

Book Review

Abeneazer G. Urga, Jessica A. Udall, and Edward L. Smither, eds.,
*Reading 1 Peter Missiologically: The Missionary
Motive, Message and Methods of 1 Peter*

Reviewed by J. Nelson Jennings

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Reading 1 Peter Missiologically follows its 2023 precursor, *Reading Hebrews Missiologically* (Urga et al. 2023). A similar volume on James is soon to follow. These volumes (and presumably others like them to come) are intended to fill the gap left by New Testament missiological scholarship's oversight of the general epistles.

This volume on 1 Peter has an instructive preface by the three editors, 15 chapters, a contributors list (of four women and 12 men), and a scripture index. As with the Hebrews volume, the chapters in *Reading 1 Peter Missiologically* are divided into three sections, the titles of which are spelled out in each book's subtitle: The Missionary Motive, Message and Methods of 1 Peter (or Hebrews). The book's structure makes for clear navigation of the volume as a whole.

A major strength of *Reading 1 Peter Missiologically* is the "diverse array of biblical scholars and missiologists hailing from and living in countries all over the world" (8). Chapters sparked by insights most particularly from African, Western, and Chinese contexts result. Such diversity embodies the Bible's—and in particular 1 Peter's—missional character of speaking the one gospel message appropriately in all settings.

Along that same multi-contextual vein, the authors' international experiences enhance their contributions. For example, the Norwegian Sigurd Grindheim, with years in both Ethiopia and in the USA, tackles the "Missional Implications of Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits" in 1 Peter 3:18-22 (329-354). Grindheim notes (no doubt in part autobiographically), "Perhaps because this worldview is so alien to modern, Western readers, the missional implications of this passage have largely gone unnoticed" (329). The Canadian Grant LeMarquand, in his chapter entitled "Eschatology and Mission in 1 Peter" (134-163), articulates a "fuller understanding of mission" that emphasizes both the primarily divine character of mission and a holistic approach (135). LeMarquand's sojourns in Northeast Africa and in the USA, along with international ecclesiastical and scholarly involvements, surely helped to shape his robust sensibilities about mission.

LeMarquand's explanation of "mission" is one of the volumes' few attempts at spelling out what "mission(s)" entails. The editors offer the disclaimer that no single definition of "mission" is given for the volume. Instead, each contributor is free to explain their own understanding of "this complex concept," with the intended result that "this book as a whole makes the idea of mission shine...." Readers will have to decide if indeed they gain insights into mission's "multi-faceted aspects in unique and edifying ways" (8-9) or if they are distracted by wondering what unexplained notions of mission drive each chapter's presentation.

On top of the book's attempt to allow for uncharted undercurrents of mission's "multi-faceted aspects," like most multi-authored (and multi-edited) volumes *Reading 1 Peter Missiologically* can at times feel a bit disjointed. Viewed positively, the editors' choice not to confine contributors to a single framework exemplifies the inherent diversity of worldwide Christianity and of the Christian mission(s) movement. At least as importantly, the complex and missional character of 1 Peter, and of the other New Testament general epistles, can be appreciated more fully. Bible teachers, mission scholars, theology/missiology students, and mission practitioners can all benefit, with thanksgiving, *Reading 1 Peter Missiologically* and its companion volumes.

References

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