

REVIEW ARTICLE

That You May Believe

GEORGE J. ZEMEK, JR.

That You May Believe: Miracles and Faith Then and Now, by Colin Brown. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; and Exeter, United Kingdom: Paternoster, 1985. Pp. 232. Paper. \$7.95.

That You May Believe is a popularized sequel to Brown's technical volume, *Miracles and the Critical Mind*. The author successfully targets his audience with a practical introduction (cf. pp. vii-xi), and a helpful organizational survey and content summary (pp. xi-xiii). There is an annotated bibliography at the end of the book (pp. 223-27).

Part I (six chapters) is entitled "Can We Still Believe in Miracles?" The leading paragraph introduces and summarizes both part I and chap. I ("From Foundation to Crutch to Cross"):

In days gone by, miracles were seen as clear-cut proof of divine intervention. Christians answered their critics and persecutors by pointing to the miracles performed by Jesus and his followers. Miracles were like God's seal of approval. They were a kind of guarantee, for all to see, of God's backing. But today many people are unsure which side the miracle stories are really on. They see them as more of a liability than an asset. At best they have changed from being a foundation for faith to being an object of faith. At worst they have to be apologized for. Miracles seem to belong to the realm of myth and fantasy. They do not seem to have a place in the technological world of computers, body transplants, and space shuttles. From being a foundation for the faith, they seem to have become a cross that the defender of the faith has to bear [p. 3].

Concerning miracles and the apostolic testimony, Acts 2:22-24 and 10:38-41 are cited as examples. A very abbreviated section follows on the apologetical significance of miracles as gleaned from the pages of church history (pp. 5-6). At the core of chap. I is an outline of the rise of skepticism (pp. 6-13). One of the questions asked is "Can We Be Sure of the Evidence?" In response, the critical mind reasons:

What independent corroborating evidence is there for the miracles of the New Testament? We have the word of the books themselves. In some cases we also have the word of the early church fathers. But then, these fathers got their information from the New Testament. And so we seem to be back to square one.

What we have before us are not the miracles of Jesus themselves but only reports of miracles. And there is a world of difference between seeing something for ourselves and merely reading a report of it [p. 7].

Another important question which prompts critical thinking is "Can There Be Violations of the Laws of Nature?" (p. 7). Spinoza is used as a paradigm of extrapolation in response to this question (pp. 7-9). During the Reformation period a far more benign question surfaced: "What Do Miracles Prove?" (p. 10). This was "a question not so much of whether miracles could happen [cf. Spinoza] but of what precisely they proved" (pp. 10-11). What becomes obvious through Brown's scanning of the skeptics is that because of this avalanche of doubt and ridicule, "the miracle stories were not simply a cross to bear. They had become a cross to be dropped" (p. 13).

At this juncture the author challenges the reader with the crucial question: "What Then Should We Think About Miracles?" (p. 13). He detains a final answer but appeals to Augustine, Calvin, and Luther (pp. 13-16):

Perhaps the time has come for us to listen more attentively to the witness of Augustine, Calvin, and Luther. If we do, we might find ourselves asking whether the traditional arguments are quite the right arguments. We might find ourselves asking whether we need to look beyond the apparent violations of nature to the harmony of a higher order, whether we need to look beyond the desire for objective proofs to the place of miracles in a sacramental universe, and whether we need to look at miracles not just in connection with the incarnation but rather in the context of the Trinity [p. 16].

As a result of this conclusion the reader may be sufficiently convinced of the shortcomings of the traditional apologetical appeal to miracles; however, it is not yet clear where Brown is heading.

Chap. 2 deals with "David Hume and Company." In reference to Hume's two-phased argument, Brown does a commendable job in outlining this "classical attack" against miracles (pp. 17-23). There is also a brief survey of some of the most famous deistic writings (pp. 23-26). Commencing with the heading entitled "Pros and Cons," Brown evaluates those historical attacks (pp. 26-32). He correctly refutes Hume at the presuppositional level:

At the outset of his discussion Hume laid down the principle that "a wise man . . . proportions his belief to the evidence." But he ends up by saying, in effect, that a wise man will refuse to look at the evidence at all. Or, if he does, he will just dismiss it. Once he has made up his mind that a miracle is "a violation of the laws of nature," Hume allows nothing to count as such a violation. Whatever evidence there might be is automatically dismissed [p. 27].

Subsequently, he exposes the fallacies and inconsistencies of Hume's four major observations (pp. 27-30). The author anticipates a future challenge (cf. chaps. 10-12) of the uniqueness of Jesus' healings and states in response that "they were not just any healings but the works of the Christ, foretold in prophecy and fulfilled by Jesus" (p. 30).

"The Curious Case of the King of Siam" is the intriguing title of chap. 3. This title corresponds to the skeptic king from the writings of John Locke who would not believe in ice. His illustration prompted many generations of philosophical interaction (p. 33). The point that Brown makes is that "Locke's

story pinpoints the problem of miracles. It embodies what philosophers call the principle of analogy. . . . Experience in the past is my guide to the present and the future" (p. 34).

The resurrection of Jesus is introduced next, and Brown responds with his previously anticipated argument. The thesis for which he argues is that "the very existence of the church cannot be explained without presupposing the resurrection of Christ" (p. 37). A brief but adequate explanation buttresses this historical thesis; however, he does not yet inform the reader of some of the limitations of such argumentation, though he states that "maybe our present experience should not fool us into imagining that we know everything there is to know" (p. 37).

The author then proceeds from the previous discussion to a background for a definition of a miracle:

Of course, miracles are improbable. They would not be miracles if they were not improbable. Of course, we cannot predict them in the same way the scientist predicts things on the basis of proven experiments. That is what makes them miracles. If they were common, repeatable events that could be reproduced on demand, they would simply be ordinary events. . . . Miracles are like warning flags. They signal the presence of a different order of reality that is present in the midst of our everyday world [pp. 37-38].

From this base he responds to Hume's skepticism by reasoning that miracles are "not so much as violations of an existing order but as indications of the presence of a different order" (p. 38).

"Two Observations" capstone chap. 3. The first of these is extremely important: "Miracles do not normally serve to establish belief in God" (p. 39). "The second observation is that analogy is really a two-way process" (p. 39). After showing that the skeptic proceeds only down a one-way street, Brown states that "it may be that we are like the King of Siam. We may be using the present to judge the past, when what we need to do is to allow the past to judge the present and open us to God's future" (p. 40).

Chap. 4 is devoted to C. S. Lewis's contributions to the ongoing debate over miracles. After Brown extols him and highlights some of "the lay Theologian's" apologetical works (pp. 41-42), Lewis's primary contention of preconceptions is presented:

To Lewis the problem was not the amount (or lack) of evidence there may (or may not be) [sic] for any given miracle. The real problem lies in the way we look at things. Seeing is not believing, for what we see is regularly colored by our existing deep-seated beliefs. Not only religious believers do this. The atheist and the agnostic do it as well [p. 42].

Lewis indeed recognized the implications of one's worldview (p. 43). He also "believed in an ordered universe that was open to the personal action of human beings and of God" (p. 45). "Lewis saw a parallel between miracles and God's acts in general. . . . He saw in . . . miracles a concentration of divine activity that performed in an instant what nature can perform only over a prolonged period" (pp. 46-47). Unfortunately, this could be read merely as accelerated providence.

The "well almost" portion of chap. 4 (entitled "C. S. Lewis to the Rescue—Well Almost") begins with Brown's appropriate reminder:

In Roman Catholic circles there is a saying about Thomas Aquinas: "Thomas has spoken; the case is closed." In some evangelical circles today the impression is given that when C. S. Lewis has said anything, nothing much remains to be said. But has Lewis said the last word on miracles? Has he rescued belief in miracles once and for all? Lewis himself was more modest in his claims than some of his posthumous admirers. He deliberately called his book on Miracles *A Preliminary Study* [p. 47].

Brown emphasizes two significant strengths of Lewis's work on miracles: 1) his reluctance to become involved in certain scientific speculations, and 2) his consistent emphasis upon the preconceptions of materialistic determinism (p. 48). Concerning the former strength, Brown's observation is noteworthy: "Theologians and apologists can easily get out of their element in trying to draw implications from technical disciplines outside their expertise" (p. 48). I would assert that the reciprocal of this statement is also true.

The major weaknesses of Lewis's argument are acknowledged by Brown (pp. 48–50). He first addresses Lewis's "leap of faith"; for example, "despite his many insights and incisive attacks on materialistic determinism, Lewis's philosophical theology fails to provide compelling reasons for belief in a miracle-working God" (p. 49). In reference to Lewis's "acceleration theory," Brown recognizes that "it does not really help us if we were to claim that the changing of water into wine and the feeding of the five thousand were really only accelerated instances of natural processes" (p. 49). Brown also challenges Lewis's idea of "miracles of the New Creation" (pp. 49–50; cf. p. 47): "Perhaps some of the other miracles [i.e., prior to the Resurrection] in the Gospels are better seen, not as Miracles of the Old Creation, but as anticipations of God's new order breaking into our order" (p. 50).

"What sort of World Do We Live In?" is the theme of chap. 5. At the outset Brown astutely notes that "the answer we get to this question depends on whom we ask it" (p. 51). The author correctly points out the fallacies of "the God-of-the-Gaps View" (i.e., that "the supernatural is to be encountered in the gaps between the natural" [p. 52]).

The author's main burden is given in the second portion of chap. 5 (pp. 55–61). His first point is developed (pp. 55–57) and applied to our complex existence:

In the divine structuredness of our existence God's grace is not an alternative to our human action. At the center of Christian existence stands the paradox. We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, living as creatures our creaturely existence in the world. But at the same time we are to realize that God is at work in us, willing and working for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:13) [p. 58].

His second point involves the testing of claims. A very important caution surfaces in the midst of this discussion:

I . . . think it is a mistake to try to show the truth of God and the world by arguing in the abstract. The attempt to prove the existence of God first and then

to show that this God is the God of Christian faith is full of pitfalls. . . . But the biblical writers never argued from an abstract God of natural theology to the living God of their faith. . . . They did not move from reason to faith. Rather, it was from the standpoint of their faith that they were able to express both the mystery and the rationality of life [pp. 59-60].

The last portion of the chapter ("Where Do Miracles Fit In?") is characterized by the author's acceptance of a both/and tension between miracles and the 'natural world' (pp. 60-61).

In chap. 6 Brown attempts to answer the question, "What then is a Miracle?" He suggests that this question must be answered on two levels, the philosophical and the theological (pp. 62-63). He concedes, however, that these are not always distinguishable in practice, because "philosophy encroaches upon theology and theology encroaches upon philosophy" (p. 63). The first portion of the chapter is largely a summary of previous personalities and arguments (pp. 63-69) supplemented by a survey of the distinction drawn by R. F. Holland between the "contingency concept" of the miraculous and the "violation concept" (pp. 65-67).

As Brown more fully develops his own approach (pp. 69-74), he asserts that one must begin with a faith commitment (p. 70). Unfortunately, Brown fails to acknowledge the presuppositional basis of his interpretation of the event, though he later sides with the presuppositionalist (pp. 73-74). The author must also be challenged on most if not all of the illustrations given to argue that "some miracles in the Bible admit the presence of natural factors" (p. 72).

"The Theological Question" (pp. 74-77) is introduced by an abbreviated survey of the OT and NT vocabulary for miracles. Brown contends that Deuteronomy 13:1-3 "became decisive for Jewish attitudes to miracles" (p. 74), and that "it is a characteristic of signs to point beyond themselves to Yahweh's ordering or overriding of nature and history" (p. 75). The author emphasizes the significance of the continuity of "signs and wonders" in the NT. Interrupting his survey is an important reminder which has practical ramifications: "Both Jesus and Paul deprecated the desire for signs (Matthew 12:39; 16:4; cf. Luke 11:16, 19; John 4:48; 1 Corinthians 1:22). The demand for a sign is indicative of a refusal to respond to what has already been given" (p. 76). Little interpretation is given to the scriptural data; therefore, Brown concludes Part I by promising an integration and systematization in Parts II and III of his book (p. 77).

Part II ("What Do the Miracle Stories Tell Us about Jesus?") unfolds in five chapters, beginning with "The Quest of the Unhistorical Jesus."

What was Jesus really like? To many the Christ of Christian theology—and, for that matter, the Christ of the New Testament—is like an official portrait painted by a court painter. It is the work of devout veneration, but not a true likeness. Art and pious imagination have improved on nature. What is therefore needed is to strip away the official portrait of Jesus as a wonder-working divine being in human form and get back to Jesus as he must have been—Jesus as simply a man [p. 81].

He traces the "quest" from Reimarus through Schweitzer (pp. 82-90) and points out that this critical preoccupation had its conceptual roots in the Deists

(p. 83). The passing of the baton to the History of Religions School, Neo-orthodoxy, and the contemporary skeptics is very briefly surveyed (pp. 90–93).

In “Where Do We Go From Here?” (pp. 93–94), Brown acknowledges the frustration of this theological heritage coming from such a long string of skeptics, but he admirably warns the reader not to capitulate for the sake of gaining ‘scholarly’ credibility (p. 93). He closes the seemingly depressing discussion with a promise to provide the reader an assuring option in the subsequent chapters (i.e., 8–11).

Brown introduces his option in chap. 8, “Unscrambling the Puzzle.”

Take the claim that is sometimes made: “Miracles prove the divinity of Christ.” A variant of this is the claim: “Jesus was able to do miracles because he was the divine Son of God.” We feel that we ought to be able to justify these claims by proof-texting them from the New Testament. But when we actually look at the New Testament, the picture there turns out to be more complex. Some of it may appear at first sight to be downright disconcerting. What we need to avoid is reading our own meanings into the New Testament and then, in turn, trying to justify our meanings from the New Testament. What we need to do is to start with the New Testament and follow its lead [p. 96].

Beginning with “two examples of early preaching” (i.e., Acts 2:22 and 10:36–38), Brown makes the point that they “do not move directly from the miracles of Jesus to his divinity” (p. 97). His thesis is that “we need to see both the miracles of Jesus and the question of his person in the context of the Trinity” (p. 98). Quite obviously, one of the author’s motivations is to expose the traditional evidentialist approach.

Brown launches into a discussion of the significance of the titles of Jesus (pp. 98–101). Several of his specific exegetical conclusions should be challenged (e.g., his conclusion concerning the title “Son of God”; cf. pp. 98–99); however, most of his generalizations are acceptable. For example, he correctly observes that “it is an oversimplification to say that ‘Son of God’ expresses Jesus’ divinity and ‘Son of Man’ expresses his humanity” (p. 99).

“Miracles and Truth Claims” is an important section dealing with “the place of miracles in Christian apologetics and the part they play in the truth claims that are made for the Christian faith” (p. 101). Brown emphasizes the attestation factor of Jesus’ miracles. He also argues that the miracle stories do not have the same compelling, evidential force for us today as did the original signs in their context (pp. 102–3), raising two questions: 1) in the light of natural man’s fallenness, were these miracles designed to be directly and immediately compelling? and 2) by drawing such a sharp dichotomy between the then and now has the author not undermined the attestation factor of Scripture?

Brown next points out the shortcomings of appealing to the resurrection of Jesus for the apologetical purposes of arguing from the greater to the lesser miracles and also arguing that the resurrection proved Jesus’ divinity (pp. 104–7). Yet he interjects his own contention that “the resurrection of Jesus is the one necessary explanation of the existence of the Christian church and its faith” (p. 106), thereby espousing verificationism.

Chap. 8 closes with the introduction of Brown’s major subthesis, upon which subsequent discussions will be built:

One part of the picture still needs some unscrambling. It has to do with the difference between a sign and a proof. Signs and proofs are not the same thing. . . . This last point applies to the miracles of Jesus as "signs" no less than road signs. As we saw in the last chapter, one of the characteristic biblical words for a miracle was the word "sign." But in the Bible miraculous signs do not have a purely external function. They do not function like an external proof or guarantee that what is being said has the divine stamp of approval on it. The signs themselves are actually part of the message. . . . They were not external to the message but the embodiment of it. In the same way baptism and the Lord's supper are to be seen in the tradition of prophetic signs.

It is in this tradition—or, to use the expression that we have earlier used, this *frame of reference*—that we can best appreciate the miracle stories of the Gospels. The miracle stories do not function as external proofs of the truth of the message. They are part of the message itself. They are an embodiment of the message. They are like acted parables. They have a story to tell. They confront us as signs that point beyond themselves to the one who performs them. To read them correctly, we need to understand the sign language to which they belong [pp. 107–9].

His subthesis stimulates both interest and concern.

In "Remaking the Puzzle" (chaps. 9–11) the author turns his attention to the four gospels. Preliminarily, he vies for an inaugurated eschatology (pp. 111–15) and continues to argue that Deuteronomy 13, 17, and 18 are exclusively determinative for an understanding of the religious leaders' reactions to Jesus' miracles. There is a shaky embarkation into the gospel data as the author challenges the perspicuous interpretation of "a voice from heaven" (p. 118). This is followed by Brown's forcing of his messianic interpretation of the baptism with the Holy Spirit (cf. his "Spirit Christology," p. 121) upon the account of Mark 1:21–27:

Mark presents a contrast between the two spirits: the unclean spirit in the man and the Holy Spirit who has descended upon Jesus and who now leads him. In Jesus' action of driving out the unclean spirit Mark intends us to see how Jesus was now beginning to fulfill John the Baptist's prophecy. It is the first instance of baptizing with the Holy Spirit [p. 119; cf. pp. 127, 133 for Brown's tenacious and often far-fetched application of this assumption].

Furthermore, he once again leaves with the reader the clear but errant impression that the Pharisees were merely applying OT theology when they reacted to Jesus' miracles as they did:

The event leads to the decision of the Pharisees to destroy Jesus. Mark's account brings out the ironic contrast between Jesus' action by which the man's hand was "restored" and the Pharisees' action in taking counsel how to "destroy" Jesus. What prompted the action of the Pharisees, who enjoyed a reputation for their piety and devotion? The reason is to be found in the explanation we have given. They saw Jesus as an evildoer, a blasphemer who was flagrantly undermining the law and leading the people astray with his signs, wonders, and false teaching. The only course open for them was to follow the instructions of Deuteronomy 13 concerning such matters and purge the evil out of their midst [p. 120].

Brown makes a transition when he says, "Alongside this explicit Spirit Christology, Mark presents an implicit Word Christology" (p. 121). His argument would be more palatable if the referents bound to "explicit" and

"implicit" had been reversed. Nevertheless, Brown rightly stresses that "Mark's Spirit Christology is inextricably linked with a Word Christology" (p. 122). Many of the alleged parallels made by Brown in his ensuing discussion are forced or at least significantly stretched (pp. 122-30).

Chap. 10 ("The Pictures of Matthew, Luke, and John") is designed to be step two in Brown's process of "Remaking the Puzzle." Herein the author restricts his data analysis even more and is thereby open to the criticism he has directed towards others, speaking in generalities. This makes it quite convenient for him to interpret the scriptural data through the two lenses that he has prescribed: "These two factors [i.e., "Spirit Christology" and the leaders' reactions allegedly based upon Deuteronomy 13] are keys to understanding what is going on not only in Mark but also in Matthew, Luke, and John" (p. 131). Nevertheless, some of his generalizations are valid.

A brief survey of Luke (pp. 140-44) is followed by an unjustifiably abbreviated scanning of John's Gospel (pp. 144-50). Certainly the fourth gospel's contribution to the understanding of miracles deserves more than a six-page treatment (e.g., cf. his superficial treatment of John 10:22ff. on p. 147). In addition, most of the author's efforts are directed towards the alignment of selected data with his previously mentioned "key factors." However, Brown does remind the reader that "John develops the theme that the works of Jesus can be recognized as the works of the Father" (p. 147). The author also correctly emphasizes the fact that Jesus' "miracles . . . had the character of prophetic signs" (p. 148), but he does not mention the apologetical controversy that this fact generates. More objectionable is the fact that only one short paragraph deals with Jesus' miracles and the reciprocal responses of belief and unbelief (pp. 149-50). Even though this volume is a survey work aimed at a general audience, its cursory treatment of the miracles in John is unjustified.

In chap. 11 ("Step 3: The Emerging Picture") are found both condemnable and commendable remarks. For example, Brown's discussions relating to the coin in the fish's mouth, the water turned into wine, and the Gerasene swine indicate that he feels compelled to scandalize some of the most academically embarrassing miracle accounts (cf. pp. 153-56). On the other hand, his presuppositional acknowledgment of the Christian's "frame of reference" is commendable (cf. p. 158).

Brown offers a generally credible summary of "Healing and Faith" (pp. 167-68). In answering the question "How are people expected to tell the true from the false?" the author notes appropriately that "all true miracles are 'in character.' They are in character with the work and words of God, as we know them from other parts of God's revelation" (p. 169). The author then states that "the miracles of Jesus were not all-purpose miracles that simply impressed people by their sheer supernatural power. They were miracles that fulfilled prophecy. The evangelists saw in Jesus the fulfillment of Isaiah 35:5-6" (p. 170; cf. pp. 170-71).

The chapter closes with an expected return to the author's Deuteronomy 13 construct in application to the messianic secret (pp. 171-72) and with an equally anticipated emphasis upon his "Spirit" and "Word" Christology (pp. 172-75). Labored applications are again evident.

The discussion takes a contemporary turn in Part III: "Can We Expect Miracles Today?" Chap. 12 ("Health and Wealth for All?") examines the "bewildering smorgasbord of competing claims" in reference to the controversial issue of healing (p. 180). The discussion is organized into two basic categories: 1) "The Appeal To Experience" (pp. 181–90), and 2) "The Theological Arguments" (pp. 190–203). Brown expresses adequate cautions concerning appeals to experience (cf. pp. 185, 88, 90). In reference to the theological arguments he begins by not accepting the longer ending of Mark (pp. 191–92); therefore, he concludes: "In short, the church has no specific ongoing mandate from Jesus to heal that is recorded in authentic Scripture" (p. 192). There is a pointed discussion on "The experience of the Apostles" (pp. 192–95), in which Brown aptly develops the "paradox" of the afflicted miracle worker (pp. 194–95). Some of his least ambivalent conclusions occur in this context:

The account Paul presents here of his experience (to which may be added the picture that we get from Acts and letters like Philippians) clearly gives the lie to the belief that the Christian life is one continuous success story. . . . It is worth noting the miraculous healing was by no means the norm in the New Testament [pp. 194–95].

Concerning James 5:13–16, Brown unfortunately leans toward the early church's application of the passage to the practice of anointing the dying (pp. 195–97). In a subsequent discussion on "Healing and the Incarnation" he rightly reminds all that "there is nothing to suggest that because Jesus and Paul did miracles, the same gift is passed on to all members of the church" (pp. 197–98). Also commendable are his answers to those who argue for the continuance of sign miracles based upon a narrow interpretation of John 14:12–14 (pp. 198–99). Equally satisfying are his brief treatments of "Healing and the Atonement" (p. 200) and "Salvation and Wholeness" (pp. 201–3). He expands the latter discussion in the concluding section of the chapter ("Dangers of Expecting Covenanted Healing," pp. 203–5). This portion contains the most important exhortation of the whole volume as Brown's climactic summary indicates:

Perfect health and healing are not things that we have any right to expect just because we are Christians. They are not guaranteed to us as our birthright any more than total and instantaneous sanctification. Nor has anyone the right to hold out promises of them to people if only they will believe [p. 205].

"My Grace Is Sufficient" (chap. 13) bolsters the author's previous warnings and pleas. The author also reiterates and summarizes his previous conclusions:

My reflections on experience and my study of the New Testament suggest to me that the miracles that we read about in the New Testament were bound up with the manifestation of Jesus as the Son of God and his decisive work in salvation history. But they are not typical ongoing events. The signs and wonders belong to God's special saving acts, but they are not everyday occurrences. There is no specific mention of healing in the ongoing mandate of Christ to the church. There is no unqualified promise of physical health and healing to those who believe, any more than there is an unqualified promise of wealth and prosperity [pp. 208–9].

Following up he also notes that “this is not to say that one should not pray for healing. Nor is it to say that one may pray for anything but healing!” (p. 209). He again deserves commendation for repudiating the common tactics of faith healers:

We cannot go on to draw the conclusion that only our lack of faith prevents us from being healed. Few things are more cruel than to say to someone who is crippled with pain or terminally ill that it is only his or her lack of faith that prevents healing. . . . It is simplistic and dangerous to take biblical texts out of context and use them as pretexts for justifying our practices. . . . It is wrong-headed to take prophecies like Isaiah 42:1–3 and 61:1–2, which applied specifically to Jesus, and to apply them to ourselves and our ministries [pp. 210–11].

In addition, “Nothing in the New Testament suggests that all physical illness is attributable to demonic activity,” nor do we find “any warrant in the New Testament for cursing particular diseases” (p. 212). He also strongly rejects the wholesale equation of mental illness and demon possession (pp. 212–14).

Because of the author’s firm conclusions on these crucial issues he anticipates and answers those who would accuse him of espousing “a semi-secularized view of the world” (pp. 214–16). Brown’s major conclusion pertaining to apologetical methodology is manifested when he again asserts that Jesus’ ministry of healing and exorcism “was not designed to soften people up for accepting his message. It was not a kind of bargaining chip that he used to entice people” (p. 216). The volume comes to rest in a homily on Paul’s thorn in the flesh which stresses the pre-eminent lesson for all Christians: “My grace is sufficient”!

This new work by Brown on miracles does meet a need. Parts I and III are particularly suitable to a general lay audience. Minimal cautions need to be attached to them. Although Part II contains many valuable insights, it could confuse and/or mislead the reader for reasons previously mentioned. Due to the combination of its brevity and its postulation of some unique interpretations, it is advised that the reader of that portion be a solidly foundationed Berean. On the other hand, the same portion provides for the exegete/theologian a convenient summary (in comparison with *Miracles and the Critical Mind*) of Brown’s contributions to the ongoing discussion concerning miracles.