

Teaching all Nations: Interrogating the Matthean Great Commission

Mitzi J. Smith & Jayachitra Lalitha, eds.

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This collection of essays offers critical perspectives on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century missionary movements and their cultural legacy today. The contributions focus on four themes: the use of the Great Commission in colonial missions; womanist, feminist and postcolonial criticisms of the Great Commission; theology, art and the Great Commission; the Great Commission and Christian education. The collection then ends with two essays reflecting on mission today in the wake of the missionary movements. The essays share the perspective that the missionary movements were agents of oppression, or at least colluded with them. Therefore, they are the subject of ethical scrutiny from a series of liberationist perspectives in this volume.

That there was collusion with oppression and dehumanization of others in this era can hardly be doubted. These essays add to the growing body of literature on this subject, and some of them offer not simply political critique, but ground it intelligently and helpfully in the history being examined. The contribution of Dave Gosse is particularly good in this respect. However, as a collection of essays 'interrogating the Matthean Great Commission', the book does not work in the judgment of this reviewer. There is no examination of Mt. 28.16-20, let alone re-reading of the text in the light of historical mistakes. Nor are there majority world readings from those who are not only grateful for the missionary movements, but are re-evangelizing the old and overdeveloped world. A fair interrogation would allow all voices to speak and the text to respond.

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