

## BOOK REVIEWS

French L. Arrington, and Stronstad, Roger, eds., *Full Life Bible Commentary to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999. 1629 pp. ISBN: 0-310-20118-7, US\$39.99.

This volume was produced to be a companion volume to the *Full Life Study Bible*. French Arrington and Roger Stronstad, both respected Pentecostal scholars, have brought together the fruit of sixteen New Testament scholars (all card-carrying Pentecostals), in this very useful volume. Although having so many different contributors necessarily results in some variety in form and quality, there is sufficient uniformity in presentation so that the reader is not left with too many bewildering questions.

As one would expect, each writer gives maximum attention to the references to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. For example, in the excellent chapter on First Corinthians, Anthony Palma works through issues related to the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 12-14) carefully, employing more than 30 pages to accomplish this.

An interesting divergence from traditional presentation, the editors arrange the Gospels so that John appears first, followed by the Synoptics, so they can be reviewed together. And, the last of the Synoptics, Luke, is coupled with its companion volume, Acts, to form a single entry. This allows French Arrington, the writer of the Luke-Acts commentary, to feature the unique approach of Luke, as both historian and theologian. The result is a strong case for the Pentecostal experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit, as an experience subsequent to the new birth, and accompanied by speaking in other tongues (p. 543).

Jerry Camry-Hoggatt, writing on the Gospel of Mark, adopts a "reader-response" hermeneutic, but disavows a postmodernist commitment. He sees in this approach a resonance with Pentecostal preaching (pp. 257-58). Although he points out the reasons the long ending of Mark is not likely in the original Markan text, Camry-Hoggatt handles this matter with tact and grace, so that Pentecostals who may feel short-changed by the loss of a favorite passage are not left comfortless (pp. 372-73).

Tim Jenney's presentation of the Book of Revelation is a departure from the traditional futuristic pre-millennial interpretations common in many Pentecostal churches. He sees Revelation as written in 68 or 69 AD, long before apostle John's death in the mid-90s. Revelation was written as apocalyptic material for a church having endured the suffering caused by Nero. The message of Revelation is an appeal to hold steady, since the Lord is going to return in triumph. Jenney gives little room for

speculative attempts to hitch various symbols in Revelation to future events. His objective is to focus attention on the central message of the triumphant Lord of history.

Most of the chapters conclude with extensive recommendations for further reading. Elaborate outlines, numerous charts, photographs, and extended notes on special topics, are helpful aids to the reader. I find in the book an excellent blend of serious scholarship (which addresses important issues, including significant textual variants) with strong, uniform commitment to the main theses of the Pentecostal revival. It reads well, being written in straight-forward language. The average layperson will readily profit from examination of any portion, since it serves as a most useful reference work.

Here is indeed a tool that any Pentecostal or Charismatic will find helpful, whether he is looking for help in planning for a sermon or a Bible study, or for personal devotional study.

Steven J. Brooks

Synan, Vinson. *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001. 492 pp. ISBN: 0-7852-4550-2. US\$29.99.

Vinson Synan, dean of the School of Divinity, Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia, since 1994, is a recognized Pentecostal scholar and world-renown Renewal statesman. Having grown up within the Pentecostal Holiness denomination, he speaks with insight and understanding from within the Pentecostal tradition. Yet, his broad spectrum of warm relationships within the larger church world give him a sympathetic perspective on the world-wide Charismatic movement.

This, the latest of Synan's several books, compresses an immense amount of material into one volume, furnishing for the serious student a wealth of information approaching the character of an encyclopedia. As the title suggests, the objective of Synan's book is to survey the background, the origins, the development and subsequent history of the modern Pentecostal movement. Included in the 15 chapters are well-documented essays on the various strands of the enormous Charismatic renewal movements. Nine writers have written eight chapters, complementing the seven chapters provided by Synan himself. Robert Owens, Gary McGee, Peter Hocken, Susan Hyatt, David Daniels, Pablo Deiros, Everett Wilson, David Harrell, and David Barrett, each

recognized scholars themselves, add color and depth to the book. Chapters on women in ministry, on African-American Pentecostalism, on Hispanic Pentecostalism, on Pentecostal missions, and on more recent renewal episodes and phenomena are important and useful additions to the book. David Harrell's chapter on "Healers and Televangelists After World War II" is surprisingly restrained and balanced in view of the controversies that swirled around these ministries. Harrell is an interested non-Pentecostal observer of this colorful and controversial phase of the modern revival. He could have been much more critical.

David Barrett, eminent Christian statistician, has provided a study of recent trends related to the modern Pentecostal and Charismatic movement, supplying useful charts and lots of numbers. Particularly helpful is his unraveling of the many complex strands within this burgeoning dimension of modern Christianity. Barrett has supplied an interesting appendix, titled "A Chronology of Renewal in the Holy Spirit." At the conclusion of this historical odyssey he gives a prognosis of future world events, based on his understanding of biblical theology—an unusual exercise in speculation that seems a bit out of place in a volume devoted to history and facts.

The book lends itself to classroom use quite ably. Inset articles, adequate use of photographs (some in color), and even a color fold-out chart, titled "The Pentecostal/Charismatic Genealogy Tree" add vividness to the presentation. Each chapter concludes with suggestions for further reading. End-notes appear at the back of the book, together with a thorough index. There is, however, no comprehensive bibliography.

Many books have been written about the modern Pentecostal revival, with some scholars acknowledging that the rise of Pentecostalism and its accompanying Charismatic associations, is possibly the greatest story within Christianity in the Twentieth Century. In spite of the spate of books, Synan's book adds fresh insights, new detail, and a roadmap through the twists and turns the renewal has taken, especially in recent years. It is an extraordinarily complex story. This book provides a most useful guide through the forest.

This is a descriptive study. One should not expect to glean theological reflection from it. Theological matters are not within the scope of intention. A weakness in the book, from an Asian perspective, will be the very heavy focus on the American scene. McGee's chapter on Pentecostal missions addresses the world-wide outreach of the American and European Pentecostal churches, but apart from this, little attention is given to issues and movements important in Asia. For example, in the

chapter on the renewal within the Catholic Church, the brief references to the Philippines fail to mention the very large Charismatic sub-groups within the Catholic tradition, such as Couples for Christ and El Shaddai.

Synan's book promises to fill an important place as a textbook for the classroom and for the earnest individual wishing to gain current perspective on the amazing work of the Holy Spirit in the world today.

William W. Menzies

Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998. Paper, 470 pp. ISBN:0-8308-1596-1. US\$24.99.

*Jesus the Miracle Worker* (*JMW* from here on) is in many ways an expansion of the implications laid out in Australian scholar and pastor Graham Twelftree's earlier work, *Jesus the Exorcist*. He here expands his view of Jesus' miracles to get a better grasp of who Jesus was; it may be that this was his intent beginning as early as his work on his thesis at the University of Nottingham. Jesus is an exorcist, but Twelftree proposes that we best understand the historical Jesus as a miracle worker who, in his person, ushered in the kingdom of God:

He was a most powerful and prolific wonder worker, considering that in his miracles God was powerfully present ushering in the first stage of the longed-for eschaton of the experience of his powerful presence (pp. 358-59).

As this quote demonstrates, Twelftree is after bigger game than a mere thesis; how does *JMW* contribute towards his goal? He begins by treating the possibility of miracles from a philosophical/theological/experiential standpoint, demonstrating that much of the animus against the possibility of miracles is merely the imposition of the modern worldview upon the old. Twelftree begins by viewing the entire record of miracles in the Gospels, examining each book's miraculous content, and then individual miracles by grouping types. In his examination of all miracle types, Twelftree demonstrates that he fully understands the canons of criticism, subjecting the Gospel accounts to rigorous scrutiny, seeking to ferret out in the reports that which would have been reported by eyewitnesses of the events, that which might be redaction by the writers. Twelftree establishes that the Gospel reports are, on the whole, more accurate than not; yeoman work is done, for example, to establish

the stilling of the storm by a command of Jesus on the sea of Galilee is at least possible, instead of being merely fictitious. Twelftree admits that absolute certainty regarding this miracle cannot be produced; but “*historians* once again have to leave open the question of the origin of this story” (p. 317).

The heart of *JMW* is Part Three, “Jesus and the Miracles.” After a substantive discussion of historicity, Twelftree advances the proposition that history is more than the fictive creation of the writers’ imagination—particularly if the history is written within the lifetime of those who might be expected to protest sheer fiction. Accordingly, history as story (which he identifies the Gospels as being) does not equal sheer fiction. From this point, he advances to consider Jesus as a miracle worker in his milieu, and finds Jesus to be unique from his background. In the 200 year period on either side of Jesus’ lifetime, there are precious few persons recorded to be miracle workers; those who petition God and receive positive answers are many, but Jesus alone seems to work miracles by virtue of who he is. When one considers this in connection with the fact that the coming Messiah was not expected by Jews to be a miracle worker (and yet Jesus is the miracle worker par excellence), one can only come to the conclusion that the vividly described miracles are more than creative backdrop.

Beyond this is Jesus’ own understanding of the import of his miracles. Twelftree contends, as he did in his previous work, that Jesus saw his miracles as a part of the casting out of Satan through the expansion of the Kingdom of God; to this he adds that Jesus is unique from all other miracle workers in that:

He generally expected faith or confidence in him to be the prior condition for a miracle...he would have been conscious of the personal relationship with him that was precondition for experiencing a miracle—as it was also an expected response to his miracles (p. 265).

Accordingly, Twelftree concludes that Jesus would have known that he was the anointed one of God—the Messiah. It cannot then be avoided, that “the miracles of Jesus reveal his identity as God himself at work: indeed, God is encountered in the miracles” (p. 343). Everything from this contention on is summary.

There are a few omissions which cannot be glossed over; one is the lack of interaction with John P. Meier’s examination of the historical Jesus’ miracles in his *A Marginal Jew*, where Meier adopts the novel position of affirming that Jesus certainly *seemed* to his contemporaries to be a miracle worker while not admitting that Jesus *was* a miracle worker.

On another score, those of a more conservative bent may not take kindly to Twelftree's supposition that the Gospels are "history as story" instead of "newspaper facts" history. But these are relatively minor details. Twelftree has established a Jesus critical to the Pentecostal/Charismatic understanding of what the kingdom of God is about, and we would do well to listen.

Steven J. Brooks

John Thannickal. *The Holy Spirit: An Appeal for Maturity*. Bangalore, India: Neva Jeeva Ashram, n.d. 60 Rupees.

When I first looked at this book, its potential was apparent in that an Indian Assemblies of God minister of forty years had written on the Holy Spirit. He would naturally bring his Indian background and Pentecostal perspective into his discussion of the Holy Spirit. In this book, the author emphasizes the need to reform and reevaluate the Pentecostals understanding and practice concerning the working of the Holy Spirit.

The first few chapters deal with some fundamental elements of pneumatology from his perspective. The middle section of the book is John Thannickal's analysis of the Acts 2, 10, 19 and 1 Corinthians 14 with regards to "tongues." The last few chapters delineate the writer's position on the "initial physical evidence" and his position on the early Classical Pentecostal history.

I have to admit that I had high hopes when I first read this book, but I quickly found several fundamental problems with it. First, one of the major difficulties of this work is the author's suggestion that Luke's usage of speaking in "other tongues" refers to the divinely inspired Hebrew from Greek speakers to a Jewish audience and Greek from Aramaic speakers to a Greek audience. In other words, speaking in other tongues is equated with speaking in any language other than their mother tongue (pp. 52-3, 70, 79 etc.). Related to this is the assumption that Greek/Hebrew (Aramaic) distinction was the reason for the divine gift of tongues, and there is no appreciable group who operated in both languages equally well or comfortably (e.g., p. 70). So, the 120 at Pentecost spoke in many tongues and Peter spoke in the "other tongue" of Greek for his message in Acts 2 (pp. 46-56), Cornelius in Acts 10 spoke in the "other tongue" of Hebrew or Aramaic (pp. 57-66), in Ephesus the ex-disciples of John spoke in Greek (pp. 67-72), and in 1

Corinthians 14 the “other tongue” was Hebrew which the Greeks of Corinth could not understand (pp. 73-88).

For Thannickal, in Acts 2, 10 and 19 “tongues” is referred to only because it was a divinely inspired demonstration to overcome of linguistic (and other) divisions within the church. The author assumes that, everywhere “tongues” is mentioned in Acts, that the audience attending understands it, whereas biblically only Acts 2 specifically mentions this fact. Further, he presupposes that there was a stark Greek/Hebrew division even in language, which only the Holy Spirit through tongues could overcome. There is little doubt that Acts 10 helps overcome the Jew/Gentile separation that the Jewish church carried on from their religious past. The fundamental problem is that aside from the above-mentioned passages there is no real evidence for this position. Neither is Acts 8, the Samaritan conversion, cited as an important Jewish/gentile division due to the fact it does not mention “tongues,” and the author assumes that it was because there was no multi-linguistic or multi-racial problem. Thus, Simon was trying to buy the “apostolic authority” not “tongues” (pp. 109, 101). Whereas it is evident that the Day of Pentecost was a clear renunciation of the Tower of Babel divisions (as he notes by a quote from John Stott on p. 49), however, Luke’s usage of “tongues” throughout the book (semantically and theologically) is not used in the way this author suggests. Further, the divisions in the church at Corinth were from a very different source than the Hebrew (Aramaic) vs. Greek speaking division that the author suggests. There is little room in his scheme for those that feel comfortable in two very different languages without one being the “other tongue.” A careful reading of First Corinthians definitely demonstrates a division in the church, but to conclude that it was a Jewish/gentile division is highly improbable.

Further, to suggest that the “other tongues” of 1 Cor 14 was the Jews speaking Hebrew which the Greek-speakers did not understand, and thus, Paul’s statement to not speak without an interpreter present has several problems.

The author also suggests that when Paul says that he thanks God that he spoke in tongues more than the Corinthians, he was referring to the fact that he spoke Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin, etc. To support his case, he could only cite two eighteenth and nineteenth century writers—Adam Clarke and John Lightfoot.

Further, he does not take seriously the standard definitions of “other tongues” in biblical studies or theology, and, in particular, the activity of

the Pentecostal/Charismatic movements, which demonstrate a very different element of the *charismata* than what was presented.

Inherent in the discussions of both the Acts and Corinthian passages is the basic problem of the hermeneutical methods demonstrated. The author's work emphasizes a certain theological position loosely based on the Acts 2 passage where the audience understood the "other tongues," and the Acts 10 passage where there is a clear overcoming of Jewish/gentile division, and applies that understanding to all passages which refer to "tongues." In other words, a theological position determines the reading of the texts (in very much the same way as feminist theologians or dispensationalists do). Further, the author mentions twenty other texts in Acts where being filled with the Spirit is mentioned, but there is no tongues mentioned. His problem is that he reads all these texts the same, and does not distinguish between summary statements and records of salvations from extended texts expressing major theological points. Further, part of his discussion of these points is that they do not mention "tongues" because of the lack of the multi-linguistic division there, thus, there was no need for "tongues." Thus, reading his theological position into the biblical text.

Another difficulty is his portrayal of Pentecostal history. Whereas he states that the main problem was that from Charles Parham on, the Pentecostal experience was declared to be the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues. The author compares the "Topeka tongues" with the "biblical tongues" demonstrating that Topeka and the early Pentecostals, since they taught tongues as a sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, were non-biblical and forced the position due to the experience (cf. Acts 2, 10).

However, the author did not take seriously numerous testimonies of those whom when seeking the Lord ended up speaking in "tongues," nor those who actively opposed the Pentecostal stance who later started speaking in "tongues." Also, it seems that he did not know that glossalalia has been found throughout church history finding expression in various groups and individuals. Unfortunately, the author's discussion of Topeka vs. biblical tongues and the corresponding horizontal vs. vertical focus took on a pejorative tone against Pentecostals. Whereas he did have some valid concerns about the way Pentecostal doctrine and practitioners have been presented publicly, sometimes the tone counteracted the possibility for positive interaction.



His interaction with the major Pentecostal/Charismatic thinkers is extremely limited. In fact, he cites more anti-Pentecostal or non-Pentecostal writers than Pentecostal authors. Further, most of the Pentecostal sources cited are from popular works such as articles from the *Pentecostal Evangel* which are meant for the Pentecostal popular audience, and are not major treatises on this field. On the issue of tongues being the “initial evidence” of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he does not cite any of the major works on the topic such as *Initial Evidence* edited by Gary McGee, or the two special issues of the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* dedicated to this issue.

He does not seem to be aware of the common distinction between tongues as the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and tongues as one of the *charismata*. Likewise there is little hint that he is familiar with current works on the nature of the tongues as initial evidence and the baptism of the Holy Spirit found in the writings of Frank Macchia, Simon Chan, and others. Nor is there any sign that the author is aware of the major biblical analysis of the Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, and 19 passages and their relation to the issue of initial evidence of tongues as discussed by Harold Hunter, Robert Menzies, Roger Stronstad, and others.

In light of the above discussion, I would suggest that this work be read by those who have a good understanding of the basic issues, rather than by most within the Pentecostal or Charismatic audience. For one whom on the back cover is described as “an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God for 40 years” and having had “Pentecostal ministers” for parents, he does not seem to understand basic theological or biblical positions held by the Pentecostals; and more accurately quoted and promoted anti-Pentecostal positions of the more dispensational/fundamentalist perspective. Due to this, beginning students will probably become greatly confused by this book, if they do not already know proper hermeneutical methods, Pentecostal history or Pentecostal theology. He does have some fresh perspectives and some good things to say, but, unfortunately, it is lost within these fundamental weaknesses.

Paul W. Lewis