

passionately caught up in that tradition as home and school of faith. This small text will be a refreshing set of starting points for many.

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Esther E. Acolatse, *Powers, Principalities and the Spirit: Biblical Realism in Africa and the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2018), pp. xii + 243. \$32.00.

Christian unity is the concern that motivates this book on hermeneutics, spirits and the Spirit. Acolatse, who teaches at Knox College, University of Toronto, identifies profound differences in the way in which Christians across the globe understand spiritual beings mentioned in biblical texts. As Christianity has assumed the garb of the cultures and peoples it has impacted, a range of diverse views have emerged, all of which, Acolatse says, are flawed. Many in the Western world reduce the ‘powers and principalities’ to inner psychological states or super-structural evil, says Acolatse, whilst many Africans inflate the importance and presence of malign spirits and do not give enough attention to personal guilt and sin. Such differences have implications not only for theology and hermeneutics but for the way in which pastoral care is addressed. Acolatse aims to establish a balanced and biblical view that provides a platform for global, inter-Christian dialogue.

Starting with Kwesi Dickson’s hermeneutics that elucidates the Hebrew worldview by drawing parallels with African society and spirituality, Acolatse critiques Bultmann’s demythologising project. She then discusses Walter Wink’s theology of the powers. Wink’s approach, widely regarded as taking the influence of evil forces with great seriousness, is inadequate in Acolatse’s view, because he imposes a modern psychological reading on first-century biblical passages whose authors believed in otherworldly powers. She appeals to Karl Barth’s comprehension of the powers, evil and sin, and adds insights from theologians like Kwame Bediako and Amos Yong to provide a foundation for her own constructivist intervention. She turns to a range of Reformed interpretations of Ephesians 6:10–20 and shows how commentary was influenced by pastoral practice. In the final chapter she critiques John Levison’s pneumatology and returns to Dickson again, as a theologian who examines ‘spiritual reality’ by keeping ‘the whole biblical account of reality in view’ (p. 221).

Acolatse’s biblical realism promotes a high view of scripture, of the Holy Spirit and the spirits. Her critique of western theology and psychology is

finely drawn. She frequently alludes to African views of the spirits that she regards as equally unhelpful in their overemphasis on spirits. However, we learn very little of the theologies that promote this view because she claims that there is little literature. Perhaps academic scholarship is sparse. Yet, prominent church leaders in Africa write popular theologies of spirit possession and Christian response and develop sophisticated demonologies that are eagerly consumed by a large reading public, who also purchase CDs of sermons, and follow Bible study manuals. There is some considerable variety in these theologies. Readers would have a greater sense of how Acolatse understands spirits to be operative if she had engaged with equal vigour with this range of theologies as well. She would also better demonstrate her claim that African churches, as a vibrant centres of contemporary Christianity, can make a positive influence on the entire conversation. Acolatse is too careful to keep to the traditional craft of theological writing, making her case using prominent theologians and established traditions.

Nevertheless, Acolatse's project is important for a number of reasons. She engages prominent African theologians alongside classic western theologians, thus instigating a worldwide theological conversation. She stands in the tradition of evangelical African theologians, like Byang Kato, who have been cautious about cultural readings of scripture that place a great emphasis on contemporary contexts. She wishes to modify the prominence of 'worldview' whilst taking it seriously and to read the Bible 'with the past and present believers in view and with an eye to the future', in order 'to make scriptural claims universal' (p. 200). The book seeks a universal articulation of the Christian faith, but one that is alert to the diversity of Christian expression.

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Ephraim Radner, *A Time to Keep: Theology, Mortality, and the Shape of a Human Life* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), pp. xviii + 290. \$49.95

Ephraim Radner's *A Time to Keep* is an excellent theological reflection on human life as it is shaped by the concomitants of temporality. Not wrestling primarily with why human lives are limited by time, Radner focuses instead on understanding what it means that human life revolves around temporally ordered realities. Although it might seem that modern life is ruled by time