



A Violent God-Image: An Introduction to the Work of Eugen Drewermann

Matthias Beier

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Theologian and psychotherapist Eugen Drewermann has been the most significant, the most prolific, and the best-selling theological writer in the German language over the past quarter century. Drewermann shows that religion, including Christianity, turns violent mentally, spiritually, and even physically if it uses fear as a motive for faith? fear of exclusion from the group, fear of hell, and fear of God. At the heart of Drewermann's nonviolent interpretation of key Christian beliefs is his analysis of a violent image of God that characterizes traditional interpretations of sin and the cross. It is this God-image, opposed to human desires and self-realization, that sanctified the killings of millions of peoples in wars declared to be "just" and legitimated the violent exploitation of nonhuman nature and the aggressive economic exploitation of non-Christian cultures.

The sheer enormity of Drewermann's principal books has thwarted publication of his works in English translation to date. His empathic critique of the clerical mentality, ideology, and culture (*The Cleric*), based on his psychotherapeutic work with clergy, led to his being silenced by Roman Catholic authorities in 1991 and suspended from the priesthood in 1992. This is the first full-length introduction to Drewermann in English and includes extensive quotations from his works.

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