

Nazis transformed this school into an elite training academy because it was “Jew-free” (126); in 1890 the school’s Mennonite board had expelled all Jewish students.

I hope that scholars will add to Goosen’s important work with additional research and case studies that could illuminate, for instance, why Mennonite communities near Danzig assisted in constructing, maintaining, and operating Stutthof concentration camp, where some 60,000 inmates perished. Confronting this past is not easy—and “how present-day Mennonites will confront the legacies of their pasts [is] yet to be seen” (212).

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

A good many essay collections, especially those that gather material written over a span of decades, suffer from a profound disjointedness. Not so this volume. Quite the contrary, in fact, because as one reads through *Messianic Political Theology and Diaspora Ethics* a kind of organic coherence emerges. Taken together, the fifteen essays articulate a powerful, nuanced vision of a political messianism rooted primarily in the Pauline, Augustinian, and Anabaptist traditions in conversation with a wide range of philosophical and literary figures from Plato to Giorgio Agamben and Fyodor Dostoevsky to Wendell Berry.

At least one way to read these essays is through Kroeker’s acknowledgement that his approach aligns with that of Anabaptist historian Robert Friedman, for whom “theology is properly ‘existential theology’” (83). The precarious attempt to hold faith and life together in various ways arguably permeates all these essays. In the face of a world often enthralled with sovereignty, mastery, and possession, Kroeker suggests that we need “an account of spiritual causality, if I may put it this way, in the language of poetic, dramatic experience, a return to our personhood—which is

particular, limited, embodied, passing away, and yet inhabited, indeed inspired, by divine mystery” (244).

The essays are organized into three sections, the first of which illuminates the apocalyptic character of messianic political theology. As such, Kroeker’s work can be located as part of what might be called “the apocalyptic turn” in contemporary theology. Significantly, it is not focused only on apocalyptic; while a number of essays make provocative use of biblical apocalyptic and its contemporary philosophical receptions, there is always the sense that this is only one tool among many and that all the tools should be used. Part of the reason for this is that the author’s vision is grounded in the biblical text, particularly in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, which urges us to use the “world ‘as if not,’ in a dispossessive manner that assesses the value of each particular thing or relation with reference to the passage of God in the world” (32). For Kroeker, this offers “a providential opportunity to rediscover the multiplicity of peoples and cultures as a divinely given good that saves human beings from idolatrous imposition of political and technological uniformity” (79).

Sections two and three embody this opportunity by taking up in turn “political theology and the radical reformation” and “messianism and diaspora ethics.” Most of these essays excavate some aspect of the Mennonite tradition with which Kroeker identifies himself. John Howard Yoder figures prominently, noteworthy because of the renewed attention being paid to Yoder’s long-term intentional pattern of sexual violence against women. Kroeker helpfully suggests that Yoder “will not be forgotten, as much for his prodigious failures as for his prodigious gifts, and we should continue to be instructed by both” (8). More helpful still, we get the beginnings of a valuable critique which contends that “Yoder’s principle of voluntariness has too sanguine a vision of the human will and its ongoing conflicts with fallen desires” (157).

Even more important for Kroeker’s project than Yoder is Dostoevsky, for whom existence is discerned within an apocalyptic vision of the slain Lamb that “dies to the pursuit of retributive justice and its alienating, isolating claims in order to be reborn into the suffering solidarity of human-divine community, where God’s presence is lovingly served in all its created likenesses on the earth” (92-93). Eschewing grand philosophical narratives of

decline that actively avoid messianic political theology in favor of the self-emptying path taken by Dostoevsky's elder Zosima, Kroeker contends that "only one freed from the isolation of self-love can truly love others, and such freedom is made possible through spiritual rebirth in the image of Christ—conformity to the 'form of the servant' that builds up the human community through embodied deeds of humble love" (247).

Since there are far too many thickets and plains to explore here, each raising profound questions about the patient labor required to live and love in exile, perhaps the most appropriate way to conclude this review is to borrow a phrase from Augustine's *Confessions*: Take up and read; take up and read!

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Margaret Loewen Reimer. *Approaching the Divine: Signs and Symbols of the Christian Faith*. Winnipeg, MB: CMU Press, 2017.

In *Approaching the Divine*, Margaret Loewen Reimer offers a short primer on some of the more common or curious Christian signs and symbols. The book is based on a column created in the late 1990s in the periodical now known as *Canadian Mennonite*. After a brief introduction reflecting on the role of symbols and signs, there are short entries with illustrations divided roughly according to the church year, and then more loosely connected entries on Signs and Tokens, and Art and Tradition. The volume concludes by reprinting a sermon on artistic imagination entitled "Biblical Magic" and an advent meditation named "The Virgin and the Unicorn."

Loewen Reimer states that "for people of faith, words and images suggesting the divine take on a sacred quality. These words and objects are not holy in themselves, but they are revered because they point beyond themselves to the source of all holiness" (13). She explains that "signs and symbols are outward, visible forms through which are revealed the invisible, inner meanings of our lives" (12), and notes that "a ritual is an act that can awaken us to new dimensions and realities" (53). This perspective invites the