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In spirituality, the term “horizon” may be used to define one’s particular context. This term addresses how one’s understanding of an event or circumstance is shaped by one’s particular location (context). This term could also be used to describe the essence of Kevin Belmonte’s new book on miracles. The word comes from the Latin word *miraculum*—“object of wonder and *mirari*.” As Belmonte states, the word *mirari* means to wonder (xii). He brings his vast background in church history to this collection of stories of wondrous events, i.e. miracles. The book offers a “guided tour” of miracles in the form of a collection of stories from biblical times to the present. He sees miracles as evidence of the Power of God; these events are ways that God has sought to draw those who experience them into Godself. Kevin acknowledges that miracles have happened in variety of settings. While he gives a passing nod to Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox communities, his book is primarily situated within the Protestant tradition, and he writes from this particular horizon.

*Miraculous* is divided into two parts: Miracles of the Ancient World, which focuses on miracles within the context of biblical texts, and Miracles in the Lives of God’s People, which surveys miracles in Early Christianity to the present age.

Before introducing the reader to the vast array of miracles portrayed in the Old and New Testament, Belmonte divides miracles in the bible into five categories. These are (1) confirmatory miracles in which God shows support of events and persons; (2) judgmental miracles that are evidenced in the plagues and such events as the “fall of the walls of Jericho”; (3) miracles of mercy that are evidenced in the array of healings that take place in both the Old and New Testament; (4) miracles of deliverance that are focused primarily in the Old Testament, such as Daniel’s deliverance from the fiery furnace; and (5) miracles of divine vision that God gave to individuals whom God favored to reveal God’s person for God’s people.

In part two of his book, Belmonte moves to miracles and miraculous events in the lives of men and women from early Christianity to modern times. In this section of the book, he introduces the reader to various key moments and stories in the lives of God’s people, including St. Augustine, St. Perpetua, Julian of Norwich, and Martin Luther, as well as miraculous events that are occurring today on the continent of Africa. Of added note is the section that addresses a challenge to the Christian concept of miracles as posed by philosopher David Hume. It is in this section where one clearly sees Belmonte’s horizon.

The section on Africa presents a disturbing aspect of this book. I found this section reinforces the notion of Africa as a continent in need of a Christian missionary presence. While he mentions such early African religious as Athanasius of Alexandria, his focus is primarily on Africa as a great area of mission activity. Of particular note is his description of Africa as a “war-torn and disease ravaged continent,” while at the same time seeing the faith of
Africa as one that can renew the faith of the West (249). Again, the author reinforces some unfortunate stereotypes about the continent and peoples of Africa.

The primary audience for this collection of stories would be one who wishes to expand their understanding and view of miracles, particularly within the Protestant context. It is interesting to note that within the Catholic tradition, miracles are more readily accepted, and in many ways, what Belmonte is sharing with his audience is a concept of sacramentality that acknowledges God’s grace and presence in all things. A Catholic reader may find the book overly simplistic, but room exists for the reader to be given a history lesson in Protestant historical religious tradition. While the book may be a useful introduction to one’s understanding of miracles, it should not be considered the reader’s sole introduction to the phenomena.