

## HEALING IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES: WHY THE SILENCE?

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### I. INTRODUCTION

It is significant that in Frederick Gaiser's *Healing in the Bible*, healing in the Pauline churches receives only the briefest of mentions.<sup>1</sup> Given Paul's own relative silence on this matter, this is perhaps understandable. However, according to Luke's representation of earliest Christianity in the Acts of the Apostles, after the person of Jesus Christ, Paul of Tarsus was the most prominent healer and miracle-worker in the NT.<sup>2</sup> This apparent discrepancy has been highlighted by many scholars as one of the key indicators of the distance in both historical time and reliability between Paul and the author of Acts.<sup>3</sup>

Although the general question of how Paul is depicted in Acts, as opposed to in his own epistles, has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate, this essay will more specifically examine Paul's healings in both sources. This will be done within the contexts of Paul's literary purposes, his pneumatology and ecclesiology, and his own self-understanding as an apostle. Paul's relative silence regarding his own healings may thereby be understood without having to assume a second-century date for Acts, or impugning Luke's credentials as a historian.

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick J. Gaiser, *Healing in the Bible: Theological Insight for Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> David Basinger observes that "[i]n religious contexts ... the term 'miracle' ... is normally applied to unusual, remarkable events that it is assumed would not have occurred in the context in question if not for the *intentional activity of a supernatural being*." While this definition serves our purpose, Basinger also goes on to assert that "[t]here is no one standard religious way of understanding the concept of miracle" ("What is a Miracle?" in *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles* [ed. Graham H. Twelftree; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011] 19, 32).

<sup>3</sup> Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (trans. B. Noble *et al.*; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 112–16; Philipp Vielhauer, "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts," in *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays Presented in Honor of Paul Schubert* (ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn; Nashville: Abingdon, 1966) 33–50; Thomas E. Phillips, *Paul, His Letters, and Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010) 197; J. Christiaan Beker, "Luke's Paul as the Legacy of Paul," *SBLSP* 32 (ed. Eugene H. Lovering Jr.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1993) 511–19.

## II. A SCHIZOPHRENIC PAUL? THE PAUL OF ACTS AND THE PAUL OF THE EPISTLES

Gasque observes that “there is no general agreement among scholars on even the most basic issues of Lucan research.”<sup>4</sup> The very reliability of Acts as a historical document has been a contentious issue since the work of F. C. Baur and the Tübingen School in the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Vielhauer represents the author of Acts as being post-Pauline, and having a connection with Paul consisting principally in veneration of the legend. Acts is characterised by its “obvious material distance ... temporal distance ... [and a] distinctive theological viewpoint.”<sup>6</sup> Haenchen, espousing a similar view, writes: “[w]e need have no qualms about letting this truth be the last word.”<sup>7</sup>

However, contrary to this, the view that Acts can be read as reliable history, and that its portrait of Paul is essentially correct, has had its capable defenders throughout the history of scholarship and into recent times. In the early twentieth century, William Ramsay countered the scepticism engendered by Baur’s work.<sup>8</sup> He was followed by scholars such as F. F. Bruce, J. Jervell, Ward Gasque, I. H. Marshall, Stanley Porter, Rainer Riesner, and Colin Hemer.<sup>9</sup>

More recently, Richard Pervo has contested the approach of those who would use the most rigorous forms of criticism to analyse Acts, noting the inherent haz-

<sup>4</sup> Ward Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese 17; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1975) 305. This monograph provides a useful summary of the history of the criticism of Acts.

<sup>5</sup> See F. C. Baur’s seminal work, “Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christentums in der alten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom,” *Tübingen Zeitschrift für Theologie* 4 (1831) 61–206, repr. in F. C. Baur, *Historisch-kritische Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* (ed. E. Käsemann; Stuttgart: Frommann, 1963) 1–146. Stanley E. Porter (*Paul in Acts*, Library of Pauline Studies [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001] 188) considers that the work of Ernst Haenchen and Paul Vielhauer represents the most definitive statement of the disjunction between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the epistles. See Haenchen, *Acts* 112–16; and Vielhauer, “Paulinism” 33–50. For a critique of Vielhauer’s methodology, see Gasque, *Criticism* 284–91.

<sup>6</sup> Vielhauer, “Paulinism” 48.

<sup>7</sup> Haenchen, *Acts* 116.

<sup>8</sup> William M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915).

<sup>9</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 3d ed., 1990); Jacob Jervell, “Paul in the Acts of the Apostles: Tradition, History, Theology,” in *Les Actes des Apôtres: Traditions, Rédaction, Théologie* (BETL 48; ed. Jacob Kremer; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979) 306; Gasque, *Criticism*, I. H. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 34–44; idem, *A Fresh Look at the Acts of the Apostles* (Homebush West, NSW: Lancer, 1992) 98; and idem, “Luke’s View of Paul,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 33 (1990) 41–51. Porter (*Paul in Acts* 206) examines the arguments of Haenchen and Vielhauer and concludes that “the standard arguments marshalled in defense of the differences between the Paul of Acts and of the letters, regarding his person and work, once analysed in detail, simply do not point to significant and sustainable contradictions.” Rainer Riesner, *Paul’s Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (trans. D. Stott; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 412–15; C. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (WUNT 49; ed. C. Gempf; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1989).

ards as well as the uncertainty of the results.<sup>10</sup> Pervo himself proposes the view that Luke should be “understood as striving to be a faithful interpreter of the *corpus Paulinum*.”<sup>11</sup> Thompson has also recently re-examined the list of differences that seemingly create distance between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the letters, and has concluded that the differences are not as significant as have previously been believed.<sup>12</sup>

However, to illustrate the schism, we also have Phillips’s recent study, which claims that the majority view amongst scholars is that the Lucan Paul was “recast in terms more attractive to the church of the late first or early second century.”<sup>13</sup> Some, affirming a radical disjunction between the portraits of Paul in Acts and in the Pauline epistles, feel confident in dismissing the opposing view in the strongest terms. Beker states that “the history of research has made it abundantly clear that the attempt to harmonise the historical Paul with the Paul of Luke-Acts has come to a radical end.”<sup>14</sup> On the other side, with regard to the work of Dibelius, Conzelmann, and Haenchen, Gasque observes a “sovereign disregard for the work of other scholars outside of their own critical and theological circles,”<sup>15</sup> particularly of the work of “British and German scholars who, for *historical-critical* reasons, have been led to defend the essential reliability of the Book of Acts as a document of first century history.”<sup>16</sup> Such views are so entrenched, Gasque observes, that “it seems quite unlikely that there will be a *rapprochement* ... at any time in the near future.”<sup>17</sup> In the face of this scholarly divide, it is an incongruous and perhaps telling reality that the majority view is still for a first century dating for the book of Acts.<sup>18</sup>

It is entirely relevant that one of the issues at the heart of the divergent opinions regarding the Acts of the Apostles is the miracles it depicts. In noting that “there is a discrepancy between the ‘Lucan’ Paul and the Paul of the epistles,”<sup>19</sup> the first instance that Haenchen mentioned was the issue of the miracles in Acts.<sup>20</sup> To contemporary scholars, a narrative that contains the miraculous is “automatically suspect.”<sup>21</sup> While Hemer acknowledges the problem, his own view is that the re-

<sup>10</sup> R. I. Pervo, “The Paul of Acts and the Paul of the Letters: Aspects of Luke as an Interpreter of the *Corpus Paulinum*,” in *Reception of Paulinism in Acts* (BETL 229; ed. Daniel Marguarat, Leuven: Peeters, 2009) 142.

<sup>11</sup> Pervo, “Paul” 155.

<sup>12</sup> As presented in Carl A. Holladay, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament: Interpreting the Message and Meaning of Jesus Christ* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005) 251–54; Michael B. Thompson, “Paul in the Book of Acts: Differences and Distance,” *ExpTim* 122 (2011) 425.

<sup>13</sup> Phillips, *Paul* 197.

<sup>14</sup> Beker, “Luke’s Paul” 511.

<sup>15</sup> Gasque, *Criticism* 250.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 250.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 162–63.

<sup>18</sup> See Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2006), particularly Appendix II, “Scholarly Estimates for the Date of Acts” 358–63. Hemer (*Book of Acts* 408), for example, argues cogently for a dating of Acts in AD 62.

<sup>19</sup> Haenchen, *Acts* 113.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Hemer, *Book of Acts* 428. On a broad reconciliation between Acts and the Pauline epistles, see *ibid.* 244–69.

porting of miracles by Luke is not *a priori* grounds for dismissing him as a historian.<sup>22</sup> This essay assumes the position that the Acts of the Apostles is an important and reliable historical source for the spread of Christianity in the first century, and agrees with Porter's assessment that as far as the portrayal of the same events are concerned, the differences between Luke and Paul "are merely the kinds of differences that one could expect to find between virtually any two different yet accomplished authors when writing about the same events."<sup>23</sup> However, even if this position is accepted, it still does not satisfactorily account for the almost resounding silence in the Pauline epistles with regard to Paul's own healing miracles. Other factors, including theology, must also be considered.

### III. PNEUMATOLOGY IN ACTS AND IN THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

Questions about the role of healings in the Acts of Luke and the epistles of Paul must be informed by the debates regarding pneumatology in these texts. The connection between miracles and the Spirit is common to both Acts and the Pauline epistles.<sup>24</sup> As Craig Evans notes, in the same way as there was a close connection between demon possession and physical illness, there was probably a close connection between being filled with the Spirit and with healing.<sup>25</sup>

Many scholars believe there is a fundamental difference between the pneumatologies of Luke and Paul.<sup>26</sup> For Paul, the soteriological dimension of the Spirit is a major facet,<sup>27</sup> while it is often understood that in Luke-Acts, when it comes to salvation, the Spirit is missing in action.<sup>28</sup> The debate over this issue is in part motivated by the desire of Pentecostal scholars to define the notion of Spirit-baptism within the Lucan texts in defence of a distinctive Pentecostal pneumatology.<sup>29</sup> In this respect, Pentecostal scholars have made a significant contribution to Lucan scholarship, although as Mittelstadt observes, they face an "often overwhelming challenge ... both methodological and exegetical."<sup>30</sup>

Pentecostal scholars such as Menzies and Stronstad have insisted on the exclusiveness of Lucan pneumatology. For Menzies, Luke's theology of the Spirit is essentially different to Paul's, and Luke's narrative precludes the soteriological di-

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 442.

<sup>23</sup> Porter, *Paul in Acts* 206.

<sup>24</sup> Jacob Jervell, "The Signs of an Apostle: Paul's Miracles," in *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) 95.

<sup>25</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Luke* (NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990) 82.

<sup>26</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (*Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002] 32) calls this "one of the canons of recent New Testament scholarship."

<sup>27</sup> Rom 3:24; 8:9; 1 Cor 6:11; 15:10; Gal 1:15; 3:14.

<sup>28</sup> Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology* 32.

<sup>29</sup> This is in order to demonstrate that Luke insists on a "second-blessing theology." See D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 151.

<sup>30</sup> Martin William Mittelstadt, *The Spirit and Suffering in Luke-Acts: Implications for a Pentecostal Pneumatology* (Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 26; New York: T&T Clark, 2004) 20.

mensions of the work of the Spirit.<sup>31</sup> Roger Stronstad's similar thesis is that Luke's theology of the Spirit is charismatic rather than soteriological.<sup>32</sup> D. A. Carson, in evaluating Stronstad's approach, rightly observes that "[i]f Luke and Paul develop complementary theologies, that is one thing ... but if Luke and Paul develop contradictory theologies, that is another ... [since then] [o]ne can no longer speak of canonical theology in any holistic sense."<sup>33</sup>

James Dunn has been at the forefront of arguments for continuity between the pneumatologies of Luke and Paul.<sup>34</sup> He maintains not that their presentation of the Spirit is identical, but that there is a natural and healthy tension between them, and that they must be seen to be in real continuity.<sup>35</sup> For example, we may assert on the one hand that Paul's pneumatology is essentially Christological, so that the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ,<sup>36</sup> and that "[t]o be 'in Christ' and 'in Spirit' are virtually synonymous."<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, it is true that Luke also explicitly calls the Holy Spirit the "Spirit of Jesus" (τὸ πνεῦμα Ἰησοῦ) in Acts 16:7.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, if we assert that a characteristic feature of Luke's pneumatology is emphasis on the Spirit dwell-

<sup>31</sup> William W. and Robert P. Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000) 52, 82. Penney calls Menzies's insistence on this distinctiveness "excessive" (John Michael Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis of Lukan Pneumatology* (Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 12; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 120–21).

<sup>32</sup> Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984) 12. The reason for the underlying distinction made by Pentecostal theologians is explained by Menzies (*Spirit and Power* 51): "Most Evangelicals maintain that Luke, in a manner similar to Paul, relates the gift of the Spirit to salvation; he simply chooses to *emphasize* the Spirit's role in equipping the church for its mission. This 'same theology, different emphasis' approach undermines the biblical basis for Pentecostal theology."

<sup>33</sup> Carson (*Showing the Spirit* 151), commenting on Stronstad's *Charismatic Theology*. Menzies (*Spirit and Power* 58), for example, acknowledges the need "to work toward a holistic biblical theology of the Spirit" that is "canonical" in approach while doing justice to the fundamental differences in the pneumatologies of Luke and Paul. This latter point is also strongly made by Martin William Mittelstadt, *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul: An Attempt to Reconcile these Concepts* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005) 112. See also Max Turner, "Luke and the Spirit: Renewing Theological Interpretation of Biblical Pneumatology," in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation, Scripture and Hermeneutics* 6 (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, Joel B. Green, Anthony C. Thiselton; Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2005) 287.

<sup>34</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (SBT 2/15; London: SCM, 1970) 115, 137–38.

<sup>35</sup> James D. G. Dunn, "Towards the Spirit of Christ: The Emergence of the Distinctive Features of Christian Pneumatology," in *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism* (ed. Michael Welker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 25. Pentecostal theologians such as Menzies (see *Spirit and Power* 49) have countered that in order to argue for continuity, Dunn reads "Luke-Acts through the lenses of Pauline theology." Conversely, Pentecostals such as Turner have been accused of importing Johannine emphases into Luke-Acts. See Penney, *Lukan Pneumatology* 120, citing Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts in the New Testament Church and Today* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996). See also, e.g., Turner, *Holy Spirit* 135.

<sup>36</sup> Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19.

<sup>37</sup> Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology* 32. See also Archie Hui, "The Spirit of Prophecy and Pauline Pneumatology," *TynBul* 50 (1999) 116; and Dunn, "Spirit of Christ" 25.

<sup>38</sup> That Luke is specifically referring to the Holy Spirit is clear; v. 7 should be paralleled with v. 6, in which he refers to the "Holy Spirit" (τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος) as performing the same function.

ing in the community,<sup>39</sup> we may find a similar situation in the Pauline epistles.<sup>40</sup> For Paul, a major pneumatological emphasis is that it is the Spirit that creates and unites the community in Christ of believing Jews and Gentiles.<sup>41</sup>

The same holds true for eschatology. Penney is correct in observing that baptism with the Spirit is presented by Luke as the “unique eschatological sign of Israel’s renewed missionary vocation.”<sup>42</sup> We can hardly deny that there is an eschatological side to the Spirit for Paul. In fact, as Kärkkäinen notes, for Paul, “it is even more explicit.”<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Cho’s work demonstrates that Paul intends his language regarding the Spirit to reflect the meaning of Jesus’ teachings about the Kingdom of God, “highlighting the continuity that binds together the message of the New Testament.”<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, in Luke-Acts and in the epistles of Paul, the person of the Spirit is the same, and the ecclesiological and eschatological roles of the Spirit are also fundamentally the same. We are dealing with questions of emphasis, not ontology or function. It therefore becomes tendentious to argue that Luke and Paul have different pneumatologies.<sup>45</sup> This is particularly the case when we observe that in both Luke-Acts and in the Pauline epistles,<sup>46</sup> there is always a close nexus between physical healing and salvation: the same vocabulary, agents, and processes are involved. Therefore, since healings are clearly affected in Acts by the Holy Spirit, it is difficult to argue that Luke sees no role for it in effecting salvation.<sup>47</sup>

The differences between the pneumatological emphases of Luke and Paul are due to their different but complementary foci. Luke’s primary but not exclusive focus is on witness.<sup>48</sup> As Penney observes, “[t]his is Luke’s controlling interest. It is not that he is unaware of other emphases: there are clear indications that he understands the soteriological function of the Spirit, as also the work of the Spirit in the interior life of believer and church.”<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, it is also incorrect to represent the author of Acts as having a single purpose and focus. This can lead to over-analysis, as well as to attempts to iden-

<sup>39</sup> Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology* 30.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 33.

<sup>41</sup> Hui, “Pauline Pneumatology” 116.

<sup>42</sup> Penney, *Lukan Pneumatology* 111. See also Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers* (Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 16; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 121.

<sup>43</sup> Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology* 33.

<sup>44</sup> Youngmo Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul: An Attempt to Reconcile These Concepts* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005) 197.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. Stronstad, *Prophethood* 121.

<sup>46</sup> Luke 5:20, 23; Acts 26:18; 1 Thess 5:23.

<sup>47</sup> Acts 2:38; 5:32; 9:17; 11:15.

<sup>48</sup> Stronstad, *Prophethood* 123. See also Penney, *Lukan Pneumatology* 25.

<sup>49</sup> Penney, *Lukan Pneumatology* 120. This is also admitted, from a Pentecostal perspective, by Frank D. Macchia (*Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006] 16), who writes that “I think Paul’s broader soteriological understanding is implied in Acts, functioning at least as a background to Spirit baptism as empowerment for living witness. I would also define Luke’s empowerment for witness more broadly and deeply than mere prophetic speech (Menzies) or charismatic gifting (Stronstad).” Note also that Penney (*Lukan Pneumatology* 120) criticizes Turner for having a “very restricted view of missionary preaching.”

tify unique theologies in Acts in relation to other NT books, which may not be present at all. As Gasque has pointed out, all books have multiple purposes, and it “should be self-evident that all simplistic approaches to the Lucan writings are erroneous.”<sup>50</sup>

However, it is still evident that Paul, to a greater degree than Luke, emphasizes a multifaceted pneumatology, placing the work of the spirit in a more sophisticated soteriological and ecclesiological context.<sup>51</sup> Dunn points out that although Paul has no difficulty referring to “the signs and wonders” (ἐν δυνάμει σημεῖων καὶ τεράτων)<sup>52</sup> and “miracles” (ἐνεργῶν δυνάμεις) worked among his churches,<sup>53</sup>

it is probably significant that when he recalled the work of the Spirit ... he spoke then not of miracles and signs and wonders, but of the *grace of God* working through him .... For Paul *charisma* never amounted to anything unless it expressed the *charis*, the grace of God manifested most clearly in Christ.<sup>54</sup>

#### IV. THE SPECIFIC PROBLEM OF HEALING

1. *Background.* Paul’s relative silence on the topic of healing is surprising because of three key reasons. Firstly, the large array of model body parts recovered from the Temple of Asclepius at Corinth evidences the tremendous importance that was laid on supernatural healing in that city.<sup>55</sup> This healing sanctuary at Corinth, where the sick would seek healing through dreams, illustrates the most common means of seeking supernatural healing in the ancient Mediterranean world.<sup>56</sup> It is clear that pagans believed in the occurrence of something akin to our understanding of “miracles.” Prominent contexts for miracles in the pagan world of the Mediterranean were healings, the legitimation of a new deity in an area, and the establishment of sanctuaries.<sup>57</sup>

Although the miraculous is not given great attention in contemporary diaspora Judaism, this may be in part due to the fact that not many diaspora texts have

<sup>50</sup> Gasque, *History of Criticism* 308.

<sup>51</sup> Dunn (“Spirit of Christ” 45) refers to Paul as “more theologically and pastorally astute” than Luke. For Paul, “the theme of miracle belongs to pneumatology.” (Jervell, “Signs of an Apostle” 93, citing Rom 15:19; 1 Thess 1:5; Gal 3:1–5; 1 Cor 12:4ff.)

<sup>52</sup> Rom 15:19; cf. Acts 2:22; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:43; 14:3; 15:12.

<sup>53</sup> Gal 3:5; cf. Acts 1:8; 2:22; 4:33; 6:8; 8:13; 10:38; 19:11. See also Dunn, “Spirit of Christ” 24.

<sup>54</sup> Dunn, “Spirit of Christ” 24–25.

<sup>55</sup> A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 949. See also Mabel Lang, *Cure and Cult in Ancient Corinth: A Guide to the Asklepieion* (Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1977) 8. On the cult of Asclepius generally, see Craig S. Keener, who points out that the Asklepieion at Corinth was not one of the great shrines to Asclepius in the Empire, with the most significant being at Epidaurus, Cos, and Pergamum (*Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011] 38–40).

<sup>56</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 949.

<sup>57</sup> Craig Keener (*Miracles* 1.65), observes that the only element that this method has in common with healing as practiced by Jesus and his first followers is the general idea of healing by a deity, which was a broad concept across the ancient Mediterranean world.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Garland, “Miracles in the Greek and Roman World,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles* (ed. Graham H Twelftree; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 76–78.

survived.<sup>58</sup> We know that contemporary Palestinian Judaism was certainly interested in the miraculous. Second Temple and early rabbinic writers not only frequently refer to biblical miracles, but also “offer various reports about miracle workers in their own time.”<sup>59</sup> With regard to these, Keener observes that they usually involve a much longer period of transmission than is found in the Gospels and in Acts.<sup>60</sup>

Secondly, we know that although after his death, Paul’s teachings appear to have received scant attention, he was held in awe for his wonder-working powers.<sup>61</sup> This was particularly the case in the context of what might be called “popular Christianity,” as reflected in the apocryphal second-century *Acts of Paul*.<sup>62</sup> Thirdly, we know that in the Acts of the Apostles, Luke presents Paul as a great miracle-worker and healer.

Commenting on the cult of Asclepius, Nock observed that “[t]he rise of Asclepius reflects also a tendency for a religion of emergencies to become prominent, as contrasted with a religion of normality; a parallel is the importance at the time of private soothsayers. Willingness to believe was satisfied by men who produced their tales of wonder and revelation.”<sup>63</sup> Although the depiction of the rise of Christianity in the Acts of the Apostles might be seen as supporting Nock’s category of “religion of emergencies,” the epistles of Paul do not. While the dramatically miraculous is not prominent in the Pauline epistles, Paul’s own understanding of his context can hardly be called a “religion of normality.” Paul clearly holds to apocalyptic dualism, where the death and resurrection of Christ has inaugurated a new age for the world.<sup>64</sup> Even if we hold that Acts is a later second-century text, we cannot maintain that there was any significant difference between the late first century and the second century with regard to the popular conception of the miraculous. Nock’s categories are therefore not necessarily helpful here.

2. *Paul’s healings in Acts*. The first major speech in Acts, by Peter, may be seen as programmatic for the rest of the account that is given in Luke’s work. Here, Peter publicly declares in Jerusalem that Jesus was “a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs ... which God performed through him.”<sup>65</sup> Twelftree comments that here Luke portrays the miracles of Jesus as “points at which the saving power of God can be known in the present, as validating his di-

<sup>58</sup> Of course, the epistles of Paul themselves may be themselves used as evidence for contemporary diaspora Judaism.

<sup>59</sup> Lidija Novakovic, “Miracles in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Judaism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles* (ed. Graham H. Twelftree; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 95–112, 108.

<sup>60</sup> Keener, *Miracles* 1.82.

<sup>61</sup> C. J. Roetzel, *Paul: The Man and the Myth* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999) 151–54.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 167.

<sup>63</sup> A. D. Nock, Review of E. J. and L. Edelstein’s *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*, *Classical Philology* 45 (1950) 48.

<sup>64</sup> 1 Cor 2:6–8; 3:18; 7:31; 10:10; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:21. See U. H. J. Körtner, *The End of the World: A Theological Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1995) 131.

<sup>65</sup> Acts 2:22. Unless otherwise indicated, the NASB has been used for English translations of the Bible. The NA-27 has been used for the Greek text.

vine origin and ministry and as intended to induce faith,” and that in the same way, Acts portrays his followers as “modeling the ministry of Jesus.”<sup>66</sup>

In Acts 14:3–4, Luke writes that Paul and Barnabas performed “signs [σημεῖον] and wonders ... done by their hands” at Lystra. The word σημεῖον is the same word that is often used of Christ’s healings, particularly in the Gospel of John, and Twelfree suggests that the word σημεῖον is best understood in terms of its use in the Septuagint, in which it is used to demonstrate prophetic authority.<sup>67</sup> Accordingly, in Acts 14:3, it is “the Lord, who bore witness to the word of His grace” (v. 3) who allowed the signs and wonders to be performed by Paul and Barnabas. Although no further details are given, it is to be presumed that these miracles included healings. Certainly, a little later, vv. 8–11 describe Paul’s healing of a lame man.

In Acts 19, Paul performs many “extraordinary” miracles (v. 11) in Ephesus, including healings through the use of handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his body (v. 12). As a result of Paul’s miracles, “the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled” and the word of the Lord is described as continuing “to increase and prevail mightily” (vv. 17, 20).

In Acts 28:8–9, while on the island of Melitta, Paul heals the father of Publius of fever and dysentery by praying and laying hands on him. The word used here for “healing” is ἰάομαι, which is also often used of the healings of Jesus, especially in Luke (cf. Luke 4:18). It is subsequently used in Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians.<sup>68</sup> As a result of this healing, “the rest of the people on the island who had diseases” came to Paul and were cured (v. 9; θεραπεύω). Previously, at Troas, Paul had performed the ultimate act of physical “healing” by raising Eutychus from the dead (Acts 20:9–12). Overall, therefore, Acts presents a picture of Paul as a great healer and miracle-worker.<sup>69</sup>

The “we” passages in Acts have on the one hand been seen as eye-witness testimony,<sup>70</sup> and on the other hand as authorial inventions to bolster the credibility of the narrative.<sup>71</sup> In this regard, Stanley Porter’s observation is particularly notable: the “author of the ‘we’ source provides a credible portrait of Paul the apostle, without exaggeration or embellishment. Not only is Paul not depicted as a miracle worker, but clear opportunities to depict him as such are passed by.”<sup>72</sup> This tends to support the idea that the “we” passages are evidence of genuine eyewitness accounts.

3. *Healing in the Pauline Epistles.* In his epistles, Paul does not specifically refer to his own healing miracles at all. We may, however, perceive them in his broader

<sup>66</sup> G. H. Twelfree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999) 186.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 226–27.

<sup>68</sup> 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30.

<sup>69</sup> See Jervell, “Signs of an Apostle” 79, *contra* Haenchen, *Acts* 113–14.

<sup>70</sup> Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 52–54; cf. Thompson, “Differences and Distances” 425–26.

<sup>71</sup> William Sanger Campbell, *The “We” Passages in the Acts of the Apostles* (Studies in Biblical Literature 14; Atlanta: SBL, 2007) 46–47, 89.

<sup>72</sup> Porter, *Paul in Acts* 62.

references to his miraculous works in passages such as Rom 15:15–19 and 2 Cor 12:12. These passages are typically within the context of Paul’s defense of his apostolate and ministry. In 2 Cor 12:12, Paul presents his performance of “signs [σημεῖον] and wonders and miracles” as evidence of his apostolic credentials.<sup>73</sup> Thrall’s view is that it is likely that Paul is referring primarily to healing miracles.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, Barnett comments that the repetition of aorist tense verbs in successive verses, “each signifying singular action,” focus the attention of the Corinthians on Paul’s historic ministry in founding the church in their city.<sup>75</sup> Even though Paul makes references to these miracles, he does not elaborate or dwell on them; he merely brings them to mind. In addition, Furnish notes that in using the passive voice, Paul attributes these miracles ultimately to God.<sup>76</sup>

Another verse in which Paul possibly refers to miraculous works that would have included miracles of healing is 1 Thess 1:5: “our gospel came to you not only in word [ἐν λόγῳ μόνον], but also in power and in the Holy Spirit [ἐν δυνάμει καὶ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ] and with full conviction.” There are two approaches that have been taken to this verse. One of them follows Furnish’s view that signs and wonders (as in Rom 15:19) are “probably not in view”<sup>77</sup> in 1 Thess 1:5, but that rather, to use Witherington’s phrase, Paul is simply referring to the “salvific effect” of the gospel among the Thessalonians.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, Paget considers that the intention of Paul in 1 Thess 1:5 is to differentiate “between preaching without and with miracle.”<sup>79</sup> The answer as to what Paul has in mind in 1 Thess 1:5 might be illuminated by a comparison with Paul’s similar remarks in a similar context, and also in the opening section of one of his other epistles, 1 Cor 2:4, where he writes, “my speech [λόγος] and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power [ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως].”

This essential contrast between word and deed, as well as their complementary function, is also in view in Rom 15:18–19, where Paul writes: “For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed [λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ], by the power

<sup>73</sup> This is the conclusion to the “Fool’s Speech” (11:1–12:13), in which Paul paradoxically boasts of weakness. See C. J. Roetzel, *2 Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007) 108; and Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* 869.

<sup>74</sup> M. E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000) 839; see also R. Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (trans. Erich Dinkler; Augsburg: Minneapolis, 1985) 232.

<sup>75</sup> P. Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 577.

<sup>76</sup> V. P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (New York: Doubleday, 1984) 553.

<sup>77</sup> V. P. Furnish, *1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2007) 45.

<sup>78</sup> Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 70.

<sup>79</sup> James Carleton Paget, “Miracles in Early Christianity,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles* (ed. G. H. Twelftree; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 131–48; citing also 1 Cor 2:4 and 2 Cor 12:12. David John Williams (*1 and 2 Thessalonians* [NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992] 29), remains uncertain whether the reference is to “signs, wonders, and various miracles” or to the changed lives of the believers.

of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God [ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων, ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος [θεοῦ]].<sup>80</sup> Since this appears to be a Pauline construct, and in Rom 15:18–19 the miraculous is clearly in view, it seems evident that miraculous deeds are also intended to be understood in 1 Cor 2:4 and in 1 Thess 1:5. This agrees with the view of Michael Holmes, who points out that the preposition before “power” and “Spirit” in Rom 15:19 is precisely the same as the repeated preposition in 1 Thess 1:5 translated as “with.”<sup>81</sup>

The only explicit mention of healing itself in the Pauline epistles is found in 1 Cor 12:7–11, 28–31, where Paul lists the gifts of healing among the various gifts of the Spirit.<sup>82</sup> This passage is dealing more broadly with the gifts of the Spirit in the church, rather than Paul’s own healings; also there is no particular emphasis here on the “miraculous.” Watson comments that Paul makes it clear that the gifts of the Spirit “need in no way be striking, spectacular, ‘out of this world’ . . . . It is especially striking how he places side by side the apostolate and the ability to help others, gifts of healing and gifts of administration (1 Cor 12:28).”<sup>83</sup> Although Paul understands miracles and healings as σημεῖα,<sup>84</sup> this is not necessarily his primary focus. This is suggested by the fact that in the Pauline epistles, healings are not themselves specifically mentioned as σημεῖα. In 1 Corinthians, the only two gifts that are identified as σημεῖα are tongues and prophecy (1 Cor 14:22). The primary purpose of healings, within the context of the other spiritual gifts, is not as authenticating signs from God, but rather, “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”<sup>85</sup>

## V. WHY THE (RELATIVE) SILENCE?

1. *Were there healing miracles in the Pauline churches?* We have already seen how the differences between healing miracles in Acts and the Pauline epistles have been explained by seeing Acts as an ahistorical second-century work which introduced the miraculous to suit popular tastes. Some conservative theologians have proposed another explanation for Paul’s relative silence on this topic: that healing miracles were limited to the initial years of Christianity, and actually did not occur in the Pauline communities.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> On Rom 15:19, see Peder Borgen, “From Paul to Luke: Observations toward Clarification of the Theology of Luke-Acts,” *CBQ* 31 (1969) 175–76.

<sup>81</sup> Michael W. Holmes, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) 49–50.

<sup>82</sup> There may be an implicit reference to healing in 2 Cor 12:8, in relation to Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” (v. 7).

<sup>83</sup> N. Watson, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (2d ed.; Peterborough, UK: Epworth, 2005) 130.

<sup>84</sup> This is evident in 2 Cor 12:12 and Rom 15:15–19.

<sup>85</sup> Eph 4:12, NASB.

<sup>86</sup> See P. Brenner, “Place of Healing,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 2/1 (1975) 32. On the cessationist view of the miraculous spiritual gifts, see Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary* 423; and Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “A Cessationist View,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views* (ed. Wayne Grudem; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 23–64.

Derickson argues that the absence of healing miracles in the Pauline epistles indicates Paul's own inability to heal, most notably after his imprisonment.<sup>87</sup> He also points to Paul's implied inability to heal Epaphroditus (Phil 2:27), Timothy (1 Tim 5:23), Trophimus (2 Tim 4:20), or even himself (2 Cor 12:7–9). His view is that by the end of the first century, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were no longer at work in the church.<sup>88</sup>

Of course, as Derickson notes, “to argue from silence alone is a weak argument.”<sup>89</sup> Consideration must be given to the clear evidence that the apostolic congregations fully expected to continue doing the same kinds of works that Jesus had done through the direct agency of the Holy Spirit.<sup>90</sup> The Gospel of John, which appears to be later than the other gospels, gives evidence of the continuation of miracles in the apostolic period (John 14:12–14), as does the discussion of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. As far as the non-canonical evidence of history is concerned, there is evidence of charismata within the Christian churches at least until the latter part of the third century.<sup>91</sup>

In Gal 3:5, Paul asks: “Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?”<sup>92</sup> Although the specific dating of this epistle is uncertain,<sup>93</sup> this verse clearly indicates the ongoing occurrence of miracles in the churches of Galatia, and by implication, in the other Pauline churches.<sup>94</sup> The reference to “He ... who works miracles among you” in verse 5 is clearly in the present tense (ἐνεργῶν). Furthermore, the word translated as “supplies” in the NASB is ἐπιχορηγέω. This term was used in relation to patrons of the arts, and means “to supply abundantly and with great generosity.”<sup>95</sup> The fact that this word is semantically related to the working of δύναιμι within the Galatian churches emphasizes the frequency that miracles were performed in

<sup>87</sup> G.W. Derickson, “The Cessation of Healing Miracles in Paul’s Ministry,” *BSac* 155 (1998) 309, 313.

<sup>88</sup> Derickson, “Cessation of Healing Miracles” 299. R. A. N. Kydd (*Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984] 87) considers that the church lost the ability to perform miracles by c. AD 260. Against this view, see A. Dauntou-Fear (*Healing in the Early Church: The Church’s Ministry of Healing and Exorcism from the First to the Fifth Century* [Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2009] 25) who considers the ability to perform healings and other miracles as quasi-permanent gifts, such as prophecy and tongues.

<sup>89</sup> Derickson, “Cessation of Healing Miracles” 305–6.

<sup>90</sup> Brenner, “Place of Healing” 35. See also Keener, *Miracles* 1.29–33, citing Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Cor 12:9–10, 28–30; Gal 3:5; and Jervell, “Signs of an Apostle” 94.

<sup>91</sup> Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts* 87.

<sup>92</sup> NASB.

<sup>93</sup> P. Barnett, *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity: A History of New Testament Times* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002) 292.

<sup>94</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957) 136.

<sup>95</sup> J. MacArthur, *Galatians* (Chicago: Moody, 1987) 69.

the Pauline churches.<sup>96</sup> As Harris notes, it appears that miracles were “concomitant of Paul’s preaching.”<sup>97</sup>

Paul never attributes the gift of healing to his own power; rather, he acknowledges, even in the passages that have been considered above, that healing operates solely according to God’s will and through his power.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, to maintain that Paul did not have the gift of healing, because there were some people whom he did not heal, represents a logical fallacy.

Furthermore, not all healing gifts in the Pauline communities were necessarily miraculous. The way in which Paul refers to “miracles” and to “healing” in 1 Corinthians 12 suggests a differentiation between the two. In listing the gifts, he names “gifts of healing” (χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, v. 9), followed immediately by “the working of miracles” (νεργήματα δυνάμεων, v. 10). To reinforce the consistency of Paul’s usage in this regard, he again differentiates between the two in verses 29–30, when he asks,

“Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing?”

ἢ πάντες δυνάμεις; μὴ πάντες χαρίσματα ἔχουσιν ἰαμάτων;

This differentiation does not seem to appear anywhere other than in Paul’s epistles, indicating that within the Pauline communities, the various healing “gifts” may have been specifically recognized, or in some way “specialized.” Additionally, Paul’s use of the plural χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων<sup>99</sup> suggests that he conceived of a cluster of “gifts of healing” rather than of a single phenomenon. Thiselton comments on the use of this plural, writing that it

denotes various kinds of healing. This use of the plural occurs in English when people speak, e.g., of *fruits* or *cheeses*. Since the singular already denotes more than singularity of instance, the plural becomes a device for carrying the notion of *more than one kind* of what the word in question conveys.<sup>100</sup>

These gifts may have included different kinds of healing processes, among which may have been the directly miraculous, and other means, such as the use of medication.<sup>101</sup> The proposition of Sir 38.2–9 is precisely that the healing facilitated by physicians could be understood as divine healing, from which we can see that

<sup>96</sup> Bennett and Bennett consider that the book of Acts indicates that Paul’s power in the Holy Spirit did not decrease as he grew older (D. and R. Bennett, *The Holy Spirit and You* [Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1971] 131, quoted by Derickson, “Cessation of Healing Miracles” 315).

<sup>97</sup> M. J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 875.

<sup>98</sup> Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 12:11; 2 Cor 12:8–9.

<sup>99</sup> 1 Cor 12:9; 12:28, 30.

<sup>100</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 946, citing Justin, *Apology* 2:6 for a similar use of the word, including healing by drugs.

<sup>101</sup> Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 948; contra Robert L. Saucy, “An Open but Cautious View,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* 95–148, 129; C. Samuel Storms (“A Third Wave View,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* 212) comments that “Paul’s language suggests either many different gifts or powers of healing, each appropriate to and effective for its related illness, or each occurrence of healing constituting a distinct gift in its own right.”

this view was at the very least not unknown in Second Temple Judaism. We should not necessarily be surprised if this is reflected in 1 Corinthians 12.

2. *Paul's subordination of healing miracles.* Having considered the above, some reasons why Paul, in his epistles, subordinated healing in his churches may be presented. Paul subordinated healings to the various purposes of his letters; he subordinated the healing gifts generally in the context of his pneumatology and ecclesiology; and he also subordinated his own healings in terms of his understanding of the gospel. These considerations address the arguments that use the lack of miraculous healings in the epistles to postulate an unnecessary distance in historical time and reliability between Luke and Paul.

The genre and the purpose of the text must matter. Luke's genre and purpose in Acts is not the same as those of Paul in his epistles. While Luke provides a general narrative of segments of Paul's ministry, Paul wrote letters to address specific problems in the churches that he founded, and these specific problems do not focus on questions about healing miracles.<sup>102</sup> Paul's letters were of an "occasional, irenic, and polemic" nature.<sup>103</sup> It is, however, significant that when necessary and relevant, such as in Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, and in defense of his apostleship in 2 Cor 12:12, he did not hesitate to make reference to the miraculous.<sup>104</sup>

Paul's emphasis in his pneumatology and ecclesiology must also matter; his approach tends to subordinate the healing gifts to his understanding of the nature and role of the Holy Spirit, as well as the nature and role of the church. Luke's focus on the role of the Holy Spirit is narrower, though not exclusive, focusing on witness in the context of his narrative of the early spread of the gospel. Paul's focus is broader, presenting the Spirit as the ongoing presence and power of Jesus who brings people to salvation and who builds and sustains the church.

It is not a question of either Luke or Paul having or not having a focus on eschatology, salvation, or witness; they both do. However, for Paul, the Spirit is much more than the Spirit of prophecy of the OT, and the church is much more than the continuation of Israel of old. For Paul, in the new age inaugurated by Christ, the Spirit is doing new work in the world, and the church is the result of that work. The difference between Luke and Paul with regard to their emphasis on healings is not the result of different pneumatologies, but rather of breadth of focus. Luke seeks greater continuity with the Old Testament emphases. Paul largely assumes these and moves forward in his presentation of the church in the new age of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 12, although all gifts are of equal honor, Paul still appears to value some above others;<sup>105</sup> there are "higher gifts" (12:31) in terms of their functional roles within the ἐκκλησία.<sup>106</sup> At the same time, Paul also subordinates all gifts

<sup>102</sup> Jervell, "Signs of an Apostle" 94.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* 90.

<sup>104</sup> Keener, *Miracles* 1.30.

<sup>105</sup> Watson, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 136. For another example, note 1 Cor 14:1 with regard to prophecy.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* 137.

under the “more excellent way” (v. 31) of love (13:13). Paul’s rationale for doing this, which is one of the central themes of 1 Corinthians, is the role of the cross of Christ (1:18) in relativizing and subsuming all human differences (1:10–31).<sup>107</sup> This relativization also includes the operation of the gifts of the Spirit (1:7).<sup>108</sup>

It is within the context of the more excellent way of love that Paul uses the image of “the body of Christ.”<sup>109</sup> The ἐκκλησία in 1 Cor 12:12 is here presented as an organic whole, in which no function or gift is indispensable (v. 22), and all members of the body are to be honored (v. 23). Paul’s picture of the body of Christ is one in which there is a balancing, a valuing, and a reciprocal and mutual caring between all of its members, “so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.”<sup>110</sup> For Paul, all the gifts of the Spirit operate with the context of a community.<sup>111</sup> Within the Pauline ἐκκλησία, there is no role for the prominence of the gifts of healing above the other gifts, since all gifts function within the concept of the “community.”

The ranking of the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, in which the gifts of healings are fifth in what is clearly an ordinal list,<sup>112</sup> does not reflect intrinsic value. Instead, it appears to reflect each gift’s function in building up the church. Fee argues that Paul does not intend here to rank any gifts after the first three, the implication being that “gifts of healing” are not included in the ranking.<sup>113</sup> However, if we count the number of times that the specific descriptor of each gift in verse 28 is used across the totality of the Pauline corpus, there is clear evidence that Paul does indeed intend an ordinal ranking. Following the order of their appearance in verse 28, we find that “apostles” (ἀπόστολος) appears 33 times, “prophets” (προφήτης) 13 times, and “teachers” (διδάσκαλος) seven times. δύναμις is translated four times as “miracles” in the NASB, and “gifts of healing” (χάρισμα ἰαμα) appears 3 times, all in 1 Corinthians 12.

This provides clear support for the view that Paul’s ordering of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Cor 12:28 represents his own understanding of the value of their role within the ἐκκλησία. Their order corresponds precisely with the number of mentions each Greek word receives across the entire Pauline corpus. If this represents Paul’s own “mental map” of the spiritual gifts, then it is significant that this confirms his relegation of the “gifts of healing” in verse 28 to a position behind several of the other gifts.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Paul’s own attitudes and understanding of his role as an apostle must also matter, for it is clear that Paul himself subor-

<sup>107</sup> See E. Gonzalez, “Pauline Universalism: Anachronism or Reality?” *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 14/1 (2011) 71–72. See also Gal 6:14–16; and Eph 2:12–17.

<sup>108</sup> See D. Dale, *In His Hands: Towards a Theology of Healing* (London: Daybreak, 1989) 67.

<sup>109</sup> 1 Cor 12:12, NASB.

<sup>110</sup> 1 Cor 12:25.

<sup>111</sup> Watson, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 129. See also S. J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993) 439; and Dale, *In His Hands* 143.

<sup>112</sup> 1 Cor 12:28, NASB. See also P. W. Walaskay, “Biblical and Classical Foundations of the Healing Ministries,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 37/3 (1983) 195.

<sup>113</sup> G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 619.

dinates his own healings for the sake of the gospel.<sup>114</sup> In the writings of Paul, the personal dimensions of the subordination of his own healings are prompted by two interrelated factors. The first is his own understanding of the gospel and his role as an apostle of that gospel, and the second is the nature of the polemic inherent in many sections of his letters.<sup>115</sup> In these contexts, it is significant that every time Paul mentions his own healings, it is within the context of “not boasting.”

This is the case in 2 Corinthians 12.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, in Romans 15, Paul claims not to be boasting of himself, but of the work of Christ. His reference to his preaching the gospel “by the power of signs and wonders” (v. 19) is immediately preceded by the statement that “[t]herefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me” (vv. 17–18, NASB). It is clear that Paul is explicitly stating that he has no intention of referring to anything except what Christ has done.<sup>117</sup> This may suggest that his reticence about his own healings is partly due to a reluctance to exalt himself on account of his own gifts.

Paul’s discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 similarly falls in the context of “not boasting.” He is writing to those who seek to exalt one gift above another (vv. 15–22). This is clearly in accordance with Paul’s theme of the cross throughout 1 Corinthians. Through the cross, God has chosen “what is foolish the world,” “the weak things of the world” (v. 27) and “what is weak in the world” (v. 28), “so that no human being might boast in the presence of God” (v. 29), and, “so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord’” (v. 31).

3. *The signs of an apostle.* The role of healing in Paul’s understanding of his own ministry is encapsulated in the expression the “signs of an apostle.” Paul writes to the Corinthian church in 2 Cor 12:12 that

[t]he signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

τὰ μὲν σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου κατεργάσθη ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν πάσῃ ὑπομονῇ, σημεῖοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν.

This passage makes it clear that for Paul, the signs of an apostle consisted in miraculous works, given the expression “signs and wonders and mighty works” is allowed its usual meaning in the NT.<sup>118</sup> Paul asserts, then, that he had worked “signs and wonders and mighty works” in the Corinthian church. But he makes a

<sup>114</sup> Note P. Baumeister, “Healing: Mission and Ministry of the Church,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 13/4 (1986) 210–11.

<sup>115</sup> Notably in 2 Corinthians.

<sup>116</sup> See 2 Cor 12:11a. See also Harris, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians* 869.

<sup>117</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. II (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979) 757–58. C. K. Barrett (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [New York: Harper & Row, 1957] 276) observes that this sentence is rather awkward to understand.

<sup>118</sup> Note Keener, *Miracles* 1.30, n. 54. Jervell (“Signs of an Apostle” 90) is of the view that this phrase denotes “miraculous and only miraculous deeds.” Caird considers that the “phrase certainly covers miracle, though it may include much else” (George Bradford Caird, *The Apostolic Age* [London: Duckworth, 1958] 65).

greater claim, immediately asking: “For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches?” (v. 13). It is evident that he is claiming that he has performed miracles in the rest of the churches with which he has been associated, and that these miracles are well known to the recipients of his epistle.

If, as seems to have been the case, apostles were *particularly* characterized by miraculous deeds,<sup>119</sup> then it is notable that while Paul’s opponents attack his apostleship, they apparently never accuse him of *not* performing miracles. Paul also affirms that his own miracles were at least as extraordinary as those of the other apostles. Paul’s concept of the “signs of an apostle” is centrally related to the three elements of the subjugation of healing miracles in his epistles: the epistolary, the theological, and the personal.

The matter is relatively straightforward as far as the epistolary context is concerned; we are dealing with issues of genre. The Synoptic Gospels and Acts are narrative literature, and what is narrated tends to be the words and deeds that most impressed the authors of the relevant texts, in the context of the principal themes of each text. In this context, we expect miraculous deeds to feature significantly, as is indeed the case in Acts. The Pauline writings are pastoral letters, dealing with the situational exigencies, and often polemics, in the life of his churches. In this context, we would expect that if healing miracles were not a key matter of dispute in the Pauline churches, then we should expect that there would be sufficient evidence in the epistles to perceive their existence, although these references might only be very few, brief, and *en passant*. This is indeed the case in the Pauline letters. The epistolary context of Paul’s references to miraculous healing therefore allows us to reasonably deduce that it is precisely because healing miracles were not in question in the Pauline communities that they are not more prominent.

The remaining two elements in the subjugation of healing miracles in the Pauline epistles, the soteriological and personal considerations, are more complex. The soteriological issue will be next dealt with. For Paul, miraculous healings are part of the “signs of an apostle.”<sup>120</sup> An apostle has been especially called to preach the gospel as a witness of Jesus, and the gospel is therefore inextricably accompanied by the Spirit and power of Jesus, and therefore by miraculous works.<sup>121</sup> Jervell writes that for Paul, “[j]ust as word and miracle belong together, so also do miracle and Spirit . . . . Without miracle the gospel is not gospel but merely word.”<sup>122</sup> While this is true, it is also here that Pauline soteriology and pneumatology come together. In 1 Corinthians 12–13, Paul explains how the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit must be subordinated within the church under the principles of the gospel. In not emphasizing his own healing miracles in his epistles, Paul is being consistent in applying this very same understanding to his own ministry.

<sup>119</sup> Dauntton-Fear, *Healing* 23.

<sup>120</sup> See nn. 73 and 74.

<sup>121</sup> 1 Cor 2:4; 1 Thess 1:5. See Jervell, “Signs of an Apostle” 91–92. Jervell (p. 95) notes that in this Acts and Paul agree, although “on this point Paul proceeds beyond Luke and defines the miracles actually as part of the gospel.”

<sup>122</sup> Jervell, “Signs of an Apostle” 94–95.

The final element in the subjugation of healing miracles in the Pauline epistles is the personal element. Since Paul claims to be an apostle of the gospel, the performance of miracles that would usually include healings are part of his identity. A corollary of this is that to question any aspect of his ability to perform miracles is to undermine his standing as an apostle. For this reason, the one occasion where aspects of the miraculous are an issue (2 Corinthians 10–12) elicits some of Paul's most impassioned and memorable rhetoric.<sup>123</sup>

Haenchen argued that 2 Cor 12:12 indicates that Paul's opponents completely denied his ability to perform miracles.<sup>124</sup> In this, he followed Käsemann, who had maintained that *Darin besteht also die vermeintliche Schwachheit des Apostels: Er soll kein rechter Pneumatiker sein.*<sup>125</sup> In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul is dealing with comparisons about his "visions and revelations" in relation to the claims of his opponents. However, the issue is not *whether* Paul had visions and revelations, but the *degree* to which he did so. For this reason, he speaks in superlative terms when referring to the "surpassing greatness" (τῆ ὑπερβολῆ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων; v. 7) of his revelations.

However, even when not under personal attack, Paul's tendency is to subordinate miraculous works, and indeed all things, to the preaching of the gospel. In Rom 1:1, he makes it clear that in his self-understanding, he is first called to be an apostle, and that this calling then defines his mission. We see this sequence here: "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God."<sup>126</sup> Paul sees his role as an apostle as being to "preach the gospel" (v. 15), which "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (v. 16). Although for Paul the miraculous is undoubtedly part of his proclamation of the gospel, he specifically gives primacy to the "word" of the gospel (Rom 10:8–14), which implicitly subordinates the miraculous. Healing miracles may therefore be a demonstration of the power of the gospel, but they are always subordinated to the purposes of the gospel, which by its very definition is a gospel that excludes all boasting (3:27). Although Jervell is correct in maintaining that for Paul word and miracle go together, it is also important to note that miracle is always subordinated to the word.

Paul was not alone in subordinating miracles to the word, since Luke in effect does the same thing. Jervell strikingly observes that with regard to Acts, "What Luke intends to say about Paul in a theological way he says chiefly by means of speeches," and that "in Paul's speeches the element of miracle is totally lacking."<sup>127</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Paget, "Miracles" 135, citing J. A. Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* (WUNT 2/112; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000) 271–81.

<sup>124</sup> Haenchen, *Acts* 113.

<sup>125</sup> Ernst Käsemann, "Die Legitimität des Apostels," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 41 (1942) 35.

<sup>126</sup> Rom 1:1, NASB. See also Gal 1:15–16; 1 Cor 15:9–10.

<sup>127</sup> Jervell, "Signs of an Apostle" 79. In fact, Jervell continues to observe that in Acts "[w]e may omit the miracle stories without noting any perceptible change in theological content. Luke obviously does not intend to express what is most important to him where Paul is concerned by aid of miracles."

Therefore, while it is true that in Acts, miracle and word are inextricably connected,<sup>128</sup> even in the textual form of Acts, miracle is subordinated to the word.<sup>129</sup>

Similarly, while Paul insists that the signs of an apostle accompany him wherever he ministers, he still gives pre-eminence to the word of the gospel that he has been commissioned to preach. These fundamental similarities between Luke and Paul do not negate the fact that each author is writing in their own contexts and for their own purposes. However, they do argue against the view that Luke and Paul represent fundamentally different ideological or theological perspectives.

## V. CONCLUSION

According to some of the secondary literature, there is a vast distance between Acts and the epistles of Paul. This has been seen not only in terms of time, but also of historical reliability. The aspect of the miraculous in the writings of Luke and in those of Paul has often been used as evidence for this. Historically, it has been argued that Acts is a later work that romanticizes the life of Paul and embellishes it with miracles; theologically, it has been argued that Luke and Paul have fundamentally different pneumatologies. Both these issues have been the subject of extended academic debate.

In focusing on Paul as a healer, this essay has centered on an issue at the heart of these debates. Why is Paul depicted as such a prodigious worker of healing miracles in Acts, but this is barely mentioned in his epistles? When this issue is put under the spotlight, it becomes evident that there are multiple reasons, without needing to question either the reliability of either Acts or the epistles of Paul. Luke, as any author does, chose to emphasize certain aspects of the story of Paul; Paul himself subordinated his own healing miracles to the form and purposes of the epistles that he wrote, and even more fundamentally, to the gospel that he preached.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid. 87.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.