

***Indigenous Theology and the Western Worldview.*** By Randy S. Woodley. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022. 141 pp.

The attempt by Christian theology to reveal and envision who God is to humanity has been expressed primarily from a Western worldview. However, in *Indigenous Theology and the Western Worldview*, Randy S. Woodley believes that the story of God told by Western civilization carries many problematic aspects and should be rejected. Instead, God's story can be told from a Native American (indigenous peoples) worldview, as a paradigm that offers hopeful perspectives and is closer to Jesus and indigenous traditions.

Woodley is a Native American missiologist, farmer, cultural activist, and theologian who teaches faith and culture and directs the Intercultural and Indigenous Studies at Portland Seminary. He obtained his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at Asbury Theological Seminary. Woodley describes himself as a mixed-blood Cherokee who received salvation at a Baptist church revival service in Detroit, where he was set free from drug addiction. Although he was educated from a Western perspective, he applied his education to his indigenous people, doing missionary work, communicating the Christian faith to them, and learning their history and theological outlook about God. Ultimately, his conviction was that the indigenous worldview was closer to the way of Jesus Christ than the Western worldview.

The book *Indigenous Theology and the Western Worldview* was birthed from the Hayward Lectures hosted by Acadia Divinity School in Nova Scotia. It contains three chapters comprising three lectures (conversations) Woodley engages in to articulate a differentiation between the Western worldview of theology and the indigenous people's worldview. The first chapter (lecture) takes an excursion into the progressive narrative of history against the high civilizations of the indigenous peoples that existed for centuries before their discovery, likening the encounter to the story of the wolves (indigenous peoples) and the terrapin (the discoverers). Woodley suggests that Westerners failed to acknowledge that Jesus has a covenant with all peoples of the earth, so their theology has existed for centuries with biases inconsistent with Scripture. However, the indigenous approach relates all humanity to their creator and their land and embraces other ignored voices.

The second chapter discusses Western dualism, which separates the spiritual from the material, and how it differs from the indigenous understanding, which integrates all of life—physical and spiritual—into one harmonious component. Thus, Westerners tend to appreciate truth from the prism of propositions against an indigenous worldview that is unitive and incorporative of the spiritual and the material. Essentially, whereas the Western worldview is a linear, illustrative, and rationalistic one that

emanates from Plato's dualistic distinction between spirit and material worlds, the indigenous worldview tells stories without separating the spirit world and the material world or challenging the factuality of the story, rather than the truth that is embedded in the story itself.

Finally, the last lecture presents ways to decolonize the Western Christian theology of power, conquest, and control and replace it with an indigenous worldview premised on a mosaic of ten indigenous values that together showcase a harmonious way to do theology. To this end, Woodley reveals to white Western theologians that Christianity's foundation is indigenous; therefore, understanding the indigenous worldview will allow them to appreciate the challenges those colonized faced and continue to face.

Essentially, Woodley's thesis from this work is that the indigenous theology of narrating stories has always been a central form of communication among indigenous people; therefore, traditions are passed on orally and developed over time, but the Western theology of illustration is mired in a mosaic of theological inefficiencies and should be rejected. Consequently, Christianity is not a white European or American religion but a religion of following Jesus, which is more compatible with indigenous values.

The strength of this book resides in Woodley's excellent appraisal of the foundational structures of Christian theology by presenting the indigenous narrative worldview as a more ordered way of observing the Christian faith and a corrective to the propositional worldview of Western civilization. It is thoroughly well-written in a conversational style, convincingly engaging, and deftly presented in a manner that humbly but sternly shakes the architecture of Western Christian theology. In *Indigenous Theology and the Western Worldview*, the author discovers the indigenous way of doing theology in a historical, theological, cultural, and doctrinal way—a broader view of theology. Consequently, this book opens the eyes of the world to an inclusive and egalitarian form of envisioning God from other voices, such as the indigenous voices, and it breaks the rigidity and biases of Western hegemony in its control of the Christian theological space. In so doing, Woodley brings the universal motif of the Bible to the domain of theological conversation, where all voices are welcome to find harmony in the Christian faith. Woodley does not engage in simplistic construals or dismissals of Western Christianity and never falls victim to shallow cynicism. Instead, the author invites the reader to lament and change from the temptation of complicity and the tendency to be apathetic to what other communities go through. Additionally, by connecting the Christian world to the sordid and messy history of the Native Americans, Woodley teaches the reader how the Christian faith can intersect with a more conscious and healing worldview.

Nonetheless, the book will probably create unexpected anxiety among Western Christians, who may be unsettled to think their worldview has nothing to offer Christian theology any longer. It is also possible that some Westerners may find the

author's representation of their worldview skewed and unfair, especially their understanding of the universality of God's covenant with humanity. Notwithstanding, *Indigenous Theology and the Western Worldview* will be an incredible addition to the body of Christian theology, providing a critical understanding of the indigenous perspective.

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