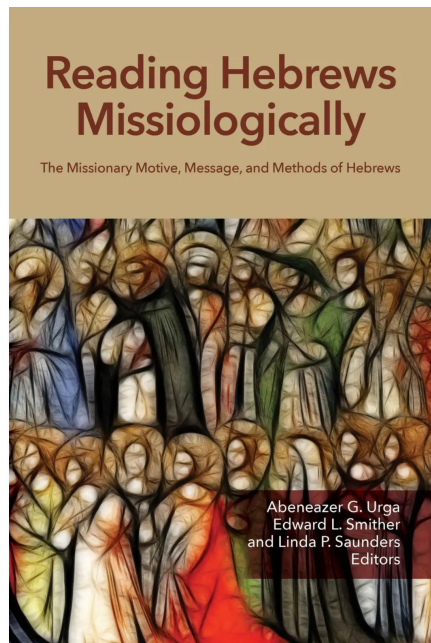


REVIEW: *Reading Hebrews Missiologically: The Missionary Motive, Message, and Methods of Hebrews* by editors Urga, Smither, and Saunders

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REVIEWED BY
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Urga, Abeneazer G., Edward L. Smither, and Linda P. Saunders, eds. *Reading Hebrews Missiologically: The Missionary Motive, Message, and Methods of Hebrews*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Publishing, 2023. 216 pages. 978-1-6450-8455-6 \$17.99 paperback



Biblical studies serves as one of the key foundations of missiology since the church's understanding of her mission flows naturally out of the biblical data. The relationship between these two disciplines, though, is often tenuous and even when done well, tends to only focus on Acts or the Pauline letters. *Reading Hebrews Missiologically* attempts to address both of these issues as the authors "tease out the theology of mission in the book of Hebrews" (ix).

As the subtitle suggests, this book has three main sections. The first deals with the missionary motive of Hebrews. These four chapters deal with broad themes that relate primarily to the biblical storyline and the *missio Dei*, and the chapters show how the grand narrative of Scripture provides the background for the issues addressed in the letter. The second section focuses more on the specific missionary aspects of the content in Hebrews, namely the themes of hospitality, the pilgrim people, and hope in a storm-tossed world. These three themes arise from specific texts in the letter and show the missiological concerns of the Hebrews community.

In the final section of the letter, the authors consider specific missionary methods displayed in the epistle of Hebrews. In these chapters, Urga shows how the author expected the readers to be involved in evangelism, while Grindheim argues that the epistle shows the superiority of witness that is borne out of suffering and humility. Then Janvier addresses how Hebrews influenced the ways the African American community engaged in social and ethical issues while simultaneously being missional.

Finally, Lunsford considers disciple-making efforts and how Hebrews informs discipleship in mission contexts.

The primary strength of this work is that it brings together the unfortunately often separated disciples of biblical studies and missiology. For example, in her chapter Linda Saunders unpacks the relationship between the grand narrative of Scripture and the *missio Dei* and shows that, for example 1:3 “validates the perfected mission of God” (24). Her detailed exegesis of 1:3 sheds light on the church’s mission and how it relates to God’s salvation historical plan fulfilled in Christ.

At the same time, though, an additional strength is that examining a missiologically neglected section of the Bible enables the authors to deal with missiologically neglected topics. For example, Ed Smither examines hospitality and shows that this theme is not just in Hebrews 13:2 but is woven throughout the letter. Likewise, Allen Yeh focuses on Hebrews 13, which gives him the opportunity to examine centripetal missions, which is an aspect of strategy that contemporary missiology rarely addresses.

Though limitations exist for any book, one weakness of this book is that a number of additional key issues from Hebrews remain unaddressed. To name just a few, issues like the believer’s future and the promised eschatological rest (4:1-13), perseverance of the saints and the warning passages (6:1-12; 12:1-2), and the importance of the local church meeting and suffering together (3:13; 12:3-5; 13:3) all have significant implications for contemporary missiology.

This weakness withstanding, *Reading Hebrews Missiologically* is an incredible resource that makes a unique contribution to the church’s biblical understanding of her mission. It will be helpful as a primary textbook in Theology of Mission courses and as supplemental reading in Introduction to Missiology courses for years to come.

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