

11-1-2019

Efrain Agosto and Jacqueline M. Hidalgo, Editors, Latinxs, the Bible, and Migration

Victor Carmona
University of San Diego

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/jhlt>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Catholic Studies Commons](#), [Chicana/o Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Comparative Methodologies and Theories Commons](#), [Ethics in Religion Commons](#), [Latina/o Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Carmona, Victor "Efrain Agosto and Jacqueline M. Hidalgo, Editors, Latinxs, the Bible, and Migration," *Journal of Hispanic / Latino Theology*. Vol. 21 : No. 2 , Article 7. (2019) :181-184
Available at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/jhlt/vol21/iss2/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Hispanic / Latino Theology by an authorized editor of USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. For more information, please contact repository@usfca.edu.

Efraín Agosto and Jacqueline M. Hidalgo, eds. *Latinxs, the Bible, and Migration*. London, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018. 209 pp. \$139.99 Hardcover. ISBN: 978-3-319-96694-6.

In this edited volume, Efraín Agosto and Jacqueline M. Hidalgo offer an impressive collection of essays by Latinx biblical scholars taking up the dual task of reading Scriptures in light of migration and of reading migration in light of Scriptures. The authors use multiple hermeneutic approaches to engage texts spanning both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures “with a focus on those persons—historical and contemporary—who have undertaken migration as well as their descendants” (2). In an introductory chapter, the editors define the main terms of the conversation (Latinx, migration, religion, Bible). The volume then offers eight chapters organized in the order of appearance that each text makes in the Christian Bible. In the tenth and final chapter, biblical scholar Margaret Aymer, a Caribbean-born migrant of African, Indian, and Latinoa descent, contributes an affirming yet vigorous response that speaks to the care that this topic deserves. As a consequence, the volume offers an essential view into the state of the question on the interrelated topics of migration, exile, and diaspora in biblical studies.

While the dual task that the volume takes up reflects the rich diversity inherent to the authors’ multiple academic, ecclesial, and social locations, perspectives, and interests, the influence of Latino Scripture scholar Jean-Pierre Ruiz on the authors and their field is evident. Not only do several of the authors refer to or cite Ruiz’s book *Readings from the Edges*, but as a whole, the project is guided by a consonant commitment to critically analyzing the multivalent meaning and significance of migration experiences *and* biblical texts using diverse hermeneutic approaches (15). More to the point, the chapters in this collection reflect a concern for the ways in which the Bible, while providing resources that help immigrants and their descendants make a

home *and* engage in border crossings of many kinds, “has also served as a border and boundary that incites practices of transgression, practices that seek to challenge the Bible’s own borderlands” (11). Each of the authors successfully takes up that concern. Two examples powerfully illustrate how.

In “‘Out of Egypt I called My Son’: Migration as a Male Activity in the New Testament Gospels,” Gilberto Ruiz critically analyzes the gendered manner in which the Synoptics and John conceive of migration. His work is precise and rigorous. Ruiz engages feminist biblical scholarship, as well as the hermeneutic implications of the centrality of Jesus’ life and journeys in the texts, with care. That care permits him to calibrate his analysis so as not to overstate or oversimplify the problematic tendency of the four Gospels to relativize, ignore, or outright silence the role of women in Jesus’ journeys. As a result, the conclusions and implications that Ruiz draws out are nuanced. He cautions “biblical scholars and theologians from romanticizing the Bible and its content” in our pursuit of justice for marginalized migrants, since “[in] this case, the migratory experiences of men and women are not given equal attention in the text of the New Testament gospels” (98-99). While Ruiz affirms the Bible’s ability to be a faithful ally of liberative migration theologies, readers must “explicitly and critically” bring their concerns to the text for that to happen (100).

While Gilberto Ruiz takes on the task of reading Scriptures in light of migration, in “Gendering (Im)migration in the Pentateuch’s Legal Codes: A Reading from a Latina Perspective,” Ahida Calderón Pilarski reads migration in light of Scriptures. The chapter begins with the harrowing daily lived experience of Latina farmworkers in the US. It cites a report showing that eighty percent of women farmworkers, the vast majority of them immigrants, have “experienced some form of sexual violence on the job” (44). The chapter then constructs an

intriguing three-part theoretical interpretive framework that accounts for the ideological function behind laws, the reality of violence in legal contexts, and the function of *lo cotidiano* (Isasi-Díaz) and *naked facts* (Pilar Aquino) in Latina readings of scripture to take up a gendered reading of ancient Israel's legal codes that traces their treatment of women immigrant farmworkers. The chapter's finding is nuanced: while the biblical texts neglect to address abuses that women farmworkers likely suffered then as they do now, they do suggest that Israel developed "a discourse of social justice and ethics" (60) that furthered a process of principled laws and that may function as a model for us today in our pursuit of practices and legislation that would end the violence taking place in the fields.

Gilberto Ruiz and Ahida Calderón Pilarski each take up different yet complementary approaches to critically analyze the borders and boundaries around gender and migration in the Bible. Like most of the other chapters, their work foregrounds profound implications for interdisciplinary biblical, theological, and ethical scholarship on migration. However, the discussion of this work's pastoral implications remains in the background. I do agree with Margaret Aymer's observation (197-198), that Eric Barreto's reading of Acts 2:10-13, in his chapter, "Whence Migration? Babel, Pentecost, and Biblical Imagination," offers one of the volume's most robust pastorally-grounded readings of migration in light of the Bible, based on an interpretation of Pentecost as a response to Babel rather than its reversal (140). Another chapter, Gregory Lee Cuéllar's "Channeling the Biblical Exile as an Art Task for Central American Refugee Children on the Texas- Mexico Border," offers some of the most cutting-edge work I have encountered on detained immigrant children.

This volume is essential for libraries across colleges, universities, and seminaries that have undergraduate and graduate programs in biblical studies, theology, theological ethics,

religious studies, Latinx studies, and migration studies. Most of its chapters should be accessible to students in advanced undergraduate course work in biblical studies. The volume's inclusion of texts that foreground theoretically and pastorally-informed readings of migration and Scripture make it attractive to graduate programs, especially for seminaries that offer classes attended simultaneously by students pursuing advanced academic and professional degrees in ministry (e.g., M.A. and M.Div.) and most notably for programs aware of the demographic shifts taking place in churches across the U.S.

Víctor Carmona

University of San Diego

San Diego, California