

Mitzi J. Smith & Yung Suk Kim. *Toward Decentering the New Testament: A Reintroduction*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018. 386 pages. \$51.89 (hardcover); \$32.86 (paperback); \$2.99 (e-book). ISBN 9781532604652

Marginalized or minoritized folks have been conditioned for far too long into believing that the white male is the only legitimate presence and normative center of discourse. Western Christianity has fashioned an idol in a white (and color-blind) Jesus, and its image and likeness has lorded it over the religious imagination of Christians around the world for many centuries. Consequently, in the field of New Testament Studies, the white male scholar's voice has also become the lone authoritative voice, and therefore, the rightfully dominant one; while his perspective is the only one deemed "objective, value-free, and culturally and ideologically neutral." (p.3) To these inequalities, dissent is a necessary response and an ethical imperative.

It is for this reason that Mitzi J. Smith, an African American womanist New Testament scholar, and Yung Suk Kim, a male South Korean American New Testament scholar, worked closely together to come up with a well-written and insightfully robust re-presentation of the New Testament from the "minority perspective."

True to the Spirit of the Book and the Spirit of the times, *Toward Decentering the New Testament: A Reintroduction (TDTNT-R)*, privileges the many voices that formed the words of sacred scriptures and the many voices that bring fresh new meaning to the ancient biblical text. As such, it does make the NT a living word of hope and salvation for our present world, where issues of race/ethnicity, gender/sexuality, and social inequality/climate injustice continue to wreak havoc, causing suffering to countless lives.

The 374-page (re)introduction to the NT textbook is divided into five sections and 34 chapters. Section I is "a must read" since it explains important contexts and critical concepts for reading the NT from the margins: Chapter 3 lays out the Greco-Roman and Jewish background of the NT, Ch. 4, highlight the treatment of refugees, immigrants, and foreigners in the NT, while Ch. 5 zeroes in on the system of Roman slavery and Ch. 7, the privatization of water in Ancient Rome and the NT; Ch. 6 emphasizes intersectionality and reading complexity in the NT, while Ch. 8 on matters of translation of the NT. Chapter 2, "Biblical Interpretation: Invitation to Dialogue," is the whole book in capsule form, where the authors share questions they gathered from their students, such as: *Is the Bible a self-interpreting text? How significant is the identity and context of the reader? How do you understand ideas like Freedom and Transformation in relation to reading the NT?* and answers them individually and thoughtfully.

Query boxes strategically placed in various pages of each chapter pose contemporary issues and themes that are relevant to minoritized communities and their allies. Enlightening quotations from minoritized scholars and historical figures grace the beginning of each chapter. Particularly helpful summary points and list of references and books for further reading are found at the last part of every chapter. Sections II-V cover all 27 books of the New Testament, divided as follows: Gospels and Acts, Pauline Epistles, Catholic Texts, Apocalypse of John/Book of Revelation. Two of the most interesting and most provocative, if not liberating aspects, in the book are found in Ch. (1) the gospels portrait of Jesus of Nazareth as a colonized political revolutionary prophet and as a mulatto and hybrid messiah and (2) the use of slave parables about participation in the "kingdom of the heavens" in the Gospel of Matthew re-inscribe typical master-slave behaviors."

I highly recommended this (re)introduction to the New Testament from a "minority perspective" to be among the required textbooks on the subject in all North American undergraduate/graduate institutions, seminaries, and theological/divinity schools. It should also be

read by a wider audience, starting with those that are open to critically engaging the biblical text, but ideally within the context of bible study groups and adult religious education classes in parishes and churches.

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