

Practical Pathways Forward

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For me, decolonising New Testament Studies is fundamentally a postcolonial task. True decolonisation requires us to consciously and boldly disrupt hegemonic silences and tendencies that belittle or ignore diverse voices in our field.

I believe the task at hand extends far beyond simply diversifying our bibliographies or adding Global Majority Heritage scholars to our recommended reading lists. Doing this is important but I've increasingly begun to find this superficial and tokenistic. Also, I think the task extends well beyond employing postcolonial interpretive methodologies. So, I'd here like to highlight some practical pathways forward – concrete steps that I think are helpful to adopt as individuals and as a society. I'll also talk about steps we've taken at Trinity College by way of sharing our experience and what can be helpful for others to adopt.

1. Genuine collaborative scholarship that moves beyond tokenistic inclusion to meaningful collaboration where diverse perspectives shape the very framework of our scholarship. This can be done for example through co-authorship or co-editing projects that centre Global Majority Heritage voices. Some examples from my corner of the world:
 - a. I've had the privilege of co-editing a volume with Prof. Liz Mburu from Kenya & Dr. Abeneazer Urga from Ethiopia – both NT scholars. We brought together 11 Global Majority Heritage scholars from around the world: from Guatemala, India, China, Malaysia, South Africa, Ghana, Ethiopia and a French Canada to produce *Reading Hebrews and 1 Peter from Majority World Perspectives*.
 - b. Another example of cross-cultural theological dialogue which demonstrates how established frameworks can be enriched through diverse voices is another co-edited volume to which I've contributed a biblical theology chapter. The project was led by the Systematic Theology scholar Michael Horton and involved 9 Global Majority Heritage scholars.
 - c. These are just two examples from an encouraging trend in recent publications that have highlighted GMH perspectives like the *New Testament in Color*, Fortress Press's *An Asian Introduction to the New Testament* and the forthcoming *An African Introduction to the New Testament* from Fortress Press to which I've contributed a chapter on 1-2 Peter. There is also JSNT's special issue (vol 47 issue 1) entirely dedicated to the task at hand.

2. Authentic engagement: While our guild has made significant progress in welcoming people of colour, we must guard against reducing scholars to their cultural identity or confining them to "postcolonial" or "cultural" readings". True engagement for me looks like reviewing contributions – engaging with what has been said even if it doesn't fit the mold – even if, dare I say it, it doesn't speak from a racial or national identity. Otherwise we risk falling into the trap highlighted in the film *American Fiction*: reducing people to stereotypes and ignoring work that doesn't fit expected patterns.

As Global Majority Heritage scholars, we need space to contribute across the full spectrum of biblical scholarship, not just when our work aligns with expected cultural or postcolonial themes. Our contributions should be valued for their scholarly merit regardless of whether they explicitly address issues of colonialism or cultural identity.

Sometimes this might mean bestowing the honour of a read or better yet a review of a volume by a Global Majority Heritage scholar. Eg. my Mohr Siebeck book [Apocalyptic Spatiality in 1 Peter and Selected 1 Enoch Literature. A Comparative Analysis.](#)

3. Transforming the Next Generation

At Trinity College Bristol we have a wonderful initiative...I'm really excited about this: we have hatched up a plan for world domination... to truly support the process of embedding a plurality of voices in the guild we thought it would be right for the process to begin with the training of future biblical scholars and theological educators. Our Potential Theological Educators track provides funded PhD study and is designed to create greater diversity of voices and perspectives in biblical studies and theology in the UK. If you have promising MA students, do let them know there's a free PhD for UK GMH students. The program is supported by:

- Bi-monthly seminars where we have a series of excellent speakers including David Horrell and others who will help our faculty and PhD students think more deeply about inclusive approaches to biblical study and theological teaching.
- We are also offering open access to these seminars for the broader scholarly community – I'd be happy to add you or your contacts to a mailing list if you drop me a line on x or via email.
- Intentional mentoring toward careers in biblical studies, is another practical approach that can be effective.

There is a lot to celebrate. Biblical scholarship has come far in welcoming diverse voices and Global Majority Heritage scholars but there is more that can be done to tackle unconscious bias and tokenism (especially in TEIs). This work demands both courage and patience: courage to challenge entrenched patterns and patience to build the collaborative relationships and institutional changes that will sustain the task of decolonising New Testament studies.