

Good book review about understanding johnson elizabeths consider jesus: waves of ...

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In the book *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology*, Johnson offers insight into the Christian religion by analyzing the origin and understanding of the same. Johnson's writing finds basis on the start of Jesus' ministry on earth when he asked the gathered audience, "Who do you say I am?" Different answers have been given in response to this question by the religion clerics, scholars in the same field. To give an account of how the question has been answered over the years, Johnson embarks on a thorough research on the subject in the book. It is important to note that Johnson's research finds that the scholars who answer this have all been men. To diversify this fact, Johnson offers her own opinion with emphasis on Christianity and feminine philosophy.

Johnson's research argues that over the years, otherwise feminine attributes have been overshadowed by the masculinity surrounding Jesus' profile. To understand this argument, one needs to do a thorough analysis of Johnson's arguments in *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology*. Moreover, her feminist arguments need to be considered in drawing conclusions on the aim of writing the book.

Johnson Elizabeth, a theologian herself, writes the book to target the Christian fraternity and scholars in the same. Readability of the book requires ages above eighteen as the arguments made require a deep understanding and reasoning of the target subject. However, a person from any religion can read it as Johnson offers a good introduction to her ideas

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and views discussed in the book. This and the explanations she gives regarding her ideas and views also add to this benefit of the book. Her inclusion of many characters with Jesus being her focus is another added advantage, as he is known by people of many ages and is a common household name. The book has no illustration but can boast of an attractive cover and readable font type and size.

Johnson makes three major arguments in the book all of which support her theory regarding the topic. She stresses a need for renewal in the study of the life of Christ in a bid to fit in to today's world. Before stating the reasons for her theory, Johnson identifies the ideas that refute women's participation in this branch of theology and in turn, gives sound to her own ideas on the church and the body of Christ.

On the identification of previous scholars' disqualifying women as positive contributors to Christianity, Johnson states that, "the curse of God' was on women; Augustine claimed that 'only males' were made in the 'complete image of God'; and Thomas Aquinas held that 'woman is a misbegotten man'" (101). This notion finds basis on the ideas of human beings regarding women and their role in the world alongside their male counterparts. While she draws her conclusions from the views of other scholars, the only person who can refute or concur with her statement is God himself. Nobody can assume what God is thinking or feels regarding women or men.

Johnson attests to this when she writes that, "In both Jewish and Christian scriptures, God is praised under two aspects. On one hand, God is highly exalted, beyond earth. No one has ever seen God or can imagine the divine being. No one knows God's thoughts or can control God in any way" (116).

Therefore, no one can make an assumption regarding God's ideas and thoughts regarding the human species. Additionally, while God did create Adam first, Eve was created in the same way. Adam was created from dust and God gave him the breath of life, Eve was created from Adam's rib and was given the breath of life. Since Adam is from dust, so is Eve and since they both needed the breath of life the two have no difference in the eyes of God. After all, the Christian bible teaches that all human beings are created in the likeness of God.

At the same time, the basis of the idea of women being bad luck and inferior to the men is traceable to the original sin. Because Eve convinced Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, she has been looked at as the downfall of humankind while Adam is perceived to be the victim. On the surface, it can be argued that her beauty and sexuality gave her an upper hand and in turn, allowed Adam's blindness to what she suggested. However, Christians are made aware that it was after they ate the forbidden fruit that they realized they were in the nude. With Adam being unaware of Eve's nudity before, this idea is baseless and cannot be used against women. At the same time, today men have sought sexual gratification from women through violence. It is ironic to imagine Eve doing the same thing to Adam regardless of the issue of physical strength.

With regard to Christ in the modern society, Johnson insists on the need for new interpretations of the Bible to fit in with the evolving world. According to her, Christianity has changed and so should the Bible and people's understanding of the same. She attests to these ideas when she writes that, " Like the Christians of the first century, we too are being called to write the

good news in an idiom suitable to our time and place. . . . We must name Jesus Christ again and claim him again for our own people” (145). This notion refutes Bible teachings that dictate God’s infinite presence among His people. God being the beginning and the end means he remains the same among his people. With reference to this, Johnson’s idea suggests that God has changed in the modern world. This means that He cannot be compared to the same being that was worshipped before such as in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, baptism is regarded as a sign of washing away one’s sins upon which one is considered clean and filled with the Holy Spirit. This finds basis on Jesus’ baptism and His sending the Holy Spirit to guide His followers. Johnson’s writing on ‘ claiming Jesus Christ again’ seems to be in contrast with this particular teaching, as one cannot claim what one already has in possession. In addition, the idea that with time God has changed falls short of the Christian understanding of God and his stand through time. As stated before, He was there before creation and will be there on judgment day.

Finally, insinuating that Jesus’ teachings are not applicable in today’s world also falls short of His teachings as recorded in the Christian Bible. Regardless of year and place, the teaching brought forth by Jesus’ preaching and the methods He used are and will always be applicable in today’s society. A good example is in his use of parables that incorporate daily activities and easily relatable situations to pass His teachings. For instance, in the parable of ‘ The Lost Coin’, Jesus incorporates local currency and the use of light in the dark parts of a room in which one of the coins fall. The use of currency and

that of light to see in the dark are facts that still exist in modern society. Therefore, the teaching he passes across on the importance of all of God's children is still applicable in today's world. Changes to these teachings are therefore unnecessary, as Christians should take the word as it is written rather than as how they assume it would have been written in this century. Her last argument on the life of Christ finds basis on God's sacrifice to save the whole of humanity. In evidence to this, Johnson states that, " the cross reveals that God identifies with the one unjustly executed rather than the rulers. Far from legitimating suffering, the cross . . . shows victims that God is in powerful solidarity with them in their suffering" (92) This is with regard to the Christian teachings on the death and resurrection of Christ. During the time of Jesus' ministry, crucifixion was considered the most painful way of dying and punishment. Christians are taught of Jesus' prayer for strength before he is taken by the guards and are aware of Jesus' innocence regarding the crimes with which he is charged. Johnson's writes that, " God is involved in the sufferings the enslaved people, and is not distant beyond the reach of their cries" (117) and gives evidence to her belief that God heard Jesus' prayer and offered the strength He requested. Furthermore, while the Pharisees thought they had triumphed over Jesus by killing Him, the resurrection that followed in three days contradicted this notion. Johnson's statement is believable as Christian teachings support the idea. While the Pharisees saw the cross and Christ's undoing, it turned out to be the greatest depiction of love known to humanity. This is so as Christianity believes that the moment Jesus rose from the dead, He brought salvation to His people. After Jesus' prayer for strength, there is reassurance that God

was with Him because He managed to endure the suffering and in turn fulfill God's will. It can also be argued that His resurrection is an indicator of God's consent for Jesus' crucifixion. Finally yet importantly, Jesus was innocent as the Bible teaches that all He taught was the truth and that he committed none of the crimes of which He was accused. He was unjustly executed and God sided with Him, again giving strength to Johnson's writing, and understanding of Christ.

Throughout the book, Johnsons develops these three ideas in a bid to convince her audience on the validity of the theory she sets forth. However, the argument regarding women and her ideas of modernizing the teachings of Jesus Christ can be refuted. Christian traditions are relevant in today's world as they were at the time of conception. At the same time, Christianity originates from Christ and the religion teaches that Christ is alive to this day. Changing His word will be similar to changing the ideologies revolving around Him and His teachings.

What is more, as stated before, no one can tell what God is thinking or how He feels. The same applies to Christ. His principles in teaching and His reasoning are the only facts that guide Christians in differentiating between right and wrong. For example, in the parable of the Sower, Jesus teaches on the importance of Christians to receive God's word with an open heart and readiness to nurture the same. Here Chris teaches on the benefits of listening to Christian teachings and at the same time explains, with reference to seeds falling on unsuitable ground, the outcomes of disregarding God's word. The Bible is therefore important in every Christian's life.

In *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology*, Johnson's research argues that over the years, otherwise feminine attributes have been overshadowed by the masculinity surrounding Jesus' profile. She summarizes the ideas rising from this notion and in turn gives her views on Christianity in a few sentences. First, she sees need to show her credibility in answering the stated questions and in turn, comes up with a theory in the study of the life of Christ. This is however irrelevant as Christianity dictates equality rather than dominance. Her idea of changing the idioms of Christianity to fit in to the current century is also unnecessary, as God is the same since the beginning of time. Humanity is on the other hand bound to change hence the need to compare situations written in the bible to those in present life. Her idea of the cross is acceptable as it originates from the Biblical teachings and finds reference in the same.

Work Cited

Johnson, Elizabeth. *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992.