
Introduction to the New Testament: Reference Edition. Carl R. Holladay. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017. Pp. xl + 248.

Reviewed by David Anthony Basham, *McGill University*

First published in 2005, Carl Holladay of the Candler School of Theology at Emory University has provided an updated and reprinted *Introduction to the New Testament* (NT) that assumes little to no familiarity with the NT. With the twofold focus of theology and church, Holladay initially sought to provide an Introduction that answered the question: “What ... do ministers really need to know about the [NT] to relate it meaningfully to their own life of faith and the communities of faith they serve?” (xxvii–iii). This new edition continues to work toward that answer. While his *Introduction* includes the necessary discussion of historical and literary information regarding the NT, Holladay’s particular approach is, admittedly, theological. This approach stems from his view that the NT is a defined group of writings that has been privileged by the church at large as “theologically normative for interpreting the message and meaning of Jesus Christ” (1). He is quick to distinguish his *Introduction* from a NT theology, though, since he is not arranging the material thematically but, rather, introducing the NT theologically in a somewhat canonical order. Holladay moves through the NT in canonical groupings, addressing the Gospels, Acts, the Pauline letters, Hebrews, the Catholic Letters, and Revelation. The specific order of writings dealt with in each grouping, however, reflects critical insights (e.g., beginning with Mark instead of Matthew).

Part One concerns the NT as theological writings, noting that the underlying conviction of each writing is that “God is at work in Christ” (19). The history of how the NT canon was shaped is also discussed, though a more in-depth treatment of the entire Christian canon follows in *Part Seven* at the end of the volume. Holladay highlights the theological significance of the current arrangement of the NT, as well as the value judgments it represents. Maintaining the canonical order of the various groupings, while altering the specific order within each, Holladay’s approach portrays a respect for church tradition in tandem with more critical research that has challenged some of the church’s canonical convictions.

In *Part Two*, Holladay begins discussion of the Gospels with their relationship to one another, as well as their relationship to the historical Jesus. These chapters include helpful diagrams that visualize some of the more prominent theories of source dependence and Gospel origins.

Part Three concerns the Acts of the Apostles as the narrative of the church’s origin and expansion. Holladay again emphasizes the implicit message in canonical ordering: that Acts precedes the Pauline letters “invariably affects the mental image we form of Paul as we read the letters” (371).

Part Four addresses the Pauline letters and Hebrews. The Pauline letters are

characterized as containing *situational theology* – they show Paul developing theological positions in response to questions from within specific situations – and *dialogical theology* – reflecting an ongoing conversation between Paul and his churches. Paul not only brings theological conviction “to the conversation,” but he also works out his positions “in the conversation” (393). Holladay prefaces his introduction to the Pauline corpus, which he has reordered, with a discussion of ancient epistolography, the general formatting of each letter, form criticism as applied to the letters, their identity as an edited collection, a possible timeline for Paul’s life and letters, and Paul’s indelible imprint on the Christian church.

In addition to the undisputed Pauline letters, Holladay also considers 2 Thesalonians to have been written by Paul and, possibly, Colossians. He is less confident about the authorship of Ephesians and unconvinced of direct Pauline authorship of the Pastorals. These judgments stem, in part, from the likely timeline of Paul’s letter-writing activity. If the thirteen letters attributed to Paul were written in the latter third of his twenty- to thirty-year ministry (i.e., within a maximum ten- to twelve-year period), Holladay concludes that these letters should represent a mature Paul, albeit with room for some adjustment and refinement of positions. Using such a framework, Holladay moves to determine outliers with regard to authentic Pauline form and content.

Part Five introduces the Catholic Letters which, in contrast to Paul’s letters, generally envision a wider audience. Holladay also acknowledges that such groupings can often mask the individual peculiarities of each letter.

In *Part Six*, Holladay’s robust treatment of Revelation details the wide range of literary issues, theological concerns, and potential historical backgrounds that make the text elusive.

Holladay closes his volume with further discussion of the Christian canon in *Part Seven*. Here, he provides an historical overview of the church’s privileging, not just of the NT writings, but those of the Old Testament as well, and outlines the multi-faceted significance of accepting these writings as *canonical*. The *Introduction* includes two appendices: one on ancient canonical lists and the other on early Christian views of the Gospels.

The greatest drawback to Holladay’s *Introduction* is intentional. He has chosen not to incorporate preliminary material on the world of the NT for two reasons: such constructions, he claims, are always highly selective and never ideologically neutral; and second, these constructions often oversimplify the complexity of the historical, political, social, and religious realities of the first century CE (xxvi). These realities are nevertheless laced throughout, enriching the treatment of each NT writing. Holladay masterfully weaves theological insight together with necessary critical information in a way that simultaneously illumines the message of the NT, while readily supplying the committed reader with the dense history of NT scholarship.

Terrestrial Lessons: The Conquest of the World as Globe. Sumathi Ramaswamy.
Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017. Pp. xx + 429.
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Sumathi Ramaswamy's *Terrestrial Lessons: The Conquest of the World as Globe* centres on the history of the terrestrial globe in the Indian subcontinent, and examines how the European preoccupation with terrestrial sphericity came to be an Indian concern. Ramaswamy raises the important question: does this object have the same history elsewhere and everywhere, and with the same affects and effects? Ramaswamy provides a much-needed alternative history of this "worldly" object, which serves to fill a significant gap in the existing literature. While the notion of the world as a globe has been extensively examined and studied in the Western context, the question arises, what occurs when this conception of our earth travels elsewhere? Moreover, what are the implications when the globe, as a symbol of the educated, enlightened, and modern, is received in a colonial context?

Significantly, Ramaswamy's work makes a meaningful contribution to the field of South Asian Religions. In her study, Ramaswamy highlights the disparity between, on the one hand, the Western enlightenment and Christian understanding of the earth as spherical, and on the other, the multiple Hindu conceptions of the earth, for example, the idea of the flat Earth as resting upon an animal variously imagined as a turtle, elephant, or a multi-headed cobra. In her analysis of the confrontations between European and native conceptions of the earth, Ramaswamy coins the term "cartographic evangelist" (61) which she uses to describe a figure who is involved in the task of "geographic catechism" (16). Many Europeans living and working in colonial India took up the mantle of guiding young Indians away from the "darkness" of their false ancestral knowledge into the European "light" in the form of the "the Gospel of Modern Earth" (61), as Ramaswamy aptly phrases it. Ramaswamy illustrates not only how the spherical world became an object to be both surveyed and mastered by the colonial British, but also came to represent the superiority of European scientific knowledge. She convincingly argues that these beliefs cannot be untangled from the Christian notion of God as not only the creator of the universe but also the spherical earth and the life which inhabits it. In this context, Ramaswamy interprets the globe as becoming an instrument of conversion which strikes down the very foundations of Hinduism and serves to wean the young Hindu child away from their native idols.

Ramaswamy traces the history of the terrestrial globe in colonial India and, through extensive archival research, is able to relate key accounts of Indian encounters with this object. Her command of the history and sources across the regions of both North and South India is impressive. Moreover, a notable feature of Ramaswamy's book is the remarkable images and photographs which have remained

unscrutinized until now. These visuals further complement her critical analysis on the terrestrial globe as a material object.

Ramaswamy structures the chapters of her book around three key encounters with the terrestrial globe, the first being the story of a teenage Maratha prince who was gifted a globe by a colonel. The prince was subsequently encouraged to study the terrestrial globe and learn geography by a reverend of the Halle Mission in 1794. Yet, in his pursuit of European science throughout the course of his life, Ramaswamy highlights the fact that the Maratha king retained his ancestral faith even while he converted to “the Gospel of Modern Earth.”

In the second encounter, Ramaswamy relays the account of a female Protestant missionary who, in 1815, presented a makeshift ball of silk fashioned out of some scrap cloth to a young Brahman who was troubled about his ancestral beliefs. The young man abandons his inherited faith as a result of this encounter and undergoes baptism, eventually becoming a teacher of so-called “terrestrial lessons” to a new generation of native pupils in mission schools. Ramaswamy coins the term “global pandit” (94) to categorize this young man as a figure who feels pressured to uphold his ancestral knowledge, yet rejects his hereditary role in order to advance the cause of Western science alongside European adherents.

The last encounter centers on the plot of the 1956 Indian film, *Aparajito*, in which a Bengali Christian headmaster presents his brightest pupil with a pocket globe. The young boy uses the globe to teach his widowed mother the terrestrial lessons he has learned in school. However, as a young man, he rejects his mother’s wish for him to follow in his ancestral profession of Hindu priesthood and embarks on a journey to pursue his higher education in the city, which comes to represent secular modernity.

Ramaswamy’s method of weaving these personal narratives with the history of the terrestrial globe in different places and times across the Indian subcontinent is both effective and engaging. These core narratives provide a springboard from which Ramaswamy is able to delve into more nuanced historical accounts and analysis over the course of her chapters. At the same time, these core narratives serve as anchors which aid the reader in making meaningful connections across the various topics and themes discussed in each of the chapters.

Ramaswamy’s *Terrestrial Lessons* is an ambitious work which takes an innovative approach by making the central “protagonist” of the academic work the artefact of the terrestrial globe. Ramaswamy has achieved her goal in demonstrating that even the most commonplace objects, such as the school globe, have consequential histories. This work promises to make a valuable contribution to the scholarship of South Asian Religions and Post-Colonial Studies.