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Ruben Rosario Rodriguez, Dogmatics After Babel: Beyond the Theologies of World and Culture

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Rubén Rosario Rodríguez. *Dogmatics After Babel: Beyond the Theologies of Word and Culture*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018. 221 pp. \$12.80 Paperback. ISBN: 9780664261658.

“Is Babel a problem to be solved?” This is the foundational question in Rubén Rosario Rodríguez’s book, *Dogmatics After Babel: Beyond the Theologies of Word and Culture*. Rosario Rodríguez presents the story of Babel as an analogy for our contemporary theological discourse: diverse voices competing to be the “right” doctrine. Throughout this work, the author succinctly analyzes differing theological approaches and claims about God’s revelation in the world. Ultimately, Rosario Rodríguez argues that theological pluralism should not be seen as a problem to be solved; instead, this diversity should be embraced. Rosario Rodríguez turns to the Pentecost event to illuminate how the gift of the Holy Spirit works through Christians to validate and respect diverse perspectives. Rosario Rodríguez believes that this attention to pneumatology will also allow Christians to engage in peaceful theological dialogue with Judaism and Islam.

Rosario Rodríguez effectively supports his appeal for theological pluralism by explaining the emergence of the two prominent methodological approaches in theological discourse and their inadequacy for the contexts where Christianity is currently thriving: Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Since the twentieth century, the methodologies of Karl Barth and Paul Tillich have dominated theological discourse in Europe and North America. Rosario Rodríguez clearly explains that Barth and Tillich’s approaches were a response to the rise of the Enlightenment in Europe. In that era, theologians were left to be apologists against the critics of theology who viewed the discipline as irrational. Hence, Barth’s revelational approach and Tillich’s anthropological approach emerged. Rosario Rodríguez rightly claims that while these approaches

were necessary then, and while they have made essential contributions to theological discourse, there is currently a need for new approaches in light of Christianity's status in the world.

Christianity needs to make dogmatic claims in a diverse context without resorting to theological totalitarianism; it can no longer be focused on European and U.S. contexts alone.

It is clear that Rosario Rodríguez, as a clergy person and a scholar, is responding to the changing demographics within Christianity. As a liberation theologian, Rosario Rodríguez also wants to incorporate into theological discourse the neglected voices of theologians from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and marginalized communities in North America. There is much at stake, he believes, if we ignore the pluralism of theological approaches. Rosario Rodríguez advocates for an approach focused on pneumatology and how God reveals Godself through the work of the Holy Spirit, which can manifest itself in a variety of ways to different communities. Therefore, when one ignores another's experience of the Holy Spirit, one can in fact be overlooking a particular way in which God has revealed Godself to the world. An embrace of pneumatology as a point of departure for discerning God's revelation in the world allows Christians to embrace each other's unique perspectives. It also facilitates interreligious dialogue by seeing the Spirit's work in Judaism and Islam.

This book offers several important contributions for theological discourse. Most notable is Rosario Rodríguez's locus of pneumatology, as opposed to christology, for analyzing God's revelation and work in the world. Rosario Rodríguez also illuminates the dogmatic claims and works of Latin American liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez and Rubem Alves. By choosing to conclude his book with remarks from these theologians, Rosario Rodríguez is exemplifying his argument for the need to include diverse and neglected voices in theology. Additionally, Rosario Rodríguez attributes dogmatic value to social movements such as Black

Lives Matter, and states that these are the new “places of theology” because they are liberatory works of the Spirit in history.

Rosario Rodríguez also makes an important contribution by encouraging interreligious dialogue between the three Abrahamic religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. He claims that the Spirit is at work in each of these religions and that a dialogue between them and Christianity can help believers have more clarity about God’s revelation in the world. It is unclear, however, how this interfaith dialogue will occur. The book’s insufficient engagement with scholars in Judaism and Islam makes the reader wonder whether this is a task that those faith communities desire and are willing to engage in or whether it is something that Christians want to impose on them. Supplementary sources from Jewish and Muslim scholars who also advocate for interreligious dialogue would strengthen the particular claim that Rosario Rodríguez proposes.

There is much to commend in Rosario Rodríguez’s latest work. This book is highly recommended for those interested in theological methods in light of our changing, pluralistic context and should be required reading for students in theology. It is a gift to them as well as to more advanced scholars.

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