

place for God' (p. 107). Can these writers bring to us 'something life-giving in their approach to the theological task and also their coupling of self-denial with the joyful pursuit of God?' (p. 128).

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Najam Haider, *Shi'i Islam: An Introduction* (Cambridge: CUP, 2014), pp. 266. \$27.99 (pbk).

In *Shi'i Islam: An Introduction*, the author examines the theological and doctrinal developments of Zaydi, Ismaili and Twelver Shi'a Islam as they are embedded within their particular historical and socio-political contexts. Other introductory works on Shi'a Islam, as the author argues, either have a historical framework which concentrates on the early historical fragmentation of the Muslim community or have a theological framework emphasising central theological beliefs and practices of mainly Twelver Shi'is – thus ignoring smaller groups such as Zaydis or Ismailis. In this book, the author combines both approaches by engaging critically with the various, sometimes controversial and contradictory, historical narratives of Zaydi, Ismaili and Twelver Shi'a Islam which have been in constant negotiation of their theological beliefs through remembering historical events, that as the author argues, are shaped in a way to explain current socio-political circumstances. The author shows in this book how these contexts have influenced the theological developments and particularities of each Shi'a group throughout history.

The book covers four thematic areas discussed in ten chapters. The first engages with the central beliefs and how they influence various Shi'a communities' historical memories. The second area discusses various narratives of Shi'a past. Here the author emphasises the various readings and interpretations of historical accounts and textual sources. Since, as the author argues, Ismailis and Twelver Shi'a emphasise the Imam's role as an inerrant interpreter of revelation and regard him as the source of religious guidance, they focus on the Prophet's biography and use it to create a narrative which proves Ali's superiority and right of succession, particularly in relation to the Prophet's speech at Ghadir Khumm when they believe he was formally declared as his successor. Zaydi Shi'a on the other hand do not give the events at Ghadir Khumm the same religious importance as Ismailis and

Twelver Shi'is do. They rather emphasise Qur'anic evidence which proves Ali's right to succession. The author not only presents the views within the various sub-groups of Shi'a Islam but contrasts them with Sunni views as well. By doing so, the author highlights the complexity of religious beliefs which rely on a selective recalling of historical events, as well as on specific textual interpretations that reflect the particular theological positions of certain religious groups.

After engaging with the theological and doctrinal principles and discussing the various historical narratives of Shi'a Islam, the author turns in the last two thematic areas to illustrating the developments of Shi'a Islam in the modern world. Here the focus is primarily on the interaction between the various Shi'a groups within different Muslim societal contexts. The author starts with illustrating the transformations that Zaydism in Yemen has undergone in moving from a proto-Sunni to a more assertive Shi'a orientation in response to certain political developments. The author then turns to Ismailism and discusses the role of the Imams and the limitations of their authority up to the rise of Ismailism in India under the guidance of the Aga Khan. At the end, the author discusses the meaning of rituals among Twelver Shi'a and their politicisation during the Iranian revolution.

The book is supported with tables which provide the reader with a quick overview, making it easier to follow the complex narratives of each Shi'a group. In the first section, for example, a table is provided which summarises the various understandings and beliefs of Zaydis, Ismailis and Twelver Shi'is in regards to the role and scope of the Imamate. In the second section, a list illustrating the main characters of the Karbala narrative is provided, making it easier for the reader to understand the role of various individuals involved in the foundational mythico-historical event of Shi'a Islam when the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, Husayn, was killed in Southern Iraq in 680 CE.

In the conclusion the author discusses Sunni-Shi'a relations and engages in a currently very important issue. Throughout the book, the author is extremely nuanced in his description and analysis of the complex historical, doctrinal and socio-political developments of Shi'a Islam. This last topic is too complex to be discussed within a few pages. It nevertheless provides the reader with a quick and general overview of the issues around Sunni-Shi'a relations in the modern world.

The book is very well written, with a style which should appeal to undergraduate students, as it does not overload the reader with too many names, dates or technical terms. The author is quite successful in illustrating the foundational theological doctrines of various Shi'a groups,

their different historical narratives and current political developments in Shi'a Islam – thus making this book one of the best introductions to Shi'a Islam.

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Esther E. Acolatse, *For Freedom or Bondage? A Critique of African Pastoral Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), pp. 233. £23.99/\$35.00 (pbk).

The rapid growth of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa has generated an immense amount of theological reflection, much of it implicit. Esther Acolatse's book is a rare attempt to articulate – and reprove – the nascent pastoral theology of some African churches.

Acolatse's focus is what she calls independent evangelical churches in Ghana, taking their practice as representative of much charismatic and pentecostal Christianity across the continent. Many people, particularly women, turn to these churches for help in healing illnesses and maladies, often moving from pastor to pastor or congregation to congregation in search of an effective remedy. Acolatse argues that these churches practise deficient healing practices which rely too heavily on traditional religious beliefs, particularly the strong sense of spirits and their influence on natural phenomena. 'African Christianity has yet to truly transcend its cultural moment', she writes, 'and this failure can explain many of the pastoral problems that beset parishioners' (p. 5). When people present with psychological or somatic illnesses, they are diagnosed as results of the demonic, and the proposed remedies fail. Rather than finding the true liberation which is the promise of the gospel, Acolatse argues that many African Christians remain in bondage to existing religious beliefs.

To correct this, Acolatse argues that both a new theology and a new understanding of psychology are needed. She draws at length on Karl Barth and Carl Jung, putting their work in conversation with existing African beliefs and practices. A new theological anthropology is needed which understands that in Christ's resurrection demons have no purchase on the individual. Undergirding human existence is God's Spirit, not local spirits. Acolatse argues against the idea that there is a basic continuity between an African cosmology and a putative universal biblical cosmology. Africans are misreading the Bible when it comes to Jesus' encounters with demons in the gospels. Instead, drawing on Walter Wink's *Unmasking the Powers*, she argues that Africans need to look beyond their fixation on the demonic.