

Reviews

Timely and Constructive...

"The essential point of the Challenge of Diversity is that appreciation of the diversity in scripture and in the early church is a source of renewal in the church today. ... The book's principal strength is its case that church renewal must be grounded in scripture and that diverse perspectives of particular writings must be honored. In this way Rhoads offers a welcome corrective to reductionist tendencies that gloss over theological and relational tensions within and between biblical books. ... Rhoads offers a timely and constructive contribution for engaging the challenge of diversity, and those seeking fruitful discussion on this topic will not be disappointed."

— *Interpretation*

"Written for 'Christians of various denominations in the United States' the book can also be used a first overview on Paul and the Gospels by undergraduate students. ... It is very readable and gives important information about central themes in Pauline theology [and the Gospels.] The book imparts a good impression of the diversity at the beginning of Christianity. Rhoads leads his reader in (some parts of) the world of primitive Christianity without simplifying the matter."

— *Religious Studies Review*

Clear and Accessible...

"Rhoads's style is clear and accessible, and his passion for the renewal of the church comes through on every page. This book will prove stimulating reading for pastors, seminarians and lay persons who are concerned to draw upon the rich resources of the Bible in revitalizing the life and mission of a diverse church in a pluralistic world."

— *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*

"David Rhoads has presented us with a remarkable integration of hermeneutical devices for Bible study and preaching. ... Such a resource will incite fresh interest in studying the texts he has selected. I suggest that Rhoads' work provides both a way of putting the Scriptures back into the hands of our congregants and a way of modeling the liveliness that can come from practicing the Scriptures' orality. ... Rhoads organizes the Galatians

material in a way that will assist the preacher in planning a preaching or teaching series on such difficult Pauline topics as "law," "grace," even "faith." ... The material is engaging and points toward a vanishing point which I found extremely useful—Rhoads ends each chapter with an image of a community that might attempt to embody the interpretations of Jesus' life and ministry distinctly offered by each evangelist."

— *Homiletics*

An Important Contribution...

"Rhoads's study involves good exegesis. He consciously utilizes the method of 'social location' and rigorously focuses on the individual perspective of each author, thus drawing out the diverse views expressed in the New Testament. ... Rhoads makes an important contribution to the task of bridging scientific exegesis and pastoral theology. I see this book as one of the initial steps in an increasingly important task of drawing out the religious message of the New Testament precisely through scientific exegesis."

— *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*

"One could read *The Challenge of Diversity* simply as an introduction to five major New Testament perspectives. But Rhoads has a fuller agenda. He wants church people from differing backgrounds to study the Bible in order to renew their own life and worship and community, and he wants to do this by recognizing and then embracing the diverse sometimes contradictory perspectives they can find in the New Testament. ... This book could be read with greatest profit in an ecumenical study group of adult lay people; they would be in the best position to test the thesis that diversity within the Bible and within the Christian community can be embraced and cherished and finally experienced in reconciliation."

— *Currents in Theology and Mission*

Highly Recommended...

"I highly recommend this book for both lay and minister readers and for personal and group study. My first year seminarians in my introductory Gospels course *loved it!* It evoked lively discussion, helped us experience the Gospels anew, and deepened our appreciation of the profundity and contemporary relevance of diverse New Testament witnesses. It is a book that can help all of us understand and embrace the diversity that is God's gift to the church and essential to effective mission and ministry."

— *The Presbyterian Outlook*

"Without sidestepping or trivializing difficult issues, Rhoads offers a very readable, non technical introduction to issues of diversity in the New Testament and to approaching different expressions of faith within the contemporary church. I highly recommend this book to pastors, lay leaders and anybody interested in deepening his or her understanding of the biblical authors in relation to one another. Particularly apt for small groups and adult education classes is the Study Guide, which contains suggestions for discussion leaders and questions for further reflection. Even beginning seminarians will find a welcome and reassuring introduction to the subject of this volume."

— *The Covenant Quarterly*

Commendable Clarity and Urgency...

"Through different eyes, the text poses different questions, which Rhoads presents with commendable clarity and urgency. Behind this is an impressive amount of scholarly work. One of the main reasons to commend the book is that Rhoads is clear in his insistence that the biblical texts are misunderstood apart from the cries of the poor, and the call to forego oppression."

— *Lutheran Partners*

"The book is a useful corrective to the homogeneity that sometimes threatens Christian community especially since the dawn of the contemporary ecumenical movement. It helps groups isolate their particularities, and determine those approaches to being Christian in this book and beyond that they find most helpful."

— *Encounter*