

Jeremy M. Bergen, Paul G. Doerksen, and Karl Koop, eds. *Creed and Conscience: Essays in Honor of A. James Reimer*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2007.

On the occasion of A. James Reimer's retirement, his friends, students, and colleagues wished to recognize the thought and work of this prominent Mennonite theologian. The result is *Creed and Conscience*, a collection of sixteen diverse essays. Many of the essays are expansions of key theological concepts of Reimer's, while others are either inspired by conversations with Reimer or simply dedicated to him.

The collection is divided into six sections. The first, "Biographical," contains a biography of Reimer that outlines his intellectual and theological influences and development. The second, "Engagement with Scripture," focuses on the current debate around homosexuality, same sex marriage, and the church, approaching the issue from a biblical standpoint. "Engagement with the Anabaptist Tradition," the third section, contains discussions about catholicity and holiness, and about Pilgram Marpeck and natural law. The fourth, "Engagement with Modernity," provides a reading of Thomas M ntzer as a quasi-Marxist revolutionary, as well as an exploration of Freudian and Jungian psychologies of religion and ethics alongside Mennonite thought, including Reimer's.

The longest section is the fifth, "Engagement with the Ecumenical Tradition." Several essays focus on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, while others explore the relationships between the Creeds and ethics, worship, interdenominational dialogue, and Christian witness. The final section, "Political Theology," asks questions about Martin Luther's two-kingdom theology, the secular nation, and the positive and negative aspects of several Anabaptist political theologies, such as John Howard Yoder's and Reimer's.

Whether or not the reader is familiar with Reimer's theology, this volume provides an apt summary of his wide-ranging interests. John Rempel's succinct biography of Reimer is especially helpful in providing context for the discussions that follow. That the essays cover everything from current issues, such as homosexuality and the church, to the sixteenth-century Reformation, and to age-old challenges for the church, such as ecumenism and political theology, is a testament to the impressive – or even intimidating! – scope of Reimer's work.

To its credit, the collection does not blindly praise Reimer but ends on a challenging note. In his essay “Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology,” Paul G. Doerksen daringly critiques both Yoder’s and Reimer’s political theologies, pushing Reimer and other Anabaptist theologians to delve more deeply into the political aspect of their faith and tradition.

Beyond the core issues, however, the essays in *Creed and Conscience* are a powerful account of the very different people Reimer has influenced and connected with over the years: Mennonites (both proud and critical), Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and Lutherans all make their appearance here. Nearly all the essays include a personal anecdote about Reimer; Rudolf J. Siebert goes so far as to call his contribution “Our Friendship,” and in her psychological/theological essay, Christina Reimer writes about growing up with Reimer as her father and role model.

*Creed and Conscience* is also a cross-section of discussions among current Mennonite theologians, many of whom contributed to this volume. Several essays stand apart in either their excellence or their limitations. Jeremy M. Bergen’s “The Publicity of the Holy Spirit,” Karl Koop’s “Holiness, Catholicity, and the Unity of all Christians,” Harry J. Huebner’s “The Nation: Beyond Secular Politics,” and Lydia Neufeld Harder’s “Theological Conversations about Same-Sex Marriage,” are especially insightful reflections, often containing critiques of the Mennonite tradition while lauding its strengths. In other cases, the reader cannot concur with the critique of Mennonite theology, as it is too strident, condescending, and generalized.

The book’s organization into six sections is somewhat unhelpful, as the essays are too disparate to be categorized, even under such general headings. Nearly half the essays are in one section, leaving the other sections hungry; the essays could be left to stand on their own without the larger sections. Also, several essays overlap in content, while other aspects of Reimer’s work remain untouched. One can only wish Reimer’s conversations with Muslim theologians had received more than a passing mention in the Preface; surely this would have enriched the collection even more.

*Creed and Conscience* fittingly celebrates Reimer’s many contributions on both academic and personal levels, and provides a largely balanced taste of his wide range of interests and diverse personal connections, while

outlining the broader conversations within his Mennonite denomination and beyond. Readers familiar with Reimer's theology will appreciate the deeper explorations of some of his ideas, while others will find this volume a mostly accessible, helpful introduction to his thought and to Mennonite theology in general.

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Johanna W.H. van Wijk-Bos. *Making Wise the Simple: The Torah in Christian Faith and Practice*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

*Making Wise the Simple* calls Christians to “engage the entire Bible” as a “rich source for Christian faith and practice” (xix). This is the appropriate response to the Holocaust and centuries of anti-Semitism among Christians, who have often supported their prejudice by (mis)reading the Bible (xviii-xix).

In the introduction, the author expresses many of her own perspectives on the interpretation of the Bible. Her reclamation of the Torah (the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses) by Christian readers articulates the approach of feminist biblical criticism within a “confessional arena” (xix). In order to provide a context for interpretation, Van Wijk-Bos contends that we contemporary readers must “establish and evaluate the distance between us and the text, between our world and their world,” which manifests itself in terms of “cultural, social, and economic aspects as well as [the Bible's] religious practices” (xx). Thus she states her belief that the Bible is not “without error” but that “a redemptive word from God [can] be found here” (xxi). She writes for those who share her conviction and have “[the] courage to ask disturbing questions of the text” (xxi).

The book is divided into five main parts: The Torah in Bible and Tradition, The World of the Torah, The Making of a World (Genesis 1:1-11:32), The Making of a People (Genesis 12:1-Deuteronomy 34:12), and Living with Torah.

Part 1 presents Jewish and Christian understandings of “Torah” and the people of God as articulated by the related texts of Exodus 19:3-6 and