, on the one hand, and the way they actually live within civil society, on the other. I am . . . encouraging us to be honest: not to use high-sounding theological and moral rhetoric to (1) ideologically disguise the situation in which we actually find ourselves in our family, professional, business, political, civil, and church lives; nor (2) selectively read the Bible and history, undervaluing the positive mandate for institutional life found in the biblical narrative as well as in our own Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage. . . . Whether we like it or not, we occupy a space in the large world. All of us are citizens and carry passports of one country or another (some carry two), and unapologetically draw on the benefits that such citizenship

¹⁵ Paul G. Doerksen, "Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology," in Jeremy Bergen, Paul Doerksen, Karl Koop, eds., *Creed and Conscience: Essays in Honour of A. James Reimer* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2007), 282.

¹⁶ Reimer, *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology*, 1-17.

offers. Let's be honest about this, and reflect theologically on it without ideological distortion.¹⁷

That honesty, in addition to a more positive embrace of law, freedom of conscience, civil institutions, and responsibility, calls for a careful consideration of forbearance and concord as a way of being in this world as Christians, a stance that goes beyond liberal toleration.

The calls for honesty by Yoder and Reimer address the issue of traditions—just war and Anabaptism respectively—being truthful and internally consistent. Thus Yoder encourages the just war community to be more honest about itself, its commitments, and its refusals to participate in war according to its own best lights; that is, to be consistent in living out its own historically developed criteria for participation and non-participation in wars. Reimer acknowledges the importance of such a call to honesty but turns it inward for Mennonites, calling for more honesty about the commitments and involvements in which we already participate, and thereby open the way for a more positive embrace of law and other civil institutions. In this sense, he wants our political theology to be truthful about where we find ourselves, and to recognize our embeddedness in various settings, especially as these involve the formal structures of law, electoral politics, and civil society more broadly.¹⁸

Reimer's call for honesty is of a more self-reflexive nature than Yoder's well-known appeal to a tradition to which he did not belong. Also, Reimer's call goes beyond a "realistic" assessment of Mennonite involvement in civil society. To put things differently, Reimer is interested not only in self-reflexive descriptive honesty but in investigating and understanding the truth about God's work in the world. He saw himself to be working as a Mennonite and embracing Mennonite sensibilities but, as already noted, not limited by that tradition or beholden to take only its sources into account. He was alert to the problems inherent in every kind of reductionism, especially in cases where theology is reduced to either ethics or politics. This perpetual concern resulted in investigating the theological realities that are to serve as the engine, the generative force, of political theology. Reimer was not afraid to use the language of foundation or presupposition, despite the

¹⁷ Ibid., 3-5.

¹⁸ Again, see Reimer, *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology*, 1-17.

suspicion of many that such an approach—a search for foundations—has no place in theological reflection. The “honesty” displayed here is a clear recognition of current Mennonite practices and commitments, but perhaps more importantly, it also seeks to be truthful (honest) regarding theological convictions.¹⁹

Beyond Reimer’s Call

Reimer’s attempt to develop a more honest Mennonite political theology was cut short by his untimely death, although his work made significant strides toward Mennonite self-reflexive honesty.²⁰ Nonetheless, questions have arisen in response to his project; scholars have wondered just how convincing this initiative was even if it made the laudable move of going beyond Yoder. For example, Jodie Boyer Hatlem and Douglas Johnson Hatlem have pointedly asserted that “Reimer’s theological project on law and civil society fails to demonstrate a requisite grappling with philosophical and theological conceptions of power.”²¹ Since the putative honesty does not extend to the acknowledgement of power, Reimer has compromised the possibilities of necessary resistance to the state via a nonviolent commitment to the law, especially as outlined in the Torah, they argue.

Further, Joseph Wiebe finds Reimer’s demand for honesty curious: “Whenever Reimer gets to the point at which he must name who, exactly, needs to be more truthful, he equivocates”²² and in so doing, scrubs clean and irons out the spots and wrinkles in his Anabaptist/Mennonite heritage. The result, says Wiebe, reinforces privilege while ignoring “the multitudinous voices—post-colonial, feminist, womanist, Indigenous, LGBTIQ—who have all recorded the ways in which an ‘ideal rational system of moral laws’ has

¹⁹ I am grateful to several anonymous peer-reviewers for comments on the nature of honesty under discussion here.

²⁰ As argued in Darrell Winger, “Shaping a More Honest Anabaptist Political Theology: A Consideration of the Work of A. James Reimer,” *Vision* (Winnipeg, MB) 18, no. 1 (2017): 16-26.

²¹ Jodie Boyer Hatlem and Douglas Johnson Hatlem, “Exousiology and Torah: A Suggestion for Mennonite Political Theology with Reference to the Reimer-Yoder Divide,” *Direction* 38, no. 1 (2009): 52.

²² Joseph Wiebe, “Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology: Law, Order, and Civil Society,” *Modern Theology* 32, no. 4 (October 2016): 675.

been terrorizing.”²³ Proclaiming Reimer’s cache of political concepts as tired and passé, Wiebe claims that North American Mennonites could learn from Mennonites in the global South, for example, and in so doing, seek to develop

an approach . . . both pragmatic and self-reflexive [that] would require entering into the dark waters of the past. The governments with which North American Mennonites have dealt were organized to benefit white agricultural immigrants (some of whom were Mennonite) at the expense of Indigenous land rights; Mennonite ethnoreligious identity—Mennonite theology and mode of being—is mired in previous *privilegia* with those governments. Yes, those privileges were reneged when Mennonites got too nonconformist with their language, education, and pacifism, but rather than begin here as a problem of demands for Mennonites to compromise their religious commitments to participate in public life, why not frame it as one way to recognize a shared world with their Indigenous neighbours?²⁴

I cite Wiebe’s work as just one sample of Canadian Mennonites who are extending the desire for more honesty into areas where our political theology has been inadequately attentive or inadequately faithful. Insofar as such a charge holds true, it is encouraging to see Mennonites push harder to be ever more and even differently honest in our theological and political work. For example, it isn’t hard to identify Mennonites working as activists and scholars in areas too often ignored.

While not all these topics are as novel to Mennonites as some practitioners and thinkers make them out to be, and while the political cache on which we have drawn is not as tired and passé as has been suggested, very interesting developments are occurring on a number of key issues. Among them are involvement in peace and reconciliation efforts with Indigenous peoples; a search for renewed understanding and practices in sexual politics and in the nature of citizenship; active participation in and reflection on feminist political theory; and identifying and analyzing institutional power,

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 674-76.

environmental issues, questions of race, land, and identity, colonialism, and economic justice. The last decade especially has seen a welcome proliferation of these kinds of deliberations.

Honesty and the Danger of the Superfluity of Mennonite Theology

Another related development in Mennonite theology deserves our continued attention. The development I have described thus far is a shift toward an evermore self-reflexive honesty, which involves working within and acknowledging deep complicity with, and culpability for, the problematic dimensions of church and society that we are keen to address. However, this development carries with it a significant danger: “the desire to identify, inculcate, and preserve the special, unique, distinct, or distinguishing core of Anabaptism . . . inadvertently makes Mennonite theology superfluous.”²⁵ Paul Martens traces a “distillation trajectory” from Harold Bender’s identification of Anabaptism’s three essential elements to Yoder’s distillation of Christian existence into politics, and then to J. Denny Weaver’s insistence on nonviolence as the primary ethical category. Martens sees a similar tendency in the recent work of Keith Graber Miller and Stuart Murray:

[V]irtually all of their distilled convictions are anthropocentric and ethically focused; their distilled descriptions seem to assume some sort of broader theological context; their descriptions leave that broader theological context undeveloped, thereby assuming its secondary importance (at best) among Anabaptists; and all of these descriptions suggest a possible (and perhaps even probable) disconnect between Mennonite churches today and the respective depictions of Anabaptism.²⁶

Martens’s argument is important for Mennonite political theology, which must take seriously the ever-present danger of leaving the theological dimension behind when we think that we have identified the essence of our politics, even while remaining open to changing our theology. This of

²⁵ Paul Martens, “How Mennonite Theology Became Superfluous in Three Easy Steps: Bender, Yoder, Weaver,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 33 (2015): 150.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 160.

course requires that Mennonites continue to search for more honesty, more truthfulness in both practice and theology.

Honesty and Vision

Mennonite political theology can ill afford to leave theology behind as we face ever-increasing complexities. In a recent publication, P. Travis Kroeker refuses to render theology superfluous. He defines political theology as

a normative discourse rooted in the conviction that political crises . . . may be best accounted for with reference to theological terms . . . Messianic Political Theology in the Christian sense is committed to the claims that these terms are revealed in the messianic anointing and worship of Jesus as sovereign, in keeping with the complex theological narratives of the Bible.²⁷

If political theology is thus understood, then our continued embrace and exploration of the Bible and theological heritage proceeds as if God matters. Political theology's dynamic reality exists as the body of Christ on pilgrimage through this world, having accepted its fundamentally exilic status, seeking an alternative imagination to that of possession and raw power, pursuing an ecclesial institutional ordering to relate itself actively and critically to all aspects of divine government which preside providentially over "all things." This might enable Mennonites, with their long-term intimate preoccupations with land and family, to become more openly and critically engaged with the ways in which these orderings are implicated in the wider "principalities and powers" of fallen created existence. It would also make it more difficult for mainstream Christian theology to marginalize the Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective as "a-political" or "sectarian."²⁸

Acceptance of a fundamentally exilic status such as Kroeker describes is not to be construed as either a (re)turn to sectarianism, a deliberate pursuit of separation-as-faithfulness, or a refusal to acknowledge our involvement in all levels of civil society. That is, it is not a call to return to what Reimer considered to be less-than-honest Mennonite political theology. Rather,

²⁷ P. Travis Kroeker, *Messianic Political Theology and Diaspora Ethics: Essays in Exile* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8. This paragraph draws heavily on Kroeker's book, especially the introduction.

Kroeker is asking for more openness and more critical engagement with society, but now in terms that seek to participate in the wider world in a manner aligned with the Messianic reality that reveals itself in apocalyptic form. In this way, embracing a fundamentally exilic status would press Mennonites to be less marginalized, less sectarian, less self-righteous, less possessive, and less pathological in pursuing the distinctive identity to which we want to cling.

The drive for honesty in political theology is currently being pursued beyond accurate descriptions of practice and a commitment to truthfulness. Without leaving the initiatives behind, we must be honest about how our practices and beliefs may serve as expressions and ends that are or are not unwittingly and unintentionally oppressive of some people or groups, or that cause damage in other ways. Perhaps here the language of *honesty* may be supplemented and enriched by the language of *vision*, of seeing clearly in order to discover or uncover blind spots concerning our practices and beliefs.

Recent responses to Kroeker bring these dynamics nicely into view, as is evident in a recent book symposium on work by Kroeker and Kyle Gingerich Hiebert.²⁹ In her response to these Canadian political theologians, Mennonite theologian Nancy Bedford turns to the language of vision in response to Hiebert's project, in order to interrogate further political theologies that do not see certain dimensions of reality even though they purport to be "trustworthy lenses" for looking at it.³⁰ She identifies two blind spots in North American political theology in which Mennonites are implicated, namely coloniality and the effect of any given political theology on the lives of women. Bedford pointedly asks, "What is it about a particular theopolitics that so readily closes its eyes to the way bodies of concrete human beings—for instance, young women—are treated by (usually male) theologians or other academics who claim to speak for peace?"³¹ Further, in response to Kroeker's emphasis on incarnation in his political theology, she warns that "to commit to an incarnational or embodied, particular,

²⁹ P. Travis Kroeker and Kyle Gingerich Hiebert, eds., "Political Theology and Apocalyptic," in *The Conrad Grebel Review* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 274-306.

³⁰ Nancy Bedford, "To See and Inhabit," in *The Conrad Grebel Review* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2018):278.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 280.

and faithful way of being in the world means figuring out how to do so honestly, meeting head-on the ways in which our traditions (e.g., Mennonite traditions) may have become distorted, unfaithful—indeed, disincarnate.”³²

I am under no illusion that Kroeker’s particular work will save us (and Kroeker is careful to make no such claim; after all, an important dimension of the entire project is dispossession). However, his vision of a messianic posture rooted in renouncing the possessive desire pervading all aspects of human life—in the household, the academy, and the world—presses us to consider current issues in light of the overriding claim that God is sovereign, “a claim that subverts any merely human claim to sovereignty and political authority.”³³ Then, to have that dispossessive, messianic, apocalyptic, and exilic vision subjected to incisive, constructive, critical questions pressing for recognition of dangers and blind spots—to bear witness to this process—suggests that Canadian Mennonites are perhaps moving toward the more honest political theology for which Reimer (and others) hoped.

Conclusion

It is not easy to accept the subversion of human claims to sovereignty and political authority, especially when we find ourselves in positions to make those very claims. Indeed, to be presented with the possibility of exercising some level of sovereignty and authority brings in its train the temptation to interpret such opportunity as a gift from God, a time to claim what has been denied us for too long in too many times and places. Here we must keep in mind what Christian theology has to say politically, which differs from asking what it has to say to politics. To be more honest, to see more clearly, calls for clarity regarding our already involved (and complicit) status in

³² Ibid., 282. As part of the same symposium, Elizabeth Phillips states that she feels like an outsider, like a woman listening to a conversation between men, for men. Her appeal to Kroeker and Gingerich Hiebert is that they and others in the field “must work harder to choose to seek out, listen to, and engage with voices, experiences, and scholarship of women and others excluded from these conversations, both historical and contemporary.” Elizabeth Phillips, “Apocalyptic, Anabaptism, and Political Theology,” in *The Conrad Grebel Review* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 288. Both Kroeker and Gingerich Hiebert acknowledge the legitimacy of her critique. See Kroeker and Gingerich Hiebert, eds., “Political Theology and Apocalyptic,” 299-300, 302.

³³ Kroeker, *Messianic Political Theology and Diaspora Ethics*, 17.

wider civil society and its institutions, as Reimer argued. We are also called in perpetuity to humbly seek to recognize our own blind spots, including our separating practice from theology. To be honest in these ways suggests that it is not enough to largely accept the way things are, or to be satisfied with occasionally sprinkling faith onto what remains an essentially secular imagination.³⁴ Put another way, Mennonite political theology in Canada is not primarily called to wrestle the current political reality into a shape suitable to our political authority. Rather, we would do well to cultivate, with honesty, an alternative imagination generated through humble faith in God, in whom our hope and trust is placed.

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³⁴ Harry Huebner, "The Nation: Beyond Secular Politics," in Bergen, et al., *Creed and Conscience*, 258.