



This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith

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In recent years Christian scholars have become increasingly aware of their responsibility to recognize and respond to the challenges posed by ethnic and racial diversity. Similarly, historically white Christian colleges, universities, seminaries and congregations are struggling to transform themselves into communities that are welcoming to minorities and sensitive to their needs. This collection of all-new essays is meant to enable those who are engaged in these initiatives to understand the historical linkage of race, ethnicity and Christianity and to explore the ways in which constructive change can be achieved. The volume is the product of a long-term study funded by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology. In the course of this study it emerged that many Christian institutions now offer courses on race and ethnicity, but that there is very little relevant literature written from the standpoint of rigorous Christian scholarship. This book is intended to fill that gap. The authors address such questions as: What has been the history of Christian churches and leaders in relation to slavery, segregation, and apartheid? Which biblical texts and doctrines have historically been employed on behalf of racial projects, and which are relevant to the racial and ethnic crises of our day? How have religious leaders constructively engaged such crises? How do congregations shape the values, civic commitments, understandings and sensitivities of their membership? How can local congregations be sites for racial reconciliation and justice initiatives? Are there positive models for how churches and other religious institutions have helped to bring healing to racial and ethnic tensions and divides? How might Christians in the professions work to bring justice to business, education, government, and other areas of society? When good intentions fail to accomplish desired ends, how do we analyze what went wrong? Written by an interracial and interethnic team of scholars representing diverse disciplines, this book will meet a pressing need and set a new standard for the discussion of race and ethnicity in the Christian context.

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