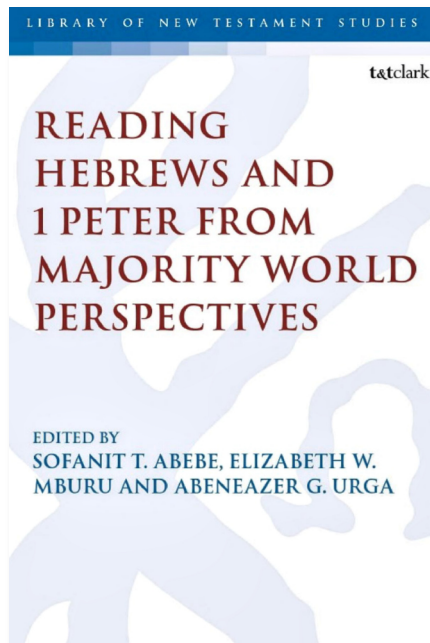


REVIEW: *Reading Hebrews and 1 Peter from Majority World Perspectives* by Sofanit T. Abebe & Elizabeth W. Mburu

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Sofanit T. Abebe, Elizabeth W. Mburu, Abeneazer G. Urga, eds. *Reading Hebrews and 1 Peter from Majority World Perspectives*. London: T&T Clark, 2024. xvi + 199 pp
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Reading Hebrews and 1 Peter from Majority World Perspectives contains eleven chapters, eight dedicated to Hebrews and three addressing 1 Peter. Five are written by African scholars, three from Ethiopia. Other individual contributors come from Indonesia, Guatemala, China, India, and Malaysia—and, interestingly, Quebec. A Canadian scholar, LeMarquand, introduces the collection, and a Norwegian professor, Grindheim, offers a closing twelfth chapter of summary and critical response. Six of the sixteen total contributors are women.

On the whole, then, it is a book mostly about Hebrews and mostly by African authors, arguably befitting both the relative length of the two New Testament epistles and the relative weight of African Christianity within the global Christian majority. The volume is also distinguished in virtue of being the first of 700 entries in the T&T Clark's Library of New Testament Studies series to feature the terminology of "Majority World" in its title. In their opening acknowledgments, the editors note the "often-held assumption that exegesis and theology from and for Europe and North America are objective and bias-free and thus constitute the norm while other readings are de-facto 'reader-response,' subjective, a form of 'eisegesis' and thus outliers that can be safely ignored" (ix). By publishing in this prestigious, scientific, and western scholarly series, they seek to counteract this impression.

Their success at doing so is questionable. The closing chapter by Grindheim characterizes the volume directly in terms of reader-response (179), and indeed, given the volume's methodological eclecticism, attention to social and cultural locations is its

only unitive factor. The relationship between text and context varies widely across the volume. Some authors leverage the biblical text to challenge local Christian practice: Fedes's chapter 3 examines the theme of solidarity in Hebrews to call for greater hospitality toward migrants in Chile. Chapter 5 by Terefe insists on the intercessory ministry of Christ in Hebrews 7:25 over against Ethiopian Orthodox concern that Christ's praying jeopardizes his divinity. Chapter 7 by Qina exegetes the spiritual supremacy of Christ's sacrifice in Hebrews 10, while accommodating the ongoing practice of Xhosa ancestor sacrifices. Chapter 8 by Nsiah and Dawson uses Rahab's example in Joshua and Hebrews to invite support for Ghanaian sex workers. Other authors use local traditions to silhouette dimensions of the biblical text, as, for instance, the volume's chapters on 1 Peter. One chapter is hardly exegetical at all; Feng's chapter 4 presents a fine study of Watchman Nee's trichotomy but relates only incidentally to Hebrews 4:12. The quality of the negotiations between text and context also varies; the toggle from one to the other can be abrupt or disjointed.

A number of historical claims may also meet resistance among western readers. For example: chapter 1 by Urga argues for the Pauline authorship of Hebrews on the basis of the ancient Ethiopian commentary tradition. It is interesting that the Ethiopian church inherits several interpretations from Clement and Cyril (e.g., Paul's alleged strategic anonymity) but unpersuasive as a matter of historical scholarship. Similarly, chapter 9 by George attempts an intercultural reading of 1 Peter calibrated to experiences of persecution in India—a salutary project whose credibility may founder insofar as it is premised on eyewitness Petrine authorship. Fortin's sixth chapter on composite citations in Hebrews vis-à-vis the struggles of Christian believers in a French Canadian context contends—dubiously—that Jesus taught the disciples to use composite citations (90).

For evangelical missiology, the volume yields plentiful fodder for reflection; it will be selectively useful for academics and students, less so for practitioners. Some value is retrospective: the legacy of mission to the Batak in Saulina's chapter, Feng's chapter on Chinese translation histories, and especially Qina's chapter on Xhosa names for God contain cautionary tales. Other lessons are more prospective: Saulina's interest in "attractiveness" holds hermeneutical potential, Feng's treatment of Local Churches is instructive, and George's chapter is the most overtly engaged with intercultural or missional literature.

Reviewed by **Collin Cornell**, Assistant Professor of Bible and Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary