

# Foreword

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In recent years and in academic circles including biblical studies, there has been a steady increase and crescendo in the volume of postcolonial voices emanating from the “Global South”; from those who, historically, have been rendered voiceless and considered practically of little or no value. And perhaps this increase in both voices and volume, in terms of both quantity and intensity, is best exemplified in the ever-growing corpus of scholarship that seeks to interrogate the dominant and dominating paradigms that have marked and marred academic, ecclesiastical, and other forms of discourse.

Those paradigms have been creatively collocated over the years in three alliterative phrases: “Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization”; “Missionaries, Merchants, and Mercenaries”; and “God, Gold, and Glory.” The present point, essentially, is this: the Bible, the Book of the Church, has sometimes found itself in bad company. It has had a rather ambivalent impact on those who have been brought within its sphere of influence in that it has not only served as a liberating and humanizing agent in some cases, but as a blunt and brutal instrument of economic, academic, gender-based, and other forms of oppression in other cases as well.

This volume comes as a timely demonstration of precisely that. It presents us with a multidisciplinary onslaught on, and a sustained critique of, what has long been a focus text in ecclesiastical and now especially in missiological circles, to wit, the so-called Great Commission, Matt. 28:16-20. This volume takes part in the on-going postcolonial push to problematize, to prod, and to provide us with new and exciting ways of seeing and saying things, but from the “underside”—from those who have been pushed aside to the periphery. Such pushed-aside people include women of all colors and men of color—be they Africans or others who share similar existential locations. The volume points to those “others” who usually are not numbered among the privileged and the powerful but instead find themselves among the despised and the rejected. In short, the volume is really about the demographic bifurcation that exists between “the West and the Rest,” as ideologically understood—a bifurcation that the traditional execution of the Great Commission, as is shown over and over again here, has played no small part in reinscribing.

If anything, then, this volume, which is wide-ranging in its reach in terms of both geography and culture, is a clarion call for a more authentic and humanizing mission as God in Christ would wish; a mission that is to be distinguished from the sometimes dehumanizing effects that, wittingly or unwittingly, the Matthean Great Commission has had and continues to have on those who, ostensibly, are meant to be its beneficiaries. It is a volume that I would therefore commit to the reader's careful attention with the hope, in the words of the late great British New Testament scholar C. H. Dodd, that it would "tease our minds into active thought."