



Shattering the Illusion: How African American Churches of Christ Moved from Segregation to Independence

Wes Crawford

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From Reader Review Shattering the Illusion: How African American Churches of Christ Moved from Segregation to Independence for online ebook

Paul says

This is a well-done and provocative work of scholarship, arguing that racial divisions among Churches of Christ have led to a theological chasm so wide that it essentially constitutes the creation of a fourth stream of the Stone-Campbell Movement – or a fourth denomination, if you prefer that loaded term. Crawford's case is compelling, as is the amount of research he does to show the disgraceful response of whites in Churches of Christ to the suffering and struggles of their African American brothers and sisters, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. Those wanting an unvarnished explanation for why Churches of Christ are so deeply divided by race, and why those races are now so deeply divided by theology, should read this book.

Kyle Johnson says

This book is a very, very worthwhile read for anyone associated with the Stone-Campbell Movement, and more specifically, Churches of Christ. Have you ever wondered why Churches of Christ remain even more racially segregated than many other denominations? Crawford shines an honest, tough light on that question beginning with the dawn of the Movement through the Civil War and Jim Crow and Civil Rights Eras all the way up to the early 2000s. Crawford's best offering here may be on how the uniquely "non-denominational denomination" status of the Church of Christ initially helped to present an illusion of racial unity over and against other denominational bodies, yet eventually failed to meaningfully and timefully address white racism and paternalism. Having to instead lean heavily and informally on CoC colleges, lectureships, and journals to mediate the denomination's theology and ethics, the delay and the inadequacy of addressing these issues has contributed (quite unfortunately) to there seemingly being two distinct Churches of Christ- one white, one African American.

More informal tidbits for my actual GR friends (many of whom have CoC connections): This is an academic, scholarly book BUT is short, readable, and interesting. You'd like it, I think. Also, Crawford is a professor of mine and writes as an insider- he's not beating up and crushing our tradition for the heck of it, he is offering needed, poignant critiques of our past to help shape us to look more like Christ in the present and future.
