

Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

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Agrippa Goodman Khathide

Hidden Powers: Spirits in the First-Century Jewish World, Luke-Acts and in the African Context

AcadSA Publishing. Kempton Park, South Africa, 2007
456 pages

<http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-05202005-103502/>

Reviewed by Dr. Erwin van der Meer, Blantyre, Malawi

Dr. Khathide is an ordained minister of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa and the head of department at the Auckland Park Theological Seminary. This publication was originally submitted for a PhD degree at the faculty of Theology, New Testament department at the University of Pretoria.

Khathide addresses an important issue in the African context, namely the felt need for protection against witchcraft and evil spirits. Many Africans feel that the church does not sufficiently address this need and as a result they revert to traditional means for supernatural protection in times of crisis. As Khathide's work is a doctoral thesis it is not an easy read. Nevertheless it is a scholarly work which seriously addresses the problem of the evil supernatural powers from a Biblical and contextual perspective.

The first chapter is a general introduction to the subject and emphasizes the felt needs of Africans which cause them to consult a 'shaman' even when they are confessing Christians. It also includes a brief and somewhat superficial review of the various theories that seek to explain the concept of demon possession. A little more interaction with those who think differently would have given his arguments more weight.

The second chapter provides a comprehensive review of demonology in the Old Testament, the literature of the Inter-Testamental period and of the New Testament era in order to present a better understanding of demonology in the first century Jewish world. While the demonologies of the Old Testament, Inter-Testamental period and the New Testament cannot be

exhaustively discussed within a single doctoral thesis, the main issues surrounding the concept of Satan and the evil spirits in the Old Testament are sufficiently discussed and highlighted. However, Khathide's suggestion of a correlation between Daniel's intercession and angelic powers who influence the destiny of nations (p. 105) is clearly influenced by Khathide's Pentecostal background and does not reflect a proper reading or exegesis of the text in Daniel 10. Chapter two also provides an interesting overview of the various occult practices, mediumistic activities and methods of divination employed in Old Testament times. The section on Inter-Testamental demonology is interesting but overlooks the strong Hellenist influence upon Jewish thought in this period. However, when looking at the New Testament, Khathide provides a very comprehensive study of demons and evil spirits in this period. In his discussion of spiritual warfare from a Pauline perspective he rightly emphasizes that it is a community affair. It is the new community of believers who together stand up against the devil (p. 223) and that the victory of Christ over the powers is visible in the new way of life of the believers (pp. 224-225).

The third chapter focuses specifically on the theology of Luke in Luke-Acts and the conflict between Jesus and his disciples with the demonic and magical world. Khathide highlights important themes in Luke's understanding of Christ and His gospel. Apart from Luke's special attention for the marginalised, Khathide focuses on Luke's theology of Christ, salvation, the church and on his eschatology. In line with the main theme of his book Khathide gives special attention to Luke's demonology and the importance of exorcism in the ministry of Christ. Contrary to recent misinterpretations by proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare of the binding of the strongman Beelzebul by Jesus in the synoptic gospels, Khathide provides a biblically sound and convincing interpretation of the narrative (pp. 279-288). The discussion of the sorcerers Simon Magus and Elymas in Acts as well as Paul in Ephesus is both interesting and relevant in view of the African context. However, the suggestion that Acts 19:18-19 refers to Christians who had continued to practice magic (pp. 306-307) fails to take into consideration that it can just as well refer to people who had just become believers and now broke with their past.

In the fourth chapter Khathide looks at the present African context and how the spirit world is understood and responded to. He interacts with a wide range of African and non-African writers and demonstrates a good understanding of the issues. Contrary to common misconceptions Khathide emphasizes that the Africans normally did not consider the ancestral spirits as

evil spirits (p. 337). Unfortunately Khathide interacts very little with sociological, anthropological and psychological insights (p. 344) which is unfortunate because the issue of witchcraft and magic is not an either-or issue. When it comes to demonic and human factors, there is often an interaction between the two as scripture also indicates. Khathide also looks at some of the African understandings of the devil, demon possession and exorcism. His conclusion that Christian theology should engage more with issues related to the spirit world is certainly valid.

In the fifth and final chapter Khathide pulls all the earlier strands together and provides a critical evaluation of African approaches to the spirit world and magic in the light of the comprehension of Jesus and the early church. In this chapter the demythologizing influence of the Enlightenment and the resultant mechanistic worldview on biblical studies, theology and mission is also discussed (pp. 384-385). Khathide however seems to have overlooked that the African traditional worldview is in essence also mechanistic: If the right spiritual parameters are in place we get the desired outcome. If someone dies or a misfortune befalls the family it is caused by a curse, witchcraft or because something has displeased the ancestral spirits. If the right steps are taken and the right charms are used or the right prescriptions from the 'Shaman' followed the problem will be solved.

The same mechanistic approach to spiritual matters can be discerned in some of the current spiritual warfare theologies within the same Pentecostal tradition from which Khathide comes. Nevertheless, in spite of being appreciative of the Pentecostal approach to demonization Khathide generally avoids the extra-biblical speculation and questionable extrapolations so common in contemporary spiritual warfare literature. On the whole, Khathide's work is an excellent biblical and contextual study by an African Pentecostal scholar who by means of good scholarship and an evangelical hermeneutic convincingly demonstrates the need for further theological reflection on issues related to dealing with the evil supernatural powers in an African context. For anyone involved in ministry or mission in Africa this book is a valuable asset to acquire.

Barry J. Beitzel

The New Moody Atlas of the Bible

Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009.

ISBN: 978-0-8024-0441-1. 304 pp. US\$ 29.91 (Amazon)

Reviewed by Knut Holter, Dr. Theol.

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The well-known – and much used – *Moody Bible Atlas* has come in a new and significantly revised version; still authored, however, by Dr Barry J. Beitzel, professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, USA. The atlas is now expanded to 300 pages, and in addition to 118 multicolor maps and a large number of photos of landscapes, ruins, and objects related to the maps, it also includes explanatory texts surrounding the maps, no less than 653 endnotes with further literature references, and finally a map citation index, a scripture citation index, a general index, and a general bibliography.

The atlas includes a number of survey maps, portraying the Land of Israel from Dan to Beersheba from a number of different perspectives, such as, for example the patriarchs (p. 105, with useful Bible references) or the divided monarchy (p. 169). Moreover, it also includes a large number of more detailed maps; detailed both with regard to geography and particular events, such as for example the battles of Jericho and Ai/Bethel (p. 117) or the judgeship of Jephthah (p. 142). In a sum, author, cartographer (Nick Rowland), and publisher should be thanked for providing such an excellent tool for the intended users, defined as ‘pastors, small group leaders, and students’.

However, a couple of critical remarks should be voiced. First, the explanatory texts that surround the maps seem to take the historicity of the biblical narratives for granted. Critical scholarship’s questioning of the historicity of for example the patriarchs or the exodus, or the united kingdom of David/Solomon for that matter, is not reflected. The result is an atlas with a literary/textual (that is, the biblical text) rather than a historical (that is, the history of ancient Israel) emphasis, in spite of its frequently expressed focus on the latter. This is a reasonable choice with regard to the intended readership; still, one hopes that the users of the atlas are aware that the

explanatory texts are not representative of today's mainstream, historical-critical scholarship.

Second, from an African perspective one should ask whether the maps and explanatory texts in this atlas continue the traditional marginalization of Africa of this particular textbook genre. It has been argued by for example the Nigerian biblical scholar David T. Adamo (*Africa and Africans in the Old Testament* (1998), 1) that traditional western textbooks in biblical studies (introductions to the Bible, histories of Israel, Bible atlases, etc.) tend to 'de-africanize' the Bible, by locating Egypt in the Ancient Near East rather than in Africa, and by marginalizing the references to Cush. The present atlas does indeed relate the biblical land to Africa; geologically, such as when the Jordan Rift Valley is related to the Afro-Arabian Rift Valley (pp. 48-56), and historically, such as when Solomon's trade partner Ophir is located (without much evidence, it must be admitted) to the African side of the entrance to the Red Sea (pp. 159-162). At the same time, however, the literary/textual, rather than historical focus of the atlas prevents it from acknowledging some major historical lines, such as for example the occurrence of the Twenty-fifth/Cushite Dynasty of Egypt (760-656 BC), which deserves attention due to its influence on the Old Testament concepts of the Cushites.

In spite of these critical remarks, this revised version of Moody's Bible Atlas is a welcome and valuable contribution that will continue to illustrate and enlighten the texts of the Bible.

Tibebe Eshete

***The Evangelical Movement in
Ethiopia: Resistance and Resilience***

Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009. 525 pp. \$43.81 US

ISBN-10: 1602580022

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Reviewed by Steve Bryan, PhD

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Tibebe Eshete, Assistant Professor of History at Calvin College, provides the first full-length English-language history of the evangelical movement in Ethiopia. This work began as a doctoral dissertation at Michigan State University; supervised by the late Professor Harold Marcus. It traces the evangelical movement from its roots in various outside initiatives to bring renewal within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church dating back to the seventeenth century through the end of Ethiopia's tragic communist period in 1991. Drawing on dozens of oral interviews and archival sources, Tibebe weaves an engaging and thoroughly credible narrative of the emergence and growth of a church, which, in the face of severe opposition, has become an influential force in a troubled region.

Although Tibebe acknowledges the key role of Western missions in the establishment of Christian churches outside of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the major thesis of the book is that Ethiopian evangelicalism can by no means be construed as a "foreign" religion. This has been the major critique the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has leveled against the evangelical churches; a charge picked up with devastating effect by the Marxist Derg regime which rose to power in 1974. To make the case that Ethiopian evangelicalism is an indigenous movement and at the same time to remain true to the historical contribution of the Western missions, Tibebe has had to walk a fine line. He has done so primarily by crediting Western missions with impact rather than agency and depicting the evangelical movement as a

reformation movement that grew out of the Orthodox Church and brought to expression “a latent dimension of an already existing faith” (p. 314).

Tibebe’s case for the primacy of local agency in the growth of evangelicalism is argued in several ways, but three are key. First, Tibebe highlights the extent to which Ethiopian evangelicalism has its antecedents in Ethiopian Orthodoxy. Though the emergence of evangelical movements in contexts where there is a strong, established church is not unknown in Europe and elsewhere, this is far from the norm in Africa. In Ethiopia, the absence of colonial intrusion together with the presence of the Orthodox Church which had thoroughly shaped cultural norms and national identity for over 15 centuries, created a situation which “did not allow Western agents to engage in efforts of ‘civilizing missions’ and to impose Western culture in their pursuit of evangelization” (p. 314). Thus, Tibebe argues that Ethiopians embraced evangelical faith not so much as an act of desertion or denial, but as an act of reinforcement and reformation.

Second, Tibebe demonstrates that the two most astonishing periods of growth occurred when the Western missions were mostly absent (i.e. during the Italian occupation of 1936-1941 and the communist Revolution of 1974-1991). Not only did the churches grow numerically in the face of extraordinarily violent repression by means of courageous witness, but local leadership also proved remarkably adept at generating underground structures, and fostering cooperation across a spectrum of evangelical traditions. Even more importantly they created a vast corpus of gospel songs that gave expression to the evangelical commitment to remain faithful despite the predations of a brutal regime.

Third, Tibebe argues that much of this local leadership emerged out of an independent Pentecostal movement that erupted in the 1960s among students in urban areas and spread into most of the evangelical denominations during the time of the Revolution. Tibebe argues that the impact of the Pentecostal movement on urban educated youth provided the crucial link in the chain of events that led to the creation of an evangelical movement. Although some argue otherwise, Tibebe suggests that the contact between these young Pentecostals with Western missions was mostly incidental. Nevertheless, these urban, educated, and highly committed elite Christians, already tested by official pressure during the closing years of Haile Selassie’s regime, provided the leadership that enabled the evangelical churches not only to survive, but to thrive in the face of systematic attempts to violently eradicate them.

The importance of evangelical impact on Ethiopian youth, which Tibebe

rightly highlights, is further highlighted by Ethiopian census data released about the time Tibebe's book was published. This data shows that evangelical penetration of rural Ethiopia far outpaced its growth in urban areas. Tibebe may therefore be correct in asserting that the Revolution created the conditions which allowed evangelical Christianity to move out of its rural mission base into urban areas and thus to become a national Church. But this is true in only a limited sense. Today, 95% of all evangelicals live in just two of Ethiopia's eleven administrative regions and the movement remains overwhelmingly rural. Tibebe seeks to claim for evangelicals a portion of the space traditionally occupied by the Orthodox as the traditional purveyors and protectors of Ethiopia's national identity, but the claim will be vulnerable as long as evangelical presence in the country remains geographically limited.

In keeping with his narrative of evangelicalism as an authentic "national strain" of Ethiopian Christianity, Tibebe tells the story of foreign missions as one of impact rather than agency. In the earliest stages, the involvement of outside missions focused on the attempt to bring renewal within the established Orthodox Church by sparking a focus on the reading of Scripture and "a fresh revelation of the doctrine of salvation" (p. 311). In Tibebe's judgment, these efforts did not succeed, though the impact may be seen in several of the evangelical denominations. Other missions, beginning with SIM in the 1920's, sought to establish Christian communities outside the Orthodox church, but these mission-based churches experienced relatively slow growth, numbering only an estimated 250,000 by 1962 before jumping to nearly a million in the early 1970s with the advent of an indigenous Pentecostalism and then to 4 to 5 million by the end of the communist period in 1991. Tibebe's point seems to be that the impact of foreign missions was significant, especially in greatly increasing the availability of the Bible and initiating the establishment of communities outside the Orthodox Church. However, the agency by which evangelicalism became a movement was primarily Ethiopian. Although Tibebe briefly assesses the post-Communist period, it is not clear how he would assess the fact that between 1991, when various missions began to reestablish their presence in Ethiopia, and the national census of 2007, the number of evangelicals tripled to nearly 14 million (18.6% of the population). The most dramatic growth has occurred in Ethiopia's two largest denominations – the Kale Heywet Church and the Mekane Yesus Church – both of which are mission-based.

Tibebe's larger narrative may at times lead him to downplay the significance of the initial agency of Western missions as well as various forms

of secondary agency; most notably, their involvement in education and theological training. For example, Tibebe argues that the advent of modern education in 20th century Ethiopia loosened the hold of traditional Orthodox society on Ethiopian youth and led them to seek alternative ways to affirm their faith, not least through the study of the Scriptures and the experience of personal faith. However, the admission of Western missions into Ethiopia was central to Emperor Haile Selassie's strategy to develop a modern educational system. Furthermore, the involvement of the missions in education became one of the primary means by which many youth were introduced to the personal study of Scripture and the notion of individual conversion. This by no means overturns Tibebe's case for the primacy of Ethiopian agency in the development of an evangelical movement in Ethiopia, but that emphasis may obscure somewhat the significance of the "missionary factor."

It is perhaps unfair to criticize this excellent piece of history for theological shortcomings, but one caution seems warranted. Against the charge that evangelical Christianity is foreign religion, Tibebe argues that evangelicalism in Ethiopia is authentically Ethiopian. He does so on the strength of his compelling case for the primacy of local agency. But surely Ethiopian agency alone is not what makes evangelicalism authentically Ethiopian, but rather also the nature of the encounter between evangelical faith and Ethiopian realities. These realities have meant that the evangelical focus on faithfulness to the gospel and its proclamation has led to extreme persecution. Tibebe's work, therefore, is a wonderful chronicle of one African community's profound commitment to biblical Christianity and to mission in the midst of recurring waves of violent opposition. I suspect that this, more than the claim he stakes to an evangelical share in Ethiopia's national identity, will be his greatest gift to Ethiopian Christianity and to the Church around the world.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Ruth Valerio. *“L” is for Lifestyle: Christian living that doesn’t cost the earth, Revised Edition.* Nottingham: IVP 2008

Nick Solly Megoran. *The War on Terror: how should Christians respond?* Nottingham: IVP, 2007

William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Karkkainen, eds. *Global Dictionary of Theology.* Nottingham: IVP, 2008

Graham Beynon. *Mirror: discover your true identity in Christ.* Nottingham: IVP, 2008

Mike Cain. *Real Life Jesus: meaning, freedom, purpose.* Nottingham: IVP, 2008

David Gibson and Daniel Strange, eds. *Engaging with Barth: contemporary evangelical critiques.* Nottingham: Apollos, 2008

John White. *The Fight: a practical handbook of Christian living, Revised.* Nottingham: IVP, 2008

B.J. van der Walt. *The Eye is the Lamp of the Body: worldviews and their impact.* Potchefstroom: The Institute for Contemporary Christianity in Africa, 2008

Jason Gardner. *Mend the Gap: can the church reconnect the generations?* Nottingham: IVP, 2008

Gerald L. Sittser. *Love One Another: becoming the church Jesus longs for.* Nottingham: IVP, 2008

Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, eds. *Faith Comes by Hearing: a response to inclusivism.* Nottingham: Apollos, 2008

Chris Wright. *Salvation Belongs to Our God: celebrating the Bible’s central story.* Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008

Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber, eds. *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, community, worship.* Nottingham: Apollos, 2009

Julian Hardyman. *Maximum Life: all for the glory of God.* Nottingham: IVP, 2009

Peter G. Bolt, ed. *Christ’s Victory Over Evil: Biblical theology and pastoral ministry.* Nottingham: Apollos, 2009

Thomas, R. Schreiner. *Run to Win the Prize: Perseverance in the New Testament.* Nottingham: Apollos, 2009

Keith Warrington. *Discovering Jesus in the New Testament.* Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009

BOOK REVIEWS

Femi Adeyemi

***The New Covenant Torah in
Jeremiah and the Law of Christ in Paul***

Studies in Biblical Literature 94. New York: Peter Lang, 2006.
328 + xix pp., hb. ISBN 0820481378 \$81.22 US

Reviewed by Christopher A. Beetham, PhD.

Ethiopia Graduate School of Theology, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The work is the product of the author's doctoral dissertation at Dallas Theological Seminary (Dallas, Texas, USA). Adeyemi served at the time of publication as Visiting Lecturer at the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) Theological Seminary in Igbaja, Nigeria.

The book takes up the issue of Paul and the Law. Its purpose "is to set forth the identity of the law that will be written on the hearts of people at the time of the fulfillment of the New Covenant, as prophesied by Jeremiah and later understood by Paul" (17). The author's thesis is that "the prophet Jeremiah intended the Torah of his New Covenant prophecy to be understood as an eschatological Torah of the Messiah, and that Paul understood Jeremiah's prophecy in the same way, designating the new Torah "the Law of Christ" (18).

Adeyemi argues that the content of the Mosaic *torah* and the promised *torah* of the new covenant are essentially different, thus stressing discontinuity between the two covenants (74). The author's exegesis of Jeremiah 31:31–34, however, is unlikely at three key points, rendering this conclusion doubtful. First, he over-exegetes the pronominal suffix on the Hebrew *torati* ("my law") of v.33, arguing that the suffix implies that the promised *torah* is something new and different that proceeds directly from YHWH himself (pp. 73–74). The pronominal suffix, however, can hardly bear such interpretive weight. Second, despite its regular use throughout the book of Jeremiah to the contrary, the author insists that the word *torah* at v.33 cannot refer to the

Mosaic covenant stipulations enjoined upon Israel but rather to “a new Torah different from the Torah of Moses” (73). The explicit reference to the *Mosaic* covenant in the immediate context, however, makes such a claim appear as special pleading (see v.32). Third, the author rightly sees that the Mosaic covenant and the promised new covenant are to be different, but overly focuses on the grammar of the negative particle that begins v.32 to the neglect of much more obvious contextual considerations. The author asserts that this “negative phrase reiterates that the New Covenant absolutely will be dissimilar to the old order” (65). Immediate context, however, informs the reader as to the differences between the covenants, not the negative particle in and of itself.

Indeed, the stated differences between the two covenants are three. First, the *torah* stipulations will be engraved on human hearts (not on tablets of stone; v.33a). Second, every member of the covenant community will “know” YHWH (not just the faithful remnant within Israel; v.34a). Third, the covenant formula and the right relationship it encapsulates will be finally realized (“I will be their God, and they shall be my people”; v.33c). Additionally, a fourth difference can be inferred in light of context, although it is not stated explicitly. The new covenant, unlike its older Mosaic counterpart, will not be broken (v.32).

Adeyemi is correct to point out that in Ancient Near Eastern covenants, stipulations function within their broader covenant framework, but incorrect to assert that “a covenant cannot be divorced from its stipulation[s]” (73). This ‘impossibility’ is, to the contrary, exactly what Jeremiah 31:33 promises will take place: the *torah* of the failed Mosaic covenant will be brought forward and taken up into the new covenant framework. Dennis McCarthy has pointed out that such a move enjoys ANE precedent (*Treaty and Covenant*, 69 n.64). Not that the Mosaic *torah* will be brought forward unchanged, for as Adeyemi himself brilliantly observes, v.34’s promise of a definitive forgiveness renders superfluous “the procedures for atonement and forgiveness of sin” embedded within the failed older covenant (208). Jeremiah’s oracle contains within itself the seed that will flower into the eventual abolishment of the entire sacrificial system and its attendant priesthood. The *torah* of the new covenant age is therefore a transformed Mosaic *torah* grounded in a definitive atonement that forever redefines that *torah*. The Mosaic covenant comes to an end in the death and resurrection of Messiah Jesus, but its stipulations are taken up - freed from all “shadows” (Col 2:16–17) - into the new covenant framework. Here they are engraved upon the tablets of the covenant members’ hearts and

energized by the provision of the Spirit (Ezek 36:26–28). It is in the inauguration of Jeremiah’s new covenant that an obedient Israel is finally birthed, which can and will finally fulfill Israel’s vocation to mediate the Abrahamic blessing to the nations (Gen 12:3; Exod 19:4–6).

Against Adeyemi’s complete discontinuity model, I therefore am suggesting an approach that embraces continuity as well as discontinuity. This proposal also makes more sense of several of Paul’s otherwise recalcitrant OT quotations, where the apostle appeals to Mosaic covenant stipulations as relevant authority. The new covenant was not promised because Israel needed a different and better *torah*, but because Israel’s history had demonstrated that the *torah* would never be kept as long as the nation existed ‘in Adam’ with only sin, not *torah*, “engraved upon the tablet of its heart” (Jer 17:1).

Adeyemi’s monograph is a true contribution to the ongoing discussion concerning Paul and the Law. Readers of the review ought not to take criticisms to mean that the work is not a stimulating and substantial read. It is both of these things and more. More than any other work that I have read, save for Scott Hafemann’s *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, Adeyemi has established the centrality of Jeremiah 31:31–34 to Paul’s thought concerning the Mosaic Law and the “Law of Christ.” The work deserves to be in theological research libraries both in Africa and abroad.