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4-5-2023

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Growing in Global Perspectives: A Book Conversation of *Reading the Bible Around the World*

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April 5, 2023

Title: *Reading the Bible Around the World: A Student's Guide to Global Hermeneutics*

Author: Federico Alfredo Roth, Justin Marc Smith, Kirsten Sonkyo Oh, Alice Yafeh-Deigh, Kay Higuera Smith

Publisher: IVP Academic; Student edition

Publishing Date: September 27, 2022

Pages: 168 (Paperback)

ISBN: 978-1514001868

This book review arose from the collaborative efforts of multiple Dordt University students, modeling the goal of this book and engaging in conversation around their learning. In part 1, students offered brief summaries and connections to specific global approaches. In part 2, they dialogue about their growing perspectives (A) and how a global awareness can enrich the North American Christian church (B).

Part 2 A

A book conversation between Hannah Landman (HL), Jaelyn Dragt (JD), Eoghan Holdahl (EH), Joya Schreurs (JS), Susan Wang (SW).

This conversation has been lightly edited for clarity and concision.

Hannah Landman

Welcome to our book conversation. We'll be discussing the bulk of *Reading the Bible Around the World*. It features a collection of authors from Azusa Pacific University in a variety of theological areas. The book focuses on exploring a few global perspectives on hermeneutics, and we are excited to enter into conversation as the book encourages.

We're going to start with the parable of the loving neighbor, which most of us know as the parable of the Good Samaritan. Each chapter has a few commonalities in their interpretation of this parable. So, we'll be looking at those and the ways in which each chapter brings new light into the reading of this parable.

Jaelyn Dragt

Yes, I think it would be helpful to touch on how each of our chapters uniquely interpret this passage that many of us are familiar with from our own theological tradition, but in reading each of our global approaches we got to engage with the passage in a new light.

Eoghan Holdahl

As a student with Scottish and Norwegian roots and growing up as a South Dakotan farm boy, I don't have a lot of personal experience to give to the first chapter, which looks at the Latin American approaches, but I did really enjoy what the author had to say and his different approaches to reading the parable of the loving neighbor. The author specifically looked at how a Latin American reading views themes of displacement and how this Samaritan, who's in this land, isn't supposed to be here. He's traveling. And with the idea of travel, there's also this idea of insecurity and risk that a lot of those from Latin America will relate to quite well. He talks about how we see the parable as somebody being generous, but to someone from a Latin American background, they read readily see that there's this kind of riskiness to this traveller because the Samaritan doesn't have any security. He is not near home or his own people, and with that comes a lot of risks, so acting generous in this way is even more surprising. We also see that he, of the three who passed by, is probably the most marginalized. The others are Levites and priests, and you'd expect better conduct from them based on their social status, but instead, it's somebody from a lower social status that's able to show the grace of God to their neighbor. And with that, Roth really does a good job of revealing how a Latin American approach to this text really helps us to see things that I didn't see from my own American background, understanding. Not all of theology is a prescriptive model of interpretation, there is a subjectivity to it. It's valuable to understand and to look into and appreciate Scripture from a variety of backgrounds.

Jaelyn Dragt

As a student from Canada of Dutch descent reading the chapter on African approaches, I got to learn more specifically about the Cameroonian social location that the author, Yafeh-Deigh, is speaking from, which is very different than my own upbringing. An important piece in how she

approached interpreting this passage was beginning with a description of the context that she was reading from, which was specifically the Northwest region of Cameroon. Among the Ndop subdivision of the Ngoketunjia people group there are a lot of different conflicts around ethnic and religious tensions. This social location offered unique insights into reading the parable of the loving neighbor because we can see in there also Jewish and Samaritan conflicts and tensions. She writes that there's a lot of hope that is offered through reading this text for the specific social location in Cameroon for these people groups because they can see that the Samaritan chose, who himself was an ethno-religious other, to go beyond those tensions and those barriers to offer honor to the man on the road.

Seeing the shared humanity of others is something she touches on in her writing. Rather than allowing those barriers to inhibit him from helping this person who was hurting and in need, as we see the Levite and the priest do, the Samaritan became a loving neighbor. That was a really interesting insight for myself to see how our specific cultural location and our lived experience speaks into how we are reading scripture.

Joya Schreurs

Reading my chapter was an interesting experience because I read about European and Euro-American approaches, and I'm an American of European descent. So, it wasn't necessarily a new perspective for me, but this chapter definitely pointed out things about the way I interpret scripture that I kind of take for granted or assume are universal experiences, when actually they're not shared by everyone. And with that there are some unique gifts but there also are some blinders that that puts up, because, like it says in the beginning of this chapter, unfortunately, with colonization and all the historical and cultural weight, European and Euro-American approaches have really dominated in places where they shouldn't have.

Something that this chapter pointed out to me about the parable of the loving neighbor that is a specific strength of European approaches is how they unpack the historical and cultural factors at play in a passage. Because of things like the history of the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution, Western approaches are really skilled at looking for objectivity and the different factors of things like history that might be at work. And in some cases, this is a strength because it leads to a thorough understanding of history and the culture of the passage, and then interpreting that for the current context. That also, like I mentioned earlier, puts up blinders to the power dynamics that are at play. Reading about the interpretation of this chapter, I was able to see some ways that my own approach to the text is good at evaluating what's happening there. But it's also blind to many of the things that Eoghan and Jaelyn have mentioned. The gifts of those interpretations aren't present in my reading of it, and that was interesting to see.

Susan Wang

I read the chapter on Asian approaches as a Chinese female student here at Dordt.

In Asian countries, the theological approaches are influenced by Europeans or Americans, which gave me this different perspective. For the parable of the loving neighbor, Sonkyo Oh really draws out and clarifies how the Samaritan was considered as a marginal person under the background of that time, and as he became the center of the story, she points out how God uses the oppressed to represent Jesus, the Savior, in this story. Moreover, despised people—poor or rich, rural or urban women, and passive recipients can be involved in God's work regardless of their social status.

The chapter pointed out that the story is not only for individuals or how we can love other people, but also a more communal approach. For example, how the crime in society needs to be fixed and for Christians to focus on how we can develop and protect people in the systems we have in society. The Good Samaritan also indicates the much-needed changes in the brutal social systems where the dominant (robbers) rule over the weak (traveller) and the imbalanced power causes violence in this world. This reading really opened my eyes to see that Christians are called to restore this broken world beyond the church or home and into a vast scope of policy and society.

Hannah Landman

I am a native from Sioux Center, and we are having this conversation on Dordt's campus. So, reading the chapter on diasporic approaches was definitely interesting for someone who has experienced little diversity in social and regional location.

Kay Higeura Smith addresses the diasporic communities that have had external forces acting on them. This includes refugees, migrants, or people who've been uprooted from a place and culture that they knew and who've had to assimilate into a new culture. They are often trying to make sense of keeping that historical cultural identity while adopting ways to fit in and operate within the dominant society, and this influences their reading of the parable of the loving neighbor. This section touches a lot on the identity of Samaritans themselves. It was interesting to learn that Assyria conquered what is now Samaria and actually repopulated Samaria with refugees from other nations. Samaria itself was kind of a conglomeration of refugees, in which case, the author makes the case that this parable is really a challenge to religious and cultural status.

In this story we often view the Samaritan refugee in a positive light, for example how we associate Samaritan's Purse or a Samaritan as someone who does good works. However, what's true in this story in the cultural context, is that it was very much a challenge to the status quo of the religious culture of where Jesus was preaching at the time. The author makes the case that especially in the Gospel of Luke, where he talks a lot about the poor, that something like this was uplifting to people who may have felt very displaced from their own history.

Eoghan Holdahl

In summary, I think it's definitely humbling to hear various approaches to a single parable. It helps us see our own blind spots. Hermeneutically, the importance of glimpsing experiences of immigrants and outsiders was humbling. It was a great reminder of how South American Christians understand 'home' much better than I might. Additionally, this book has served as a very good introduction to global hermeneutics. I'm glad that they really spelled that out and the fact that they're not being comprehensive, this is just an introduction to the conversation. And there is such a plethora of different perspectives to draw from that they really can't talk about all of them. I was glad that the authors acknowledged and spoke into the number of voices.