At the outset Kee, a New Testament scholar, states that he aims to offer a critique of the prevailing historical methods in the study of religion, and to propose a new historical method which more faithfully portrays and interprets religious phenomena in their original setting and which seeks to develop safeguards against imposing modern categories on ancient data (p. 1). "This method insists that the essential requirement for interpretation of a text is to read it in context: not merely in literary context, but in the wider, deeper social and cultural context in which both author and audience lived, and in which the language they employed took on the connotations to which the interpreter must seek to be sensitive" (p. 3). Although this may seem to be a truism, Kee tries to demonstrate in ch. 1 ("When the Golden Bough Breaks") that all his predecessors have failed in this respect. From Descartes through Bultmann, students of miracle in the ancient world have worked with an unsound methodology. In ch. 2 ("Personal Identity and World-Construction") Max Weber's concept of the ideal type turns out to be the necessary antidotum that can be of much use in the recovery of the life-world of the ancients that the interpreter has to enter in order to understand what miracle meant to them. After these abstract methodological and polemical chapters, Kee turns to the ancient sources themselves. In chs. 3 and 4 ("Asklepios the Healer" and "Isis") he explores the evolution of the Asclepius and Isis cults and especially the changing views of miracle attendant on this evolution: Asclepius as medical and cult healer in the classical period, as benefactor and personal guide in the hellenistic period, and as savior in the imperial period; Isis as agent of order and maintainer of the law in hellenistic times, as benefactress and dispenser of health or immortality or cosmic wisdom in the Roman period. In ch. 5 ("Miracle and the Apocalyptic Tradition") Kee discusses the varying functions of miracle stories in post-biblical Jewish writings and in the Gospel of Mark. Ch. 6 ("Miracle in History and Romance") deals with the views of miracle in Suetonius, Tacitus, Josephus, and the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (and Acts). Ch. 7 ("Miracle as Universal Symbol") treats of miracle as sign and symbol in the Gospel of John, in Philo, Plutarch, and Aelius Aristides. In ch. 8 ("Miracles as Propaganda in Pagan and Christian Romances")
Kee discusses the ancient novels, Philostratus' *Vita Apollonii*, the critical voices of Lucian and Celsus, and the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. In the conclusion the author says that, although in the hellenistic and early imperial period there is a general agreement that through miracles the gods disclose their divine purposes, within that general framework there is a wide range of meanings and functions of miracles: health or welfare, union with the god or disclosure of one's possibility for participation in divine cosmic purpose, defeat of evil powers and vindication of the oppressed, religious propaganda, divine attestation of the leader figure, etc.

There is much in this book that is methodologically sound and there are many illuminating and valuable remarks. Nevertheless, there are some reasons why the reviewer has read it with a steadily growing irritation. Firstly, there is the discrepancy between the high claims of the author, who promises to put the study of ancient miracle stories on a solid basis for the first time, and the far from original contents of the book. Much of it, although worthwhile to read, is common knowledge. The mountain has produced a mouse. Further there are many mistakes and signs of great carelessness. To give some examples at random: Kee claims to have used Behr's LCL edition of Aristides' *Hieroi Logoi* (93 n. 28), but neither the LCL edition nor Behr's editio maior contains the *Hieroi Logoi*; Kee has only used Behr's translation in his *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales* (Amsterdam 1968) without knowing Festugiere's numerous corrections in REG 82 (1969) 117-153. Kee says Antiochus IV Epiphanes had erected a statue of himself in the Jerusalem temple (68), which is certainly mistaken. Kee quotes phrases from modern publications but in the notes he sometimes refers to whole chapters instead of to the page(s) concerned (20 n. 39; 63 n. 46). Kee refers to a German work with an English title but with the German place and date of publication (19 n. 37). *Pour besoin de sa cause* Kee dates the magical papyri to the third and fourth centuries (52, 288) without saying that much of the material therein is much older. At pp. 75, 175, 182-3 passages from ancient authors are given a wrong interpretation. Kee consistently writes 'Asklepion' instead of 'Asklepieion' (87, 91, 93, 95) and even changes a correct German book-title accordingly (91 n. 24!). Twice Aelius Aristides is dated to the second cent. BC (90). Kee speaks of Aristides' mysticism and says that Aristides thought his place in heaven assured through the benefactions of the God: wrong terminology in both cases. At p. 117 Cleopatra III and VII are confused. At p. 123 the wrong term 'hieroglyphics' occurs (see L. and J. Scott, *Egyptian Hieroglyphs for...