

KIRKUS REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

EXAMINING THE GREAT COMMISSION

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AuthorHouse (384 pp.)

\$31.50 hardcover, \$9.99 e-book

ISBN: 978-1467036986; October 20, 2012

BOOK REVIEW

In this thoroughgoing analysis of the Christian Bible, Baido-Essien explains exactly what Jesus expects of his followers.

According to the Gospels, after Jesus is raised from the dead, he makes a number of post-resurrection appearances. In one of the last, he succinctly outlines the responsibilities of new Christian disciples in a short series of commands (just three verses long) that come to be known as the Great Commission. According to Matthew, it reads, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.” The Commission represents Jesus’ marching orders to the first believers, and it remains a powerful summary of Christian ethical teaching. Essentially, Baido-Essien’s book is a close reading of the Commission that tries to answer the following questions: What are the exact expectations of the Commission? What did each piece mean to the first Christians? How should it affect and direct believers’ lives today? He divvies up his analysis to correspond with the passage’s three verses. The first deals with Jesus’ comprehensive authority, the second with discipleship and baptism, and the third with teaching and the church. Baido-Essien handles all three prongs with energy and ease. Best of all, his analysis never feels stale or dated; whenever possible, he injects his interpretation with anecdotes and analogies that keep his writing fresh and current. That timeliness is the work’s strongest attribute: Baido-Essien remains convinced that the Commission has both historical and contemporary relevance, and he’s determined to demonstrate how its language affects modern believers. However, he grounds his project in a deep understanding of scholarly research, and his claims are both serious and substantial.

Fresh, pertinent biblical criticism.