

Paul Hertig, Young Lee Hertig, Sarita Gallagher Edwards, and Robert L. Gallagher. *Breaking through the Boundaries: Biblical Perspectives on Mission from the Outside In*. American Society of Missiology Series 59. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019. 186 pages. \$38.

This volume, which is one of the newest entries into the long-running American Society of Missiology Series, seeks to integrate the continually emerging—and much-needed—emphasis on the “other” in biblical studies with the equally needed emphasis on global contextualization in missiology studies. The focus of this approach is to articulate the essential role that Gentiles played in bringing God’s plan in scripture to fruition in order to address how the church can understand how God works—and how others find God—outside the traditional evangelistic approaches of predominantly Anglo-Western, protestant denominations.

This volume is composed of ten chapters, which includes an introduction and conclusion. In the introduction, Paul Hertig reminds us quite sharply why the phrase “the other” is even in our vocabulary: “We reside in a world of polarities. . . . God’s kingdom, however, is not confined by polarities. In God’s world we are all in this together” (xvii). Hertig argues that much of theological scholarship has focused for too long on hostility and suspicion, and it is time to “come full circle” and re-establish an overarching hermeneutic of hospitality instead (xxi). Hertig closes the introduction with a brief discussion of Jesus, demonstrating how his care and concern for Gentiles (especially Gentile women) should be the guiding principle for this ongoing conversation.

In chapter 1, Sarita Gallagher Edwards focuses on the story of Abraham, emphasizing that the father of the Judeo-Christian religion was, for almost his entire life, a stranger in a foreign land. Edwards presents Abraham as both one who blesses and one who is blessed by the other. The promise given to Abraham in Genesis 12 can only come to fruition, Edwards argues, through Abraham’s interaction with the other, the stranger. It is in these interactions that Abraham is both blessed and blesses those around him.

In chapter 2, Edwards continues by focusing on the flipside of the coin in Abraham’s story—Hagar. Most treatments of this portion of Abraham’s narrative focus squarely on Ishmael and whether he is the child of promise. Edwards, here however, focuses on Hagar, the Egyptian servant who becomes affiliated with Abraham’s house and becomes the conduit through whom the larger Gentile population will receive—and reveal to Israel later—God’s blessing.

In chapter 3, Hertig focuses on how Egypt and Midian’s religio-political cultures shaped Moses both as a theological and political leader. His emphasis, as was Edwards’ emphasis in previous chapters, is not necessarily on Moses, but on those characters who are traditionally treated as background characters—Zipporah (Moses’ wife) and Jethro (Zipporah’s father). Hertig argues that it is actually Zipporah and Jethro who provide Moses with the needed theological framework for understanding who God is and what God is calling Moses to.

In chapter 4, Robert L. Gallagher shifts the focus downstream a few centuries to the time of Samuel, Saul, and David. Israel, now at least a confederation of tribes, has somewhat successfully migrated into the land of Canaan but they have lost that memory and have now developed hostilities with their Gentile neighbors. Gallagher, however, argues that Gentiles—especially the Philistines—while hostile, were also integral to Israel’s development as a nation-state, from providing safety for the ark of the covenant to providing safety for King David.

In chapters 5 and 6, Young Lee Hertig focuses on two stories that highlight women in the Hebrew Bible—Ruth (chapter 5) and Esther (chapter 6). She focuses on how both of these women begin as outsiders, as migrants, who become insiders who significantly contribute to

their new national home, thus both continuing God's mission of blessing the nations. Important in both stories is the allegiance shown between the migrant outsider and a national ally.

In chapter 7, Paul Hertig argues that the Magi from Persia clearly demonstrate the long-lasting influence of Esther's quiet faith. These outsiders who have been waiting for the Messiah who will come from Israel to bless all the nations bring these glad tidings to a nation that has forgotten its purpose. Fear had become the watchword of the day under Herod, a word that is defeated by the word of hope from these traveling scholars.

In chapter 8, Robert L. Gallagher focuses on the story of Cornelius (Acts 10) and how this story becomes—and should remain—the paradigmatic text for further Christian mission. This outsider is clearly called by God, much like Abraham, to become an insider that brings a new perspective to the entrenched faithful, much like Ruth. The entire story is built around the theme of hospitality, which serves as a microcosm for the entire biblical witness of God's work among humanity. Gallagher then, in the volume's conclusion, offers a call to continue this work.

In the final assessment, the authors stick true to both their focus and intent, that being to articulate an evident theology of hospitality that binds God's interactions with humanity without defaulting to uncritical interpretations of scripture to do so. That, however, does bring up two concerns about this volume. First, much of the hermeneutical work in this volume seems to read at a devotional commentary level, which is likely an unintentional byproduct of the overall intent to read the selected texts under a certain theological lens. Second, although the stated interpretive approach was to ground interpretation in the original context before applying the teachings to the contemporary context, often the opposite appears to have happened. However, this is a much-needed text for ongoing theological conversation. It would make an excellent secondary reading in many intercultural studies courses or supervised fieldwork settings like CPE or urban ministry contexts.

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