

Luke A. Powery. *Becoming Human: The Holy Spirit and the Rhetoric of Race*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2022. 162 pages. \$22.00.

After a forward by Willie James Jennings which calls homiletics to be anti-racist, Powery's *Becoming Human: The Holy Spirit and the Rhetoric of Race* connects preaching amid racialization to the work of the Holy Spirit. The book demonstrates that race was socially constructed to serve colonial ends and that the process of racialization was de-humanizing. Powery names ways in which the church has been complicit in whiteness and racialization, but he holds onto the hope that, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the church can counter racialization with humanization. The Spirit is the common breath among all humans, which is capable of addressing the reality of racialization and providing an alternative vision of humanity through Christ.

Chapter one discusses the history of racialization, especially as it intersects with slavery and whiteness. Powery connects slavery and racism with Christianity, noting ways in which "whiteness fused with Christianity" in support of the racial hierarchy (21). The second chapter shifts from the historical role of colonialism in creating race from racism to the role science played in promoting a faulty biology of racial differences. This underscores that many of the past ways of conceptualizing race were wrong, but the past conceptualizations remain sociologically significant in the present. Powery offers a "pneumatology of race" in chapter three (52). He takes a theological approach to Pentecost as inspiration for how the Spirit can move people from racialization toward humanization. Pentecost is an affirmation of diversity and the Spirit's work through all people. While the book makes homiletical suggestions at various points, chapter four turns more directly to preaching. Powery reviews two typical intersections between preaching and race. The first set are works by non-dominant racialized scholars and the second are works geared toward preaching about race. He proposes a new homiletical approach, "preaching *through and beyond* racism" (81). This approach is somatic and theological as it attempts to honor the Spirit's work through a human form. The final chapter broadens his vision of preaching toward and beyond racism to ministry more generally. He incorporates insights and experiences from Howard Thurman and outlines four ministry components: "following Jesus, attending to suffering bodies, striving for community, and embracing mortality" (106).

In this book, Powery calls the guild of homiletics to continue de-centering whiteness, and he highlights existing scholars and works which are engaged in this process. The work itself serves this central function. *Becoming Human* does not exclusively speak to a Black-White racial binary, but it does center Black and Brown experiences. Powery draws from several scholars from diverse social locations. He weaves personal and professional stories which connect his experiences with racialization to the topics discussed in the book.

One of the most helpful parts of the book is where Powery adeptly connects colonialism with racialization. Powery carefully explores the nuances of colonialism and racialization in ways which allow each to be distinct; yet the interworking nature between the two is exposed. In this way, Powery is able to bridge postcolonial theory, and postcolonial works on preaching, with racialization. Included in this conversation is a description of relevant terms and concepts. The history and description of the common usage of terms like race, racism, and racialization is especially helpful for those looking to deepen their working understandings of these concepts. Those in dominant social location may especially benefit from this type of literacy. In this way, Powery accomplishes a major objective of his book: "to 'de-fang' colonial racism in the power of the Spirit" (120). *Becoming Human* can assist preachers by providing language and theology

to preach about racialization in the present constructively. Powery urges preachers to embrace the Spirit as a humanizing breath of fresh air.

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