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Miracles: An Encyclopedia of People, Places, and Supernatural Events from Antiquity to the Present [review]

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work will lose some relevance and currency. Nonetheless, it provides a solid introduction to the major players, events, and ideologies that led to the development of ISIS, its rapid military successes, and the beginning of the group's unraveling. It is recommended for undergraduate serving academic and public libraries.—*Brent D. Singleton, Coordinator for Reference Services, California State University, San Bernardino*

Miracles: An Encyclopedia of People, Places, and Supernatural Events from Antiquity to the Present. Edited by Patrick J. Hayes. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2016. 478 pages. Acid free \$89 (ISBN: 978-1-61069-598-5) E-book available (978-1-61069-599-2), call for pricing.

We live in a world with incredible diversity, and the stated goal of *Miracles: An Encyclopedia of People, Places, and Supernatural Events from Antiquity to the Present* (MEPPSEAP) is “to approach the concept of miracle from different perspectives” (xvii). Specifically, the editor notes ethnic traditions, geographical locations, periods, writings of theologians and philosophers, and modern science as frameworks that are mined for the material included in this one volume reference resource.

Working with eighty-five contributors from a dozen countries with positions in academic settings, different religious training centers, and independent settings, the editor, an archivist for the Redemptorists of the Baltimore Province in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, has taken on a large task. Pointing to Ebenezer Cobham Brewer's *A Dictionary of Miracles Imitative, Realistic, and Dogmatic* (Lippincott 1894) as his example, the editor states that “it has been well over a century since the last attempt at assembling a similar volume (xvii).” Hayes admits a kind of “pride of place” for Christianity due to the volume of Christian-related issues covered in MEPPSEAP. He also recognizes a need to look at “how other faiths” see miracles, and this work does provide a wider range of content than the work of Brewer. For MEPPSEAP, outside of Christendom, miracles are discussed as evident in Judaism, Sufism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism.

To provide an initial framework, as discussed further below, the editor's introductory essay includes “Defining Miracles: Theology, Philosophy, Science.” A short history of miracles, and sections on hagiography, people and miracles, and the literature on miracles rounds out the essay. Following the essay an interesting Timeline begins with the Hindu Vedas (ca. 1500–500 BC) and concludes with the canonization of Pope John Paul II.

In the front matter the 204 entry titles are listed both alphabetically and in a topical guide under the broad categories of “Era,” “Geographic Location,” and “Religious Community.” An alphabetic arrangement is also used for the encyclopedia entries which cover a wide range of issues, topics, and phenomena. The collection opens with a general essay “Africa, Miracles in,” and ends by discussing a critic of miracles “Woolston, Thomas.” Understandably, the entries vary in length. A paragraph covers the “Georgetown

Miracles,” and five and a half pages with twenty-four further reading references addresses “Latin America, Miracles in.” Every entry has “further reading,” with “see also” references for some. The sample of entries read by this reviewer were informative, readable and suggestive. A twenty-two-page index, and fifteen-page bibliography are also provided.

In comparison, a recent work with lengthier overview essays by eighteen contributors on key related subjects is *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles*, edited by Graham Twelftree (Cambridge 2011). David Weddle's *Miracles: Wonder and Meaning in World Religions* (New York University Press 2010) is sole-authored.

An example of related coverage in MEPPSEAP and Twelftree is how each presents an opening framework on the meaning of miracles. Hayes introductory essay (noted above) lists a variety of questions, and it looks at reports of miracles with one page describing those performed by Saint Francis Xavier. The essay also considers how miracles function, especially in the Roman Catholic faith, and notes skeptical treatment, for example that of the magician Harry Houdini. In contrast, in Weddle the fourteen-page chapter “What is a Miracle?” authored by philosophy professor David Basinger involves an explication of arguments focused on the meaning of the concept of miracle, with notes and references dominated by recent publications in philosophy. The following fifteen-page chapter looks at “The Meanings of Miracle.” Also, compared to the two-page entry with eight further reading references for “Islam and Miracles” in MEPPSEAP, the essay “Miracles in Islam” in the Twelftree work is fifteen pages with twelve references. Conversely, three pages on Lourdes in MEPPSEAP compare to one sentence in Twelftree, and the range of entry topics in MEPPSEAP is more extensive.

For a different set of critical perspectives potentially relevant to some of the topics covered in MEPPSEAP, readers could consider the *Encyclopedia of Unbelief*, edited by Tom Flynn (Prometheus 2007), for example finding there three entries and further reading for Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. The entry and further reading for “Faith Healing” in Flynn could be also considered next to that for “Healing” in MEPPSEAP.

The editor recognizes that this new encyclopedia is not “a comprehensive guide” (xxviii). His intent is that it can be a ready reference tool. As a basic resource for quick reference this work could be useful for school, public, and academic libraries.—*Paul Fehrmann, Humanities and Social Sciences Librarian, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio*

The Persian Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia. By Mehrdad Kia. Empires of the World. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2016. 2 vols. Acid free \$198 (ISBN 978-1-61069-390-5). E-book available (978-61069-391-2).

This encyclopedia is the first English language reference source to focus exclusively on ancient Iran during the period of its great empires before the arrival of Islam from 700 BCE to 651 CE. The major empires were the Medes, the Achaemenids,