

cover. It will better serve as a reference volume for individual texts.

Unfortunately, the physical layout of the book does not facilitate its use as a reference volume. Outside the reference, in the translation of the text at the beginning of each section, there are no references to either chapter or verse in the top margins of a page. In addition, when the verse under discussion is referenced at the left margin, it is not set apart by either bold or larger print, making it difficult at times to locate the discussion of a particular verse. Another limitation is that the commentary is not complete in itself. There are numerous and significant references to comments and discussions on 1 and 2 Timothy that are found only in Quinn's commentary on Titus. Thus, in order to get the full benefit of this commentary, one would also need to invest in Quinn's commentary on Titus.

The commentary's primary weakness lies in the introduction, which is extremely cursory for a commentary of this type. The discussion of authorship issues falls far short of being comprehensive. In what little space is devoted to the possibility of Pauline authorship, the author does a less than satisfactory job of outlining the case for or against Paul, nor is there any discussion of the possibility that Paul used an amanuensis. Based on what he sees as ecclesial developments that were not evident in Paul's lifetime, Quinn assumes a non-Pauline authorship sometime around A.D. 80-85 but does not consider the ethical issues that non-Pauline authorship raises. While the introductory material is taken from Quinn's commentary on Titus, one could wish that Wacker had strengthened it.

Despite some weaknesses, Wacker's completion of Quinn's work on 1 and 2 Timothy is a notable achievement and one that will surely enrich our understanding of the language and literary content of Paul's letters to Timothy. The rich insights found in the word studies provide a gold mine of easily accessible material for the pastor, student, or teacher who may not have the time or resources to conduct such an exhaustive study. However, one would need to supplement this commentary with Quinn's Anchor Bible commentary on Titus and another commentary with a fuller introduction to 1 and 2 Timothy.

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Sundkler, Bengt, and Christopher Steed. *A History of the Church in Africa*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000. xix + 1232 pp. Hardcover, \$140.00.

"A bitter pill which the majority of writers on Christianity and missionary activities in Africa should swallow is that they have not been writing African Church History . . . [they write] as if the Christian Church were in Africa, but not of Africa" (1). Bengt Sundkler (1909-1995), former missionary (South Africa, Tanzania) and later professor in Church History at the University of Uppsala, uses this incisive critique by two Nigerian scholars to preface his lengthy effort to set the record straight. Due to the author's death, this massive and magisterial account of the subject had to be completed and prepared for publication by Christopher Steed, his former research assistant and now instructor at Uppsala. Sundkler develops some prominent themes of earlier works (most notably, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, 2d ed. [London: Oxford University Press, 1961]) in stressing the

indigenous African initiative during the progressive Christian evangelization of this great continent. In fact, it is "a fundamental thesis of this book . . . [that] the Western missionary arriving at any place in Africa always found that he had been preceded by some group of African Christians" (299).

The well-known and documented missionary enterprise is certainly not ignored, but Sundkler and Steed (hereafter, S&S) take pains to point out that this is only a small part of the full story. It is crucial to view the whole picture and hence also the vital, creative role that Africans themselves—kings and catechists, merchants and migrants, refugees and returnees, itinerant prophets and independent religious movements—played in this dynamic process of Christianization. It is this particular local perspective, one that "focuses not on Western partners but on African actors" (3), which makes the book such a worthwhile study. S&S present a detailed, well-researched historical overview and evaluation that have important contemporary theological and missiological implications, not only for the church in Africa but also for Christianity worldwide.

In his personal introduction, Sundkler calls attention to several other principal concerns of his research. One is to demonstrate the close connection between the established mission-related churches and the so-called "African Independent Churches," which form such a distinctive, locally "charismatic" element of current Christianity south of the Sahara. Another interest is to present an ecumenical perspective by "highlighting Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Independent work . . . [so that] both Catholics and non-Catholics might find an interpretation of the essential intentions and achievements of their respective churches" (5). This is a worthwhile goal in view of the fact that, until recent times, at least, there has not been a great deal of interaction or cooperation among these different macrogroups, as indeed was (and often still is) the case also among the different denominations of Protestantism.

A major problem that S&S face in their treatment of African history is the "wide chronological discrepancy" (5) among the different regions of Africa—North, West, East, Central, and South—in terms of religious proselytization and development. In some parts of Africa, notably the northeast, Christian church history goes back nearly 2,000 years; elsewhere, especially in the inland areas, development has been limited to much more recent times. This has led the authors to adopt a helpful historical description on a more restricted, region-by-region basis but within some very broad time frames, namely: Part I—the first 1,400 years, Part II—the "middle ages" (1415-1787), Part III—the long nineteenth century (1787-1919), Part IV—the Colonial years (1920-1959), and Part V—the age of "independent Africa" (1960-1992). Despite the great period of history and large area covered, the treatment is quite complete and relatively balanced. Ironically, however, it is the most recent period that appears to be the most thinly discussed, with adequate coverage petering out rapidly during the final decade of the last century. This is reflected also in the otherwise extensive bibliography of forty-eight pages.

In addition to their special focus upon the significant indigenous African contribution to "missionwork" in Africa, S&S point out most, if not all, of the other important factors that have led to the relatively rapid growth of the Christian church throughout the continent (except for the northern region, which

due to the influence of Islam is a special case). In most instances, these topics are discussed diachronically as they happen to occur in the historical overview, not synchronically in extended sections. I would consider the following to be the most important of these strategic influences (noting particularly important exemplifying references in parentheses): use of the vernacular in popular communication in preference to a Western language (517-518); translation of the Bible, whether the whole or selected portions (157); a Scripture-based Gospel message (309); effective preaching/sermonizing (665-673); persistent and widespread lay witness (36-37), including that carried out by women (712) and youth (392-393); travel to new areas via the rivers of Africa (303) and newly built railroads (865); the development of distinctive Christian hymnody and liturgy (916-917) as well as literature programs (743); increased training and use of national pastors (509) and "evangelists" or catechists (310); the widespread promotion of literacy (573) and education, including that for girls and young women (249-250); agricultural (363) and medical missions (307); the establishment of mission stations (312-313) and Christian communities (377). A study of some of these constructive influences within their historical setting could be of benefit to African churches today as they plan for the future in view of the significant changes that have taken place already.

Side by side with such positive forces are factors that have definitely limited, hindered, or even prevented the church's advance in various times. S&S deal with these honestly and often with keen insight as to their original cause or subsequent exacerbation. Among the more serious of such obstacles to progress were: ecclesiastical rivalries and denominationalism; enforced or ritualistic sacramentalism and sacerdotalism; doctrinal disputes and consequent factionalism; association (whether real or supposed) of the church with slavery, colonialism, and/or apartheid; varied legalistic, paternalistic, or even prejudicial attitudes and practices on the part of Westerners; the imposition of Western cultural ideals and customs at the expense of African equivalents; debilitating tropical diseases and a high death rate among missionaries; interethnic tensions and tribal conflicts; and the continual advance of Islam from the north and east. These factors are all well known, of course, but a consideration of them in concrete historical contexts is useful.

Along with the preceding, relatively straightforward positive and negative considerations are a number of others that are not so clear as to their ultimate impact and effect on the growth of the *African Christian church*—or should we rather say, the *Christian church in Africa*? This matter of designation is important and concerns the principal issue of controversy, which in one way or another involves the relative past and present influence of traditional religious beliefs and practices on various Christian churches. These less than clear considerations would include: the use of indigenous symbolism and arts (painting, singing, instrumentation, dancing, dress, bodily decoration) in church buildings and during worship services; the communicative importance attached to dreams, visions, and possibly even divination; an appeal to rites aimed at combating sorcery and witchcraft; the continuation of certain "beneficial" magical practices; veneration of ancestors through prayers, sacrifices, offerings, life-cycle and agriculture-related ceremonies. Such influences have been and continue to be debatable, even divisive—that is, depending on a group's theological persuasion and beliefs with respect to what they regard to be *biblically*

based Christianity. At times, through their lack of comment, S&S seem to be uncritical of *syncretism* involving an accommodation with ancient ancestral rites and ceremonies, such as the royal ancestral cult (61), sacrifices in times of calamity (181), "rain-making" rituals (474), dreams of divination (504), funerary libations (811), and miracle-working "prophets" (814). They can be congratulated for their "objective" record of the various sources that they utilize, leaving it up to current readers to make their own evaluation of such accounts. On occasion S&S do gently warn against a Christianity of "adhesion" (96), which is simply "a thin veneer over a groundwork of solid traditional religion" (55).

This is not some long and dry, fact-saturated historical report. On the contrary, S&S quickly engaged me by their generally clear, interesting, and informative manner of writing. Theirs is an easy style that is lightened by periodic, subtly humorous, and ironic comments, but one that is also punctuated by many important insights and penetrating observations. For example:

The village sermon must be appreciated against the background of a live, pulsating milieu with its tensions and afflictions, its witches and spirits, its fears and hopes and expectations, its sighs and tears, laughter and jubilation, and the Gospel text bringing the Holy Land with its demons and Beelzebub and its healing miracles close to the African village, and in the midst of all, the Christ, Son of God and Savior of the world (667).

The text's overall organization is enhanced by a helpful division into major and minor sections, all of which are provided with summary titles. A principal section is normally prefaced by an introduction that is accompanied by a map of the particular area of Africa to be covered. Detailed Name and Subject Indices enable the reader to quickly locate persons and topics of special interest. Several succinct topical studies are provided, for example, on: African religions, missionary societies, David Livingstone, church strategies, Islam, preaching, healing practices, African church music, and Independent churches. S&S also make pertinent suggestions concerning areas that could use further study, for example: reasons for the surprisingly rapid conversion of the Igbo people in Nigeria (253), differing preaching styles among various denominations (668), the relationship "between Christianization in Africa . . . and recruitment for jobs of discipline and order" (706), refugee peoples in relation to the society into which they move (796), a sociological study of those who were caught up in the East African Revival in the 1930s (864), and the varied evangelistic methods that were adopted on the coastal plantations of the Indian Ocean (872).

By way of criticism of the book, the inadequate treatment of the last decade has already been noted; hence the current AIDS pandemic in relation to medical missions is not mentioned (674). The three-page Epilogue could easily have been expanded to provide a summary of some more recent developments in the Christian history of Africa. The footnotes indicate the extensive documentation that underlies this study, but there is no evaluation of the relative reliability of the sources that are cited. A handful of quotations are left unattributed (e.g., 1025). I noted several errors of fact—for example, credit for the entire NT in Chichewa given to just one person, when a whole team was involved throughout (979). Also, I would disagree with several interpretations

of the historical record, for example, that it was mere "fortuitous chance, almost fate" that led certain missions to begin work among particular African societies (311-312). I believe that the Holy Spirit deserves a little more credit than that. All in all, however, there is precious little to complain about in this magnificent study.

In the publisher's opening remarks in this book, it is claimed that it "will become the standard reference text on African Christian Churches." I would heartily endorse that assessment. It is one of those essential books for the new millennium that needs to be displayed in every theological library worldwide. Having said that, I would also encourage the publishers to make a much more affordable (paperback?) edition available so that scholars, pastors, and teachers on the African continent can also have immediate personal access to a text that so completely and competently surveys their deep-seated Christian roots.

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Twelftree, Graham H. *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999. 470 pp. Paperback, \$24.00.

Graham H. Twelftree is senior pastor of North Eastern Vineyard Church in Adelaide, Australia. He is the author of two other books on Christology that have attracted scholarly attention: *Christ the Triumphant* and *Jesus the Exorcist*. As the title itself shows, the present volume deals with the miracles of Jesus. In it, Twelftree provides a comprehensive study of the miracles of Jesus and their historical reliability.

The opening section deals with some preliminary issues with regard to the subject of the book: the purpose and plan of the book, the problem of defining a miracle, and the historical reliability of the miracle reports in the Gospel narratives. The latter is discussed especially in light of the shadow cast over the miracles by two monumental figures in the modern critical studies of Jesus' miracles: David Friedrich Strauss, the pioneer of the mythical character of the miracles view, and Rudolf Bultmann, who argued for the extra-Christian origin of the Gospel miracle stories. In the conclusion of his first section, Twelftree argues that it is quite reasonable to suppose that miracles are possible; and that "in view of the nature of the God of the Gospels and a reasonable defense of the doctrine of the incarnation, such miracles as are reflected in the Gospel stories are likely to have happened" (52).

Part 2 occupies the bulk of the volume. It provides an extensive and detailed analysis of the miracles of Jesus within each of the four Gospel narratives. In exploring the Gospel material Twelftree takes redaction and narrative criticism as his guiding methods. He argues that despite the variety of apparent perspectives in the Gospels with regard to the miracles of Jesus, there are common trends. "The most obvious one is that the Gospel writers are all convinced that the miracles of Jesus carry in them the signature or fingerprints of the one who performed them. That is, the miracles of Jesus reveal his identity as God himself at work: indeed, God is encountered in the miracles. Thus the miraculous activity of Jesus is the eschatological work and message" (343).