

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).

In the third section of the volume the author considers Jesus' own understanding of the miracles. Twelftree maintains that it is possible to recover what Jesus thought about his miracles; namely, Jesus appears to have been aware that God's own power was represented in his activities as the beginning of the eschatological kingdom of God in operation. He argues that the evidence from a historically critical examination of the Gospels leads to the conclusion that "there is hardly any aspect of the life of the historical Jesus which is so well and widely attested as that he conducted unparalleled wonders. Further, the miracles dominated and were the most important aspect of Jesus' whole pre-Easter ministry" (345).

The final section of the book is devoted to a discussion of implications of the Gospel material for the contemporary reader with regard to the quest for the historical Jesus. Twelftree concludes that "the Gospels have given a credible picture of Jesus as a miracle worker that coheres well with the historical Jesus we are able to reconstruct" (352).

This volume is an important contribution to the quest for the historical Jesus. In an era characterized by skepticism with regard to the reliability of the Gospel material, readers will welcome this refreshingly readable and clear, yet deep analysis of the subject in NT scholarship. The vast bibliographical coverage adds to the scholarly quality of Twelftree's work. While taking differing scholarly views seriously, he discusses them fairly and honestly. While bold and persuasive in defending the historical reliability of the miracles in the four Gospels, he approaches this investigation cautiously: "In addressing the historical questions, I have been aware that some readers will have wanted to retreat in fear—the fear that the so-called facts of the faith will recede and their basis of faith will have shrunk, leaving them insecure. Such insecurities are unfounded" (344). When examining the Gospel material, it is not possible for historians to say with certainty that the miracle stories reflect or do not reflect an event in the life of the historical Jesus. "As is often the case, we have had to acknowledge the limits of historical inquiry and exercise intellectual humility" (345). Such an approach is commendable.

Weaknesses in Twelftree's work are too minor and few to mention. Leaving aside a few interpretive differences, this reviewer agrees with Craig Blomberg, Colin Brown, Ralph P. Martin, John P. Meier, Martin Hengel, Graham N. Stanton, Bruce D. Chilton, and others in commending this masterful exposition of the Gospel miracle stories as a great contribution. This volume deserves to be a standard textbook on the miracles of Jesus and the Gospels in general for years to come. It should be read by those who seek to understand the relevance of miracles for the modern mind.

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Van der Merwe, Christo H. J., Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, Biblical Languages: Hebrew, 3. Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 1999. 404 pp. Hardcover, \$90.00.

The specific purpose of *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (BHRG), a team work of three authors from South Africa, is "to serve as a reference work at an intermediate level for exegetes and translators" (9). It is not intended to replace