

Todd Penner and Davina C. Lopez. *De-Introducing the New Testament: Texts, Worlds, Methods, Stories*. Oxford, England: Wiley Blackwell, 2015. 242 pages. \$99.95.

This book discusses many elements of discourse to show the ways that New Testament (NT) scholarship changes the present even while illuminating the past. It is not meant to offend or to replace, but to enhance and offer new insight and perspective into what NT scholarship is and can be in our contemporary context. Penner and Lopez ensure that it is accessible for individuals unfamiliar with the work in NT by using robust descriptions and in-depth stories at the beginning of each chapter to break down the more complex discussions into concrete examples.

The introduction opens with a story of Lady Justice, a statue that sits at the intersection of five New York boroughs in front of what was once the Bronx Borough Courthouse. The statue is now sprayed with graffiti, invoking debates on whether the previously valued statue is still important. This illustration invites the readers to consider the complexities of maintenance of the old versus creation of the new. Penner and Lopez use this metaphor to position NT scholarship with the statue and this book with the graffiti. The authors hope to “underscore the point that the study of the NT is not simply about the texts themselves, but also concerns what people do with the texts in different time periods, cultures, and media forms” (15).

Chapter 1 focuses on the episteme of NT scholarship and the way that methodology is shaped. They discuss a bone-box, “an ossuary used for the second burial of Jewish remains in antiquity” (25), which was discovered with an inscription pointing back to the presence of Jesus. Debates surrounding origins of the box and how we determine its authenticity invoke the question, “How do we know what we know?” The chapter explores four different categories of knowing with this example as the backdrop. Building on this treatment, Chapter 2 highlights the importance of contexts and backgrounds as a lens of knowing and the many elements that create different perspectives for meaning making.

Chapter 3 introduces “excavating discourse” as a methodological tool for writing based upon the field of archaeology. This method focuses on understanding the many discourses around an object or event and not just the facts or “truth” of what happened. This method also pays careful attention to those elements that contribute to understanding the past and considers how the ways we unpack ancient contexts impact our understanding of the world today.

The final chapter focuses on the scholar as a critical part of NT scholarship and its development. The authors posit the affect that neoliberal subjectivity has on the scholar and scholarship. Its focus on “freedom of expression through performances of authenticity and difference” (177) as a marker of the identity economy has a profound impact. An NT scholar constantly navigates who they are, what are they doing and for whom, while creating narrative based upon the answers to these questions. The scholar is continually participating in branding as they navigate their identity and in turn the identity of their scholarship. The book concludes by inviting the reader to consider a new role of NT scholarship as a tool to take a critical and expansive look at the past as a means to consider the present differently and to look into the future in new ways.

The content of *De-Introducing the New Testament* is focused on NT scholarship, however the perspective that they offer is also beneficial to related fields such as: Hebrew Bible, Homiletics, and Liturgics. It is particularly interesting for preachers because it offers an in-depth look into how we put together and offer information in the public sphere. The methodological tool of excavating discourse is important for any homiletician considering how texts are used,

interpreted, and re-interpreted for contemporary preaching. In addition, the role of neoliberal subjectivity in identity construction is helpful. It is important to consider how culture, politics, and other markers of our society contribute to our constructions of identity and the construction of what we proclaim to the public. I highly recommend this text not only as an in-depth look into the impact of New Testament scholarship, but also as a tool for other disciplines to examine their epistemology, scholarship, and scholars.

Chelsea Brooke Yarborough, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN