

The Conrad Grebel Review

Volume 40, Number 2

Spring 2022



Foreword 114

ANABAPTISTS AND PHILOSOPHY
GUEST EDITOR: LAURA SCHMIDT ROBERTS

The Reluctant Mennonite: Reflections on an
Ambiguous Inheritance 116
Diane Enns

Religion's Persistence: A Response to Diane Enns 132
John Caruana

Anabaptism contra Philosophy 138
Maxwell Kennel

The Anabaptist Tradition: Intellectual Problems, Resources,
and Possible Conversations—A Response to Maxwell Kennel 158
Christian Early

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

- The Phantom Limb of the One-Armed Bandit: Nigel Biggar's
Colonialism and the Crucified People of Quintana Road 169
Tyler B. Davis
-

BOOK REVIEWS

- Perry B. Yoder. *Leviticus*. Believers Church Bible Commentary 33. 181
Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2017.
Reviewed by Jackie Wyse-Rhodes.
- Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiesen, eds. *European Mennonites
and the Holocaust*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020. 183
Reviewed by Ben Nobbs-Thiessen.
- Ryan S. Schellenberg. *Abject Joy: Paul, Prison, and the
Art of Making Do*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. 187
Reviewed by Gordon Zerbe.
- Darin W. Snyder Belousek and Margaret R. Pfeil, eds. 189
*Intercessory Prayer and the Communion of Saints: Mennonite
and Catholic Perspectives*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2022.
Reviewed by Brian Haymes.
- Ronald Tiessen. *Menno In Athens*. Kitchener, ON: 193
Pandora Press, 2022.
Reviewed by Charles Roth.
- Knut V.M. Wormstädt, *Versöhnung erzählen. Eine
prozestheologische Untersuchung ökumenischer
Versöhnungsbegegnungen mit den Mennonit*innen (FSÖTh 173)*. 195
Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2022.
Reviewed by Marius van Hoogstraten.

- Katherine Sonderegger. *Systematic Theology Volume 2: The Doctrine of The Holy Trinity: Processions and Persons*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2020.
Reviewed by Zac Klassen. 198
- Elizabeth Phillips. *Apocalyptic Theopolitics: Essays and Sermons on Eschatology, Ethics, and Politics*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022.
Reviewed by Maxwell Kennel. 201

Foreword

This special issue of *The Conrad Grebel Review* comprises the proceedings from the first two sessions of the Anabaptists & Philosophy Roundtable, an occasional webinar series established in 2022 featuring scholars discussing Anabaptist life and thought in relation to philosophical themes, topics, and methods. The roundtable is sponsored by Doopsgezind Seminarium in Amsterdam, the Biblical and Religious Studies Division of Fresno Pacific University, the Institute of Mennonite Studies at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, and Pandora Press. I am grateful to Laura Schmidt Roberts, Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Fresno Pacific University and member of the organizing committee for acting as guest editor of this issue.

The essay by Diane Enns reflects on the ambiguous and inescapable nature of human inheritance and explores the legacy of her Mennonite past and the broader implications of inheriting traditions. Tensions between an inner life and community life, between a restless, questioning and a solidified certainty, between freedom and security, challenge readers to consider their own inheritance and agency. The nature and basis of belonging and alienation and the right to a tradition's inheritance predominate consideration of the preservation and alteration of philosophy and religion as traditions. Enns's skepticism regarding the capacity of a tradition's internal resources for facilitating its transformation raises important questions about boundaries, authority, and choice of interlocutors. John Caruana's response explores the ambiguous and inescapable nature of religious language and meanings in shaping modern Western philosophical, political, and ethical discourse and calls for engaged, critical awareness of this fact.

Maxwell Kennel's essay challenges the narrow field of interlocutors Anabaptism engages, pressing for intentional engagement with secular and philosophical voices from within and outside of the tradition. Methodologically, Kennel finds the tradition itself provides resources for such a broadened, risky engagement in its both/and, neither/nor "third way" identity and practices, even as many within the theological stream fear loss or amendment of long-held convictions and practices may result. Readers encounter poignant questions that probe apparent fears of difference. Christian Early's response affirms Kennel's interest in "risky engagement"

with voices external to Anabaptism for the way these might clarify and enrich convictions, observing the risk entails more honest dialogue born of self-awareness and openness to not knowing how the conversation will end, including the possible amendment or overturning of convictions. In the case of philosophy, Anabaptism's scant engagement provides substantial opportunity, the pluriform and undetermined nature of which should be preserved as a space for ongoing exploration and testing. In particular, Early applauds Kennel's concern for "the inner world" of the affective and psychological, challenging readers to consider how fear, anxiety, or resentment of the other can shape responses to difference that retreat to the safety of tradition instead of risking open, underdetermined engagement.

Across the provocative work in this special issue, several themes emerge: the importance of risking engagement from outside of tradition in service of its transformation and vibrancy, the need for self-reflective examination of what inhibits us from doing so (e.g., fear, anxiety, desire for certitude), and the reality of nontheological grounding for Anabaptist and Mennonite convictions and lifeways—a reality which calls for more thoughtful and respectful engagement among the tradition's perceived insiders and outsiders.

As always, *The Conrad Grebel Review* invites submissions of articles or reflections on a wide range of topics in keeping with our mandate to advance thoughtful discussion of theology, ethics, peace, society, history, and culture from broadly-based Anabaptist/Mennonite perspectives.

Kyle Gingerich Hiebert
Editor

Laura Schmidt Roberts
Guest Editor

The Reluctant Mennonite: Reflections on an Ambiguous Inheritance

Diane Enns

ABSTRACT

Drawing on the more general relationship between religion and philosophy, this essay reflects on the extent to which the author's Mennonite past is an ambiguous inheritance that can never be completely left behind but nevertheless leaves room for a certain kind of indignation, particularly as it relates to the exclusion of women. Drawing on diverse figures from Arendt to Derrida, the author suggests that there is something to be said for moving as far as one can to the peripheries of inherited traditions when they have taken something vital from us and, further, that there is a kind of exhilarating, if painful, liberation to be experienced on the edges of such traditions.

Clarity is one of the gifts of aging. The shape of a life only comes into view the further we are from its most important moments, and as we see it in relation to all other lives. We sift through the years behind us searching for the meaning of every road taken, every relationship, decision, and event that made us who we are. Our "inheritance"—the world that was given to us—is illuminated in all its intriguing complexity: the circumstances into which we were born, the rough outlines of our characters, the situations we have little choice but to survive. These constitute the hodgepodge of what is bequeathed to each of us—the good and bad, beautiful and ugly, kind and cruel. What we do with this ambiguous inheritance shapes us as much as the inheritance itself.

I have been asked to reflect on what it means for me to be a philosopher with a Mennonite past, and on the conclusions to which such reflections lead me regarding the relationship between religion and philosophy more generally. This is an opportunity to revisit my contribution to a 2010 volume of essays by philosophers who were asked to discuss their religious

upbringing and its effects on a life devoted to philosophical pursuits.¹ With frequent references to “flight,” I wrote then about leaving the Mennonite church in my early twenties and rejecting my faith in the Christian God—a faith that had been the unshakeable core of my existence throughout my teen years. I believed this was a necessary rejection in order to escape the narrow-minded moralism and conformity of my community, with its emphasis on obedience and prohibition on thinking. It was only as a young adult, after some exposure to the world from which I had been protected, that I began to see my religious belief as fundamentally at odds with the life of the mind I sought—a life of asking questions, of thinking independently and critically, a life open to the complicated world around me.

At the time of writing that essay I was still under the illusion that we can flee our pasts with some success. I have since come to realize that absolute escape is impossible—the past always shadows the present, reminding us of where we have been and what we have inherited. If we do achieve some clarity of vision, we may learn to accept the ambiguities of our inheritance; the edges of bitterness wear away as we come to terms with any adverse effects, and perhaps even appreciate the indelible marks these effects have left on our lives. But any heritage marks more than one life. There is room for indignation; if we don’t transform the world we have collectively inherited, its debilitating structures will be left intact for ensuing generations to inherit.

A Plenitude of Meaning

1) The Inner Life

I begin my reflections on the contradictions of heritage with thinking itself—more specifically, with Hannah Arendt’s incisive distinction between thinking and knowing. Following Plato, she describes thinking not as a technical or theoretical exercise whose objective is to know the truth about something, but as a silent dialogue with oneself. Thinking is “the habit of examining whatever happens to come to pass or to attract attention, regardless of results and specific content.”² It does not lead to certainty but

¹ See Diane Enns, “For the Love of Paradox: Mennonite Morality and Philosophy,” in *Religious Upbringing and the Costs of Freedom: Personal and Philosophical Essays*, ed. Peter Caws and Stefani Jones (University Park, PA: Penn State Univ. Press, 2010).

² Hannah Arendt, *One/Thinking, The Life of the Mind*, One-Volume Edition (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1971), 5.

to *meaning*; we think in order to give an account of someone or something we encounter, to understand what it means.³ But meaning is slippery and can't be pinned down; it changes as we acquire hindsight or adjust our understanding after reflecting on meaning discovered by others. We think for its own sake, then, not as a means to an end, as is the case with knowing, which has thinking as its condition but always moves toward the goal of establishing something with certainty. Another way of putting this: when we think, we think about unanswerable questions, and if we couldn't do so, we would lose the capacity to ponder all the questions we can answer. Only by asking the unanswerable questions—those that give us meaning rather than certainty—do we establish ourselves as “question-asking beings.”⁴ Arendt insists we can all think in this sense of “pondering reflection,”⁵ and, in fact, should never leave thinking to the professional philosophers or specialists.⁶

This means thinking can never be instrumental. It should never settle; it moves in and around us like the wind, shaking and loosening. We must be vigilant against the ever-present risk that thinking will solidify concepts and doctrines that are no longer open to the provocation of further thinking. As Arendt puts it, thinking must undo every morning what it has finished the night before⁷; it unfreezes frozen thoughts.⁸ In this work of undoing, there is no satisfying outcome; thinking merely reminds us that all we have are perplexities, “and the best we can do with them is share them with each other.”⁹ This was Socrates's method; he is Arendt's exemplary thinker because he gave his life not to defend a doctrine, but “for the right to go about examining the opinions of other people, thinking about them and asking his interlocutors to do the same.”¹⁰

³ Ibid., 100.

⁴ Ibid., 62. An “unanswerable question,” we might say, is whether God exists, a question philosophers and theologians seek to answer definitively, when the question's unanswerability leads to something much more important: the *meaning* of God, religion and faith as human experiences. Essential to this meaning is the *meaningfulness* faith may provide for an individual and community.

⁵ Ibid., 171.

⁶ Ibid., 167.

⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 166.

⁸ Arendt, *One/Thinking, The Life of the Mind*, 175.

⁹ Ibid., 175.

¹⁰ Ibid., 168.

Arendt's shift from the quest for truth and certainty—the darlings of philosophy—to the quest for understanding and meaning through persistent, restless, thinking, illuminates one of the most interesting contradictions of my childhood and youth. There was certainly a prohibition on thinking as a skeptical interrogation of the church's teachings. Questioning our faith was considered dangerous, it meant Satan was worming his way into our souls. Socrates, who calls himself a gadfly in his role of rousing others from the sleep of thoughtlessness,¹¹ would not have been welcome in the Mennonite church to which I belonged in the 1970s. At the same time, in my constant communication with an imagined other I learned the art of pondering reflection, of the silent dialogue with oneself that Arendt calls a conversation of "two-in-one," between me and myself.¹² I learned to leave nothing unthought, nothing unspoken to myself, even if I thought only within the narrow limits my faith afforded me.

There is no way to know whether I was born with a propensity to reflect and was drawn to the daily habit of communing with God due to my Mennonite enculturation, or whether my inner conversation with God habituated a life of reflection. Perhaps both are true. I certainly identify with the temperament William James variously calls the "sick" or "morbid-minded" soul—terms that fail to convey the high value he assigns to these temperaments. The morbid-minded are unusually sensitive, reflective persons, prone to anxiety and melancholia because they are all too aware of the dark side of life. They find it impossible to ignore suffering and are often tormented by the deep feelings it evokes. But they also recognize that suffering is a fundamental part of life through which the meaning of the world is accessed.¹³ James concludes that it is not reason that gives life meaning, but rather these deep feelings, or "passions," as he calls them. They are gifts to us, and the value we give to others and to the world because of

¹¹ Ibid., 172.

¹² Arendt writes: "We call *consciousness* (literally, as we have seen, 'to know with myself') the curious fact that in a sense I also am for myself, though I hardly appear to me ... I am not only for others but for myself, and in this latter case, I clearly am not just one. A difference is inserted into my Oneness." Arendt, *One/Thinking, The Life of the Mind*, 183.

¹³ See William James, "The Sick Soul," *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, Centenary Edition (New York: Routledge, 2002), 103-131.

these feelings are our gifts to the world.¹⁴

In my youth I began to cultivate a life abundant with meaning due not only to a strong sense of purpose—to know God’s will, to please him, to be good—but also to the awareness of an inner life that has no utilitarian value, no ultimate ends. If Arendt is right—that thinking can condition us against evil—this inner life is no small thing, but a requirement for making moral and political judgments. How desperately we need this focus on meaningfulness now, in a world all too rapidly adapting to superficiality and thoughtlessness, since nothing is demanded of us except conformity and the endless consumption of information and products. “A life without thinking is quite possible” Arendt warns, “it is not merely meaningless; it is not fully alive”—the unthinking “are like sleepwalkers.”¹⁵

James’s discussion of deep feelings as gifts brings me to another experience of inner life, one that has been called mystical, sublime, sacred, spiritual, transcendent, ek-static, or divine. Some of these terms are overdetermined for me; I am unable to wrest them free from their religious institutional associations and as a result have an almost allergic reaction to hearing them (I will return to this point). Sublime captures the experience of being deeply moved by music, art, a breathtaking line, and of sheer awe at the spectacle of the natural world. In my youth it was an out-of-body sensation that could occur during intense moments of prayer, by myself or with others, or during choir performances when the boundaries of the self dissolved—the feeling was one of rising to the ceiling with the sound of our perfectly harmonized voices.

Some would immediately recognize this as a transcendent or mystical experience of unity with God. Freud, and others before him, called it an “oceanic feeling,” a sensation of undifferentiated oneness with the universe. Freud was uneasy with the feeling, thinking it might be an expression of the death drive. But Julia Kristeva attributes his discomfort to our early dependency on mothers and the lifelong psychic impact of this dependency—an impact Freud did not sufficiently acknowledge. When we experience the oceanic feeling, the self is lost “to what surrounds and contains us,” Kristeva writes, and we are momentarily returned to the security and absolute

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁵ Arendt, *One/Thinking, The Life of the Mind*, 191.

satisfaction of infancy, when there are no established borders between the unborn and the maternal body. We lose ourselves in the unremembered undifferentiation of our pre-birth condition, before the advent of the individuated self and its inevitable loneliness. Both Freud and Kristeva suggest this experience supports religious belief, a belief that Kristeva claims is necessary. She means by this that human beings need a powerful sense of “unshakable certainty,” “sensory joy,” and self-dispossession. We need to experience something “more-than-life” that perhaps commemorates the archaic experience of containment in the maternal body.¹⁶

I am drawn to this description of a sublime or transcendent experience as an extraordinary sensation of unity in which the self is happily, if momentarily, lost—a sensation that is reminiscent of our original home. We might call this a silent dialogue with nature or the universe, as essential to the expansion of an inner life as the silent dialogue with oneself. It is often said that when in nature, we experience solitude rather than loneliness, surrounded by life forms to which we suddenly feel joined.

The experiences I have thus far highlighted—silent reflection and conversation with God, and the sensation of sublime oneness—contributed to a meaningful inner life for me and form an essential part of my heritage. In crucial ways these experiences have made me the philosopher I am, drawn to the most profound and often unanswerable questions of human existence; how we are to understand the nature and experience of freedom, for example, or violence, love, loneliness, and community.

2) *Community Life*

The outward orientation of an inner life of dialogue with oneself, a God, or nature, has an obvious parallel in community life. A theme that underlies much of my work is driven by what is perhaps one of those unanswerable questions: How to live together? In a collection of lectures with this question as its title, Roland Barthes suggests that what fascinates us most about other people, and what inspires the most envy, is groups “getting along well together,” living with others harmoniously. He explores the fantastical element of living together—the fantasy of the perfect family, of perfect

¹⁶ Julia Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, trans., Beverley Bie Brahic (New York: Columbia Univ. Press), 7-8.

group togetherness.¹⁷ Nostalgia makes it difficult to pry apart the fantasy from the actuality of community life, a nostalgia that intensifies as we lose places and communities to which we once belonged. As Zygmunt Bauman writes, our desire turns the community into a paradise lost, inflating its mythic proportions.¹⁸ This is the most stubbornly ambiguous dimension of my heritage, for in a tightly-bound community we find the best and worst that human beings have to offer one another in a concentrated form—in sum, we find the same love and violence we find elsewhere, but in the faith community the relation between these is often obscured and disavowed. The paradise we long for can become a prison, as is well known by the women of Manitoba Colony in Bolivia where, what are referred to as the “ghost rapes,” occurred in the early 2000s.¹⁹

We are caught in a dilemma that appears irresolvable—we long for the security community offers us but also crave freedom from it. For the privilege of being in a community, we may lose the individual freedom to be the authors of our own lives. For the privilege of autonomy, we may lose the security of living among a trusted group of people who will care for us.²⁰ These desires are in tension, so we must find a way to live that fully satisfies neither, recognizing that both ideals are illusory: we are never the absolute authors of our lives, and we are never absolutely safe and secure. Some will decide a contingent security is better than a contingent independence; others—myself included—will choose a contingent independence.²¹

Here too we must think of meaningfulness, for it is a rare person who can conceive of a meaningful life without trust in others, or the care and friendship social life ideally provides. The intensity of Mennonite

¹⁷ Roland Barthes, *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, trans. Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2013), 5.

¹⁸ Zygmunt Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2001), 3.

¹⁹ See “Bolivian Mennonites jailed for serial rapes,” BBC News, August 26, 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-14688458>; Andres Schipani, ““The work of the devil;: crime in a remote religious community,” *Guardian*, September 10, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/sep/10/mennonites-rape-bolivia>; Jean Friedman-Rudovsky, “The Ghost Rapes of Bolivia,” *Vice*, December 22, 2013, https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/4w7gqj/the-ghost-rapes-of-bolivia-000300-v20n8.

²⁰ Diane Enns, *Thinking Through Loneliness* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2022), 95.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

community life as I knew it from the 1960s to the early 1980s demonstrated an orientation toward others now thrown into stark relief by our pandemic-influenced distortion of freedom, perceived as *my right not to consider you*. Never have we faced more the need for care and civility from others. At the same time, I have to ask who was doing most of the care work in my Mennonite community—unpaid, often unrecognized, and certainly undervalued. I might also ask who was intentionally excluded from care and trust and cast out of the fold, generally at the moment they needed that care and trust the most? These questions can, and should, still be asked.²²

The unique experience of a rather intense collective life founded on shared historical trauma as much as ethnicity and faith has also made me the philosopher I am—still in need of vigilance against dogma and the certainty of my own opinions, wary of group-think, fearful of ideologues. Arendt once again provides us with provocative insights. We can bind with others through collective action rather than through common beliefs or ethnic origins, maintain our focus on the human affairs that affect us all, and build and sustain the world we have in common. When solidarity is founded on what we are doing rather than on what we are, the borders around a community become porous, and belonging is based on a shared desire for a better future rather than a shared past.

Inheriting Traditions

1) Philosophy

One legacy of my Mennonite heritage is thus a plenitude of meaning drawn from a rich inner life of reflection and a life devoted to community. I would like to shift now to the broader implications of inheriting traditions, and with them, the institutions, norms and beliefs we did not choose, but which, as Jacques Derrida claims, choose us. He makes this remark in a discussion of his inheritance of the Western philosophical tradition, a heritage he loves but challenges with equal admiration and suspicion, always wary of the dangers of nostalgia.

Derrida tells us that inheritance contains within it a contradictory double injunction: to leave the past behind and at the same time preserve it.

²² Mennonite churches are still divided on the question of including LGBTQ members, for example.

In fact, he argues it is our responsibility “to receive what is larger and older and more powerful and more durable” than we are, but also “to choose, to prefer, to sacrifice, to exclude, to let go and leave behind.”²³ He insists that the traditions we are both preserving and leaving—whether of language, culture or philosophy—contain the conceptual tools necessary to continually reinterpret and amend them. If philosophy at its origins is Greek—as he affirms—it is also “a constant movement of liberation” and “*universalization*.”²⁴ Philosophy recognizes yet surpasses “its own ethnocentric or geographic limit” and it does this without “necessarily betraying” that limit.²⁵ We could draw an analogy with human rights, which have always been what Derrida calls “perfectible”; the idea of right embedded in the project of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights enables us to challenge the limits of our rights heritage.²⁶ These are limits well known to anyone who does not have “the right to have rights,” to use Arendt’s astute formulation, including the women and slaves left out of our oldest rights documents, and the stateless, who continue to prove the lie of so-called “inalienable” rights.

Nevertheless, Derrida believes we can use the tools bequeathed to us by a heritage to challenge the very limits of that heritage.²⁷ The point is not to kill it off; we must choose, and choose again, to keep our inheritance alive, if transformed.²⁸ This reiterates my earlier point: we cannot abandon or flee the past, its shadow we cannot shake off; we neither leave the past nor stay within it in any absolute sense. Derrida might be right—we can still fight to uphold the ideal of rights and its basic condition of respect for all human life. What makes this a herculean task is the fundamental exclusion—I will call it a trauma—at the origin of the attempt to implement this ideal.

Remaining for a moment in the context of philosophy, I want to point out that it is all well and good for Derrida to value the preservation of a heritage, however transformed, for he comes by his inheritance honestly. Philosophy is his birthright; he inherits it from a long line of learned men

²³ Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow... A Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2004), 5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

stretching back to Plato. There is no ambiguity in his entitlement to this inheritance, despite his outsider status as an Algerian Sephardic Jew—a “very Arab Jew” as he puts it, an identity that caused his expulsion from school in 1942 under the officially sanctioned anti-Semitism of the Vichy administration in Algeria.²⁹ Still, within a few decades, Derrida became an internationally renowned philosopher. If we use Arendt’s formulation about the condition of rights as an analogy, we might say that Derrida has the right to have rights. He is a proper citizen of the territory that is Western philosophy—he has the right to interrogate this tradition, and to wield its tools.

There is no trauma at the site of his inheritance that might make him want to abandon it, no trauma of alienation or nonbelonging—of having the wrong body within a community of men. Derrida speaks with supreme confidence that philosophy is Greek (albeit universalizable)—audaciously suggesting that other intellectual traditions are something else. In a 2005 documentary about his life and work he says with as much audacity that philosophy is male. When asked which philosopher he would have liked to have been his mother (an admittedly insipid question), Derrida launches into a brief explanation for why his philosophical mother would actually have to be his granddaughter. First, he notes that since historically “the figure of the philosopher is ... always a masculine figure,” “a philosopher is a Father, not a Mother.” This is one of the reasons he embarked on his project of deconstructing the tradition, Derrida claims, transforming rather than abandoning his heritage. But this means that the woman philosopher is still to come; she can only arrive after deconstruction—she must be Derrida’s inheritor, and consequently his offspring, his own granddaughter.³⁰

Derrida’s response illuminates the very heart of the problem for me, related to the trauma to which I have alluded, and captured in his concluding comment: “a thinking mother—it’s what I both love and try to give birth to.”³¹ Here is yet another display of what Virginia Woolf calls the arrogant posture

²⁹ Jacques Derrida, “Circumfession: Fifty-nine Periods and Paraphrases,” in Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), 58.

³⁰ Kirby Dick, Jacques Derrida, Amy Ziering Kofman et al., *Derrida: Screenplay and Essays on the Film* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 97.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

of the masculine “I”—that “straight dark bar,” as she famously describes it in *A Room of One’s Own*, in whose shadows we find the women.³² In this instance the philosopher brings the mother into being after her historical disavowal; a reiteration of the philosopher’s appropriation of birth going back to Socrates’s identification as a midwife. Derrida’s appropriation is doubled, for he not only plays the benevolent life-giving mother, but gives birth to one who gives birth. He is the mother of all thinking mothers.

At the origin of philosophy, we thus find a fundamental theft. It is admirable that Derrida seeks to transform a tradition that prevented women from the right to a philosophical inheritance, but in congratulating himself on being the mother of women thinkers, he merely repeats the theft and erasure. Furthermore, and ironically, he seems oblivious to this repetition despite his own claim to outsider status. Why not dissemble the “I,” the straight dark bar that prevents women from being seen and heard, and interrupt that line of authority? I confess I am not sure this is possible, given the belief that intellectual authority is male has lasted more than two millennia.

What do we abandon and what do we save? What is our responsibility to preserve from an immensely powerful canonical tradition whose male authors actively, intentionally ignored and excluded women’s ideas, or passed them off as their own? So powerful that still today philosophy students may complete their degrees without ever having been required to read a woman’s work. And when they do, they may not take it seriously: de Beauvoir is a mere footnote to Sartre; Arendt, to Heidegger; Stein, to Husserl, and on and on. What right do I have to belong to philosophy? A reader might reasonably protest that we find women philosophers throughout history. Though they were not recognized as philosophers in the past we are recovering their work, incorporating them into our courses, and adding them to our library shelves. Certainly, this is an exciting recent development in academic philosophy.

Yet with all of these changes, we still find a universal deference to male intellectual authority and expertise. In philosophy departments everywhere this translates into overly-confident male students and insecure female students, women faculty who find it difficult to shed a stubborn inferiority complex, or what we often refer to as an “imposter syndrome,” and male

³² Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own: Three Guineas*, ed. Michèle Barrett (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 89.

faculty who consciously or unconsciously balk at making room for thinking women, or coming to terms with an entitlement they did not realize they had. All of these groups have simply accepted their respective inheritances.

Derrida is right to argue against killing the traditions we inherit, for they are not monolithic, homogeneous entities. We find intellectual treasures in even the most misogynist philosophers of the past. But it is not yet clear how women are to choose and preserve a tradition founded on their exclusion, a tradition that continues to uphold the belief that intellectual, public authority has a male face. I do not want to be the one to raise these issues. I did not ask for this struggle. I want to live in a world in which the life of the mind is not gendered. Yet this is *my* philosophical inheritance.

2) Religion

The masculine lineage of philosophy is mirrored in the masculine lineage of Christianity; the power of one is the power of the other. I knew no one who challenged the authority of men in my Mennonite community—from God the supreme Father, to all the church fathers, to my own father. The women were not behind the pulpit, but running the Sunday School, leading the children's choirs, and cooking Christmas turkey suppers for the congregation in the church kitchen. There were no women disciples, there was only Mary, the mother of Jesus, whom I describe in a previous work as “mute, docile, adoring, a model of passivity”; and there were the prostitutes to whom Jesus extended mercy and compassion, but who certainly had no voice, no authority.³³ Even the Catholic version of Mary, though revered, is not divine in her own right. As Elaine Pagels points out, “if she is ‘mother of God,’ she is not ‘God the Mother’ on an equal footing with God the Father.”³⁴ Pagels goes on to remark that religious rhetoric often assumes that men constitute “the legitimate body of the community,” while women are only allowed to participate “insofar as their own identity is denied and assimilated to that of the men.”³⁵ We could say the same of philosophy, since reason

³³ Diane Enns, *Love in the Dark: Philosophy By Another Name* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2016), 16.

³⁴ Elaine H. Pagels, “What Became of God the Mother? Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity,” *Signs* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1976): 293.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 294.

and contemplation are forever sutured to the mind of man. Lea Melandri captures this perfectly when she says woman is a body “that simply stands next to the words of men.”³⁶

The Christian tradition is also being revised, thanks to the work of feminist theologians and religious scholars who intervene in the often seamless gendered narrative of biblical interpretation. Had I read Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza or Rosemary Radford Ruether and sampled the heresies of the gnostic gospels while still a Christian, the effect might have been revolutionary (the question remains: would I have been able to hear them?). Exciting as these developments are, I wonder if they will be heard as anything more than a whisper in the dull roar of church doctrine. It may be that I am too impatient in waiting for that revolutionary effect.

I have alluded to an original theft, a trauma. This is the only way I have found to articulate the part of my inheritance that has caused irreparable harm—the theft of a voice, desire, autonomy, power in its positive sense of being empowered to speak and act, to rise to one’s full potential. It is all very simple—inculcate in half the population a desire to please, and the needs of the other half are always met; teach love as sacrifice, and there is no need to love in return, even violence will be forgiven. Suture love to the authority of fathers, *the* Father and all his ardent subordinates, and we become unable to distinguish between love and submission; indeed, we learn to love those who can easily abuse their authority over us, *and we may not even see it for what it is*. We learn the art of deference to men, a deference that dogs us our entire lives because we have learned it so well at such an impressionable age. When they chastise, belittle, or hate us—our gods, fathers, lovers, sons—we chastise, belittle, and hate ourselves too.

This is the deep injury of an effacement justified by the lack of entitlement to an inheritance. I still feel its effects in a kind of claustrophobic reaction to certain words and phrases: sacred, spiritual, divine, prayer, God the Father, our Lord and Saviour. Or those names we hear over and over again: Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger. I know this is not a fair or reasonable response to terms and names that constitute valuable traditions of thought and experience and are meaningful to many for this

³⁶ Lea Melandri, *Love and Violence: The Vexatious Factors of Civilization*, trans. Antonio Calcagno (New York: SUNY Press, 2019), xi.

reason, but the associations are too strong for me. I hear these references to my inherited traditions and feel the walls closing in.

If we want to transform our traditions without abandoning them, we must examine the psychic and emotional effects of being controlled by them. No one should have privileged access either to divine authority or to the canonical authority of philosophy. It is this access, this entitlement, that renders these traditions highly effective and efficient instruments of patriarchal control. There is a bigger picture here, beyond the personal repercussions of one's childhood. The fact is, both Western philosophy and Christianity have been instrumental in the control of women throughout their very long histories.

Once we have had an ideological conditioning, are we ever the same again? Where is the line between faith and ideology, and how do we guard against crossing this line? I am alluding to dangers that Richard Kearney seeks to mitigate in his discussion of "atheism." He uses this term to describe a "movement" or "way" between a dogmatic theism and a dogmatic atheism, both of which lead to pernicious outcomes. Much like Derrida, Kearney seeks to transform a tradition that is rife with the settlement of thinking into frozen concepts and doctrines. He engages in the work of leaving and preserving: a sovereign, omnipotent, dogmatic God is left behind, while an encounter with a radical other is preserved—a "Stranger" in Kearney's formulation. Alterity intervenes in any closure—Kearney reveals a vital openness or hospitality to the unknown and the uncertain. He maintains we can choose whether or not to call this other or stranger "God,"³⁷ yet everywhere refers to atheism as "a return to God after leaving God." The God we return to is a God of interconfessional hospitality, a non-sovereign or "postdogmatic God."³⁸ This is an admirable deconstructive project motivated by palpable outrage and weariness over the violent excesses of religion—its "murderous potential" as Kearney describes it—and optimistic belief in a different experience of faith. But the *return to God* after God sounds suspiciously like pouring old wine into new wineskins. I remain doubtful that any transformative project can be achieved if we persist in naming a divine entity; whether male or female,

³⁷ Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God After God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 7.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

the temptation to anthropomorphize is too great. As soon as we name God, or religious experience more generally, institutions spring into life, bringing with them moralism, doctrine, orthodoxy, and criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of their members.³⁹

A Reluctant Conclusion

To conclude (hesitantly, for I have raised more questions than answers), I wonder if it is enough to have the experiences with which I began—the silent dialogue with oneself or with nature (the Stranger if we prefer Kearney’s term)—without naming or containing them, without calling the sublime a *return* to God. At most we can admit that there are dimensions to life that we cannot know or understand—they are gifts of wonder. If we allow these gifts into philosophy, we might privilege thinking over knowing, and give up our relentless reinforcement of the philosopher as father. If we allow them into religious experience, we might avoid dogma and moralism, and eliminate deference to men in the name of deference to a male God.

Our philosophical and religious institutions and traditions, however, provide us with somewhere to belong. In a 2007 lecture entitled “The Confession of a Reluctant Mennonite,” Sandra Birdsell discusses her writing in relation to a mixed Métis and Mennonite heritage. Regardless of her insider-outsider status, she describes feeling a sense of “kinship” when she finds herself among Mennonites, a sense of being “sheltered” at the mention of those familiar names, and admiration for the “mostly positive” Mennonite traits that have supported her throughout a sometimes “difficult, precarious, and often lonely life.”⁴⁰ Some of these sentiments resonate. I too feel grateful for learning the values of generosity, kindness, and responsibility for one’s community—and when I hear a familiar Mennonite name I certainly feel as though we must be related. But when Birdsell concludes her reflections by

³⁹ I am aware that there is a vast body of literature dealing with the question of naming God and with concerns over the institutional dimension of religion, in which Richard Kearney is only one voice. But such a discussion is beyond the scope of this paper and my expertise. I merely wish to express my concern with the risk of institutionalizing spiritual experience. Others may be willing to take this risk in order to benefit from the positive attributes of religious institutions.

⁴⁰ Sandra Birdsell, “The Confession of a Reluctant Mennonite,” 2007 Bechtel Lectures, *The Conrad Grebel Review* 26, no. 1 (2008): 8-40, 22, 40.

declaring she would “gladly” carry a Mennonite version of the identity card that attests to her Métis heritage, we part company. Perhaps there are degrees of reluctance.

An inheritance cannot be withdrawn, and it would be impossible to abandon our traditions in any absolute, definitive sense—but also unwise to make the attempt. We live and move with our pasts as though they were our limbs and ligaments. There is something to be said, however, for moving as far as one can to the peripheries of our inherited traditions when they have taken something vital from us. This is the only option for some of us; we look in from the edge, from a self-imposed exile. But from this vantage point we can experience an exhilarating, if sometimes painful, liberation.

Diane Enns is Professor of Philosophy at Toronto Metropolitan University in Toronto, Ontario.

Religion's Persistence: A Response to Diane Enns

John Caruana

ABSTRACT

Responding to Diane Enns's paper published in the same issue, the author expresses deep sympathy for many of the arguments Enns makes but offers a counterpoint on the issue of the persistence of religious language, which is suggested to be deeply embedded in the fabric of contemporary ethical and political life.

I want to thank Kyle Gingerich Hiebert for inviting me to reply to Diane Enns's paper. Diane is both a friend and a colleague of mine. As long as I've known her, I have admired her deeply reflective and personalized mode of doing philosophy and the beautiful prose she uses to express that thought. Her impassioned writing style is the antithesis of that mode of dry abstraction, which, unfortunately, remains dominant in our discipline.

Diane's heartfelt testimony poignantly and powerfully conveys her experiences about faith and religious community. Her testimony, and others like it, need to be heard by those who remain attached to their faith traditions. We must be completely open to receiving the first-hand accounts of those who feel their religious inheritance has aggrieved them. Religious traditions must be prepared to listen to the criticisms of both current and former members. Such testimonies offer an intimate understanding of the potential and actual harms associated with these traditions.

Unfortunately, Diane's story is all too common. There are, sadly, untold numbers of individuals across different Christian sects who have had hurtful, even traumatic experiences at the hands of their religious communities. The problem, of course, is not unique to Mennonites. My faith tradition, Catholicism, is associated with a terrible legacy of abuse and injustice, particularly toward children and women. Regrettably, the typical response has been to bury one's head in the sand at the sound of any new disclosure. Perhaps those in a position to take responsibility for the perpetrated harms

hope that the bad press and the scathing testimonies will disappear in due time. But that is not likely to happen. Nietzsche taught us over a century ago that secrecy is one of the hallmarks of religious life. Historically, that ability to cultivate secrecy may have allowed certain Christian communities to evade persecution by other dominant groups. But over time, that same capacity served as a cover for injustices and immoral practices that originated within the community itself. Secrecy can just as quickly become a breeding ground for moral evasion, the protection of abusers, and the silencing of the victim's call for justice. If we truly believe the words that a wise soul expressed almost two thousand years ago, namely, that the truth shall set us free, then we are obliged to acknowledge not only the positive goods that religion has made possible but also its shameful past, that long history in which various faith communities have betrayed the core values of their teachings.

As far as Diane's witness of her personal history goes, I have nothing to add except my sympathy and solidarity. The same, I might add, applies to her witness as a woman working in philosophy. For those of us familiar with the goings-on of professional philosophy, it is hard to dispute Diane's frustration with its conspicuous masculinist tendencies. That masculine imprint shows up among other places in the way that argumentation and logic-chopping are held up as privileged modes of disciplinary presentation. It also shows up in the way that it promotes a disembodied bird's-eye view of reality, which Thomas Nagel famously describes as the "view from nowhere."¹ That standpoint perhaps reflects a deeply embedded masculine fantasy that seeks to gain control and power over the limitations of finite, embodied, affective life. As Simone de Beauvoir noted in *The Second Sex*, this attitude is likely fueled by primordial, irrational fears around the imagined unruliness of the female body and the perception that emotions are primarily the domain of feminine psychology. Unable to acknowledge its own limitations, the hyper-abstract masculinist viewpoint takes flight from the concrete condition of fragile, feeling bodies. In the process, it ignores and sometimes disparages those philosophical perspectives that desire to speak honestly from a particular body and place.²

¹ Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York and London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989).

² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books, 2011).

As one can probably discern, I agree with much of Diane's presentation. But Diane also knows me well enough to know that our philosophical views on religion don't always overlap. In particular, I wonder about her framing of what she takes to be the dangers of religious language. Early on in a discussion of William James's description of religious experience, Diane talks about her "almost allergic reaction" to the religious language of the "mystical, sublime, sacred, spiritual, transcendent, ek-static, [and] divine." She later expands on that reaction when she articulates a reservation she has with Richard Kearney's notion of atheism:

I remain doubtful that any transformative project can be achieved if we persist in naming a divine entity; whether male or female, the temptation to anthropomorphize is too great. As soon as we name God, or religious experience more generally, institutions spring into life, bringing with them moralism, doctrine, orthodoxy, and criteria for inclusion and exclusion.

I take Diane to be saying, in a nutshell, that we might be better off avoiding religious language altogether. There is ample evidence to support her concern about the ever-present dangers that the reification of religious language poses. (Though, I would remind her that Kearney also wholeheartedly shares that concern.) Nevertheless, I think that this reservation, left as it is, reveals a potential blind spot.

The first problem I see with the view that we ought to avoid using religious language in our philosophical articulations is that it doesn't consider the extent to which religious meanings, whether we like it or not, are deeply embedded in the fabric of secular political and ethical discourses. Even if we could stop talking explicitly about God and transcendence, we would not have succeeded in freeing ourselves from religious presuppositions. Thinkers as diverse as Carl Schmitt, Jacques Derrida, Jürgen Habermas, and Charles Taylor have made the persuasive case that much of our modern political and ethical landscape is shot through with theological assumptions. The second problem I see is that these religious significations are intricately woven into the very language of modern critical thought, even though it believes itself to be mostly at odds with the spiritual heritage of the West. As Hent de Vries succinctly puts it, an undeniable "minimal theology" motivates the vocabulary and philosophy of many modern and contemporary critical

thinkers.³ More to the point, this minimal theology often serves as the ethical kernel of this thinking. This is a point that Emmanuel Levinas makes explicit in an essay entitled “To Love the Torah more than God.” Levinas expresses a certain amount of sympathy with those who, after the catastrophe of the Holocaust, are appalled by the hasty recourse to a loving and merciful God as a way to make sense of that debilitating trauma. Such appeals to a soothing religiosity strike Levinas as inappropriate and offensive in light of the unimaginable suffering that the victims of European fascism endured. In that context, Levinas notes, “[t]he simplest and most common response would be atheism. This is also the sanest reaction for all those for whom previously a fairly primary sort of God had dished out prizes, inflicted punishment or pardoned sins—a God who, in His goodness, treated men like children.”⁴ Levinas’s reaction to a business-as-usual attitude towards religious language after the horrors of the twentieth century aligns with Diane’s similar concerns. But, the critical point is that Levinas immediately follows that comment with an arresting challenge aimed at progressive, secular perspectives in general. These perspectives are likewise too quick to renounce all reference to the Good or transcendence as antiquated or potentially oppressive. Progressive secular movements continue to embrace some conception of the Good tacitly—that is to say, some notion of transcendental or religious value. Of the thinker who denounces the very idea of the Good as outmoded but continues to make critical pronouncements regarding injustice and the hope for a better world, Levinas poignantly asks: “But with what lesser demon or strange magician have you, therefore, filled your heaven, you who claim that it is empty? And why, under an empty sky, do you continue to hope for a good and sensible world?”⁵ Any political or ethical movement that sees itself as advancing progressive goals presupposes, for Levinas, some reference to the “Good beyond being,” that is, a religious or transcendent meaning to human life. Far from breaking with religion, secularist progressive discourses are secretly guided by a particular religious insistence regarding our obligations

³ Hent de Vries, *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas*, trans. Geoffrey Hale (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2005).

⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1990), 143.

⁵ *Ibid.*

towards others, especially the most disadvantaged of these. Levinas's point is that the progressive intellectual ambition to fully secularize language, to reinscribe transcendence into the field of immanence, inevitably betrays its undisclosed attachments to certain religious commitments.

It is important to note that for Levinas, it is not some general religious idea that is surreptitiously reinscribed in the grammar of progressive, critical theory. What gets reinscribed is a messianic desire to do justice to the violence directed at the Other. That conception of the Other has undeniable roots in a particular religious legacy, specifically Judaism, where the Other is explicitly identified with the most marginalized members of society as understood in the ancient context of the Israelites, namely, the orphan, widow, and stranger. Christianity extends this legacy. In its distinct idiom, the New Testament speaks of this Other as the "least of these." One can attempt to secularize this language as much as one would like. Still, it seems difficult, if not impossible in my view, to altogether remove the religious traces in this form of moral valuation. There is nothing obvious about the requirement to care for the least of these, especially when *these* people are not members of *my* tribe. We are confronted here with a singularly sacred condition, namely, the call to recognize and respect the holiness of the Other.

I think it was an awareness of this point that led a dyed-in-the-wool atheist like Jean-Paul Sartre to concede late in his life, perhaps begrudgingly, that

... we are all still Christians today; the most radical unbelief is Christian atheism, an atheism that despite its destructive power preserves guiding schemes—very few for thought, more for the imagination, most for the sensibility—whose source lies in the centuries of Christianity to which we are heirs, like it or not.⁶

As Sartre testifies here, our religious heritage has profoundly shaped the modern Western imagination and many of its key categories, whether we like it or not. Even the atheism of the modern Western world is incomprehensible outside the context of our Christian heritage.⁷ Rather

⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert, 1821-1857*, Vol. 4, trans. Carol Cosman (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2021), 346.

⁷ A potential counterargument to my position might make use of Nietzsche's attempt to undercut Christianity altogether by showing that it amounts to nothing more than a life-

than deny ourselves that language, it is incumbent on all of us, believers and non-believers alike, to be cognizant of and, yes, above all vigilant about the persistent and perhaps inevitable role that religious assumptions and language play in our ethics, politics, and thinking in general.

John Caruana is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Toronto Metropolitan University in Toronto, Ontario.

denying moral project (a will-to-Truth) that is rooted in a reactive will-to-power. This is the famous view that he puts forward in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967). In the wake of Foucault and Deleuze, Nietzsche's two most well-known progeny, this has become one of the dominant perspectives of the academy today. This perspective has some merit. It captures something about certain forms of reactive religiosity. That it captures the totality of what constitutes Christianity is, however, debatable, to say the least. For a rebuttal of this perspective that acknowledges its valid concerns while also pointing out its potential weaknesses, see Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2007); in particular, see pp. 373-374, and 635-637.

Anabaptism contra Philosophy

Maxwell Kennel

ABSTRACT

This article begins with a recapitulation of the author's previous work on philosophy in the Anabaptist and Mennonite traditions, and then provides a reconceptualized vision of the relationship between the two that connects Anabaptism and philosophy without fixing either in place. The core of the essay argues that the complex and contextual mediations between oppositions that characterize Anabaptism (neither Catholic nor Protestant, yet indebted to both) and Mennonite critiques of violence (challenging both passivity and violent action) provide philosophically important resources for moving between and beyond entrenched dichotomies and essentialist distinctions. After three critiques of the Mennonite misrecognition of philosophy, the essay concludes with the suggestion that autobiographical and connective forms of recognition (rather than abstraction or dissociation) provide a way forward for the discourse on Anabaptism and philosophy.

Introduction, Recapitulation

What does the Mennonite world have to do with philosophy, and what do the Anabaptist movements and Radical Reformation of the sixteenth century have to do with the philosophical Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and its many afterlives in modernity and postmodernity? These have been some of my research questions since I was a student at Conrad Grebel University College, and so it is fitting to explore them in the pages of this special issue of *The Conrad Grebel Review*. As a young scholar of Anabaptist history and Mennonite theology—before entering the interdisciplinary world of Religious Studies during my doctoral studies—I was surprised to find that few in the tradition had engaged seriously with philosophies and philosophers, and more surprised to encounter resistance to the idea that Anabaptist and Mennonite epistemologies were philosophically significant.

But as I looked through the archive of theological and historical Anabaptist and Mennonite texts, I encountered a minor tradition of philosophical, humanist, existentialist, and secular thinking that has much to offer theologians, historians, philosophers, critical theorists, and interdisciplinary thinkers.

For example, Robert Friedmann's 1958 manuscript, *Design for Living*, stands out as a unique bridge between Anabaptist theologies and philosophical approaches to ethics, especially its ascending values of regard, concern, service, and love that are simultaneously legitimated by both secular and religious sources.¹ Recent approaches to pacifist epistemology and ontological peace represent even more significant engagements by Mennonites with philosophical themes and thinkers, and these conversations prompted my study "Mennonite Metaphysics?" where I traced the history of Mennonites and philosophy. I concluded the article by calling Mennonite theologians to consider that the critique of violence might serve to bridge Christian and secular paradigms and even point a way beyond this division entirely,² for there are many ways that the boundaries between secularity, religion, and Christianity are upheld by violent, forcible, and coercive means.

More recently I reformulated this call in an entry update for the *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, where I conclude with a similar call for pluralistic forms of interdisciplinarity in the discourse on Anabaptism, Mennonites, and philosophy.³ The complex history of Mennonites and philosophy has sometimes involved an affirmation of philosophy's value (in the work of J. Lawrence Burkholder and Robert Friedmann), alongside contrasting approaches to philosophical ontologies and epistemologies (between A. James Reimer and John Howard Yoder), that leads up to recent work by scholars and literary figures who challenge straightforward approaches to Mennonite identity (Grace Jantzen, Travis

¹ Robert Friedmann, *Design for Living: Regard, Concern, Service, and Love*, ed. Maxwell Kennel (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017).

² "Mennonite Metaphysics? Exploring the Philosophical Aspects of Mennonite Theology from Pacifist Epistemology to Ontological Peace," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 91 (2017): 403-421.

³ Maxwell Kennel, "Philosophy," in *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, April 2020. <https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Philosophy>

Kroeker, Grace Kehler, Casey Plett, and Miriam Toews).⁴ Still more recently, in a contribution to a 2021 issue of *The Conrad Grebel Review*, I argued that Mennonites would do well to look outside of Christian theology and toward the philosophical works of posthumanist scholars in order to better understand technological life in this century.⁵ As I argue in my book *Postsecular History*, the prefix ‘post’ should not be used to indicate movements of overcoming where one gets past the past, but rather complex entanglements and mediations that reflect the apportioning of meaning and value in and by periodizing terms like past, present, and future, or Ancient, Medieval, Modern, and postmodern.⁶ For Mennonites who are concerned with technology and its posthuman futures, the answer cannot be to double-down on theological foundations and ignore the works of philosophers and critical theorists who have long worked on these topics, for the worlds that Anabaptist and Mennonite theologians seek to understand and embody are already enmeshed with political, philosophical, and secular ideas and practices.

Elsewhere I have outlined my research program in this area under the term “Secular Mennonite Social Critique” where “secularity” refers not to atheism but merely to the world apart from theological capture, “Mennonite” is an identity and set of values that anyone ought to be able to claim for themselves, and “social critique” refers to a mixture of suspicious and sympathetic attempts to understand and challenge the status quo.⁷ In brief, my argument in that chapter is that neither theological ideal-type investment in the tradition nor historical detachment from normative readings of it are sufficient for understanding or furthering the distinctive critique of violence that characterizes the Anabaptist Mennonite constellation of identities. In that project I critique both recent movements in Mennonite theology that withdraw from articulating distinctive identity markers and disciplinary patterns in Anabaptist history that withdraw from normativity and critique

⁴ Maxwell Kennel, “Secular Mennonites and the Violence of Pacifism: Miriam Toews at McMaster,” *Hamilton Arts & Letters* 13.2 (2020).

⁵ Maxwell Kennel, “Violent Inclinations,” *Conrad Grebel Review* 39.2 (Spring 2021): 118-134.

⁶ Maxwell Kennel, *Postsecular History: Political Theology and the Politics of Time* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

⁷ Maxwell Kennel, “Secular Mennonite Social Critique: Pluralism, Interdisciplinarity, and Mennonite Studies,” in *Anabaptist ReMix: Varieties of Cultural Engagement*, ed. Lauren Friesen and Dennis Koehn (Basel: Peter Lang, 2022).

altogether. My approach to these problems is to articulate a form of social critique that proceeds from distinctive Anabaptist and Mennonite values while taking up a world-affirming and secular position that resists, mediates, and reformulates the distinction between Mennonite insiders and outsiders.

One of my goals in this work is to turn the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition outward toward more serious and sustained engagements with public discourses and academic disciplines that might challenge and complement it, while spurring an introspective turn toward a reconsideration of the deeper philosophical, ontological, and epistemological consequences of pacifism and nonviolence. What does it mean to reject the use of force, coercion, and violence not only corporeally (in terms of bodies and actions) but also metaphysically and ontologically (in terms of how we conceptualize the world and our relationship to it)? This question both arises from and leads toward the relationship between Anabaptism and philosophy.

Reconceptualization, Advance

In this essay, I hope to deepen the connection between Anabaptism and philosophy by arguing that the tradition provides resources for unique and critical mediations between entrenched distinctions that limit our ways of thinking about religion, politics, and the legitimation structures of western thinking. In doing so, I hope to reconceptualize the relationship between the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition and its philosophical and secular insiders and outsiders, most of whom have not yet received adequate attention or analysis. As I suggest in the introduction to a special issue of *Political Theology* on the topic, Mennonite political theology is at its best when it turns outward and *toward* its feminist, philosophical, secular, and literary minority traditions in interdisciplinary and pluralistic ways.⁸ But this approach to the relationship between Anabaptism and philosophy cannot be undertaken when those in the Christian theological tradition fear that philosophical or secular forms of life will displace their ideas and practices.

In my recent book *Ontologies of Violence*, I attempt to undertake this kind of interdisciplinary work by reconceptualizing the concept of violence itself, while drawing from the work of French philosopher Jacques

⁸ Maxwell Kennel, "Interdisciplinary Approaches to Mennonite Political Theology," *Political Theology* 22.3 (May 2021): 185-191.

Derrida, Mennonite political theologians, and the late writings of feminist philosopher and ex-Mennonite Grace Jantzen. I argue that the concept of violence itself is best defined as the violation of value-laden boundaries, and furthermore that any ontology or epistemology of violence needs to reckon with the problem of displacement wherein the assumption that differences will always lead to enmity, antagonism, and competition ends up creating the very problems it fears.⁹ Extending from this idea to the juxtaposition of theological Anabaptism with philosophical ways of knowing, it seems essential that this or any interdisciplinary inquiry cannot proceed in a good way if it is defined by the fear of displacement, which assumes that difference is dangerous.¹⁰

This essay proceeds from the idea that scholars can take up theological and philosophical methodologies and perspectives without the assumption that they will inherently conflict, and furthermore that inquiry in the Social Sciences and Humanities ought to exceed the bounds of specific disciplines when they limit our ability to think through social problems. This form of critical interdisciplinarity can help us to understand the themes in the title of this essay, “Anabaptism contra Philosophy.” We could begin by asking if this joining term “contra” implies only difference or sheer contradiction? But this question is already a problem because Anabaptist Mennonite identities and the traditions of philosophy are both so interiorly diverse and complex that to place the two in dialogue in the abstract seems irresponsible—irresponsible in the sense of not responding to the ways that these names (“philosophy” and “Anabaptism”) are imperfect attempts to capture the uncapturable. There are so many philosophies and philosophers that the term philosophy is already dishonest when it is used in the singular rather than plural form, and there

⁹ Maxwell Kennel, *Ontologies of Violence: Deconstruction, Pacifism, and Displacement* (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

¹⁰ See Audre Lorde, “Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving” in *Your Silence Will Not Protect You* (London: Silver Press, 2017), 12. She writes: “The above forms of human blindness [racism, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia] stem from the same root – an inability to recognize the notion of difference as a dynamic human force, one which is enriching rather than threatening to the defined self, when there are shared goals.” This idea also animates the work of Grace Jantzen, most especially in *Violence to Eternity: Death and the Displacement of Beauty, Volume II*, ed. Jeremy Carrette and Morny Joy (London: Routledge, 2009), 19.

are so many Anabaptists and Mennonites that to singularize such an identity seems violent—in the sense of violating the complexity and multiplicity of what names only ever attempt to name. So how can we use these names—“philosophy” and “Anabaptism”—without contravening the best antiviolent and peaceable aspirations of the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition?

Until we clarify and contextualize what exactly we are comparing when we discuss Anabaptism contra philosophy, we cannot escape the problems of abstraction and representation. Indeed, the conceptual relationship wherein one name stands in for something multiple and diverse is a key philosophical problem that requires careful thinking about exemplarity (specifically, the question of what specific thing represents what general category), just as the relationship between the individual and the community requires careful thinking about the complexities of identity and belonging (as in the question of how individuals fit in, represent, and critique their communities). So, it makes sense that problems of representation would also be problems for any rapport between Anabaptism and philosophy.

For my purposes, I use the word “philosophy” to refer—for better, and certainly for worse—to the western philosophical tradition which traces its lineages from the ancient Greeks to the Enlightenment, and into modernity and postmodernity where its foundations become radically (and rightly!) questioned by those who reject monolithic interpretations of philosophy. Interior distinctions abound within philosophy—analytic Anglo-American philosophy is distinguished from continental European philosophy, and the recognition of global philosophical reflection continues to unfold—and its many facets are not unlike the schisms and sectarian divisions that we see in Protestant Christianity.

On the other hand, I understand the constellation of Anabaptist and Mennonite identities in terms of its key values and stated principles, from voluntarism, the rejection of coercion, critiques of the state, the formation of alternative and utopian communities defined by mutual aid and the community of goods, and the desire for revolutionary and restitutionist reform, to the emphasis on following Jesus Christ (discipleship), the various critiques of violence that underpin pacifism and nonresistance (such as the critique of redemptive violence), and the paradoxes of radicalism and

dissent.¹¹ I see the Anabaptist vision, the spirit of the Radical Reformation, and the Mennonite peace witness as forms of life that emphasize a unique critique of violence that both includes and exceeds institutional capture by the denominations of the church and the disciplines of the university. Anabaptist and Mennonite identities are diverse and multiple, and today it is controversial to define them in any singular way, and yet I believe that it is defensible to claim that the tradition is defined by a disposition of antiviolence that is informed by a pacifist interpretation of Jesus Christ and the gospels.

Between, Beyond

Anabaptist and Mennonite identities also exceed the distinction between secularity and religion both because our present ideas and anxieties about religion do not map directly onto the sixteenth century Anabaptist groups, and because not all contemporary Mennonites consider themselves to be practicing adherents of Christianity. For example, the complex identities of philosophically inclined or secular Mennonites are often expressed in literary ways that stand apart from academic or ecclesial institutions.¹² For instance, we can look to a question that frames Ronald Tiessen's novel *Menno in Athens*, which narrates the travels of a young Mennonite on the islands of Greece. The novel stages what is likely the first sustained literary-philosophical encounter between Mennonite and Greek thought, and

¹¹ For a helpful historical summary see John D. Roth and Steven M. Nolt, "The Anabaptist Tradition," *Reflections* 13-14 (2011-2012): 10-27. On the polemical character of the historical term "Anabaptist," Michael Driedger writes that "Today it is common to use 'Anabaptist' as a value-neutral or even positive descriptor for the great diversity of adult baptizing groups in the broad 'Mennonite' community" but cautions that this contemporary use of the term "makes it difficult to analyze both the hatreds aimed at continental baptizers and the attempts by adult baptizers to defend against these hatreds and name themselves." See Michael Driedger, "The Year 1625, the Dutch Republic, and Book History: Perspectives for Reframing Studies of Mennonites in Early Modernity," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 97.1 (January 2023), 13. Indeed, the normative and contested character of naming is reflected in historical transformations where names are attributed, rejected, accepted, and reclaimed in contextual ways that lead from historical Anabaptism to the contemporary Mennonite reception and the reappropriation of the Anabaptist name.

¹² See, for example, the fascinating and textured representation of Mennonite identity in Jonathan Dyck, *Shelterbelts* (Wolfville, NS: Conundrum Press, 2022).

in a key moment, the narrator asks his father a question: “If you have the proclamation of a truth in one case that is considered divine revelation, and the same proclamation is found in another culture, must we assume that one is divinely inspired and the other not?”¹³ Indeed, this kind of question defines much of the personal and scholarly encounter between religion and secularity as well as greater conversations about pluralism and exclusivism.

In the context of this inquiry, however, we can put the question in another way: If there are resonant values that connect Anabaptist and Mennonite identities with other secular or philosophical forms of life, then why would we dignify or attend to one at the expense of the other? The stakes of this question are high because it concerns the relationship between one complex and diverse tradition and its many others and outsiders. We ought to consider how Mennonites and Anabaptists treat those who are outside their bounds because this is the real test of whether the peace church traditions are who they say they are. Will those who stand outside of the tradition be treated in ways that accord with the critique of violence and pursuit of peace and justice that defines much of its interior? Or will violence be inscribed in subtle discursive ways as Anabaptists or Mennonites make instrumental use of philosophy or quietly suspect secularity of heresy?

In answer to the question of how representatives of Anabaptism and philosophy ought to relate to each other, I propose, very simply, that the way forward for this dialogue is to fully dignify the similarities and differences between the two, and to do so without the comforts of syncretistic unity (where the two are collapsed into each other) or the paralyses of irreducible difference (where comparisons and connections are prohibited). I first want to refuse the desire to simply fold Anabaptist and philosophical ideas into each other when similarities arise. Even when we do find striking resonances between Anabaptist and philosophical ideas, as Tiessen does throughout his novel, there will always be real and irreducible differences between the two that cannot be subsumed into unity without violating the dignity and uniqueness of both parts of the encounter. This reductive approach is present when Mennonite theologians use philosophies and philosophers for their own purposes, without acknowledging that the philosophers they cite and quote would not agree with their values or aims. But also, in reverse, I want

¹³ Ronald Tiessen, *Menno in Athens* (Thunder Bay, ON: Pandora Press, 2022).

to refuse the desire to see differences as solely irreducible and incomparable, a tendency that is often motivated by disciplinary gatekeeping where scholars prefer to avoid engagement with those outside of their specialized fields (even when their research topics and questions are resonant).

No, there is no need to avoid or prohibit engagement with philosophy because it is so very different from Anabaptist or Mennonite theologies. We should be able to think apart from the desire to collapse difference into sameness *and* the desire to make differences irreducible or incomparable. It is better to find a third way to define the term “contra” in “Anabaptism contra Philosophy” that is not between but beyond these two bad options. In the spirit of both sixteenth century Anabaptism’s simultaneous refusal of and indebtedness to Catholicism and Protestantism, and contemporary Mennonite attempts to get outside of the dichotomy between passivity and violence, I propose a third way that neither stands between nor entirely exits the supposed poles of Anabaptist thought and the philosophical tradition by dignifying their similarities while keeping a porous boundary between them that allows us to see their differences.

Both/And, Neither/Nor

This requires critiquing and disinvesting in rigid oppositions between: religion and secularity (by becoming both postsecular and postreligious); theology and philosophy (by becoming interdisciplinary); church and world (by acknowledging that this is an ideal-type distinction); liberalism and conservatism (by challenging liberal progressivism, conservative reaction, and the desire for neutrality); and so on—for none of these framing distinctions are adequate to the complexities and entanglements of this life. In the context of such distinctions, Anabaptist and Mennonite identities and epistemologies become philosophically significant because of their unique mediations between oppositions.¹⁴ Sixteenth century Anabaptism was a social *and* religious movement whose followers were *both* indelibly influenced by the Catholic church-state establishment and the mainstream Protestant reformers, *and* radically different from these two options in ways that mediated between them, negated them both, and sought to change the

¹⁴ I develop this claim in detail in *Ontologies of Violence*, Chapter 2.

social order.¹⁵ So too, in very different ways, with Mennonites who sought to oppose both political passivity and violent reaction by articulating pacifist “middle ways” or “third ways” that challenge the notion that violence solves violence.¹⁶

It is this both/and, neither/nor structure that is philosophically significant, and it represents a significant opportunity for thinking philosophically about Anabaptist and Mennonite identities and for bringing the insights of the tradition into philosophical and secular conversations. However, the value of philosophical Anabaptism hinges on the precise character of the mediations that would ensue from such a rapprochement. Some forms of mediation between the poles of common conceptual oppositions only reaffirm and entrench their structurally opposed character by seeking to “hear both sides” of poorly formed or even violent distinctions. Popular efforts to mediate between oppositions—both abstract and concrete—often dignify political and popular narratives of resentment and reaction or remain neutral on matters that call for justice, action, or accountability, all in the name of avoiding the perceived moral compromise of choosing a side. But there is no moral purity or neutrality to be found in this world, only complex complicities and tensions between idealism and compromise that may become emancipatory.

It is better to match mediation between social and conceptual oppositions with a strong commitment to antiviolenent action and a sharp refusal of both neutrality and polarization. This is the radical promise of a philosophically informed Anabaptism or Anabaptist-influenced philosophy. Indeed, such an approach has already been articulated in preliminary ways throughout the history of the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition. For example, Mennonite pastor and peace worker Edgar Metzler published a pamphlet in 1968 called “Let’s Talk about Extremism” in which he radically reframed the social and political oppositions of his time and argued for a critical approach to what we now call polarization by articulating a set of

¹⁵ See Walter Klaassen, *Anabaptism: Neither Catholic nor Protestant*. 3rd Ed. (Thunder Bay, ON: Pandora Press, 2001) and Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, trans. Trevor Johnson (London: Routledge, 1996), 6.

¹⁶ For a recent expression that extends Walter Wink’s “third way,” see Hyung Jin Kim Sun, *Who Are Our Enemies and How Do We Love Them?* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2020).

epistemological distinctions between open and closed ways of thinking about social problems.¹⁷ Against simplistic, selective, black-and-white, fear-based, or destructive ways of thinking about the world, Metzler advocated for alternatives to authoritarianism and nationalism, conceptualized non-reductive approaches to dialogue across lines of difference, and promoted ways of responding to social change that resisted reactivity and resentment. Had Mennonites in the 1960s and 1970s taken to this distinctive approach rather than John Howard Yoder's politics of Jesus, it is possible that Mennonites today would have richer resources to draw on to address the present culture wars.

Careful and contextual yet incisive and critical mediations between established conceptual and political oppositions are sorely needed in our present social landscape where dominant distinctions provoke reactive doubling-down, conflict averse avoidance, and the retrenchment of all-too-simple divisions. It is time to acknowledge that simple distinctions between insiders and outsiders, singularizing approaches to church and world, reductive representations of philosophy and theology, and the strictures of the religious-secular distinction are no longer adequate for understanding, explaining, or critiquing what we see in the world (if they ever were!). Nowhere is there to be found a theologian without philosophical influence, or a philosopher who does not rely upon concepts with a religious history, or a churchgoer without a secular life, or a non-religious person purified of all religious influence. We are not this or that, we are always both and neither, and nowhere except in the realm of ideal-types is there a pure identity without contradictions and enmeshments.

Three Critiques

Beginning from the assumption that these terms—religious and secular—do not name stable phenomena but instead are conceptual tools that are used and abused for diverse purposes, I want to critique the imposition of enmity, suspicion, and competition onto relationships between Anabaptism and its

¹⁷ Edgar Metzler, *Let's Talk About Extremism*, Focal Pamphlet Series No. 12 (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1968). Online edition, *Anabaptist Historians*, ed. Maxwell Kennel, (January 2021), <https://anabaptisthistorians.org/2021/01/07/edgar-metzlers-lets-talk-about-extremism-1968/>.

many others, most especially philosophy. One manifestation of this ontology of displacement that I want to resist is found implicitly in the ignorance that many Anabaptist and Mennonite theologians have shown regarding the worlds outside of Christian theology. I use the term “ignorance” here not to attack positions different from my own, but to name the specific and identifiable forms of misrecognition and nonrecognition that characterize how some Anabaptist and Mennonite theologians turn a blind eye to philosophical and secular thinkers who could otherwise become great partners and allies to think and engage with. Below I provide three examples of the tendency to ignore philosophy on the part of some Anabaptist and Mennonite theologians and then develop my greater claim that the future of the Anabaptist encounter with philosophy ought to both mediate between and refuse simplistic distinctions. I believe this critique is important for showing how some Mennonite scholars ignore those outside their discourses and disciplines at the direct expense of their own stated values.

First, I see this ignorance in some forms of Anabaptist political theology. For example, the fascinating new edited collection *Anabaptist Political Theology After Marpeck* focuses on an historical Anabaptist figure who was highly engaged in the civil society of his time (Pilgram Marpeck, an engineer), and yet the book is framed in a way that avoids similar engagements.¹⁸ Nowhere in the chapters of the book or its apparatus is any acknowledgement that the discourse on “political theology” is anything but a Christian pursuit. This way of presenting the book’s stated subject matter ignores large areas in the conversation on political theology that do not consider themselves to be contributing to the aims of Christianity. For example, the Political Theology Network has gone to great lengths to present the paradigm of political theology as a pluralistic and interdisciplinary resource that challenges the distinction between religion and secularity and seeks to understand secularization from an interdisciplinary perspective.¹⁹ So why would Anabaptist political theologies use the term “political theology” without signalling that this term is not solely determined or

¹⁸ *Anabaptist Political Theology After Marpeck*, ed. J. Denny Weaver, Gerald Mast, and Trevor Bechtel, C. Henry Smith Series no. 13 (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2022).

¹⁹ Political Theology Network, Points of Unity (2019), <https://politicaltheology.com/political-theology-network-points-of-unity/>

owned by Christian theologians? Apart from two gestural quotations to Jacques Derrida and Slavoj Žižek, there are no philosophers cited in the volume despite the central place of philosophy in political theology, and even more conspicuously, there is no engagement with major (and often controversial) figures in the discourse on political theology such as Giorgio Agamben, Vincent Lloyd, Beatrice Marovich, and Adam Kotsko. Showing awareness of the existence of secular political theologies should be a natural consequence of Anabaptist and Mennonite methodologies because recognition and attention are origin-points of both peace and violence. Yet it is rare to see Anabaptism represented in the broader conversation on political theology and uncommon to see Mennonite theologians take up the rigorous distinctions of critical political theology.²⁰

Second, I see the tendency to ignore philosophy and secularity in some Mennonite feminist theologies. A few years ago, in an article on “Mennonite Political Theology and Feminist Critique,” I challenged feminist theologians in the Mennonite tradition to consider how secular feminists might be both a resource and challenge for their work.²¹ This past year, Susanne Guenther Loewen generously responded to this challenge in her own excellent contribution to a special issue of *Political Theology*. Although she presented Mennonite feminist theologies in a comprehensive way that will surely help the discourse, her article still limits to a footnote any consideration of Mennonite feminists who do not see themselves as Christians.²² In light of this decision, I wonder more generally why Mennonite feminist theologians do not actively seek out potential secular allies who do not share their theological convictions but who might share their social values? Why not cite or intentionally form bonds of solidarity with philosophers like Diane Enns,²³ literary figures like Miriam Toews, or ex-Mennonites like Grace

²⁰ One exception can be found in Elizabeth Phillips, “Anabaptist Theologies,” *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. Peter Scott and William Cavanaugh (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019).

²¹ Maxwell Kennel, “Mennonite Political Theology and Feminist Critique,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 93 (July 2019): 393-412.

²² Susanne Guenther Loewen, “The Personal is Political: The Politics of Liberation in Mennonite-Feminist Theologies,” *Political Theology* 22.3 (2021): 192-210.

²³ See, for example, the brief reflections on Mennonite life in Diane Enns, *Thinking Through Loneliness* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 90, 96.

Jantzen, when they are also engaged in deep critiques of patriarchy? Why not engage directly with Judith Butler's recent turn toward nonviolence, or Erin Wunker's and Sarah Ahmed's "feminist killjoy?"²⁴ In some ways, it is not my place to criticize Mennonite feminist theologies because of how imbricated in patriarchal power my subject position remains. But I also feel fortunate to have had generous feminist dialogue partners with whom I have given and received criticism of this kind.

Third, I see this ignorance of philosophy and secularity in theologies that present Anabaptist and Mennonite identities as only, ideally, or normatively Christian—as if there were not Mennonites who retain their Mennonite identities in rich and meaningful ways after exiting the institutional church.²⁵ This invalidating presentation of Mennonite identity again proceeds as if certain scholars or individuals who bear a complex or negative relationship to the tradition do not exist. An example of this limited way of defining the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition is found in the work of Jeremy Bergen. In his recent book chapter in *Recovering from the Anabaptist Vision*, Bergen presents Anabaptism in a solely Christian light. He writes programmatically that "The Anabaptist tradition ought to be regarded as a reforming movement within, and for the sake of, the (capital-C) Church identified by the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic," and that "Anything that might characterize Anabaptism as distinctive... [a term he later problematizes and frames as a gift] ought to be distinctive specifically in relation to other Christians and be oriented toward the unity and integrity of the church."²⁶ To this I say, no. Not only were there many ways that the sixteenth century Anabaptists sought to radically reform all of society (beyond the contemporary Christian/secular distinction), but there are many who understand themselves to be heirs of the Anabaptist tradition but do not see that identity as something that exists for the sake

²⁴ See Judith Butler, *The Force of Non-Violence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (London: Verso, 2021), Erin Wunker, *Notes from a Feminist Killjoy* (Toronto: BookThug, 2016), and Sarah Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2017).

²⁵ See, for example, Janis Thiessen, "'It's a hard thing to talk about': 'Fringe' Mennonite Religious Beliefs and Experiences," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 33 (2015): 213-233

²⁶ Jeremy Bergen, "The Ecumenical Vocation of Anabaptist Theology," in *Recovering from the Anabaptist Vision: New Essays in Anabaptist Identity and Theological Method*, ed. Laura Schmidt Roberts, Paul Martens, and Myron A. Penner (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 103.

of the church. For example, Daniel Shank Cruz's approach in both *Queering Mennonite Literature* and his latest book *Ethics for Apocalyptic Times* promotes Anabaptist and Mennonite-informed values like community and mutual aid, without endorsement of the capital-C Church.²⁷

Another striking example of an Anabaptist theology that misrecognizes philosophical secularity and secular Mennonite identity is Layton Boyd Friesen's book *Secular Non-Violence and the Theo-Drama of Peace*. In it, Friesen continues the tired pattern of seeing secularity as a direct and essential threat to Christianity. For Friesen, when Mennonites exit the church but retain a commitment to nonviolence, there is something fundamentally lacking. He writes that "To the extent that the Mennonite pacifist ethic is not a theological ethic, it will fail to provide a coherent wisdom for how to live in this world."²⁸ I contend that this is patently false, and I ask: Why not recognize and acknowledge that the Anabaptist tradition has deep and rich secular afterlives in the present that deserve just as much consideration and dignity as its theological inheritors? For example, we can look to the entire conversation about "Mennonite/s Writing" and ask: Why not see this discourse as a coherent wisdom and legitimate expression of Mennonite identity that faithfully follows the spirit of Anabaptist radicalism and dissent by standing at a distance from the established church? What would it mean to repent and turn from such a myopic vision of Anabaptism, and instead listen to ex-Mennonites, near-Mennonites, and non-Mennonites (to echo the theme of the 2015 issue of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*) and their social critiques?

Recognition, Engagement

In face of these limitations, a greater question is: Why do theologically oriented Anabaptists and Mennonites struggle to engage with secular and philosophical thinkers without either using philosophy for their own purposes or anxiously returning to a set of rigid foundations in face of a

²⁷ Daniel Shank Cruz, *Queering Mennonite Literature: Archives, Activism, and the Search for Community* (University Park, PA: Penn State Univ. Press, 2019), and *Ethics for Apocalyptic Times: Theapoetics, Autotheory, and Mennonite Literature* (University Park, PA: Penn State Univ. Press, 2023).

²⁸ Layton Boyd Friesen, *Secular Nonviolence and the Theo-Drama of Peace: Anabaptist Ethics and the Catholic Christology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 11.

perceived secular threat? When contemporary Mennonites cite Menno Simons' favourite verse, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11), it bears considering what work the image of a foundation is doing in relation to those who do not share the same foundations. Do those in the Anabaptist or Mennonite tradition conceive of such a foundation in Christ as something to anxiously return to in the face of perceived threats, or does founding oneself or one's tradition on a peaceful figure like Jesus of Nazareth mean divesting from all institutional and structural investments that would cause such an anxious return? I use economic language of investment and divestment here because it bears considering what exactly it would cost those in the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition to engage more fully with philosophical and secular thinkers.²⁹ I contend that it would cost Mennonite theologians nothing worth saving to engage with the work of philosophers and secular political theologians without subsuming them into theology or seeing them as lacking or irreducibly different.

In the absence of the fear of difference, the Anabaptist and Mennonite values of peace and justice and concomitant critique of violence—whether rooted in theological foundations or not—can serve as a bridge to span the divide between Anabaptism and philosophy and between secular and Christian representatives of the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition. This bridge threatens to collapse, however, when Christian fragility causes a retreat to first principles rather than a true form of recognition and connection across lines of difference. It costs Anabaptists and Mennonites nothing to read, listen to, dignify, acknowledge, engage with, and cite philosophers and their philosophies—except perhaps the feeling of security one receives from believing that one possesses the truth. But there is no real threat lurking around the corner that would destabilize Christian convictions or institutions if secular and philosophical perspectives were fully recognized, dignified, and given voice inside, outside, and alongside the Anabaptist tradition. In fact, the real threat to Anabaptist and Mennonite values is found in the act of ignoring the other and in the damaging forms of non-recognition that are

²⁹ For a more in-depth exploration of economies of investment, attention, and desire, see Travis Kroeker, *Empire Erotics and Messianic Economies of Desire*, J.J. Thiessen Lectures 2013 (Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Mennonite Univ. Press, 2016).

used to keep the line between religion and secularity stable.

It is the politics of recognition that is at the core of my argument for an antiviolent form of interdisciplinary connection between Anabaptism and philosophy. I wonder: Is there not a form of implicit enmity and epistemological violence in the desire to maintain hard boundaries between disciplines and discourses like Christian theology and philosophy or religion and secularity? On one hand, these boundaries are important when we want to identify real and contextual differences in languages, approaches, values, and assumptions. At the same time, when these distinctions become weight-bearing investments that protect their users from uncomfortable truths or internal contradictions, then they prevent the kinds of mutual recognition that motivate their positive uses. The real problem underneath this distinction between differences we should dignify and differences that become self-reinforcing is the subtle violence of non-recognition. Alexander García Düttmann's approach to recognition can help us here. He states:

Someone wants to be recognized as this or that because he or she [sic] claims to be this or that... Recognition must consequently establish and confirm an identity. By constituting and authenticating an identity, recognition is meant to incorporate a contingent I into the community of a deeply rooted We, a We firmly anchored and clearly positioned. The one who recognizes is both a witness and a producer. He belongs to a presupposed community or society which must first be formed by recognition. But recognition never forms such a society or community, given that the very moment it tries to unite what it produces and what it witnesses, what it produces in what it witnesses and what it witnesses in what it produces, it must indicate its own splitting into reception and spontaneity, confirmation and establishment, witnessing and producing.³⁰

Düttmann thematizes recognition by showing how it is essential for identity while also showing how recognition performs a paradoxical task of uniting what cannot be united. So, too, with the disposition of recognition

³⁰ Alexander García Düttmann, *Between Cultures: Tensions in the Struggle for Recognition*, trans. Kenneth B. Woodgate (London: Verso, 2000), 3.

I am proposing for the relationship between Anabaptism and philosophy. Some forms of misrecognition instrumentalize the other, as in the case of theologians who take up philosophical ideas and use them for Christian purposes in ways their philosophical originators would not recognize. On the other hand, there are forms of nonrecognition that occur when we turn away from and refuse to recognize and dignify adjacent identities. For example, when theologians proceed as if all Mennonites see themselves as Christians or when theologians define the secular in terms of absence and lack, rather than a form of life with positive values, then deep misrecognition has occurred. But Düttmann's insight is deeper still because it also shows us that the communities who engage in recognition—both producing identity and witnessing it—are never fully unified or whole. Recognition “tries to unite what it produces and what it witnesses,” but it ultimately reflects our split and alienated character. We are not one. We are not whole. And we do not agree. Better to acknowledge these social facts and then undertake the difficult work of forming deep bonds of solidarity and social bonds of public trust across lines of difference, rather than taking refuge in fantasies of unity, or, as Miranda Joseph calls it, “the romance of community.”³¹

So, if the paradoxes of recognition are the problem for the dialogue between Anabaptists and philosophers, then what are the solutions? I suggest that the first solution is to cultivate richer and more generous practices of recognition; not recognition that self-assuredly gives the other the gift of attention, and not recognition that ironically prides itself in its vulnerability and patience, but a form of recognition that is mutual enough that it could leave behind the shorelines of theological and historical comfort for a very long time, and set out on the seas of secularity without the promise of return. This form of recognition would allow Anabaptists and philosophers to engage with each other's ideas without anxiety, agenda, or suspicion. Rather than seeing recognition in competitive terms—where identities in the marketplace of ideas are pitted against each other as if we can only pay attention to one thing at a time—we need to challenge the reactive and zero-sum ways we conceive of attention itself. As I argue in *Ontologies of Violence*, the first step toward a rapport between secular and religious critics of violence

³¹ Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Univ. Press, 2002).

is to challenge the idea that difference will always lead to displacement. We lose nothing by engaging fully and openly with that which is different from us, and we gain a deeper sense of our own identities and communities when we do.

But the way forward on this front is more difficult, because our response to difference is conditioned not only by our theologies, histories, ontologies, or epistemologies, but also by our psychologies and biographies. As Christian Early and his colleagues note (following the work of John Bowlby) our attachment relationships determine our ability to form peaceable bonds that do not respond to differences with fear or reactivity. As Christian and Annmarie Early write in their introduction to the fascinating and underappreciated volume *Integrating the New Science of Love and a Spirituality of Peace*, “the fundamental way that humans (and other animals) deal with stress is through social connection, not competition.”³² Although this statement is phrased descriptively, it is surely a normative claim that connection ought to be valued over competition. So, the question for the conversation between Anabaptism and philosophy should be: what stands in the way of real connection? Christian and Annmarie Early argue that there are deep resonances between Anabaptist peace theologies and the psychology of attachment, and I agree. If the notion that difference is dangerous is what keeps Anabaptists suspicious of philosophy and secularity, then the solution is not to fine-tune our theologies or double-down on our foundationalism, but to examine the deeper reasons why we react to differences as if they will displace us. On this theme, I have found insight in my partner’s field of practice as a therapist and I look to the therapeutic framework of Internal Family Systems therapy for help in trying to understand the desire to partition and divide what is really entangled and connected.³³ I gesture outward to this world outside of Anabaptism and philosophy in conclusion because I think that the stakes of the relationship between disciplines and identities like Anabaptism and philosophy are best understood by looking inward at the reasons why we construct identity and otherness in the first place.

³² *Integrating the New Science of Love and a Spirituality of Peace: Becoming Human Again*, ed. Christian E. Early and Annmarie L. Early (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013), 5.

³³ See my “Religious Studies & Internal Family Systems Therapy,” *Implicit Religion* 23 (2020): 293-304.

This is why it is so meaningful that the first lecture in the Anabaptists and Philosophy Roundtable lecture series by Diane Enns was autobiographical, for how else do encounters between Anabaptist traditions and philosophy occur than in life? If the present essay seems very personal, with its many self-citations and persistent defenses of particular liminal identities, it is only because the encounter between Anabaptism and philosophy is always, in some way, personal. One way forward for the discourse ought to involve such an acknowledgement, for it is the desire to cleanly separate scholarship from the lives of the ones who produce it that blinds those who perpetuate and receive it from the fact that all knowledge is produced from specific social locations. This does not prohibit philosophical abstraction that attempts to work with general, metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological categories, but it ought to condition such reflection and influence the mediation between particularity and generality, perhaps using the models provided by Anabaptist ways of mediating between oppositions that move away from simple either-or distinctions and toward careful and contextual neither-nor negations, both-and affirmations, relations of critical indebtedness to tradition, and movements of freedom beyond entrenched oppositions.

Maxwell Kennel is a Senior Research Associate at the Dr. Gilles Arcand Centre for Health Equity at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, and the Director of Pandora Press.

The Anabaptist Tradition: Intellectual Problems, Resources, and Possible Conversations—a Response to Maxwell Kennel

Christian Early

ABSTRACT

Using the work of Maxwell Kennel published in the same issue as a jumping off point, the author suggests further ways of inviting risky engagement with voices outside the Anabaptist tradition—such as those in philosophy, psychology, and biology—that have the potential to enrich and clarify Anabaptist convictions.

My response to Maxwell Kennel's stimulating and provocative paper is in the mode of "yes-and," drawing out directional lines for future conversations, imagining into possibilities, and at points, asking for clarification. I will not push back directly on what Kennel says in his paper because I wholeheartedly agree with the overall project of inviting risky engagement with voices from *outside* the Anabaptist tradition. In fact, that project animates my own work and offers a vision for the kind of intellectual work in which one might engage as an Anabaptist academic, and to which one might constructively contribute. Engaging voices on the margins and from the outside and working with dissonance are central ideas to what an Anabaptist philosopher might "do," and I commend Kennel for articulating them so clearly. This does not mean that I agree with everything Kennel says, but rather that it seems more constructive to expand on what he says in additional directions and to engage conversationally, requesting clarification at places where I register more hesitation.

To start, I like that Kennel pays attention to, and opens for conversation and investigation, the affective register and contributions from psychology. I agree that in order to work on the problems of difference or the problems of the relationship between Anabaptism and philosophy, however we define those terms, we also need to work on ourselves. We cannot only work on these problems theoretically and intellectually in a disembodied way, the

work is necessarily self-involving. It will require courage and learning to face the discomfort of seeing what may be “inside,” what it is that may unconsciously be driving our explicit responses, such as fear or anxiety. It will require an awareness of the way in which these emotions show up and shape reactions and the desire to protect or legitimate, philosophically and theologically, our convictional ground by running back to the source and safety of the tradition in order to re-establish and reaffirm our sense of identity. It can be difficult to tell the difference between our felt need to protect ourselves and the perceived call to protect and preserve the tradition. Cultivating self-awareness and owning that the line of distinction between a sense of self and the tradition is blurry at best might allow for a new space in which a more honest and vulnerable conversation could open up. I am imagining responses to difference that are not overdetermined by protection or rejection out of fear but that are creative and explorative of alternative ways to incorporate and move forward. It is uncomfortable and risky work to enter into. If we allow a wave of conversation to pick us up without having an idea of where it will put us down, we will need to let go of the sense of assurance that comes from already knowing the end. That courage of letting go of an assurance of the outcome requires a stance on the inside which I think Kennel is articulating and naming really well. In this way, it is self-involving work.

One of my complaints with the Anabaptist intellectual tradition has been that there is no real appreciation or accepted role for psychology—it is as if the inner world or psychological dynamics that manifest themselves in and that can take over communities do not exist—so stories of abuse, manipulation, and control seem constantly to surprise, which then evokes polarized responses of either wholesale rejection of the now-poisoned well or complete denial that anything is askew and subsequent protective re-narrating. The fact that Kennel is courageous enough to open up that conversation, which often shows up at the congregational and conference levels, is commendable.

By “no real psychology” in the Anabaptist tradition, I have in mind a comparison to the Catholic tradition. Beginning with Augustine’s *Confessions*, there is a rich tradition of investigating the dynamics of our inner world as it shows up for us, our sense of self in relation to our

experience of God, and the way in which what we find inside interacts with our theological understanding of the Christian tradition. But for Anabaptists, it is as if the inner world either does not exist or that it is a flat landscape (nothing of importance to see). I will go out on a limb and say that it has had consequences for the relatively unsophisticated way in which we understand human beings, human emotions, and relational dynamics.

I agree with Kennel that we need to talk about “Anabaptists” and “Mennonites,” being careful not to collapse those terms. I grew up in Copenhagen, Denmark. My family is originally part German, part Danish, and later I was adopted into the Early family, which has a long history in the United States. There are not many Mennonites in Denmark that I am aware of—they are across the border of Southern Jutland in Germany near Flensburg—but there is a vibrant free church tradition (Baptist and Pentecostal) in Scandinavia, and a sensibility that participation and membership in a religious tradition ought to be voluntary and that it is problematic when the nation state is involved. This was understood as the logical consequence of the Protestant movement: the freedom to say “no” in matters of religious conscience.

My introduction to the Anabaptist tradition and the significance of pacifism came in graduate school at Fuller Seminary through my teachers Nancey Murphy and James Wm. McClendon Jr. I became convinced that truth and power were inextricably linked. It followed that either what passes as true and good was at bottom a game of power supported by manipulation, coercion, and ultimately violence, or there was an alternative way to articulate an epistemological and moral project grounded in invitation and “following after” that Anabaptism claimed was embodied in Jesus of Nazareth. Having already rejected the Enlightenment project of pure rationality as a dangerous fantasy, I became a pacifist for epistemological reasons because I saw it as the only way to safeguard truth. If we eliminate our adversary, we also eliminate our means to discover whether our convictions hold water. I became an Anabaptist and joined Pasadena Mennonite Church because I realized that pacifism could not be merely a private conviction; it is a socio-political conviction governing social interactions (ethic) that can only honestly and genuinely be held communally. A coherent pacifist epistemology and ethic could be a way to engage Friedrich Nietzsche whom I had been reading. I

imagined identifying a convictional position and carving out a conceptual space that was identifiably *not* Augustinian, Cartesian, or Nietzschean in terms of how it imagined the relationship between truth, power, and good—but rather, Anabaptist. I much prefer thinking in terms of Anabaptism because I can be a full participant in that tradition and contribute to it, rather than thinking in terms of being a Mennonite because I was not born into the tradition and I cannot simply become one as I lack the family connections necessary to be recognized as a member of the tribe.

“Anabaptism and philosophy” is therefore a central and important subject area in my own work. And, again, we are dealing here with the relative poverty of our intellectual tradition. If you look at the Catholic tradition, there is a rich and long history of engagement with Aristotle through Aquinas. The intellectual work that Catholics have done over centuries to articulate and clarify their tradition is beautiful and (for some of us) overpoweringly persuasive. Protestants, by contrast, have often leaned on Immanuel Kant or David Hume, depending on which Protestant tradition, although lately many Protestants in the Reformed tradition seem to have rediscovered Aristotle’s notion of formation as it applies to a theology of worship.

That leaves us with the question of what points of engagement we can imagine between Anabaptism and philosophy. Perhaps our tradition’s relative intellectual poverty can be reframed as an opportunity. The fact that we do not have “a philosopher” on whose work we lean, may be to our benefit—we are free to choose. Earlier I used the phrase “carving out a conceptual space,” and this is where I find Kennel’s word “entanglement” helpful because I would want to preserve an open and pluralist attitude with respect to imagining into that space, rather than take a single philosophical author or a single philosophical insight, which would then constrain and narrowly define “Anabaptism and philosophy.”

If we are to remain open to the possibilities, what lines of exploration suggest themselves? I can imagine drawing on Heidegger’s critique of technology, looking at ways of being and becoming in the world. Who are we as human beings, and how do our tools, skills, and pathways shape our ways of knowing? Albert Borgmann has done some of this work, but I am also thinking of Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life*. I can see drawing inspiration from postmodern Anglo-American philosophy, meaning

philosophy that takes its cue from the epistemological holism of William Van Orman Quine, appreciating that webs of belief and changes in webs of belief are underdetermined, and from the philosophical investigations of Ludwig Wittgenstein as he uncovers the way in which language is embedded in embodied forms of life. Both philosophers reject foundationalism as a metaphor for knowledge—and that could be a point of contention, but I would argue that foundationalism is radically and irredeemably flawed and that it would be a mistake for Anabaptists to shape convictional claims in its terms. I also imagine drawing on Nietzsche and Foucault on issues of power and the unmasking of power. They are “natural” conversation partners. Walter Wink would be in that stream of thought, and again, entanglements is a good word here.

I have also worked with William Connolly and his political philosophy. I am attracted to his use of Nietzsche to open the affective register because it allows one to identify and name the hidden work that resentment does, especially in the way in which difference is negotiated, which is a central concern. How do you respond to difference? Are you, fundamentally, resentful that you have to explain yourself and that “others” are not on board with living in the way that you think they should? Do you try to eliminate difference because you experience it as a threat to your own being in the world? As a radical pluralist, Connolly draws on William James and the American pragmatic tradition in rejecting the drive to the “one explanation” or the one God, which illuminates everything and through whom everything makes sense. The universe is one in which things are connected and there are wholes, but perhaps *not everything* is connected and perhaps everything *cannot* be gathered into a single connected whole under a One-God-who-rules. Perhaps matter itself is not inert and is potentially capable of agency.

These ideas provide openings for Anabaptists to engage philosophy and gain intellectual depth, insight, and clarity in their own work. These are not meant to be definitive and in fact the list should keep growing as new thinking and critical tools emerge.

Kennel asks a critical question that I want to highlight: What is the relationship between a particular way of life and the doctrinal commitments that it might have or the convictions that might inform it? Specifically, must you have Christian convictions or, say, pacifist convictions, to sustain a

Christian way of life? Is it possible to live and navigate your life peacefully but not have any substantive convictions about, for instance, the Trinity or God? Anabaptists and Mennonites who have grown up in their tradition and who go on later to leave their tradition are finding and reporting that it is perfectly possible for them to live a life that feels coherent. Others claim that it is neither sustainable nor coherent, and that you have to maintain some doctrinal commitments in order to maintain a peaceful way of life. I am a trinitarian and I have what I would consider to be substantial convictions about the nature and character of God, but I have not seen any persuasive arguments for the *necessary connection* between trinitarianism or a creedal conception of God and a pacifist way of life. There are plenty of folk who argue for the position of the necessary connection, but their arguments seem circular and beg the question. Naming this *as* an intellectual problem for the tradition and therefore also as a possible source of discovery is a significant contribution and represents a direction of inquiry in which this conversation could go.

What are the questions we need to ask here? One question relates to the way in which we understand and define violence. I am intrigued by Kennel's definition of violence as a violation of value-laden boundaries. I would want some examples to clarify what he means by that. What value-laden boundaries, specifically, are being thought of here? Let's say that I suffer from OCD and my boundary is that you should not move my stuff. If you, out of necessity, need to move my stuff and you violate my value-laden boundary, does that count as an instance of violence? I worry that this definition of violence will identify too many instances as violence, and non-violence will become impossible to imagine. My own strategy would be to define peace not psycho-dynamically with reference to value-laden boundaries, but politically and socially as a refusal to participate in the violent territorial politics of empire that target the body, a refusal to participate in the politics of occupation and domination that pits groups of humans against each other, and a commitment to creatively recover and imagine into a way of being human together that does not depend on coercion and retaliation but on cooperation and forgiveness grounded in a conception of God who is patient love. I understand that given what I said above about the need to open up the psychological register this may seem inconsistent and perhaps Kennel

can help me here, but I draw a distinction between emotional violence and socio-political violence that targets the body. We may experience something as threatening or as violating, but physical violence is not on the same continuum.

As a conviction, pacifism demonstrates its viability by showing it is possible to map the world intelligibly and to narrate human history from that point of view as well as to imagine a viable human future coming from a realistic place of peace without resorting to fantasy, idealism, or *Deus ex machina* resolutions. What does pacifism mean concretely? What do we hope for in our teleology or our eschatology? Where is human history going? Does a commitment to pacifism entail giving up control of where human history is going? What stance is required of us with respect to local or national politics? This leads to the question of what is the relationship between a commitment to pacifism and a commitment to Christianity, which we have already mentioned but return to with more nuance and texture in terms of the way in which we make sense of and navigate our lives. How deep does your commitment to peace go? Will you allow it to shift your understanding of what you mean by God? Which of the two is more central to you and can they be teased apart?

Now it seems that we have arrived at a place that is at the heart of the matter. I am intrigued by Kennel's use of the term "metaphysical" in the phrase "a rejection of metaphysical violence." I might like that phrase—I might—but again I would want to know more about what Kennel means. I take it to be addressing the way in which we conceive of difference. I mentioned working with William Connolly's use of Nietzsche to identify and describe the dynamic of resentment and to uncover the psychological register, which involves naming fear and anxiety as some of the unconscious emotions that may be motivating us to respond to difference in hurtful and violating ways. This awareness is, I think, critical in order to get any traction, and I very much resonate with Kennel's suspicion of certain distinctions that attempt to reify difference. I mean the distinction between secular and religious, church and world, in and out, orthodox and heterodox (or heretical), philosophy and theology, and so on. I think they are ultimately unhelpful, and they serve to protect us from opening up to a real conversation in which we do not claim the high ground; speaking from a protected and superior sense has

been our tendency when we double down on identity because we are afraid of where the conversation might take us if we let go of our high ground advantage.

I support Kennel's call for richer and more generous practices of recognition, which would include an acceptance of our condition during a conversation with interlocutors who challenge our central convictions. Quine is helpful here in recognizing the underdetermined nature of our web of beliefs and the narrative history of our tradition. I have relied on MacIntyre to make the claim that convictional difference is the necessary condition within which one can become open to challenging one's core convictions and testing their claim to truth. How else will we be able to test whether our convictions are ultimately true if we refuse to put them to the test in a conversational environment in which they are not accepted? The responsibility to test our claims to truth in turn requires us to let go of any assurance that the convictions will not be overturned or altered in radical ways. Anabaptism faces serious intellectual problems, and we will need to resolve some of these problems in new and unfamiliar ways to demonstrate the viability of our tradition of enquiry. The overdetermined insistence that we must end up supporting the Nicene creed on the other side of the conversation is fundamentally dishonest. We have no idea where we are going to end up with respect to our understanding of God or Jesus of Nazareth. Here we get into issues of incomparable and untranslatable difference, which is to say incommensurability: dealing with a rival tradition or another tradition with a radically different set of convictions and language such that we fundamentally do not understand what they are trying to say, and we cannot translate their convictional claims or speech into something that is familiar to us now. How to address incommensurability is itself a whole subject and I have neither the time nor space to address it with the attention that it deserves here.

Finally, I will make two more comments. Kennel mentions *Integrating the New Science of Love and a Spirituality of Peace*, the book Annmarie L. Early and I put together from a conference at EMU. A common response to the book was "there isn't any theology in here." Going back to a theme I mentioned at the beginning, however, the response also expresses a hesitance or perhaps unwillingness to sit with a psychological theory long enough for

it to challenge us and to help us Anabaptists to articulate our theology and tradition better or perhaps perceive resonances or points of difference, or whatever it is we find.

The intention was to open up a conversation between Anabaptism and attachment theory. We wanted to build bridges and gather folks from outside to a conversational event. We did not intend to offer anything close to a theological “evaluation” or an “account” of attachment theory from the privileged position of Anabaptist convictions. We were suspicious of unconscious energies that are protective and anxious—opening up the psychological register might expose things of which we are ashamed and have carefully kept secret all these years. One colleague signaled to me that there would be dire consequences if the conference caused a disturbance in their home life. Mennonites seem to have a lot of secrets—perhaps this is a feature of most closely knit extended family communities—that they would like to keep under wraps. Some of those secrets seem to be coming out now, which is probably a good thing, even though the fallout can be difficult to process and hurtful. It seems that inviting psychology “in” so that it is part of the conversation might be both healing and preventative.

For me, the conversation with attachment theory also makes room for a conversation around evolution. This might seem like a leap from psychology to biology, but those who are familiar with the work of John Bowlby, the first to articulate attachment theory as a theory, will see the connection. Attachment is a mammalian invention that addresses the problem of having few offspring in a dangerous world. Bowlby wanted to call it a theory of love, but he was concerned that it would be dismissed and chose instead the more clinical term, attachment.

One of the problems I have worked on, in terms of articulating an Anabaptist philosophical ethics, is an understanding of our environment and the account that we offer of human nature—what I would call a philosophical anthropology. Who are we as human beings? Is our “nature” something that we fundamentally ought to resist? Do we think of human nature as fundamentally competitive and violent, and how then do we imagine Christian discipleship and life? My aim was to initiate that conversation to hear what evolutionary biologists have to say, and to engage those voices from the outside in order to counter the conviction that pacifism or an ethic

of love had to be grounded in a divine command against our (natural?) inclinations toward violence, dominance, and competition. Pacifism or an ethic of love has often been presented as a spiritual way of life that is in opposition to the carnal or bodied ethics of violence. What I found from reading Bowlby and Harlow, however, was a very different account of animal life. It was one in which connection, curiosity, and relational reconciliation was foregrounded. I discovered that there was an important difference between inflecting “survival of the fittest” toward adaptation, which was Darwin’s notion, as opposed to inflecting it towards domination, which was Herbert Spencer’s idea. This seemed promising as a way to imagine a politics of pacifism grounded in an ethic of love emerging “naturally” as it were and not in fundamental opposition to selective processes. Inspired by Peter Kropotkin and his interest in evolution, mutual aid, and love, it could perhaps be a way to get at the question: Does love “work” in the long run? I would like to be able to answer that question by saying, “yes, and for human beings it may be the only thing that ever has.”

Putting it too simply, life found a way to sustain an organism as complex and vulnerable as a human being through parental care, friendship, and cooperation. Care is a necessary survival practice for human beings, and our species will not make it without care. In strictly evolutionary terms, evolution requires reproduction and selection requires differences in reproductive rates in populations. But reproduction is not sufficient for the survival of a species. Survival of a species requires reproductive reproduction—the next generation must also be reproductive, otherwise the experiment dies out. That is a risky proposition when the time from birth to reproductive age is long and costly, as it is in humans. It means, however, that adaptive pressures among humans shift away from the numbers game of having many offspring and towards the parental and social game of raising offspring. What matters is how many offspring make it to reproductive age. After birth, you need a mother-infant connection (or a connection with a caretaker) and out of that relationship and other relationships, the child is able to form a sense of self, sustained by a communal network of giving and receiving in which, as children, we are largely on the receiving end, though gradually we begin to reciprocate with giving. That child has to be sufficiently protected and stay alive long enough to initiate the process again. If we call that sustained, self-

sacrificial caretaking necessary for survival “love” —love is more than that, but it is at least that—then love can be understood as a survival strategy. It reconfigures how we imagine human nature and what sustains human life, which in turn reconfigures the possibilities we imagine for an ethical way of life and the possibilities for living into what we can talk about as the kingdom of God. I am not suggesting there is a straight and smooth line from an evolutionary account of cooperation and care to a theological account of love—in fact the conversation regarding how those might relate and where there are significant differences seems important—but I would insist that our commonly held dualist notions of carnal and spiritual ethics grounded in a conception of a human competitive and narcissistic nature are outdated and mistaken. It seems that Anabaptists have an advantage over other theological traditions entering that conversation as it has resources to think of Christian community as an experiment of love, sharing a commitment to the way of peace, as we have received it following after Jesus of Nazareth who is the Christ.

Concluding Remarks

In my response to Kennel’s stimulating and provocative paper, I have tried to sketch out how an Anabaptist might conceive of engaging philosophy. In my response, I have foregrounded what I perceive to be intellectual “problems” in order to communicate that there is work for us to do. Anabaptism does not have the rich tradition that Catholics and Protestants enjoy, but we have instead an open possibility, an opportunity to imagine in fresh ways how to articulate and clarify our convictions. Some of the work involves investigating the relationship between doctrines and a way of life. Another part of the work will be to invite new disciplines and voices—I have mentioned psychology, philosophy, and biology—into the conversation in order to enrich and clarify our tradition. It is encouraging to encounter the energy and vision that Kennel brings to the task of what Anabaptism might gain from and contribute to a philosophical discussion that is on the margins.

Christian Early is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Director of Ethical Reasoning in Action at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

The Phantom Limb of the One-Armed Bandit: Nigel Biggar's *Colonialism* and the Crucified People of Quintana Road

Tyler B. Davis

Nigel Biggar, *Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning*. Glasgow, Scotland: William Collins, 2023.

In San Antonio, where I live, we are still grappling with what might be salvaged from the horrendous suffering and loss of fifty-three lives in the back of an abandoned tractor trailer on Quintana Road in late June 2022. Traveling to the US from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico, sixty-six people were deserted inside a sweltering trailer by smugglers, possessing no route of escape and no access to water or air in the raging heat. The fifty-three who perished were victims of a human cruelty that, far from random, was the result of an entrenched global system that organizes political life according to the enclosures of the nation-state.

In the aftermath, a makeshift memorial was built at the scene. The memorial consists of a cross for each victim, along with candles, flowers, wreaths, water bottles, paintings, photographs, icons, stuffed animals, and other sacred objects. It is vigilantly tended by devoted caretakers who have created a space for community members, friends, and families to remember and grieve the loss of each loved one.¹

Responsibility for the calamity has been evaded, however. The state assigned blame to the smugglers alone, thereby deflecting attention away from its essential role in producing the fatal channels of transit and the demand for the smuggler economies which many people utilize in moving

¹ Scott Huddleston, "'They had dreams' — ceremony honors 53 migrants who died in sweltering trailer on San Antonio's Southwest Side," *San Antonio Express-News*, July 28, 2022, <https://www.expressnews.com/news/border-mexico/article/They-had-dreams-ceremony-honors-53-17335842.php>.

across borders. In this context, the fifty-three crosses at the memorial acquire a universality: they reveal the fifty-three as the crucified people of history and become signs of the urgency of salvaging a new horizon of human community where this cannot happen and where people are free to move and to stay.²

The Contexts of *Colonialism*

Between the argument in defense of nations and empires in his *Between Kin and Cosmopolis: An Ethic of the Nation* (2014) and the full-throated imperial and colonial apologia that is *Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning* (2023), Nigel Biggar joined company with a number of academics-turned-culture-warriors. A sequence of notable events led to this situation, particularly the “Ethics and Empire” project of the McDonald Centre—a research institute in Christian theology at the University of Oxford where Biggar served as Director. This project and reactions to it warrant discrete analysis, as they are representative of patterns across the North Atlantic world in the struggle over legitimate historical knowledge.³

While *Colonialism* indeed represents the fruition of Biggar’s involvement in recent culture wars, focusing on this context alone may tempt misreading the stakes of its arguments, as though they were merely a matter of nostalgia or a melancholic cleaving to a shameful past. In what follows, I offer a critical assessment of *Colonialism*. More significant than its internal failures are the implications Biggar’s project avails concerning the relation between imperialism, colonialism, and nationalism. I suggest that *Colonialism* ought to be grasped as an academic contribution to a certain xenological politics of the nation, and, accordingly, that its arguments are instructive for understanding the positive function of imperial and colonial history in nationalist projects today in the US, UK, and elsewhere. The book consequently sheds light on the anti-nationalist shape of moral opposition needed to become accountable to the crucified people of Quintana Road.

² The notion of the crucified people is drawn from Ignacio Ellacuría. See especially, “Discernir “El Signo” de Los Tiempos,” *Diakonia* (1981): 57-59.

³ Important analysis has been undertaken by Huw C. Davies and Sheena E. MacRae in “An Anatomy of the British War on Woke,” *Race & Class*, OnlineFirst, May 15, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03063968231164905>.

Reckoning as Exoneration

Colonialism may be reconstructed as follows. Biggar, an ethicist and theologian, stumbled unwittingly into the imperial wars of historiography after making a public defense of Cecil Rhodes. The jarring experience widened his perspective to new fields of scholarship producing anti-colonial arguments. And yet, what immediately became clear to Biggar was that, unlike himself, the anti-colonialists were not equipped for sophisticated moral analysis of their subject. According to *Colonialism*, any legitimate view of this history will offer a balanced picture. The book thus rhetorically begins with a position appearing inviting: a fair reading of a morally complicated story—who would be against that? It is a sleight of hand, for *Colonialism*'s real task is the exoneration of its namesake.

Eight chapters are framed by questions Biggar poses and answers to reckon with what he takes as the anti-colonial distortion of the moral record of imperialism and colonialism. For instance: was colonialism irredeemably tied to slavery? Was colonialism pervasively violent? Was empire essentially racist? Was it predominantly motivated by greed? *Colonialism* aims to unsettle the distortive consensus implied in such questions, a goal which unfolds strategically by diminishing concepts utilized in anti-colonial critique and emphasizing the irreducible diversity of imperial and colonial history.

Thus, in chapter three, the concept of race is haphazardly naturalized as the “physical” and “cultural” features of a group and racism is reduced to prejudicial attitudes (67-9). This conceptual narrowing enables the argument that, while there were obvious cases of racism under British imperial and colonial rule, the idea that the British Empire was essentially or systematically racist is incorrect. To the contrary, Cecil Rhodes is cast as the heroic counterexample of a certain colonial non-racism. Regarding colonialism and slavery, Biggar believes everything hinges on appreciating British anti-slavery efforts. Yes, the British Empire was implicated in slavery, so the argument goes. But this only makes the British Empire typical of imperial phenomena across history. For Biggar, what is remarkable is its abolitionist awakening in the nineteenth century (65-6). So, for example, Biggar takes British colonial violence in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century West Africa as expressive of the Empire's later enlightened abolitionist

virtue (251-2).

The authoritative sources anchoring these arguments come from insiders: British colonial administrators, secretaries, and governing authorities of various ranks. In reconstructing British colonial governance in Egypt in the late nineteenth century, Lord Cromer and Lord Milner set the terms for Biggar's assessment of the facts on the ground. On their account, the decision to exclude Egyptians from governmental authority was not rooted in racism or another form of supremacy. Rather, foreign rule was justified as a paternal political structure facilitating Egyptian capacities for virtuous home rule which the British Lords found lacking. Imperialism's instrumentalist racism is understood as moral developmentalism by the Lords and therefore as the same by the author (79-83). *Colonialism* gleans from this moment the notion that the British Lords exercised domination virtuously (no contradiction on the book's terms) and this occasion is made to represent British colonialism as a morally complex phenomenon led by morally mixed human beings.

If the history of the British Empire and its colonial projects are recognized in their complexity, there is a need for a moral framework sensitive to it. Biggar characterizes the framework in need as moral realism, by which he means, first, a recognition that the world is embedded with objective moral reality. And second, realism entails the notion that the world so experienced is also fallen (10-3). For Biggar, British colonial activities are paradigmatic of both features of moral life. Generals, governors, administrators, Lords, and the like are accountable to reality's discernable principles. While colonialism caused human and ecological devastation at the planetary scale—from Australia and Tasmania to Kenya and Canada and beyond—one must, Biggar insists, see its shortcomings as natural to moral life. To the extent colonial actors were motivated by pure and not ill intentions, they are judged in their failures and the harm they caused as tragic emblems of the generically human, not ideological or vicious. The thought is that realism makes possible the recovery of the tragedies as well as complexities of colonialism. And, further, that it allows one to see the apparent benefits of the history in question, which, for Biggar, include a variety of moral achievements such as the suppression of the slave trade; the global dissemination of medicine, hospitals, transportation, and agriculture; and military opposition to Nazism.

Moral Realism as Political Manicheism

Over half a century ago, Walter Rodney anticipated arguments such as Biggar's when he wrote of a common sense justification of colonialism in Africa as having two hands:

The argument suggests that, on the one hand, there was exploitation and oppression, but, on the other hand, colonial governments did much for the benefit of Africans and they developed Africa. It is our contention that this is completely false. Colonialism had only one hand—it was a one-armed bandit.⁴

Colonialism is the work of a moral accountant so convinced of the reality of the one-armed bandit's second, phantom limb, that he attempts to convince others of the same. But the second hand never appears as more than a phantom nor colonialism as anything but a bandit. I indicate how and why this is the case before considering more urgent questions emerging when these arguments are set in a contemporary political context.

The moral argument of *Colonialism* is that the identification of the historical variability of empire and colonialism enables the recovery of a balanced assessment of their moral status. Sometimes virtuous, sometimes vicious, but always historically and therefore morally complex. Hence, the chapters proceed through arguments about historical variance across time and place, issuing (as matters of convenience rather than cogency) conceptual reductions (e.g., race and racism), in an effort to legitimate a certain realism about empire.

The problem with this argument, however, is that the recovery of historical variability does not generate the moral logic Biggar thinks it does. Of course, British imperial expansion and domination in the colonies exhibited diversity in practice. And of course, the cast of characters at the helm of various expeditions, programs, and actions displayed differences in orientation relative to colonized populations. But historical variability as such discloses nothing about the moral status of empire and colonialism. It remains unexplained why the diverse practices of domination utilized by British political and corporate classes should be investigated in terms

⁴ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (New York: Verso, 2018 [1972]), 246.

of ethical distinction, rather than, say, demonology, or simple variations of what Paul considered the powers of this present evil age (Gal. 1:4).

What Biggar would need if he were to offer something approaching a coherent moral accounting of empire is an argument about how domination may admit morally salient distinctions. This is a question of criteria. But with respect to this question, *Colonialism* wholly fails to make sense of itself. The book is so embedded in the world of imperial and colonial power brokers that it uncritically adopts their moral criteria. Did the British exercise power justly in Egypt? Ask Lord Cromer. Was the East India Company intentionally invested in human subjugation across India? Ask company administrator John Malcolm (25-6, 150). Embracing the conceits of colonial authorities results in reproducing their self-justifying judgments in defense of obvious injustices—including, for a startling example, the spineless description of British torture and brutality during the Mau Mau Rebellion as “not radically dirty” (271).

The problem of vicious circularity is compounded by the portrayal of British colonial activity as the global paradigm for understanding human moral life. This generates an account of the British Empire not as a product of contingent circumstances, but as the natural manifestation of a human will to domination. Less a moral history, *Colonialism* is a natural theology of imperialism and colonialism. On this point it is worth observing that despite pleas throughout the book of the difference between colonialism and Nazism, Biggar’s political natural theology reproduces the same conceptual form as the latter’s theological purveyors (143, 147, 214, 286).

The moral argument of *Colonialism* is, in any event, subordinate to its political argument. The latter contends that insofar as imperial and colonial history can be morally rehabilitated as not only harmful but also tragic and even beneficial, there are reasons to reinvest pride in western history, which is of present political value for the west. Along these lines, Biggar charges post-colonialism with being an ally to Russian and Chinese expansionism because its shame-producing arguments undermine the west from within (5, 296-7). (Here, Biggar extends an ideological tradition of Christian ethics with precursors in Reinhold Niebuhr’s use of moral realism to advance the Manichean Cold War—a disheartening legacy which Niebuhr participated in until he was transformed by the influence of the black freedom struggle

in the 1960s.) *Colonialism* is thus invested in the political utility of moral realism for the promotion of western power within a Manichean construal of reality. Had the book's moral argument achieved integrity, it would not have survived instrumentalization in this ideological project. On the terms of *Colonialism's* political argument, then, manufacturing a second, benevolent hand for the one-armed bandit is ultimately intended as a contribution to a larger spiritual-imperial agenda: the forgery of a soul to fortify western nations for militarist expeditions and wars to come.

The Nationalism of *Colonialism* and the Challenge of the Commons

I have indicated why the one-armed bandit's phantom limb remains just that, despite the attempt to construe Manichean politics as moral complexity and benevolence. Still, the more pressing consideration concerns the availability of *Colonialism's* arguments to the grim nationalist projects of exclusion, enclosure, and expulsion conditioning the global present and future. A critical question is how to challenge these terms: how to respond to a political Manicheism leveraging ethical and elite academic resources to refashion the history of imperial ruin for nationalist projects today? How to move toward a future not rooted in the enclosing national pride of colonialism's glory but one that works through the latter's painful afterlives to declare "Never Again"?⁵

I suggest our present context demands an anti-Manichean moral imagination committed to the remaking of common life. Critically it will involve grounding anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism in a principled anti-nationalism. The reason for this may be gleaned, surprisingly enough, from an extended argument Biggar has been making—in *Colonialism* and other writings—about essential continuities between imperialism, colonialism, and nationalism. The argument I am referring to may be indicated in thesis form from *Colonialism*: "Empire, then, is a phase in the history of many a nation-state" (14). The citation is not given to affirm a developmentalist

⁵ This echoes the exhortations of Paul Gilroy. See Gilroy, "Never Again: Refusing Race and Salvaging the Human," The 2019 Holberg Lecture, <https://holbergprize.org/en/news/holberg-prize/2019-holberg-lecture-laureate-paul-gilroy>; See also, Gilroy, "Never Again Grenfell," April 24, 2023, <https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/art-and-ideas/never-again-grenfell/>. The latter's account of Grenfell aided reflection in this essay.

account of the nation, but to highlight the practical relations which scholars such as Nandita Sharma have powerfully identified (though toward radically different purposes than Biggar): nationalism arose with racism as a support mechanism for emerging imperial and colonial power, a way of ensuring the metropole maintained ideological legitimacy over its colonies. What *Colonialism* illumines—what I understand as its profound and perverse insight—is that today the positive remembrances of imperialism and colonialism are potent ideological tools in the effort to prop up nationalism.

A genealogical analysis of the nation's roots in colonial history is not needed here to grasp lines of connection, for the author's recent publications disclose the political stakes of *Colonialism*.⁶ In the last five years, Biggar has produced sermons, public addresses, popular opinion and policy pieces, and academic articles, all of which, in the British xenophobic tradition of Enoch Powell, seek to catalyze nationalism through advancing repressive state restrictions on transnational human movement.⁷

Representatively, Biggar argues in the journal of *Studies in Christian Ethics* that nations have duties to preserve the features that make them attractive to migrants in the first place, which should involve restricting and deporting migrants to their home countries, or, according to more recent policy, to Rwanda.⁸ Exemplifying what John Berger identified as the pernicious "Second Calculation" of migrant subjugation, Biggar suggests that concern for the economic interest of the national working class runs in essential competition with international migrants.⁹ A cynical appeal to the

⁶ See, for example, Radhika Mongia, *Indian Migration and Empire: A Colonial Genealogy of the Modern State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

⁷ For two such instances, see Nigel Biggar, "The Bishops Are Wrong: There's Nothing Immoral about Controlling Our Borders," *The Telegraph*, May 26, 2023, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/05/26/bishops-wrong-nothing-immoral-about-controlling-borders/; "Immigration: Christian Reflections," *Anglican Ink*, November 14, 2021, anglican.ink/2021/11/14/immigration-christian-reflections/.

⁸ Biggar, "Whatever Happened to the Canaanites? Principles of a Christian Ethic of Mass Immigration," *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 35.1 (2022): 127–139, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09539468211046687>; "More Heat than Light: The Christian Churches and the Rwanda Policy," Policy Exchange, December 7, 2022, https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/from-the-channel-to-rwanda/#contents__accordion.

⁹ John Berger, Jean Mohr, and Sven Blomberg, *A Seventh Man* (New York: Verso, 2010 [1975]), 148–51; Biggar, "Whatever Happened to the Canaanites?"

limits of trade unionism from a member of the academic class, the argument is meant to undermine whatever solidarity an ethics of compassion could attain by disciplining it according to nationalist identity politics. Rather than allowing compassion to become the basis for confronting the limits of bordered human community and, further, the borderless structures of capitalist exploitation, the mystifying contradiction of national belonging divides solidarity through a hierarchy of citizens and migrants.¹⁰

Situating *Colonialism* in the context of Biggar's nationalist agenda against human movement across the English Channel and the planet raises the stakes of opposition to its arguments. The recovery of pride in the imperial and colonial projects of yesterday functions as a disavowal of responsibilities today. It is this morally freighted dynamic—what has been called the boomerang effect of colonialism as captured in A. Sivanandan's saying, "we are here because you were there"—that *Colonialism* aspires to undermine.¹¹ The phantom benefits of imperial inclusion there and then become the punitive warrant for national exclusion here and now. To challenge *Colonialism's* vision of the earth, then, not only means challenging revisionist historiography of imperialism and colonialism, or, as above, challenging the moral criteria underwriting its revision. More fundamentally, it entails refusing the political imagination of human community its arguments serve.

In this setting, what potential may other forms of nationalism hold, especially those of a qualitatively distinct expression which have emerged in response to imperial and colonial power? To the extent British imperialism and colonialism essentially contributed to the political imagination that would coalesce in the ascendance of national home rule, the limits of anti-imperial and anti-colonial nationalism come into view. This is to

¹⁰ To my knowledge, Biggar has yet to convert his arguments for repressive controls on human mobility into demands for the repatriation of long-standing residents, but such a position may be anticipated as a potential development of existing arguments with precedent in British politics. For analysis of the relations between immigration controls and repatriation which remains contemporary, see A. Sivanandan, "From Immigration Control to 'Induced Repatriation,'" in *A Different Hunger: Writings on Black Resistance* (London: Pluto Press, 1987), 131-140.

¹¹ On Sivanandan's saying, see "We Are Here Because You Were There," asivanandan.com/key_sayings/we-are-here-because-you-were-there/; On the boomerang effect, an image drawn from Aimé Césaire, consult Kojo Koram's *Uncommon Wealth: Britain and the Aftermath of Empire* (London: John Murray, 2022), 3-7.

say, *Colonialism* grasps the pervasive imperial and colonial conditioning that persists in the form of the nation itself, especially in practices used for hierarchal separation and subjugation. In the national paradigm, such practices are mediated by citizenship. Thus, while there are invaluable lessons to be learned from nation-centered forms of decolonization,¹² as well as irreducible differences to be maintained between Third World and bourgeois nationalism, the overriding border-producing logic of citizenship persists even in nationalism's most commendable iterations. According to Nandita Sharma this is because:

[A]ll nationalisms are fundamentally autochthonous and productive of a hierarchical separation between National-Natives (autochthons) and Migrants (allochthons). Across the political spectrum from far right to hard left, the right of National-Natives is the right to home rule. In the process, Migrants are left without a home in this world.¹³

I find Sharma's description demanding of a vigilance for new possibilities of common life beyond nationalism.

The Spirit of the Crucified People of Quintana Road

That *Colonialism* leverages the non-discontinuity between nation, colony, and empire for ideological purposes represents its contribution to contemporary discourses of the nation and thus its challenge to all who find the *status quo* intolerable. Salvaging an alternative will involve making the earth a place where capacities to move and to stay are not taken as threats to identity and possession but are recognized as being just as essential to life as the right and capacity to breathe.¹⁴ Imagining human community beyond the nation-state

¹² See, for example, Adom Getachew's important *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

¹³ Nandita Sharma, *Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

¹⁴ Echoing what voices including Achille Mbembe and the Dream Defenders have articulated. See, for instance Achille Mbembe, "Bodies as Borders," *From the European South* 4 (2019): 10, europeansouth.postcolonialitalia.it; Mbembe, "How to Develop a Planetary Consciousness," interview by Nils Gilman, *Noema*, January 11, 2022, www.noemamag.com/how-to-develop-a-planetary-consciousness/; Dream Defenders, "Freedom of Movement," *Freedom Papers*, www.dreamdefenders.org/freedom-papers/freedom-of-movement. On the spiritual vision

presents an undeniable problem theoretically and practically. But this should not mean overlooking where it is presently being practiced nor the abundant archives, parables, and wells of inspiration to draw from for this purpose—from heroic witnesses like the Diggers and the Zapatistas to ordinary border-transgressing prayers to sources yet to be gathered.¹⁵

Undoing the conditions that made the crucifixion of the fifty-three people on Quintana Road possible and predictable entails moral opposition to the international-national order of hierarchical expulsion, in this case, one seeking rejuvenation through phantom histories of imperial humanitarianism and colonial benevolence. The building of a just alternative demands a moral commitment to enacting something like the Good Samaritan parable at the scale of the earth, along the lines Martin Luther King, Jr. proposed in “Beyond Vietnam,” where ordinary acts of love for neighbors on the move are combined with transformative efforts to restructure the edifices that make Jericho and Quintana Road fatal.¹⁶ Remaking common life will not raise the fifty-three crucified people of Quintana Road. Resurrection remains the work of God. But an anti-nationalist commons, as one form of responding to the Spirit of the crucified people, can contribute to the life-saving ending of violent political projects that deny so many the capacity to live and move and result in the building of more crosses.

On my last visit, a tattered dictionary rested on top of the lectern, which stands in front of the crosses and faces toward Quintana Road and the

of the Dream Defenders, see the forthcoming essay by Nyle Fort, “Power! Transformation! Miracles!”

¹⁵ For an example of border-transgressing prayer in disaster conditions, see Will Wellman, “Why Do We Look for God in a Hurricane?” *America: The Jesuit Review*, August 29, 2019, www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/08/29/why-do-we-look-god-hurricane.

¹⁶ King: “A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life’s roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life’s highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.” See Martin Luther King, Jr., “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence,” in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed., James Melvin Washington (New York: HarperCollins, 1986), 240-1.

world. In a place as holy and haunted as the memorial for *los 53 migrantes* one becomes attuned to the charged meanings—stories and signs—of the objects all around. The softball glove placed at the foot of the cross for the young woman. The Elmo for the child. The eternal laments inscribed on posterboard. The ubiquitous image of Guadalupe. And at the top of the page of the open dictionary, the word “inescapable.” Reverberating across the memorial, the word first evokes the unspeakable scene of the inescapable trailer. And yet, in the next moment it poses the question of the fifty-three crosses: what is inescapable? Is it the imperial-colonial-nationalist currency that guarantees a future with more crosses? Or is it the making of something else—the raising of new ways of living in common?¹⁷

Tyler B. Davis is an instructor in the department of theology at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas.

¹⁷ This essay is dedicated to the memory and courage of the fifty-three crucified people of Quintana Road: Alvaro Ojeda Salazar, Efrain Ferrel Garcia, Fernando Gallegos Garcia, Francisco Javier Delgado Rodriguez, Francisco Javier Delgado Rodriguez, J Marcial Trejo Hernandez, Jair Valencia Olivares, Javier Florez Lopez, Jesus Alvarez Ortega, Jose Antonio Perez Ramirez, Jose Guadalupe Lopez Muniz, Jozue Diaz Gallardo, Juan Jesus Trejo Tellez, Juan Valeriano Domitilo, Julio Lopez Lopez, Marcos Antonio Velasco Velasco, Maria Guadalupe Montero Serrato, Mariano Santiago Hipolito, Mayra Beltran Frausto, Miriam Ramirez Garcia, Misael Olivares Monterde, Omar Rico Almanza, Oscar Aguado Romero, Pablo Ortega Alvarez, Pedro Telles Gonzalez, Yovani Valencia Olivares, Aracely Marroquin Coronado, Blanca Ramirez Crisostomo, Celestina Ambrocio Orozco, Deisy Lopez Ramirez, Denis Nis Barrios, Doniz Galvez De Leon, Enrique Chavez, Fidelino Ramirez Sanchez, Francisco Tepaz Simaj, Jonny Tziquin Tzoc, Juan Tulul Tepaz, Juan Vasquez Morales, Karla Lopez Espana, Maria Ramirez Alvarado, Nicolas Meletz Guarcax, Pascual Guachiac Sipac, Rudy Chilel Yoc, Sebastian Och Mejia, William Ramirez Alvarado, Wilson Ambrocio Lopez, Yeison Jimenez Abelarde, Adela Ramirez Quezada, Alejandro Andino Caballero, Belkis Anariba Caceres, Fernando Redondo Caballero, Margie Paz Grajeda, and Yazmin Bueso Nunez.

Perry B. Yoder, *Leviticus*. Believers Church Bible Commentary 33. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2017.

Perry B. Yoder's *Leviticus* was published in 2017 as the thirty-third volume in the Believers Church Bible Commentary (BCBC) series. As of 2023, thirty-six volumes have been published in the series, with eight still in the pipeline. In the BCBC series introduction, the editorial board says they conceived the series with "the desire to help as wide a range of readers as possible" (15) while also putting the biblical text in conversation with the best and most recent scholarship. Yoder's commentary succeeds in both endeavors. Yoder writes accessibly, inviting non-specialists to delight in the fascinating world revealed in a book modern readers often find opaque. At the same time, Yoder distills current scholarship on *Leviticus* with clarity and energy, offering a fresh interpretation of *Leviticus* that will appeal to scholars and laypeople alike. Completed after Yoder's retirement from twenty years of teaching at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, as well as teaching at Bethel College and Bluffton College (now Bluffton University) prior to that, this commentary bears the fruits of a lifetime spent in the classroom. Yoder's commitment to clear teaching is apparent in both his dedication to "plain sense" biblical interpretation (18, 307-309) and in the way he helps contemporary readers understand *Leviticus* as relevant to modern life.

Early in the commentary, Yoder introduces his readers to the defining work of Jacob Milgrom, who reconceptualized how *Leviticus* portrays purity and atonement, and then situates his work in a post-Milgrom interpretive landscape. Yoder redirects the reader's gaze toward the text of *Leviticus* itself, distancing himself from scholarly endeavors to theorize about the book's history of development or its specific date of composition. Instead, Yoder is especially concerned to help non-specialists understand exactly what the text says and the rhetorical effects its writers meant to evoke.

Throughout the volume, Yoder untangles the dense and technical vocabulary used to describe ancient Israel's sacrificial ritual system, which he divides into three categories: sacrifices for pleasing God, forgiveness rituals, and rituals for purity. Yoder interprets *Leviticus* 16:1-17:16 as a "hinge" for the book of *Leviticus*, echoing the scholarly consensus that *Leviticus* 17-26 (often called the Holiness Code) distinguishes itself from the first half of the

book by democratizing holiness. Yoder's elegant exploration of the Holiness Code traces the contours of its distinctive emphasis: that all members of the community live in "light of God's presence" (178) by following instructions for maintaining personal and priestly holiness and by celebrating festivals as a way of marking holy time. Though Yoder does not emphasize source criticism per se, source critics are likely to find themselves largely in agreement with Yoder's observations about the trends in two halves of the book.

With this commentary, Yoder's unique contributions include his commitment to a "plain sense" interpretive framework as well as his decision to interpret Leviticus alongside peace theology. The commentary invites the reader to consider how biblical *shalom* hews pathways throughout the book of Leviticus itself, from Yoder's argument that sacrifices were rituals enacting joyful friendship with God as well as covenant reconciliation (23-24), to the elegant way he explains the commands to love neighbour and foreigner in Leviticus 19 (196-204). Because Yoder's assumed reader is a modern Christian with commitments to a peace church tradition, he helpfully brings Leviticus in conversation with select New Testament writings from the gospels and epistles, especially those which borrow sacrificial language from the Hebrew scriptures.

Throughout the commentary, Yoder's approach is to give the reader the data necessary to come to a hermeneutical position themselves, a strength that makes the book a useful and productive conversation partner for multiple audiences. Readers of all kinds will benefit from the book's clear elucidation of a ritual and symbolic world which seems so distant from our own. Indeed, Yoder's explanation of the latent anti-semitism in the history of Christian interpretation is vitally important for all who read Leviticus today (187-189). I would have liked Yoder to disclose more frequently his preferred solutions to the thornier hermeneutical challenges posed by Leviticus (for the attentive reader, he drops hints like bread crumbs). In the chapter on rituals for purity, for example, Yoder might have reflected on the purity movement in modern evangelicalism and its misuse of biblical imagery; or, perhaps the Levitical laws about holy bodies could have been brought into conversation with recent work in disability studies. As his work stands, Yoder's enlivening commentary provides excellent interpretive guideposts

for modern Bible readers interested in pursuing these and similar questions. I am certain that Yoder's engaging and distinctive voice on Leviticus will ring out clearly for years to come.

Jackie Wyse-Rhodes, Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana.

Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiesen, eds. *European Mennonites and the Holocaust*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020.

This edited collection opens by pairing the profiles of two individuals. The first, SS Captain Heinrich Wiens, was born into a Mennonite family in the former Molotschna colony of Ukraine. He planned and participated in the massacre of Jews as a member of Mobile Killing Squad D. The second, Geertje Pel, was a Dutch Mennonite woman who sheltered a Jewish baby. A neighbor betrayed her, and she was later murdered at the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Throughout Europe—from Holland to Germany to Ukraine—nearly 200,000 Mennonites lived alongside Jewish communities at the outbreak of the war. Yet the Holocaust has been largely absent in the extensive and immediate narration of Mennonite wartime actions at the individual, familial, and academic levels. Mennonite silence remained the norm through German re-examination of the Nazi past after 1968 and even as post-Communist historiography in Eastern Europe reassessed questions of national complicity in the nineties. The stories of Wiens and Pel, as the editors of this long overdue collection note, are indicative of a range of Mennonite roles in the Holocaust. While accounting for this diversity, the authors are unequivocal. This was a “spectrum tilted toward enabling, participating in, and benefiting from Nazi German rule, which included the genocide of Jews” (4).

The edited collection opens with a posthumously published portion of a manuscript by Gerhard Rempel. As Doris Bergen notes in an introduction, Rempel's work, unfinished at the time of his death, drew by necessity on an “eclectic and rather unconventional” source base (38). Exploratory in nature,

it nevertheless raises important moral as well as methodological challenges that continue to inform the investigation of Mennonite involvement in the Holocaust. The collection then moves back to the pre-war era, examining how Mennonites responded to the rise of Nazism. James Lichti shows how Mennonites were able to benefit from the stabilization of their religious status as a “free church” rather than a sect under the Nazis. Imanuel Baumann mines a highly unique source, collaboratively authored youth circular booklets, that reveal growing support for conscription, the abandonment of pacifism and, even amid some opposition to anti-Semitism, the acceptance of racial thought among Mennonite youth. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast and Pieter Post then consider German and Dutch theological responses to Nazism before and during the war.

Subsequent essays in the collection pick up the investigative thread initiated by Rempel. Colin P. Neufeldt documents how, after the German occupation of Poland, Mennonites from Deutsch Wymyschle were invited to occupy expropriated Jewish homes in Gabin. Mennonite Erich L. Ratzlaff became the city’s chief administrator and oversaw the establishment of the city’s Jewish ghetto. Dmytro Myeshkov’s chapter follows Heinrich Wiens and Rudolf Federau as well as Mennonite women like Elizaveta Janzen and Maria Harms. The latter two participated in interrogations and confiscated Jewish property. The subsequent article by Aileen Friesen also probes the histories of individuals that joined the SD. It opens with a stark juxtaposition of Khortytsya under Nazi occupation. In the days before Passover, the region’s Jewish population was murdered while Mennonites openly celebrated Easter. The following chapter by Alle Hoekema turns to those Dutch Mennonites that later received Yad Vashem recognition by Israel for risking their lives to save Jews.

The final three chapters by Erika Weidemann, Hans Werner, and Steven Schroeder explore aspects of wartime atrocity and their contemporary legacies in light of the immediate post-war framing of those actions. As Weidemann reveals, Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite refugees from Ukraine re-cast the latter’s wartime decisions “against a backdrop of survival, limited involvement, ignorance, and Soviet terror” (281). According to Schroeder, Danzig Mennonites similarly “narrowed their gaze to their own wartime suffering” (310). As a result, Werner concludes, Mennonite

refugees in Canada and Paraguay reduced atrocities against Jews to “cameo appearances” in their war accounts while forgoing the process of coming to terms with the Nazi past that would unfold in Germany in the following decades (295).

The contributors to this edited collection draw from a diverse and often incomplete source base. Notably, the recent opening of the KGB archives in Kiev provides researchers with a new avenue for understanding Mennonite pre-war and wartime actions. The reliability of those records must be cautiously assessed, Myeshkov warns, given that they often involved rapid processing, no oversight, and forced confessions (some of which were later recanted). Yet the KGB sources are revealing to historians as they shed light on certain broad patterns including continuities in Mennonite actions under Soviet and Nazi rule. By employing those sources to follow the trajectories of individuals like Maria Harms who worked with the OGPU-NKVD *and* the SD, Myeshkov reveals a “common Mennonite practice of adapting to the Soviet and Nazi dictatorships” (219). Friesen, who cautions for the need to combine “Jewish, Mennonite, Soviet, and German sources” (230) to gain a more reliable picture of Mennonite complicity, similarly finds that some Mennonites, like Heinrich Wiebe exhibited, “a flexible ideology that allowed them to exploit opportunities and sidestep peril” under Stalin and Hitler (236).

The challenge of assessing Mennonite “identity” is another recurrent theme in this text. Depending upon the definition employed, this might include individuals that: continued to live in identifiable Mennonite communities at the outbreak of war, were tied to those communities by birth even if they may have rejected their faith, operated in Mennonite “social networks” or were accepted into them, were identified as Mennonites by organizations or nations, and still others who held a confessional identity. Yet even in the latter case, the relationship between Mennonite actions and Mennonite identity remains fraught. In his chapter on Mennonite rescuers that were declared “Righteous among the Nations,” Hoekema finds “explicitly expressed Mennonite convictions” difficult to separate from humanistic ones that might be inflected by class or politics (259). Hans Werner points out that the most frank acknowledgements of violence against Jews in Mennonite memoirs came from those—like Helene Latter or Katharina Krüger—that

had shed much of their ethno-religious identity. In recognition of these challenges, Doris Bergen argues in favor of Gerhard Rempel's "functional" definition that, while posing certain problems, included those with a variety of claims and connections to Mennonite identity (38).

A final point should be made about the open positionality of several of the authors in this edited collection who, in arguing for the need to reckon with this history, acknowledge their own connections to it. "Writing about one's own family's historical experience is rarely an easy undertaking," expresses Colin Neufeldt, "especially when your family is on the wrong side of history and actively collaborated with the Nazis" (192). Steven Schroeder similarly writes about the Vistula region his family fled from in 1945 where some Mennonites made use of slave labor from a neighboring concentration camp. "Second- and third-generation descendants of those who experienced and participated in the Second World War cannot escape the trauma memories of their parents and grandparents," Hans Werner concludes, reminding those of us who trace our own family histories through this post-war migration that we "are forced to come to terms" with that past (294). Jantzen and Thiesen's edited collection is an important step in responding to that imperative. In its breadth of coverage and rigorous research, it will command a broad readership while serving well in undergraduate and graduate classrooms.

Ben Nobbs-Thiessen, Chair in Mennonite Studies and Assistant Professor,
University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Ryan S. Schellenberg. *Abject Joy: Paul, Prison, and the Art of Making Do*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

In his Preface, Ryan Schellenberg, Associate Professor of New Testament at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, explains that *Abject Joy* is “about punitive confinement in the Roman world,” and thus “about constrained and abjected bodies” and “about survival, about ways of making do” (ix). Still, it will treat one prisoner and one prison text in particular—Paul’s letter to the Philippians, insofar as it is among the few extant voices from prison itself. As a “study of the historical figure of Paul,” the investigation seeks to avoid reading Paul as a moral exemplar, avoiding idealizing accounts that valorize Paul but also denigrating accounts that might vilify, by employing a comparative method that puts Paul alongside other prisoners using historical and more recent ethnographic accounts.

The Introduction names the specific interest and posture of the book, as a contribution to the “social history of emotions” by taking up Philippians as “a particularly intriguing instance of a prisoner’s discomfiting joy” (4). Philippians is “first, a biographical artifact, residue of a particular life” which witnesses “among other things, to his emotions” not “in the first place” to Paul’s “thought” (15). Accordingly, while the role of social location is taken seriously (insofar as “particular emotional dispositions emerge in the context of particular material and cultural conditions” [19]), Paul is not treated under the category of “political prisoner,” but instead is considered more generally to be in relation to “a shared cluster of experiences associated with prison—subjugation, violence, humiliation, loss of autonomy, deprivation, pain, fear” (24). Schellenberg presents Philippians as “an epistolary attempt to communicate and regulate emotion,” “an epistolary vehicle for the cultivation of positive affect” (20, 22), quite apart from any possible instrumental agenda or rhetorical aims. The book is thus not only punctuated with multiple warnings against idealizing, valorizing, or hagiographical accounts of Paul’s prison experience (even as he concedes that emphasizing his own paradigmatic virtue begins with Paul himself [xi]), but also self-consciously positioned in opposition to “political” or “theological” readings of Paul, since these so easily lead to valorizing accounts, or neglect to consider the “emotional” dimension.

Chapter 1 seeks to take Paul out of the realm of hagiography and legend, highlighting that Paul's multiple detentions (2 Cor 11:23) are to be understood in the context of "local magistrates and their non-elite detainees," arguing for a strict distinction between "Roman" or imperial officials and "local officials." The latter can hardly "be conceptualized as representatives of empire." Still, the incarceration setting of Philippians might be an exception to this general pattern (39). Chapter 2 elaborates on the phenomenon of imprisonment within the broader violence of the Greek and Roman worlds, while probing Paul's claim that "to die is gain" (Phil 1:23), alongside his vision and hope for glorious bodily transformation (Phil 3:20-21). Chapter 3 explains the complex roles of prisons and the prisoner in the social imagination of the Greek and Roman worlds as the backdrop to Paul's own self-depiction as a prisoner and his confident boldness in defense of the gospel (Phil 1:20). Chapter 4 elucidates Paul's claim of contentment (Phil 4:11) as a way "to exercise his residual agency, to perform an unjected self" (22) in light of modern prison writing and ethnography. Chapter 5 interrogates Paul's multiple expressions of joy in the framework of ancient letters among friends and kin, to comparison with modern prisoners' expressions of joy and in light of recent studies of collective emotion and their regulation.

Schellenberg is to be applauded for pursuing, as a biblical scholar, a study of Paul in the framework of the ethnography and the neuroscience of emotion, making a distinctive contribution to the emerging investigation of the "history of emotion." The positioning of the study, then, in opposition to theological, political, or otherwise-framed historical accounts of Paul can be seen as a corrective, an attempt to elevate the fundamental significance of the emotional dimension in the biographical "residue" that are Paul's own prison letters. At the same time, it seems not an easy thing to try to neatly disentangle the emotional components of such letters from their instrumental purposes (even as the study of emotion also confirms that the affective domain is inevitably interconnected with and inseparable from the cognitive), and indeed the reconstruction of Paul's affect will remain as elusive as Paul's conscious rhetorical intentionality. Accordingly, the reader wishes for even further explanation, among the extant (undisputed) prison letters of Paul, why there is so little "emotional" content in Philemon (even as there is evident relationality), and so much in Philippians. Moreover, some further

exploration of Paul's apparently later reflections on his trauma (including prison experiences) would also seem appropriate in this connection (e.g., 2 Cor 1-7, 11-12; Rom 5, 8). For instance, the Roman triumph is helpfully explained in connection with humiliated prisoners of war, but Paul's own use of this (political) image of captivity as a self-depiction is not explored (2 Cor 2:14-16). Finally, what is missing is an interrogation into Paul's self-perception, specifically as a movement leader (as opposed to simply being a purveyor of Christ-faith and having a "social network") in connection with the challenge of the "regulation" of collective emotion in the context of the abjection of prison.

Gordon Zerbe, Professor Emeritus and Senior Scholar, Biblical and Theological Studies, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Darin W. Snyder Belousek and Margaret R. Pfeil, eds. *Intercessory Prayer and the Communion of Saints: Mennonite and Catholic Perspectives*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2022.

That this book comes as the latest in the Bridgefolk Series will be enough to commend it to many readers. The Bridgefolk Conferences, gatherings of Mennonites and Catholics, have been a sign of hope for many of us and not only members of those two denominations. This volume gathers papers from two conference occasions in 2015 and 2016. The title of this volume accurately indicates the subject matter.

The 2015 conference presentations all engage with an inspiring story of prayer and healing. In 1987, Jun Yanada, the son of a Japanese Mennonite pastor, Takashi Yamada, was diagnosed with aggressive leukemia. He began treatment in the Japanese Red Cross Hospital in Nagoya near the Catholic Nanzan University and Monastery where Jun was a student studying the history of early Christian art. His professor was Fr. Alfonso M. Fausone, SVD. At the time, Jun's brother, Nozomu, was a student at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Indiana. In a detailed account, enabled by the careful research skills of Alan Kreider, the story of the illness and the

amazing healing is recounted. This includes the engagement of Japanese and other Mennonites in prayer for Jun but also the intercessions of the Catholics, staff, and students, their sustained holding of Jun before God, the novena they offered, the anointing of the sick performed by Fr. Fausone with the will and presence of the Yamada family, and their keeping of the seminary chapel lights on night after night during the prayers. Further, unknown to the family, Fr. Fausone invoked the intercession of Blessed Joseph Freinademetz. Later, Freinademetz was canonized and Jun Yamada was present in Rome with his own part to play in the ceremony.

The first part of the volume includes papers relating to the telling of this story by Nozomu Yamada and Fr. Alfonso. Inevitably there are elements of repetition but also undisguised sensitivity to the differences in doctrine and practice. The story is told with obvious care and grace. There follow presentations by Nozomu and Fr. Alfonso recalling the events, Fr. Fausone drawing on the notes he made in preparation for the process of St. Joseph Freinademetz's beautification. Both presenters contributed with an awareness of the ecumenical context. What will Japanese Mennonites make of all this fraternization, receiving Catholic hospitality, the administering of "Last Rites"? What will Catholics make of it? The facts are recounted with a sense of peacemaking and maintaining of fellowship, the working out of growing shared love and faith where issues of difference are not ignored. In a rich sense, both writers strive for integrity. There is something beautiful in these accounts. Both presenters share a caution about the word *miracle*, knowing how easily it can be misused. They are at one in the conviction that what happened to Jun was the work of God that cannot, of itself, be attributed to any isolated tradition of the Christian faith. Fr. Fausone ends his contribution with reflections on *communio sanctorum*, the deep meaning of baptism, as he draws on his knowledge of early Christianity. This reviewer was left longing for this to be developed, especially the thoughts on baptism and the shared life in Christ, crucified and risen.

My wish was granted in the second part of the book, which includes the papers of a Bridgefolk Conference held the following year, in 2016. One of the contributors, Dr. John Cavadini, draws us into the Catholic tradition through important documents. He argues that the saints pray for us because they share the life, love, and longing of God for us. Hence theirs is a life

of perpetual intercession which will conclude only with the coming of the Kingdom of God. Meanwhile the church in heaven and on earth shares the suffering love of Christ for the world and intercedes because we can do no other in love. In intercessions with the saints, we are calling on the transfiguring love of Christ. Cavadini acknowledges that some forms of intercession in earlier times were a matter of abuse and that the Church is not rid of it even now. He asserts that we do not *have* to pray to the saints, yet we can recognise in their lives the way they shared our struggles and pains and so we can locate our experiences in theirs, in the fellowship of saints in Christ. In an important sense we are only asking for what the saints are already doing.

Dr. Karl Koop brings a Mennonite perspective to this compilation. He argues that Catholics and Mennonites have different worldviews, with Catholic understandings being shaped by pre-modern thought. He stresses that among Mennonites, intercessions are offered to God on behalf of the living, not the dead. But then there are different understandings of the life in Christ following our bodily death. Purgatory is not a concern of saints who sleep, waiting upon the Last Day. Christ alone is the sole mediator, although the saints are models of faith in life. Koop sets the Catholic/Mennonite divide in a Reformation Context and, in doing so, keeps with some basic questions such as, who are the saints and who today shares the communion of saints?

Essays by Kimberly Hope Belcher and Marlene Kropf describe practices in different traditions. For example, Belcher has a description and reflection on the Easter vigil litany and baptism, as the whole church petitions God for blessing, calling on the saints to pray for us. The litany of saints affirms the eschatological hope of the Catholic liturgy. Marlene Kropf's essay engages with research on what Mennonites believe and practice relating to intercessory prayer. She notes the changes in recent years: the overall decline in intercessory prayer, the importance of singing of prayers, the growing reluctance to pray, the turn to prayers being pastor-led, and the absence of Mary but the common request to friends to pray for us (or keep us in their thoughts). Praying *for* us is replaced with praying *with* us, a change not only made by Mennonites. Kropf gives a sharp and honest appraisal of the poverty of prayer among Mennonite congregations who may well be embarrassed by a request to pray for another, or who may even declare intercession

irrelevant, an argument that has led to a new emphasis on contemplative prayer (which hardly excludes intercession, properly understood). Now it seems it is not a question of whether intercessory prayer works but of how contemplation builds our essential relationship of love with God. Prayer deepens compassion. If this can sound hard on Mennonites, other writers say they recognize similar responses among Catholics. Four useful Appendices follow this essay giving details of the research questions and other information. Kropf's pastoral heart shows itself in her final paragraphs as she longs for Mennonites to recover a passion for intercessory prayer, for it to become again as natural as breathing, not the least because prayer breeds compassion, the love that sustains peacemakers and expands the flow of God's healing love in the world.

Two further essays, by Rebecca Slough (Mennonite) and Elizabeth Groppe (Catholic), conclude the conference papers. These essays were written as responses and are useful summaries. They draw attention to issues still needing to be faced. Additionally, they illustrate how we have already grown in Christ by such ecumenical engagements as we have met a larger Christ than we have known and a richer church than many have ever imagined. There are still questions to be asked and answered, still abuses to be dealt with, but there is also hope, of which Bridgefolk and this splendid volume give evidence. After all, it is only with all the saints that we come to know the fullness of the love of God in Christ.

Brian Haymes, former Principal of Northern Baptist College, Manchester, United Kingdom.

Ronald Tiessen. *Menno in Athens*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2022.

Menno In Athens by Ronald Tiessen tells the story of a young Mennonite's pilgrimage to a series of Grecian locations, where he searches for parallels in the thought of the ancient Greeks to the Anabaptist tradition in which he was raised. Although the book has a thin novelistic veneer, it is really a travelogue and intellectual memoir that consists of about twenty-five visits to cities, towns or regions, each of which is associated with one or more Greek thinkers. At each of these stops, Menno, the protagonist of the novel, finds correspondences with elements of Anabaptism. Sometimes these are fairly mundane (the Athenians selected public officials by lot; some Mennonite communities chose their leaders by a form of lottery), sometimes surprising (a thread of non-violence theory in what we think of as a martial culture), and sometimes astonishing (the possibly Johannine mysticism of the Pythagoreans). They are always interesting.

In the Foreword Menno tries to explain his pilgrimage to his disapproving stepfather, Paeta. He tells Paeta that he is "drawn in by a sense of familiarity" because modern Mennonites and ancient Greeks share some common insights (11). This seems innocuous enough. Throughout his journey, Menno will cross paths several times with a fellow Mennonite, an MCC volunteer named Virgil. Virgil will also disagree, sometimes strenuously, with both his program and his conclusions. Why? What do both Paeta and Virgil find objectionable about this apparently innocent project? The answer goes to the heart of why *Menno in Athens* is such an interesting book.

Paeta articulates his concerns in the Foreword: "I imagine you even consider your Greek myths to be divine revelation! Everything you say points to a denial of the true revelation in Scripture." (9). Near the end, Menno seems to circle back to Paeta's accusation when he comments that his pilgrimage is an attempt to examine how the thinkers of ancient Greece *foreshadowed* tenets of Anabaptism:

"It was not evident to Menno how this came to be. He was not one to identify direct lines of causality and connectivity, but at the same time he favored Simone Weil's commitment to the idea that there is a clear continuum between ancient Greece and the

Gospels” (173-174, emphasis added).

Is Menno being disingenuous? Questions of causality and connectivity (which comprise the larger question of literary influence) are unavoidable. Even if the text does not explicitly pose them, they will surface in the mind of any attentive reader. Paeta’s concern is real, although he may have it essentially backwards. There is very little danger of Menno (or us) coming to believe that the Greek myths are divinely inspired. The problem for Paeta and Virgil is the reverse: how we come to view the inspiration of Biblical texts.

In his chapter on Epidauros, Tiessen argues that the healing ministry of the New Testament is a continuation of a Greek experience rather than a tradition found in the Hebrew scriptures. As a case in point he cites the legend of Asklepios and notes its parallels to the story of Jesus. Both Jesus and Asklepios claim divine ancestry, both are healers and have followers who extend their ministry, and both were resurrected and deified, albeit in different ways. It may not occur to us to ask whether Asklepios’ story is divinely inspired, but it will almost certainly occur to us, recognizing the legendary elements of Asklepios’ story, to interrogate the Biblical narrative. Does it also incorporate legendary elements? *That* is the problem for Paeta and Virgil. To notice the parallel is to ask the question, and once the question is asked, it cannot be unasked. We may answer in favour of Biblical literalism, as do, for instance, C.S. Lewis and G.K. Chesterton, but we will always know that we might have answered otherwise. A new deliberateness is required of us; an innocence has been lost.

In one of the most interesting chapters in the book, Samos-Pythagorio, Tiessen finds parallels between the beliefs of the Pythagoreans and the mystical theology of the Gospel of John. Was the writer of the Gospel a Pythagorean? Influence, if it exists, can go only one way. Pythagoras could not have read John.

The presiding genius of *Menno in Athens* is Simone Weil. She figures directly in at least four important chapters: Chios (Homer and the Iliad), Samos-Pythagorio (the Pythagoreans), Thebes (Antigone) and Poros (Prometheus and Zeus). Chios is, in fact, essentially an account of her brilliant (mis)reading of Homer: *The Iliad, The Poem of Force*. If nothing else, we owe Tiessen a debt of gratitude for reminding us of her book *Intimations*

of *Christianity Among the Ancient Greeks*. Her thought informs almost every page of the novel.

Weil herself remains contentious among Christians, probably for the same reasons that Virgil and Paeta are suspicious of Menno. To read her is to open hermeneutical doors that we might prefer to leave closed. *Menno in Athens* will, I suspect, do the same and that is why, for believers like Paeta, it is a dangerous book. To read it is to see correspondences and to ask questions—questions that may produce tremors in the ground of a naïve faith. So be it. Difficult questions and honest answers are essential in the transition to maturity, in faith as in everything.

Charles Roth, Rainham Mennonite Church, Selkirk, Ontario.

Knut V.M. Wormstädt, *Versöhnung erzählen. Eine prozesstheologische Untersuchung ökumenischer Versöhnungsbegegnungen mit den Mennonit*innen* (FSÖTh 173). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2022.

In *Versöhnung erzählen*, Knut Wormstädt draws on process theology and particularly the work of philosopher Donna Haraway to interpret the sense of “reconciliation” in ecumenical dialogues between Mennonites on the one hand and Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed churches on the other. Typically, Wormstädt notes, this sense of reconciliation is understood along two axes: a “vertical” reconciliation between humanity and God which precedes and conditions the “lateral” dimension of inter-personal (or in this case inter-ecclesial) reconciliation. Wormstädt’s work, which is based on his doctoral dissertation, productively complicates this relationship, seeking ways of thinking about reconciliation that bring these axes together, seeing God’s reconciling work and creaturely healing of hurt relationships as significantly intertwined.

The theme of reconciliation is significant in these ecumenical dialogues, not only because of the theological identity of Mennonites (in which peace is central), but particularly because of the growing significance of a “healing of memories” after the sixteenth-century persecution of the

Mennonites' Anabaptist forebears by the churches of the magisterial reformation. Over the years, the focus of these dialogues has shifted from the discussion of doctrinal differences (the status of which is less clear for Mennonites than for many other churches) toward the reconciliation of this difficult and violent history. Yet how can we understand this reconciliation theologically? For this, Wormstädt suggests, process theology—in which *being* is best understood as an open-ended *becoming* in entangled webs of complicated interdependency and divine-human cooperation—might be singularly suited.

After the introduction and chapter 1 in which the main themes, terms, and issues are established, the book proceeds with four core chapters before closing with a set of theses. The first of these core chapters (chapter 2) introduces process thought, its (limited) Germanophone reception, and its potential for understanding the divine-human relationship and the church. Drawing on Catherine Keller and Marjorie Suchocki, Wormstädt envisions God's power as one of invitation and cooperation rather than unilateral omnipotence and sees the Church itself as a relational and non-exclusivist process of becoming.

In chapter 3, Wormstädt unfolds his understanding of the titular “narrating.” For Wormstädt, narrating means imposing order and meaning onto events that are themselves disorderly. This is necessary for the stabilization of identity, but the in- and exclusions thus produced remain haunted by an unruly remainder that resists narrativization. A more complete self-understanding requires facing such blind spots. In this chapter, we also find an illuminating passage on “provincializing reformation,” challenging the preeminence of the magisterial reformation in historical narrative, and an intriguing reading of Mennonite narration of their own persecution. Even convictions (such as doctrine) are ultimately a type of narration, Wormstädt notes, implicating the speaker as a trace of unruly events. Wormstädt argues a greater awareness of this might allow ecumenical dialogues to hold the tension of apparently incommensurable differences.

Chapter 4 then consists of readings of documents resulting from institutional ecumenical dialogues between Mennonites and churches of the magisterial reformation. This is the largest chapter by far (the size of chapters 2, 3, and 5 combined), and analyzes texts such as the Mennonite-

Roman Catholic *Called Together to be Peacemakers* (1998-2003), the Lutheran-Mennonite *Healing of Memories:Reconciling in Christ* (2010), and the Mennonite-Reformed *Christ is our Peace* (2009). Wormstädt especially asks how these texts frame and interpret the narration of *history* (seeking a shared narration of past injustices, which Wormstädt stresses must remain open), *theology* (where mostly baptism and the church-state relation persist as sticking points, tellingly on the fault line between orthodoxy and orthopraxy), and *reconciliation* (where the model of a “healing of memories” becomes significant, if in different ways in different texts).

Chapter 5 then returns to the more ontological concerns of chapter 2, seeking metaphors to think about what happens in these dialogues. The work of Donna Haraway in particular now becomes important. Wormstädt settles on two main metaphors: first, an organic and unruly inflection of relationality (that is, life understood as “lived along lines”) named “tentacularity,” and second, an image of symbiosis from Haraway’s *Camille Stories*. There, a future is imagined in which some humans take it upon themselves to enter a genetically modified symbiosis with monarch butterflies over the course of several generations, out of responsibility for what humanity has done to the nonhuman world in previous generations. In Wormstädt’s discussion of these, we also find the image of “compost,” alluding in colourful language to the way the guilt of the past may be processed and become fruitful.

Drawing on Keller, Michael Welker, and John Caputo, Wormstädt then brings this reading back to theology. Reconciliation emerges not in the first instance unilaterally along a vertical axis, but *as* and *in* the becoming of creaturely relationships, in an entangled, fragile, infinite interaction. As such, the success of reconciliation is not guaranteed, and indeed these processes are not to be thought of as teleological goals to be achieved, but as teeming and tentacular processes of “becoming-with,” in which divine action can only be discerned in retrospect. “At least as an anthropological experience, reconciliation does not irrupt into the world through the unilateral action of God, but is advanced fragmentarily in the inter-human, hoping that what is impossible with humans may be possible with God” (366).

Versöhnung Erzählen is intriguing, creative, daring, erudite, and compelling. The combination of process thought and ecumenics is, to my knowledge, wholly novel, and the production of such a work in German

offers a welcome engagement with a type of thinking rarely discussed in this language. With a work of this scope, it is perhaps inevitable that the reader is left wanting more at certain points. For example, a more elaborate conversation with Keller (of whom Wormstädt relies on a single work) might have broadened the passage between Haraway and theology. Further, readers looking for an extensive introduction to Haraway and process thought will find that Wormstädt's priority lies more with his readings of ecumenical texts and his constructive endeavour.

In sum, Wormstädt not only offers a reading of ecumenical documents, he also invites their questioning. How does centralized institutional dialogue impose an order over the teeming and pluriform processes of ecclesial becoming? What would it mean to "provincialize" ecumenism? Further, Wormstädt's metaphors are saturated with humanity's relatedness to the nonhuman world. Where is the nonhuman in ecumenism? What does it mean to seek ecclesial reconciliation in light of this more fundamental relatedness—how can inter-ecclesial reconciliation open into inter-*creaturely* reconciliation?

Marius van Hoogstraten, Postdoctoral Researcher, Mennonite Seminary, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Katherine Sonderegger. *Systematic Theology Volume 2: The Doctrine of The Holy Trinity: Processions and Persons*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2020.

"Just why is Leviticus, the priestly and Holiness Schools, so foreign to the Christian imagination?" (355). So asks Katherine Sonderegger before launching into a constructive account of how Israel's sacrificial cult "grounds Trinity" in Christian dogmatic reflection (412). If there were any locus of Christian imagination that might seem foreign to the book of Leviticus, the doctrine of the Trinity would seem to be at the top. Where do we learn about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in this ancient account of Israel's sacrificial cult? Is not trinitarian dogma derived from the New Testament

or perhaps the post-Scriptural theological developments? Not so fast, says Sonderegger. According to her, “Trinity” is not first about “Divine Persons,” but rather about “being itself,” about the holy life of God, a life that is intensely witnessed to in Israel’s scriptures and in Leviticus in particular (3). The Old Testament, according to her, is thus “the proper home” for the doctrine of the Trinity (94).

A bold claim, indeed, and Sonderegger is aware of the dangers of this claim in an era of sensitivity around Christian claims to ownership over the scriptures of Israel. She asks: “Can a doctrine of the Trinity be lodged in... the Holiness Code and remain philoJudaic?” (10). Part of her attempt to provide an affirmative answer to that question has already been alluded to. The doctrine of the Trinity, she argues, is not first a dogma about God’s ways with us in Jesus Christ. Trinity is not first a doctrine of salvation, rather, it is about the “*inner life of God*” (13). In a lovely overture, Sonderegger prays that Jewish readers would thus “see something familiar, a beloved dwelling place that is expressed in another language and belongs to another culture,” but not, she clarifies, that Jews would become trinitarians (14).

Further, Sonderegger suggests that trinitarian dogma of the sort she is interested in has an “intellectual legitimacy” that can foster “kinship” not only with Jews but with those committed to other metaphysics. Invoking Ludwig Wittgenstein, she sums up this kinship by describing trinitarian dogma as addressing “problems in the neighborhood” of differing metaphysical systems. In her chapter “Realism as Trace of the Trinity,” she outlines forms of kinship between Christians and “realists,” the latter broadly understood by her to refer to those who are open to “anything that is *there* and can make itself felt” (201). Trinity is not a regionally exclusive dogma, she argues, but concerns universal matters around identity and difference, universality and particularity, and the concrete and the intelligible that others are also concerned with. This kinship is also evident in scripture, she argues. Scripture does not advocate a uniquely biblical metaphysics that shirks common reason. Rather, scripture has a broader “cultural legitimacy” that is worth affirming through dogmatic reflection (255). This might all seem a strange methodological focus to preface a doctrine of the Trinity derived from the book of Leviticus, but Sonderegger claims that too much of modern trinitarianism has sought its credibility solely within a regionally

walled-off metaphysics rather than speaking a language about the triune God that might be recognizable within a broader intellectual frame.

The crown of this second volume comes with her attempt to “anchor the dogma of the Holy Trinity in Israel’s sacrificial cultus” (364). Shifting away from trends in modern trinitarianism that have emphasized the triune persons in their relation (here social trinitarianism looms large), Sonderegger prioritizes God’s processional life understood as a “single, complex act of the One God” (466). The best defense against tri-theism, for her, is to begin with God’s Unicity (a key subject of her first volume), which is buttressed in this volume by her attempt to ground the “persons” of the trinity in the processional life of God. So, how is God’s processional life manifest in Israel’s cultus? Sonderegger invokes numerous images to argue that Israel’s sacrificial cultus “*encounters*” and “*echoes*” the triune life: as fire blazing forth purposefully (412), as sacrifice and self-offering on the altar (460), as sweet savor, fragrance, and smoke, gathering the offering and rising “back to the Origin” (465). This “life” does have its “Telos” in the divine Persons, in the names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, says Sonderegger, but as confirmation rather than completion of the divine processional life (548).

Sonderegger’s achievements in this second volume are, in my estimation, of even greater significance than those in her first volume on the divine perfections. She continues to provide dogmatic readings of neglected biblical texts—Leviticus and the holiness school specifically, but also Isaiah—that are provocative and generative. Also admirable is her boldness in advocating a “fearlessly abstract and unrepentantly conceptual” (115) metaphysical account of “Holy Trinity as Being Itself” in conversation with figures as diverse as St. Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, and modern set theorists (511). Her appeals to this diverse lineup might make her innovations less accessible to some readers unfamiliar with those discourses, but those interested in constructive paths forward in systematic theology cannot afford to ignore the paths that Sonderegger has charted in this second volume.

Zac Klassen, Pastor at Bloomingdale Mennonite Church, Bloomingdale, Ontario.

Elizabeth Phillips. *Apocalyptic Theopolitics: Essays and Sermons on Eschatology, Ethics, and Politics*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022.

Elizabeth Phillips' book *Apocalyptic Theopolitics* appears in a longstanding series called "Theopolitical Visions" which has also published the works of several Anabaptist and Mennonite-related scholars such as A. James Reimer's *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology*, Travis Kroeker's *Messianic Political Theology and Diaspora Ethics*, and Kyle Gingerich Hiebert's *The Architectonics of Hope*. It is striking that the series itself has published only one other woman in its twenty-eight volume run—a criticism that resonates with Phillips' responses to the latter two aforementioned books in CGR 36.3 (Fall 2018).

The book self-consciously presents itself as an anthology of essays and sermons on apocalyptic themes that have not been forcibly unified, and yet Phillips identifies three underlying leitmotifs that I am highly sympathetic with: (1) an argument for interdisciplinarity that resists the hubris of specialization in the modern academy, (2) the placing of "traditional sources and contemporary critical perspectives in conversation with one another" (xiv), and (3) the notion that "preaching ethics and politics" should avoid the twin dangers of being too didactic and being too neutralizing (xv). The book unfolds over the course of fourteen chapters, divided into four sections, and although its essays span the course of roughly fifteen years, they have not been significantly revised or updated in light of the many apocalyptic revelations that have appeared in that time, from COVID-19 to the rise of the far right. This makes *Apocalyptic Theopolitics* both a fascinating record of the development of Phillips' thought and a frustrating catalogue of missed opportunities for deeper engagement. Frustration itself is not a substitute for criticism, in part because the unfulfillment of a reader's desire for a more unified or updated set of essays says nothing about the substance of the book. However, there are substantial disconnections and decisions within the book that deserve to be unpacked.

On one hand, *Apocalyptic Theopolitics* makes several essential claims about the nature of apocalyptic thinking at the complex juncture between theology and politics: Phillips sees in the discipline of Political Theology the radical potential to "bring eschatology and politics back into conversation

within academic theology” (9), argues for the “normative deployment of apocalyptic in theopolitics” in ways that (drawing on McClendon) combine “last things” with “things that last” (23), preserves the space of disagreement and contestation by avoiding setting up Political Theology as a way of resolving ethical tensions (31), engages in the deep question as to whether one can be both a pacifist and an Augustinian (106), and calls for God to “jolt us out of all our attempts to enforce false unities” (45). Each of these framing contributions make *Apocalyptic Theopolitics* a helpful contribution to the conversation on Political Theology and Christian ethics.

On the other hand, the book suffers from an interesting and profound limitation that is by no means unique. Phillips rightly rejects the usefulness of John Howard Yoder’s theology, hopes that it will fade from view, honestly reflects on the mark he has made on her thinking (and others), but troublingly stops short of mounting any sustained argument against it (xiii). This makes me question how critical Phillips’ apocalyptic theopolitics can be. What is apocalypse without the cataclysmic revelation of that which was previously hidden?

I wonder why Phillips opted not to include new material in the book with sharper criticisms of Yoder, especially because more of his works are cited than any others. It seems within the apocalyptic purview of the book to expose and analyse the deep and well-recorded connections between Yoder’s theology and his sexual abuse, but these connections are not part of the book’s approach. Surely deeper engagement with the critical voices working inside and outside of Anabaptist and Mennonite theology—from the essays in *Resistance: Confronting Violence, Power, and Abuse within Peace Churches*, edited by Cameron Altaras and Carol Penner (Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2022), to the incisive and challenging work on violence by figures like Elsa Dorlin and Françoise Vergès—would strengthen the book. But even this sort of criticism is not enough. There must be a way to move beyond the poles of didactic moralizing and its fantasies of moral purity, and neutralizing description that equivocates all forms of moral blame. This would require both a clear reckoning with the finite and flawed nature of all human beings, and an equally clear reckoning with the fact that some forms of violence are worse and more pathological than others. Apocalyptic (revelatory) forms of theopolitics (the critical combination of

theological and political analyses) are not helpful or useful if they cannot manage these challenging distinctions and look squarely at the problem of violence that afflicts us all. Phillips' *Apocalyptic Theopolitics* approaches and spurs thinking about these tensions but does not move decisively toward solutions or assertive resistances.

Maxwell Kennel, Senior Research Associate, Dr. Gilles Arcand Centre for Health Equity, Northern Ontario School of Medicine University, Thunder Bay, Ontario; Director of Pandora Press, Kitchener, Ontario.

Call for Papers

Decolonizing Mind & Practice: A Lifelong Process

The effects of colonialism are well documented within and outside the field of theology. The colonizer, the colonized, and the earth all feel its' impacts on their lives. By privileging race, gender, religion, rationality, and narrow conditions of what it means to be human, colonialism creates superiority and inferiority complexes among humans, while privileging humans above all other living things — even the conditions that sustain life.

The Conrad Grebel Review welcomes original article submissions from disciplines such as history, Indigenous and intercultural studies, philosophy, political theory, psychology, sociology, ecology, geography, anthropology, theology, Christian ethics, and others to present new research and developments on the multi-faceted theme of decolonizing mind and practice.

Possible topics may include but are not limited to the following:

- Race, theology, and ethics (African, Asian, Indigenous, Latino/a, Western theology, etc...)
- Indigenous perspectives on healing, justice, and kinship relations
- Interreligious conversation on decolonial social imaginaries
- Ecumenism and healing division among various Christian denominations
- Neoliberalism, Nationalism & Socialism
- Identity formation and religious living
- Colonialization, neocolonization, and Christian theology
- Indigenous, feminist, womanist, queer and materialist approaches to decolonization
- Economic and wealth (re)distribution, reparations, and landback
- Spatiality, urban planning, place, and environmental justice
- Crip and disability approaches to diversity

Length: 5000-8000 words

Submissions will be received as of 30 April 2024

For more details please contact Guest Editors Emmanuel Israel (e3israel@uwaterloo.ca) and/or Deanna Zantingh (deanna.zantingh@mail.utoronto.ca)

To view CGR's general requirements including document format,
citation style, etc... see:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/publications/conrad-grebel-review/submissions>.

Submissions should be emailed to the Editor: cgreview@uwaterloo.ca