

Williams, Jarvis W. *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity: A Biblical Theology of the People of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021. pp. xiii, 189. \$24.99 (softcover). ISBN: 978-1-5409-6462-5.

At its simplest, the task of the biblical theologian is to make manifest the underlying themes present throughout the biblical texts in a fashion applicable to a contemporary audience. The theologian must hold in one hand the themes of an ancient and foreign text, and in the other the issues and contexts of his or her present setting. Such is the work of Jarvis W. Williams in *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity*. Although works expounding upon the biblical theme of a divinely appointed people have been composed by a myriad of scholars, Williams stands apart in his pursuit to apply this theological concept to contemporary societal struggles in the United States. Notably, he lays the foundation for this task by differentiating between nuanced connotations of ethnicity and race. The former is delineated by a set of culturally specific characteristics, such as dialect, religion, values, and behaviors; the latter is a tenuously constructed social concept. With these definitions established, the author turns to the biblical texts, arguing that the divine plan is to restore an ethnically diverse humanity in its relationships with God, among individuals, and with creation through the impetus of Christ.

In his survey of the Old Testament, Williams divides the Hebrew corpus into its familiar sections of Pentateuch, history, wisdom literature, and prophets. In each, the author treats the people of God as it appears in each book before providing a concluding synopsis of the section. Although the book contains brief, intermittent theological synthesis, the themes and insights offered on the motif in each book are usually simply observed and left without further reflection. In the place of analysis is a series of non-sequential notes concerning each book of the Old Testament. Nonetheless, Williams does make broad theological claims regarding the people of God in the Hebrew corpus. One such claim is that Israel was chosen by God to bless the nations because of Adam's and Eve's sin. This community descended from Abraham is to be an ethnically diverse community of unique identity; one that is distinct from its neighbors yet welcoming of foreigners. Williams insists that this community and the texts that surround it anticipate Christ, but are not replaced by Christ.

The methodology and structure presented in the book's survey of the Old Testament persist in its survey of the New Testament. As in the former, this section suffers from the organization and procedure of its survey: space is again dedicated mostly to mere observation rather than robust theological analysis. Concerning its theological synthesis, Williams notes that a chosen people from every ethnicity (Jew and Gentile) are made distinct and holy by the Holy Spirit; they are the new people of God. Although he insists in his survey of the Old Testament that Christ and the church do not replace the people of Israel, the conclusions Williams draws in the present section suggest just that. The employment of phrases like "a new people of God" (149) seemingly clashes with earlier arguments. Though these positions are not completely incompatible, there is a great need for clarification and theological nuance regarding the people of God throughout the biblical corpus.

In the final section of the book, Williams considers possible praxes resulting from his survey and analysis. He applies the biblical concept of an ethnically diverse people of God to contemporary social-political issues in the United States. Utilizing his differentiation between ethnicity and race, Williams analyzes present social struggles surrounding racialization. Specifically, he observes the historical power difference among races in the US and the impact of white supremacy. Moreover, he highlights the pervasive power of racism and the sinful capacity of every human to adopt racist behavior and practices. These, he declares, stand in sinful opposition to the divine plan for an ethnically diverse people of God. Williams' reflection in this section is profound and theologically relevant, providing the social and religious language needed by many in the ongoing struggle of racialization. Its only fault is the limited space allocated to explicating and examining these praxes.

The argument of the book and its application in the final chapter accomplish the task undertaken by the author, joining the biblical texts with contemporary issues through insightful and critical observation. Yet, while the argumentative thrust of the text is largely successful, the methodology and structure with which the author composes his book is not. Organized as a survey, Williams systematically moves through each book of the Protestant Christian canon, noting where the "people of God" are mentioned and proposing general observations regarding each instance. Rather than argue for a unified

biblical theme, Williams simply surveys the many occasions of the motif. Though still satisfactory, at times it can border on proof-texting. The thesis could be better supported by attention to particular pericopes of theological significance, expounding upon specific facets of its thesis in relevant passages. Thus, while Williams' argument and application are praise-worthy, his methodology and structure would benefit from revision.

In sum, Jarvis J. Williams' *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity* presents a well-constructed argument and offers insightful praxes relevant to contemporary social issues. Though its methodology and structure would benefit from reworking and added analysis, the book's fundamental claim rings clear: the divine plan is one of an ethnically diverse people of God. *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity* will be a useful resource for laypersons and scholars alike as the Church continues to navigate the ongoing struggle of racialization in the US.

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