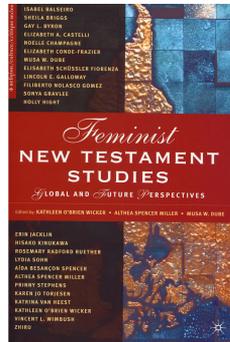


○ REVIEW OF *FEMINIST NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES: GLOBAL AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES*, EDITED BY KATHLEEN O'BRIEN WICKER ET AL.

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Stephen D. Moore reviews *Feminist New Testament Studies: Global and Future Perspectives*, edited by Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, Althea Spencer Miller and Musa W. Dube. Religion/Culture/Critique series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).



This volume collects the proceedings of a conference held at Scripps College in Claremont, California, in 2003. Kathleen O'Brien Wicker's introduction explains that the participants were invited to ponder the future of feminist New Testament studies in light of the ongoing demographic shift of Christianity from the global North to the global South. Althea Spencer Miller's 'Feminist Pedagogies: Implications of a Liberative Praxis' functions as a second introduction to the volume.

The body of the collection is structured around three 'conversations'. 'Conversation One: Europe and North America' contains Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 'The Power of the Word: Charting Critical Global Feminist Biblical Studies'; Elizabeth A. Castelli, 'Globalization, Transnational Feminisms, and the Future of Biblical Critique'; and Gay L. Byron, 'The Challenge of "Blackness" for Rearticulating the Meaning of Global Feminist New Testament Interpretation'; with a response to Castelli by Sheila Briggs, a response to Byron by Karen Jo Torjesen, and reflections on the entire conversation by Sonya Gravlee, Erin Jacklin, and Prinny Stephens.

'Conversation Two: Asia and Latin America' contains Aída Besançon Spencer, 'My Journey as a Latin American Feminist New Testament Scholar'; Hisako Kinukawa, 'Biblical Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A Japanese/Asian Feminist Glimpse'; and Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Feminist Theologies in Latin America'; with a response to Besançon Spencer by Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, a response to Kinukawa by Zhiru, and reflections on the entire conversation by Holly Hight and Lydia Sohn.

'Conversation Three: Africa and the Diaspora' contains Musa W. Dube, 'Rahab is Hanging Out a Red Ribbon: One African Woman's Perspective on the Future of Feminist New Testament Scholarship'; Althea Spencer Miller, 'Lucy Bailey Meets the Feminists'; and Vincent L. Wimbush, 'Signifying on Scriptures: An African Diaspora Proposal for Radical Readings'; with a response

to Dube by Isabel Balseiro, a response to Spencer Miller by Lincoln E. Galloway, and reflections on the entire conversation by Noelle Champagne, Filiberto Nolasco Gomez, and Katrina Van Heest.

Among the volume's many provocations are Castelli's and Wimbush's related challenges to feminist biblical criticism to engage more directly with the biblical texts' complex contexts of reception, Castelli analyzing George W. Bush's rhetorical appropriation of the Johannine prologue, and Wimbush reading Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as 'a kind of anti-scripture' (256) from which scriptural interpreters have much to learn. As it happens, the volume contains little in the way of New Testament exegesis proper, which (Castelli and Wimbush notwithstanding) will disappoint some readers. Kinukawa's brief reading of Jesus' encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman (147–148) builds on the insights of Gerd Theissen but surprisingly fails to mention, much less dialogue with, any of the extensive previous feminist work on the pericope; while Spencer Miller's reading of the Lukan version of 'The Widow's Mite' (225–234) similarly engages only with Joseph Fitzmyer's interpretation of that pericope (234). Dube's text in her essay is the Rahab narrative in Joshua; while Radford Ruether's essay does not deal with the field of biblical studies at all but rather with that of theological studies.

Taken as a whole, however, the volume is enormously significant. A formidable challenge with which many of the contributors wrestle is the question of how feminist biblical criticism, an enterprise that crystallised in Northern academic culture, can be relevant to the cultures of the global South, as well as to marginalised cultures in the North. What Spencer Miller has to say of Caribbean biblical study – that it is predominantly a faith exercise, performed in the service of denominational agendas (221) – undoubtedly also holds true for many other regions in the Two-Thirds World. What the reader encounters in this volume, however (with the possible exception of Besançon Spencer's essay) is less faith speaking to faith than intellect(ual) speaking to intellect(ual) – the Castelli-Briggs exchange being the most pronounced (and most brilliant) example. Dube notes that only four women hold PhDs in New Testament studies in all of Africa, that the global North continues to be the training ground for students from the global South, and that such students not uncommonly experience such training in terms of irrelevance and further colonisation; and she worries that whereas the locus of lived Christianity will continue to shift South, academic biblical studies will continue to be concentrated in the North (189). Zhiru summons up the specter of incommensurable discourses in another register by noting how interfaith dialogue, crucial to the future of feminist New Testament studies in the global South, all too often covertly privileges the Christian tradition (154).

Yet these hugely difficult challenges must be faced. This is a volume that should be read, not just by every feminist New Testament scholar, but by every biblical scholar, at least in the global North. No other recent book that I know of throws the relevance of our profession into question in so thorough, so timely, and so constructive a manner.