

## Book Reviews

*The Irony of Power: The Politics of God within Matthew's Narrative.* By Dorothy Jean Weaver. Studies in Peace and Scripture: Institute of Mennonite Studies. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications. 2017. \$42.

In *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (1981), Northrop Frye makes the case that among basic archetypal narrative forms, the Bible represents that of comedy (where things are not as they seem), in contrast to romance (where the good guys always win) and tragedy (where the hero fails). Comedy as an archetypal genre is fundamentally ironic. In this engaging volume, Dorothy Jean Weaver impressively demonstrates how this is dramatically the case with the Gospel of Matthew, written in the wake of the catastrophic Jewish War against Rome and conveying the author's own "autobiographical reflections on questions of power":

The result is the sharply ironic rhetoric which runs like a red thread throughout Matthew's narrative. . . . Matthew's message is clear: All earthly appearances to the contrary, God alone is the source, the arbiter, and the enactor of true power. Always. Everywhere. Under all circumstances. Matthew clearly knows what the Psalmist also knows, that God's laughter is always the last laughter (cf. Ps. 2:4) (prologue, xxi-xxii).

Weaver's *The Irony of Power* is a collection of essays previously published over the span of almost twenty-five years (1992-2015). With the exception of the opening article, "Resistance and Nonresistance: New Testament Perspectives on Confronting the Powers," the essays focus specifically on the interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew, addressing "real world" questions pertaining to power and powerlessness, resistance and nonresistance, violence and nonviolence, and "the astonishing and profoundly upside-down 'politics' of the reign of God" (xv). Weaver ultimately seeks to show how Matthew's discourse around power and politics can be read in a contemporary "global context," as one discovers "a world astonishingly similar to the twenty-first century world that we inhabit" (85-86).

Headlining the Matthean essays is "Power and Powerlessness: Matthew's Use of Irony in the Portrayal of Political Leaders," originally written in 1992. Drawing especially on the work of the literary theorist D. C. Muecke (*The Compass of Irony*, 1969), and assessing Matthew's portrayal of the three central Roman political figures in the narrative (Herod the king; Herod the tetrarch; and Pilate the governor), Weaver deftly explains "Matthew's effective and ironic subversion of all standard definitions of political power precisely in order to set forth a new 'God's-eye' vision of political power as reflected within the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, Messiah and King of the Jews" (xvi). Weaver discloses that this seminal insight into Matthew's portrayal of "the irony of power" has found its way into all of her subsequent major publications on the Gospel (xvii). Other articles rounding out the first major section on "The View from the Top Down"

focus on the Matthean portrayals of Roman characters, the Jewish leaders, and the exercise of political power more broadly.

Articles in the final section take "The View from the Bottom Up," explaining Matthew's portrayal of the (rewritten) Messianic script, women, geology (God's claim on the whole world ensuring that the faithful will "inherit the earth"), resistance and nonresistance, and violence and nonviolence.

Consistent with Weaver's primarily "narrative critical standpoint" (68) in reading Matthew (in line with current scholarly practice), the following expressions recur throughout the essays: portrait; portrayal; narrative portrayal; character portrayals; narrative world; realistic portrait; narrative rhetoric; and other similar terms. Still, Weaver argues, Matthew's aim is to generate a "perspective on the real world" in order to empower and enable the "Matthean church" in the context of its own struggles (43). Weaver uses this reading standpoint to impressive effect, though it should be noted that while "Matthew" is used to refer to the author who "intends" to produce an impact, the actual historical author presumably remains anonymous and the perspective of the (implied) "narrator" can also be emphasized (126-132). This standpoint permits Weaver to remain disinterested or agnostic about the possible layers of the text (portrait) or about how the text might be referential to something outside the text. Thus, she speaks of what Jesus says or does, but then clarifies in a footnote that this only refers to what the Gospels claim about what Jesus said or did (137). For Weaver, narrative, representation, and rhetoric come together in significantly profound ways in Matthew, though this interaction is not explained in general or in theoretical terms.

Weaver, however, is not bound to some narrow performance of narrative criticism, and she can also refer to how "Matthew" uses his literary sources (notably Mark and Q), amending them or making additions (248, 257) in the painting of a given portrait. In addition, she also engages effectively in a local, engaged, and non-technical reading of Matthew, interviewing Palestinian Christians in the Occupied Territories on themes of resistance and nonviolence as generated by Matthew (186-198).

The essays in this collection consistently revolve around the representations of Roman political power, in which the "Jewish leaders" are portrayed mainly as puppets. In this respect, Weaver is to be congratulated for drawing this dimension of Matthew's rhetoric into sharp relief, in a scholarly context in which there has been a significant preoccupation with reading Matthew primarily in terms of the emerging conflict between "the church" (Jesus) and the Jewish nation/people (the Jewish leaders), in light of the (evident or potential) anti-Judaism, supersessionism, or antisemitism of the Gospel. Still, some further treatment on this latter (similarly "political") question seems called for, taking up the question of the perceived (portrayed) social location of Matthew and his community relative to the Jewish-Judean nation and its institutions. In this connection, the theme of how the "nation/people" as a whole take on guilt for killing Jesus (Mt. 27:25) as part of some kind of rejection-replacement-judgment drama is largely left unexplored. Given her assessment that Matthew seeks to show that "the entire sacrificial system" has been destroyed through Jesus (82-83), not only that the

Jewish leaders have been removed from their leadership role (Mt. 21:33-22:10), it would appear that Matthew's portrayal largely shows that the "church" now sees itself as standing entirely apart from the nation of Israel, making its anti-Judaic rhetoric less intramural and more poignant in the construction of later Christian antisemitism.

Dorothy Jean Weaver and her publisher (and the Institute of Mennonite Studies) have done a great service in bringing these engaging essays, drawn from a variety of journals and books, together into one volume, which as a whole confirms her status as a significant contributor both to Matthean and to Mennonite theological scholarship.

*Canadian Mennonite University*

GORDON ZERBE

*Umstrittene Empörung: zur Gewaltfrage in der frühen Reformation. Studien zu Thomas Müntzer, Andreas Karlstadt, Hans Hut, Philipp Melancthon und Martin Luther. Hans-Jürgen Goertz zum 80. Geburtstag.* Edited by Thomas T. Müller. Mühlhausen: Thomas-Müntzer Gesellschaft. 2017. €10.

As its subtitle indicates, this volume is dedicated to the prominent historian of Anabaptism and the Radical Reformation Hans-Jürgen Goertz, on the occasion of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was published by the Thomas Müntzer Gesellschaft, which Goertz helped to found in 2001 and which he served as president from 2008 until 2016. Four of the five chapters in the book were papers read at the annual meeting of the society in 2017; the fifth, by Siegfried Bräuer, another founder of the society and former president, was added to round out the volume. Its title, *Umstrittene Empörung: Zur Gewaltfrage in der frühen Reformation (Controversial Rebellion: On the Question of Force in the Early Reformation)*, clearly plays on the title of a seminal volume in the revisionist historiography of Anabaptism edited by Goertz: *Umstrittenes Täufertum 1525-1975: Neue Forschungen (Controversial Anabaptism 1525-1975: New Research)*. True to its title and to the mandate of the society that published it, all of the essays in the volume involve Thomas Müntzer in some way and focus on the question of the use of force in the cause of the Reformation.

The first two essays concentrate specifically on Müntzer's willingness to endorse the use of force in the service of reform. The first, by the honoree, investigates Müntzer's "Sermon to the Princes," a *locus classicus* for analyses of his political ethic. This sermon, delivered before the Saxon princes in the castle at Allstedt on July 13, 1524, and published shortly thereafter, amounted to an exegesis of Daniel 2 and the prophet's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of four world empires. Goertz suggests the possibility that this was not just a crucial component of an investigation into Müntzer's teachings by the authorities, but also an opportunity for Müntzer to assess the commitment of the authorities to the Reformation. He argues that Müntzer's characterization of the legitimacy of secular authority was not substantial but relational. Müntzer agreed with Luther that the sword was given by God to the authorities, but insisted that the legitimate use of it was dependent on their maintaining a right relationship with God. Where

Luther stressed the obedience of subjects to their God-given authorities, Müntzer emphasized the obedience of rulers to the commands of God. Consequently, at this point he had no explicit theory of just resistance to tyrannical rulers but, at most, an implicit right of resistance. Siegfried Bräuer's chapter compares the sermon polemics of Müntzer and Luther in the early years of the Reformation, specifically between 1519 and 1521. In contrast to earlier perceptions, especially those drawn from the work of Heinrich Boehmer, Bräuer argues that there are remarkable parallels between the rhetoric employed by these two men at this time, likely because both men were trained in similar rhetorical traditions. However, toward the end of this period the Wittenberg Reformers began to show concern for the possible consequences of the use of sharp language in the pulpit, and increasingly thereafter Luther advocated the use of official compulsion against those who seemed ready to employ force in the service of reform. Early in the previous chapter, Goertz posed the question of where Müntzer belongs on the continuum between murder prophet and apostle of peace. Together these two chapters reinforce other recent research into Müntzer's thought and actions that highlights the fact that insofar as he belongs in the former category, this was the result of an evolutionary process based on his experiences of events leading to the German Peasants' War.

In 1524 Müntzer's congregation in Allstedt wrote to the people of Orlamünde, then under the spiritual care of Andreas Karlstadt, inviting them to join a common covenant or league. The response from Orlamünde, published almost immediately, rejected the invitation, arguing that the formation of leagues or covenants contravened the command to place one's trust in God. Despite earlier contacts between Müntzer and Karlstadt and frequent characterizations of both men as Saxon Radicals, this exchange of letters is often treated as indicative of fundamental differences in their reforming visions. In some cases, Müntzer's militancy has been contrasted with Karlstadt's qualified pacifism. Alejandro Zorzín takes this event as an opportunity to review Karlstadt's position on the use of force from the beginning of the Reformation to this point, not only in the context of the verbal rhetoric of reform, but also of depictions of force or violence in illustrations often employed in numerous publications by different authors. In so doing, he highlights further the complexity of what it means to claim a reformer advocated the use of force.

The final two contributions to the volume, both of which focus on Anabaptism and its place in the Reformation, are likely of even more direct interest to the readers of this journal. Nicole Grochowina revisits Hans Hut's teaching on the sword, the subject of a 1965 article by James Stayer seen as central to the establishment of the revisionist model of Anabaptist beginnings that has largely dominated the field since. Grochowina does not so much challenge Stayer's conclusions as add nuance to them. She agrees that Hut's adoption of Müntzer's willingness to use force in the service of the Reformation continued across the caesura of the Peasants' War, despite his attempts to distance himself from Müntzer in his Augsburg interrogations. As we have long known, after the defeat of the commoners in the Peasants' War, Hut merely sheathed the sword, which had been drawn prematurely and would be drawn again soon. Grochowina argues, however, that in the interim force took on a soteriological role evidenced

by its place in Hut's teaching on the Gospel of all creatures. The elect must suffer the use of force against them until the appointed hour. As a result, Grochowina concludes that Hut truly remained "Müntzer's heir," playing on the title of Gottfried Seebaß's detailed study of his life and thought.

Possibly more controversial is Andreas Lindner's study of Luther and Melanchthon's polemics against the Anabaptists. Describing demonization as a precursor to the use of force, Lindner argues that the polemics against the Anabaptists emanating from Wittenberg were influenced especially by two factors: Catholic polemics that held Luther responsible for the rise of Reformation radicalism, particularly in the person of Müntzer, and Melanchthon's brief fascination with the so-called Zwickau Prophets during Luther's stay at the Wartburg. The result, interestingly, is that Melanchthon, the "mild Reformer," consistently comes across as harsher in his criticism and calls for the punishment of Anabaptists than does Luther.

This volume is a valuable contribution to the celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 1517. In a context in which many scholars have called for recognition that the Reformation was more than just Martin Luther and that its legacy was not uniformly positive, it highlights the extent to which the distance between Luther and those he labeled *Schwärmer* was not as great as we have often assumed. It also sheds light on the extent to which events of the early Reformation were responsible for distinguishing magisterial from radical reformers.

*University of Alberta*

GEOFFREY DIPPLE

*Peace Clan: Mennonite Peacemaking in Somalia.* By Peter Sensenig. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock. 2016. \$25.

To read this book is to hear 1,001 echoes of the phrase "blessed are the peacemakers." Peter Sensenig often names those echoes as both Mennonite and Somali, who envision together another way forward through the episodes of conflict, violence, and turmoil that have been central to the history of Somalia for the last decades. To form the trust that becomes this vision Sensenig begins by naming the various clusters of Mennonites who worked in schools and health clinics over the decades of establishing a peaceful presence that endured in reputation. These many early missionaries laid a foundation of trust, creating a reputation for "the peace clan."

In naming what makes these echoes possible, Sensenig presents the sensitive, calculated, and often strategic initiatives for the sake of peace and witness taken by the Mennonite "clan" in responsive relationships with Somali clan partners. These efforts become a form of empowerment through which both parties grew in their awareness of what was possible through the work of the Holy One in their midst.

The core content of this book is a tangled, sometimes moving, and literal interface between what Sensenig calls "salt, light and deeds as witness, elicitation

and service” during the Somali eras of colonial rule, dictatorship, warlord-militancy, and neo-liberal interventionism. Each of these eras present a unique set of challenges, yet ways are found for the relationships to continue. One of the most significant themes of this book are the stories of various intentional discernment processes over decades to stay connected and committed to the Somali people: these “simple” Mennonites weighed politics, history, Scripture, interfaith relations, social context, future implications, and safety to find the narrow path toward peace.

Of special note in this book are the roles, capacity, and impact of two Mennonite women and a Somali convert to Christ’s way of peacebuilding: Bertha Beachy, Bonnie Bergey, and Ahmed Haile. Much of the impact of this book is held in this quote from Bonnie Bergey, who worked with both Eastern Mennonite Mission and Mennonite Central Committee and risked much for the sake of peace in the 1990’s:

I just believe in a whole different way. Guns are a deterrent to peace because they take conflict in an entirely different direction. But dialogue and discussion and peaceful approaches, trying to assess local people and local families and local situations, is a lot more hopeful. This became real to me as I needed to be vulnerable to the families who gave me food or provided a place for me to stay. Peacemaking and mission connect for me in many little ways. (225)

The accounts of each of their stories combine the blessedness of peacebuilding with a strategic sense of risk and the potential of suffering to bring about alternative forms of relationship and witness. Beachy risked much by taking daring initiatives; Bergey risked going places no Western man could go in the 1990’s to evoke a potential peace; and Haile lost a leg in an attack on a peace meeting he had worked to set up.

When read in parallel, their narratives bring to life the Beatitudes about peacemaking and suffering in ways that resonate with a sense of hope that eventually made another story possible, a story that is not included in the book. In August 2014 the Somali president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, visited President Obama at the White House. After that he had a day off and decided, of all places, to visit Eastern Mennonite University and the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding where he had studied thirteen years before. I invite the reader to imagine that President Hassan Sheikh made this decision based on his own experiences living among the Mennonite peace clan in Harrisonburg, while sharing Bonnie Bergey’s conviction: “But dialogue and discussion and peaceful approaches, trying to assess local people and local families and local situations, is a lot more hopeful.” Imagine his vulnerabilities and joys in the midst of the peace clan in Harrisonburg reflected back in the affirmations of that visit. Blessed are the peacemakers.

From a peacebuilding theory perspective, this book provides multiple and significant examples of John Paul Lederach’s theory of mid-level out engagement as Mennonites connected locally in grass-roots service projects and connected when needed with local and national government leaders. The relationships formed by the inertia of trust over decades hold what Lederach would call the “process platforms” and relational episodes of peacebuilding that became a sensed reality of transformation over time.

Beyond focusing on Mennonite involvements through “sending” agencies, the book has a whole chapter on “Somali Islam and Peacemaking” and another chapter on “Mennonite Peacebuilding Education and Women Peacemakers.” These two chapters are preceded by a chapter on “The Appeal and Failures of Intervention” and another on “Mennonite Peacemaking Practices During the Civil Conflict.” These two chapters set up a range of tragic challenges for the Somali people and clan structures. The conceptual interactions of these four chapters present a saddening presentation of the weakness of neo-liberal interventionism in engendering long-term change for the positive.

The book also holds the stories of how Christian witness can change lives and relationships at multiple levels. The realities of service, witness, and peacebuilding in this book, and the long-term presence of this “peace clan,” could be read as one continuous “process platform” that turns into structured forms of hope—many Somalis continue to come to Mennonite institutions for peacebuilding training; Somaliland has a peacebuilder training program where many Mennonites have been welcomed to teach; and, the Mennonite “brand” of Christianity is known as separate from other Christians and worthy of trust. These three movements of coming to professors, welcoming professors, and naming enduring trust is the bond of peace that becomes “the healing of the nations.” The last chapters of this book describe these developments.

What happens when the calm eye of an enmity hurricane begins moving slowly in the opposite direction of that enmity? This book holds 1,001 answers to that question.

*Charlottesville Mennonite Church*

ROY HANGE

---

*Design for Living: Regard, Concern, Service, and Love.* By Robert Friedmann. Edited by Maxwell Kennell. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock. 2017. \$25.

*Design for Living* is a previously unpublished work by Robert Friedmann (1891-1970). Friedmann was an Austrian scholar of Anabaptism who fled Europe in the years prior to World War II. With the help of Roland Bainton and Harold Bender, Friedmann made his way to Goshen College in 1940 and served as a visiting scholar there for three years. He spent the rest of his academic career at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. Friedmann was known for his “existential” interpretation of Anabaptism, most fully articulated in his posthumous book, *The Theology of Anabaptism*. To Friedmann, an existential faith is one in which theology has its basis in the concrete situation of life rather than a speculative or rational system. It means a fundamental orientation of a person toward discipleship that shapes the entirety of life.

Editor Maxwell Kennell has provided us with a new window into Friedmann’s thought with the publication of *Design for Living*, a manuscript that originated as lecture notes from an undergraduate course taught in 1954. This book reflects Friedmann’s attempt to articulate a meaningful philosophy of life by translating

the values of Anabaptism into a public, secular context. As such, Friedmann builds an argument for a life oriented toward values of regard, concern, service, and love without assuming a prior commitment on the part of his audience.

Friedmann begins the argument in the introduction and first chapter by noting the basic existential condition of human life: We find ourselves in a finite, mortal existence that we are obliged to fill with meaning and purpose. Life has to be “designed” by orienting oneself toward certain values and decisions. He spends the first chapter working through some of the most common pitfalls, including hedonism, relativism, self-realization, and minimal ethics.

In the second part of the book, spanning chapters 2 and 3, Friedmann argues that meaning has to be created in a concrete, interpersonal, and absorbing (i.e., existential) way. He argues for the basic social nature of human life, in which meaning can be created only through the recognition of our interdependence and responsibility for others. He argues that human life is always a process of development and growth requiring us to move from a minimal understanding of our responsibility to a mature one. This process of self-education has to be based in concrete action, not merely intellectual exercise.

A transitional argument in chapter 3 holds that meaning can be achieved only through overcoming obstacles. True meaning requires us to sacrifice lesser goods in service of a higher principle. Thus, a design for living will require self-discipline and continual effort.

In chapter 4, Friedmann outlines a positive vision for a meaningful life. Although meaning can take different forms, Friedmann argues that any meaningful life is characterized by four principles: regard; concern; service; and love. Regard is the Kantian recognition of other people as ends in themselves. Concern means expanding the regard for others into a personal responsibility to alleviate suffering. Service is the translation of concern into concrete action. Love is the crowning achievement of meaning through the integration and universalization of the other three principles.

One might ask, since the original manuscript was written so many years ago, how relevant Friedmann’s philosophy of life is to current readers. Kennell gives two possible justifications for the book in his introduction. More narrowly, the book offers a distinct perspective into Friedmann’s thought that might be useful for those interested in his Anabaptist scholarship. Or, in a broader sense, the book might be read as it was originally intended as an insightful analysis of the human condition.

In the first sense, the book does succeed in expanding our understanding of Friedmann’s thinking. Those who are familiar with his scholarly work on Anabaptism will find many of the ideas in *Design for Living* familiar, but in this book Friedmann has the opportunity to define and expand his ideas in ways that would not occur in his other writings. We see, for instance, concrete examples of what an existential faith might look like apart from the milieu of sixteenth-century Anabaptism. *Design for Living* helps us see the practical implications of Friedmann’s existential interpretation of Anabaptism more clearly than we could have otherwise.



The second possibility, that *Design for Living* might continue to be relevant philosophically, is more ambiguous. On the positive side, some of Friedmann's arguments feel very contemporary even though they were written sixty-plus years ago. For example, anyone who teaches ethics to undergraduates will immediately recognize each of the pitfalls discussed in chapter 1. This chapter alone could be assigned at the beginning of an introductory ethics course to help address some of the assumptions that students bring with them into the classroom. Unexamined amorality, relativism, and individualism are no less prevalent now than they were in the 1950s.

There is also a sense in which the datedness of the book actually contributes to its relevance. It is refreshing to read philosophy that is so connected to "the bone of everyday experience," as Kennell puts it (xx). Friedmann writes with a breadth and down-to-earth practicality that is, I think, rarer now than it would have been in the 1950s, but which contributes well to the ideal of liberal education as a holistic endeavor.

On the other hand, some aspects of the book do seem more damagingly out of date. In keeping with Friedmann's existential framework, the book stays mainly at the level of interpersonal ethics. The argument does emphasize that meaning is found through social or communal responsibility, but the book seldom addresses systemic causes of injustice. This comes out most clearly in his discussion of "service" in chapter 4 (132-149), in which the primary exemplars are individuals and non-profit organizations like the Red Cross. There is nowhere an indication that a meaningful life might require political engagement beyond relief work or service professions.

Also, a twenty-first-century reader will find parts of the book unnecessarily stodgy. I appreciated Kennell's thoughtful editing; much of the gendered language is updated while leaving the meaning of the text intact. But several comments might remain obstacles to using this book as a popular text or undergraduate textbook. For example, Friedmann objects several times to aesthetic appreciation as a distraction from a meaningful life. He says, "We might regard it quite as a general law that the 'aesthetic' and the 'ethical' dominate the human heart in inverse ratio." He points to the rise of "horror stories" in film as a symptom of amorality (39). He is concerned that aestheticism leads to "a kind of playfulness that nowhere takes life too seriously" (104). Similarly, Friedmann's discussion of the temptations of sex, power, and money in the conclusion feel less nuanced than "preachy." This is all interesting as a window into Friedmann as a scholar and a person, but could be off-putting if the book is used as a standalone philosophy text.

Overall, as someone who has been influenced by Friedmann's theological work, it is fascinating to have access to a manuscript that Friedmann himself rated highly but that had not found publication until now. Many thanks to Maxwell Kennell and Leonard Gross, Friedmann's former student and a champion of the manuscript, for acting as custodians and making it available for general readership.

---

*De l'esprit au salut: Une anthropologie anabaptiste.* By Denis Kennel. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf. 2017. Pp. 334. €34.

The title of this unedited doctoral dissertation translates as “From [the] Spirit to Salvation: An Anabaptist Anthropology.” “Spirit” here refers to the human spirit, but, as Kennel argues, early Anabaptist theologians saw salvation as a spirit-involving journey initiated and guided by the divine Spirit. Contrary to Luther and his followers, Anabaptists saw the Spirit as making use of the capacities of the human spirit, capacities that by God’s grace endured after the fall but—now contrary to Catholic sacramentalism—are only fully activated by the work of Christ and a life of discipleship in and as the church community.

Kennel develops his argument through an impressively close comparative reading of Balthasar Hubmaier’s and Pilgram Marpeck’s theological writings. It is Hubmaier’s tripartite anthropology that supplies the concept of “spirit” referred to in the title and, although Marpeck prefers the term “natural light” (*Erbgnade*), both theologians insist that even after the fall, humans have a God-given capacity to at least desire the good (Hubmaier) if not achieve a form of natural justice (Marpeck). Although neither one views this capacity as salvific, both see it as *a* (not *the*) *sine qua non* of the salvation process: God does not save us without drawing on our (again, God-given) capacity for response. For both Anabaptists it is unintelligible to speak of God’s judgment, and so of God’s justice, if we are held responsible for something we are incapable of responding to.

The book is divided into three sections, with the first two sections devoted to studies of the primary authors. Each author receives three chapters: one discussing textual and contextual factors relevant to interpreting his writings; another focusing on his main anthropological concepts (Hubmaier on the image of God, Marpeck on the natural light); and a final chapter examining his thought in light of the intellectual debates of the day (Hubmaier between Luther and Erasmus; Marpeck in conversation with Schwenkfeld—surprisingly, Marpeck’s friendly dispute with the Swiss Brethren receives little attention). The third section contains three brief chapters comparing Hubmaier’s and Marpeck’s critical theological motivations, foundations, and intuitions. A conclusion summarizes the study and makes some indications of its potential usefulness for current soteriological debates.

Kennel’s dissertation was supervised by Neal Blough, who provides a preface that outlines some of its distinctive features. Blough notes that Kennel’s work represents a flowering of French-language academic study of Anabaptism; Kennel is not only well versed in the relevant English- and German-language scholarship, but he also builds at crucial points on Blough and other Francophone scholars. In addition, Blough rightly mentions that Kennel takes a step forward in the Mennonite reception of Hubmaier *qua* Anabaptist theologian—we are truly in post-Goshen School territory at this point.

At least as significant is Blough’s final point, which concerns Kennel’s argument—here furthering claims made by Andrew Klager with reference to Hubmaier—that Anabaptism represents a “moderate Augustinian” Reformation.

According to Kennel, Augustine's primary anthropological and soteriological vision was taken up at the heart of medieval Western theology but rejected by Luther in favor of the hardline "Modern Augustinian School" that emphasized some of Augustine's more extreme statements in his late polemical writings against Pelagianism. Anabaptism was Protestant—or at least represented a version of "protestantization"—insofar as it rejected Roman sacramentalism in favor of a *solo Christo* doctrine, but this doctrine drew on moderate Augustinianism to underscore how salvation involves us, including our wills, and gradually transforms us in this life. If the Anabaptists were even more optimistic about human possibility than Augustine and his moderate interpreters, this is only because they trusted in the possibilities and responsibilities made tangible in the incarnation. Here one wonders if Anabaptism was not so much anti- or non-sacramental but rather, as Arnold Snyder has argued, differently sacramental: just as Christ's entire narrative (birth through ascension and heavenly reign) is saving, so the entire communal life of discipleship is the means of grace God makes available to us—Snyder talks about an Anabaptist "sacramental ecclesiology."

Regardless of how Anabaptism is construed as "Protestant" vis-à-vis its sacramental theology, it is clear that Kennel has advanced our understanding of Anabaptism's debt and contribution to the Western theological legacy. In addition to the ties to Augustine, Kennel also mentions resemblances (first noted by Walter Klaassen) between Marpeck's theology of the natural light and Aquinas's account of the relationship between nature and grace. These lines of inquiry create opportunities for a far more wide-ranging conversation than has been attempted between early Anabaptist theology and the two greatest "doctors" of the Western Church.

Kennel acknowledges that Hubmaier's and Marpeck's thought is not perfect. Minor matters of biblical exegesis and theology can be corrected and their full contribution to the church then received. Although I agree that both Anabaptists have much to offer today, it seems to me that Kennel's judgment underplays the difficulties in receiving them. Some of the difficulties pertain to "worldview." For instance, Marpeck in particular relies heavily on notions of Satan and of Adam and Eve that are not shared by the vast majority of Anabaptist theologians today. Other difficulties might be identified as "intellectual" and "ethical." Both Hubmaier and Marpeck, for example, partake in the late medieval nominalist emphasis on divine and human wills. This emphasis has come under heavy attack in recent years, both for its intellectual integrity and for its purported ethical impact on modernity. If some of the attacks seem hysterical—nominalism as the root of all modern ills—Anabaptist theologians would do well to discern the validity of the more moderate ones.

Additional ethical questions that arise from reading Hubmaier and Marpeck today concern gender and Judaism. Feminist theologians have expanded our definition of sin beyond the typically male focus on pride to include self-negation. Marpeck's account of sin in particular needs revision at this point, though it is notable that his discussions of embodiment and sex are more feminist friendly. More broadly, future work on early Anabaptist anthropology should grapple with the figurations of the human in the prophetic writings associated with Ursula Jost

and Anna Jansz, as well as with the implicit, embodied anthropology of other Anabaptist women.

As for Judaism, Hubmaier and, especially, Marpeck put considerable weight on a distinction between the Old and New Testaments that equates Jewish religion with inadequate “external” forms, in contrast to a Christian faith in which the Spirit transforms not only the external but also the inner human person. I found it difficult to read some of the passages reproduced in Kennel’s book in a week that featured yet another violent Christian attack on a synagogue in the United States. It was hard to shake the image of Hubmaier’s pre-Anabaptist participation in the burning of the Regensburg synagogue and its aftermath (he became a popular preacher at the Marian shrine erected on the synagogue’s ashes). Anabaptist theologians must open a conversation about antisemitism in our tradition’s great texts.

Raising these questions should not undermine the sense that Kennel has written an excellent dissertation—his work clearly succeeds in all the ways a dissertation should. Rather, the questions might lead us to consider more thoughtfully the uses of Anabaptist historical theology today. We need careful studies of early figures such as Hubmaier and Marpeck, studies that help us understand them in their own terms. Yet we also need to take care not to assume that getting the sixteenth-century sources right will resolve the pressing matters that face us today.

*Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary*

JAMIE PITTS

*Native Species.* By Todd Davis. East Lansing: Michigan State University. 2019. Pp. 94. \$19.95.

Todd Davis is a prolific poet who teaches environmental studies, creative writing, and American literature at Penn State University. In addition to authoring six full-length books of poetry, he has had poems published in nearly forty journals and publications. His poems express a tender affinity for everything that breathes and has a name within the sphere of his attention to the natural world. The epigraph by William Stafford, placed in the front of the book, reads, “What I believe is, all animals have one soul.” Davis draws no distinct line between humans, birds, and animals in these poems reflecting loss and wonder. The cover painting of a deer in the river fused to its reflection in the water symbolizes his depictions of the interconnectedness of all creation.

The first poem, “Geomorphology,” is set by itself and encapsulates the theme and imagery for works that follow. The first line asks: “What does a landscape dream of in its unsettled dreams?” The answers begin with the alliterative music: “Of snowpack still ten feet deep. Of going to sleep/ to the sound of sea-drenched wind. . . .” The natural world then collides with human creations “in which nearly every room in the house/ is rearranged. Boulder in bathroom. Old growth/ hemlock blocking the stairwell.” Finally, “The entire mountain sliding into a new zip code” (1). Like the drenched landscape that is unstable, the precise imagery in

the three sections that follow juxtaposes nature's beauty with unsettling imagery and questions that do not permit indifference.

Section one presents images of destruction, death, and disasters infused with vibrant life still present in the natural world. "Passerine" is filled with normal bird activity: "a nuthatch climbs," the "trilling of a hermit thrush," "tufted titmice and pine siskins slumber" (8). On the other hand, "We've stolen/ most of paradise with our opposable/ thumbs. Somewhere among the tamaracks/ a mockingbird mimics our endless lust by pilfering its neighbors' songs" (9). "Hexagonal" pictures a beehive: "Entire colonies/ destroyed by carelessness, and bees/ flying toward an eternity/which we imagine is finer/than a bank of purple aster" (17). Human catastrophes are cataloged in poems like "Failed Argument against Sorrow": "nephew diagnosed as schizophrenic; cousin's son dead/ from a drug overdose" so that "It seems the aching never ends." Nature provides no solace here as "A kingfisher circles the water, lands on a snag/ and scolds me. A red-eyed vireo plays a tune/ on the piccolo stuck in its throat" (23). Not only in this section, but throughout the book, Davis deftly intertwines tragedy and loss with the wonder and music of words and landscape so that the reader remains transfixed.

Various aspects of memory, including family members and others, predominate in section two, though memory is not absent in other parts. After picking raspberries in the hot sun in "Lost Country of Light," the author retreats into the shadows of trees "dim as the back/ of the closet where I put things/ that shouldn't be forgotten: the field where my grandfather planted beans; the last cow my family ever owned;/ . . . the bell on the back porch/ my grandmother rang when she heard/her son had died in the war" (37). In "The Alzheimer's Patient Tries to Remember the Names for Trees," Davis gives a succinct and humorous account of a woman who escapes from her watcher and gets lost in the woods "and since she couldn't/ recall even the commonest tree—mountain-ash or sassafras,/ sourwood or witch-hazel—she began to rename them./ Chestnut oak became *scallop tree*; a small hawthorn was dubbed *needle-bush*" (41). In this section, change and death are integral to the memories of a dead brother, grandparents, a first kiss, children now grown, an uncle's abuse, a trapped mink, a tamed—now dead—deer. How appropriate then is the poignant question in "Memory," which asks: "How many new beginnings are we granted?" (53).

Section three returns to the present time and tempers sad news with light and praise. "Generosity" begins "The sun hits the ice-coated snow. . ." and continues with a fusion of scenery, sex, and breakfast, summed up: "With so much radiance/ it's hard to hide my love for the pleasures of the earth"(68). The whole collection of poems attests to his love for earth's pleasures. In "Waiting to Hear If a Friend's Wife Has Cancer" (73), he lets nature distract him from possible bad news as "All morning outside my window, in the purple/ flowers of the redbud, bumblebees, fat/ on what the world feeds them, glide/ between turning branches"(73). While "walking the river back home" with his two sons in "Thankful for Now," he lists a host of observations: "locust in bloom, an oriole flitting/ through dusky crowns, and the early night sky going peach" (86) as he focuses on the present. Davis's reverence for the natural world is summed up in the last poem of the book, "And If There Is a Day of Resurrection." This poem refers to dead creatures mentioned

in earlier poems and ends with the blessing: "may all the bones of the living and the dead rise/ with skeletal praise, this ancient world being remade in their image" (89).

Water, a theme that flows through a majority of the observations and reflections in this collection, appears in the forms of snow, rain, ice, dam, creek, and river. Among the epigraphs scattered throughout the book is one, from Raymond Carver, that reads: "It pleases me, loving rivers./ loving them all the way back/ to their source" (67). This heads the poem "Seep" in which Davis reflects on a trout fishing excursion: "We dipped our hands, tasted the oldest/cold in our mouths: source of iron and stone,/the moon and the tides it controls,/the dimming blood we share" (67). Davis's expertise as a professor of environmental studies is clearly illustrated with his frequent allusions to water and portrayal of water as the source of life.

Dead letters to famous poets like Elizabeth Bishop, James Wright, and Richard Hugo show up here, as well as a tribute to John Coltrane. The clever analogies in "Coltrane Eclogue" compare bird songs and animal movements with the playing of a saxophone: "Where the beak of a pileated opened a row/of holes down the length of a snag/wind blows across unfastening pearl and brass" (87). Every creature's participation in the rhythm moves Davis to admit: "I feel foolish for saying this/but it's like being reborn, a syncopation/ that can call down rain. . . ." Finally, he notes a bluebird "raising its head toward a God that surrounds us, / who opens our stupid mouths and commands us/ to play whatever instrument we've got" (87). Each living being in this universe has its part to play, its responsibility in the scheme of creation.

In these poems, the detailed naming of each bird, tree, insect, animal, and drop of water fortifies our collective memory in these unsettling times when species and habitat are passing beyond recognition. The author's imaging of both human and animal viewpoints serves to intensify our sympathy and helps us to reflect on the interconnectedness of all living things. The clarity of style in this beautifully wrought work of poetry makes this an accessible and delightful read.

*Harrisonburg, Virginia*

ESTHER STENSON

---