

PAUL
and the
MIRACULOUS

A Historical Reconstruction

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1

Who Was Paul?

Who was Paul—the historical Paul? Tension between the Paul of history and the apostle of faith is already apparent in the New Testament. Most notably, although Luke portrays him as a great miracle worker,¹ critics have concluded that his opponents at Corinth were able to deny his ability to perform miracles.² Then, for example, the letter to the Colossians, probably not from Paul’s hand, if not betraying and subverting him,³ at least shows a figure remembered and redrawn for the needs of a later period without even the hint of miracle working on Paul’s part.

Which, if any, of these portraits best represents the historical Paul?⁴ Was Paul, as Luke would have us believe, a great miracle worker? Or, if we understand them, were his critics at Corinth correct, so that Colossians is more

1. Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, trans. Bernard Noble et al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 113. The contrast in the apparent importance of miracle working between the Paul of the Epistles and the Paul of Acts has long been noted; see the brief discussion by Frans Neiryck, “The Miracle Stories in the Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction,” in *Les Actes des Apôtres: Traditions, rédaction, théologie*, ed. Jacob Kremer (BETL 48; Gembloux: Duculot; Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1979), 173n10. Further, see chap. 9 below.

2. E.g., Ernst Käsemann, “Die Legitimität des Apostels: Eine Untersuchung zu II Korinther 10–13,” *ZNW* 41 (1942): 35. Further, see §§1.1, 8.6 below.

3. On the Deutero-Paulines and Ephesians 2:15, cf. Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (BLS; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 26.

4. See Martinus C. de Boer, “Comment: Which Paul?” in *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, ed. William S. Babcock (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), 45–54; Dennis R. MacDonald, “Apocryphal and Canonical Narratives about Paul,” in Babcock, *Paul*, 55–70.

accurate in carrying no memory of Paul as a miracle worker or even as interested in the miraculous? Or, again, do Paul's letters need to be read more carefully to recover some other relation that the historical Paul had to miracle working and the miraculous?

The critical study of Paul has been dominated by an interest in him as an intellectual and a theologian, not as a person involved in the miraculous or performing miracles. For Origen (c. 185–c. 254 CE), Paul “values reason above miraculous workings” (*Cels.* 3.46).⁵ Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) assessed Paul's historical position in terms of being “the founder of Christian theology.”⁶ C. F. D. Moule (1908–2007), perhaps the most influential British New Testament scholar of the twentieth century, designated Paul “the prince of thinkers.”⁷ The result is that Paul is generally discussed in terms of being a thinker and considered “the first and greatest Christian theologian.”⁸ In particular, the last generation and more of Pauline studies, dominated by the so-called, but increasingly contested,⁹ New Perspective on Paul, gives the impression that Paul's thinking was preoccupied with the law, and that he is to be understood primarily through the lens of this discussion.¹⁰ Even more recent studies do not contest this general perception.¹¹

These various scholarly conversations about Paul, dominated by the assumption that he was primarily a thinker and a theologian, and the contrasting portraits of Paul in the New Testament raise the question of how he would have understood himself and how he would have been seen by those who knew him. Would they, along with Paul himself, have taken his work to be primarily that of a thinker and a theologian or of a practical missionary?

At least initially, Paul's literary legacy certainly gives the impression of coming from the pen of a person who solves theological problems through careful thought and interaction with his literary traditions. But we have probably fallen into a trap by assuming that Paul's literary achievements accurately

5. See the comments by Andrew Daunton-Fear, *Healing in the Early Church: The Church's Ministry of Healing and Exorcism from the First to the Fifth Century* (SCHT; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), 105–6.

6. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (London: SCM, 1952–55), 1:187. In the long line of discussions to the present, see, e.g., Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

7. C. F. D. Moule, “Interpreting Paul by Paul: An Essay in the Comparative Study of Pauline Thought,” in *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World: Essays in Honour of Harry Sawyer*, ed. Mark E. Glasswell and Edward W. Fashole-Luke (London: SPCK, 1974), 89.

8. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 2.

9. See Gregory K. Beale, “The Overstated ‘New’ Perspective?” *BBR* 19 (2009): 85–94.

10. Cf. A. Andrew Das, “Paul and the Law: Pressure Points in the Debate,” in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Given (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 99–117.

11. Cf. N. T. Wright, “Paul in Current Anglophone Scholarship,” *ExpTim* 123 (2012): 367–81.

characterize his accomplishments. For, as we will see, a closer reading of Paul's letters, taking into account more than his literary activities—his life, his experiences, and his missionary accomplishments—reveals a different Paul. While not denying his genius and creative power as a theologian, to see him only or primarily as such is to caricature rather than describe him. Nearer the mark is the assertion by Adolf Deissmann (1866–1937) that “He is far more a man of prayer, a witness, a confessor and a prophet, than a learned exegete and close thinking scholastic.”¹² Also, in an attempt to capture the essence of his ministry or his contribution to the history of Christianity, Heikki Räisänen suggests that Paul was “first and foremost a missionary, a man of practical religion who develops a line of thought to make a practical point, to influence the conduct of his readers.”¹³ Yet, even these turn out to be inadequate representations of Paul.

The question of how to describe Paul and his ministry and theology also confronts us when we take into account the apparent disconnect between the portraits of Paul and Jesus in the New Testament. On the one hand, Jesus is reported to have been a powerful and prolific miracle worker, giving this aspect of his ministry a high profile in his self-understanding and how he interpreted his mission. Yet, on the other hand, when we turn to the letters of Paul, not only does he show little interest in the pre-Easter ministry of Jesus but he also appears to say little or nothing of performing miracles in his own ministry. Paul offers no narrative of a miracle relating to his ministry; at best he only appears to hint at miraculous activity.¹⁴ Indeed, from a perspective broader than just the miraculous, Bultmann said, “I do not believe it is possible to state sufficiently sharply the contrast in the NT canon between the Synoptic Gospels on the one hand and the Pauline letters and later literature on the other.”¹⁵

How the ministry of Jesus became the religion of Paul is a central problem for students of Paul and the New Testament, as well as for all Christian theology.¹⁶ Although it is beyond the scope of this study to attempt solving the problem of the relationship between Paul and Jesus, by the end of our

12. Adolf Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*, trans. William E. Wilson (New York: Harper, 1957), 6.

13. Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 2nd ed. (WUNT 29; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 267.

14. Cf. 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), 91.

15. Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 303.

16. Cf. Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History*, trans. W. Montgomery (London: Black, 1912), v; Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, introduction to *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays*, ed. Alexander J. M. Wedderburn (JSNTSup 37; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 11.

discussion it will be apparent that while Bultmann's statement about the proclaimer becoming the proclaimed remains basically correct,¹⁷ Jesus and Paul had both less and more in common than is generally supposed. On the one hand, as I have attempted to demonstrate for Jesus,¹⁸ in relation to Paul, this study will show that the more we distance Paul from the miraculous, the less we understand him, his theology, and his mission. On the other hand, we will see that for Paul the miraculous was both broader and functionally different than for Jesus. We will also have evidence that earliest Christianity was much more deeply characterized by the miraculous than it is presently assumed to have been. Thus, through a discussion of the miraculous in relation to Paul, this study is an attempt to make a contribution to the understanding of the historical Paul. (It is to be noted that this is not an attempt to offer a complete sketch of the historical Paul, but only to argue for an essential part of that picture.) In turn, this study also attempts to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between the religion of Jesus and the religion of Paul. More broadly, this study is to be taken as a contribution to understanding the nature of earliest Christianity and the place and function of miracles in it.

1.1 Specific Issues

In relation to Paul and the miraculous—the focus of this study—what follows seeks to answer a series of six interrelated questions. (1) What was Paul's experience of and his view of his involvement in miracles and the miraculous? Did he, for example, consider himself a miracle worker? Walter Schmithals says, "The Pauline epistles contain no sort of suggestion that Paul was such a miracle-worker, or that he practiced healing and exorcisms."¹⁹ Paul then, as Bruno Bauer had put it, was fighting by means of word alone.²⁰ For Paul, the true signs of an apostle were the hardships and the persecutions he endured.²¹

Nevertheless, as we will see, since the beginning of the scientific study of Paul there have been occasional statements made, and studies concluding, that Paul performed, or thought he performed, miracles. My aim is to examine the data in an attempt to contribute to and give a place to this small, though

17. Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:33.

18. Graham H. Twelftree, "The Miracles of Jesus: Marginal or Mainstream?" *JSHJ* 1 (2003): 104–24.

19. Walter Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969), 36–37, citing 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Thess. 1:5.

20. Bruno Bauer, *Die Apostelgeschichte: Eine Ausgleichung des Paulinismus und des Judenthums innerhalb der christlichen Kirche* (Berlin: Hempel, 1850), 7–25.

21. Günther Bornkamm, *Paul*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1971), 76.

increasingly clear, voice that Paul considered himself involved in the miraculous. However, we will also find that Paul's view of himself as a miracle worker and his perceived relationship to the miraculous is to be viewed quite differently from how Jesus saw himself.

Equally significant is the question: (2) How important did Paul consider miracle working, and what profile did he think it took in his ministry? Over against Ernst Haenchen, who concluded that miracles were not very significant to Paul, we have, for example, Jacob Jervell's assertion that "miracles assume a quite central role in Paul's preaching, almost to a greater degree than in Acts."²² The related question is (3) what meaning or significance did Paul give to his miracles? This question arises from what Paul has written, but we are also prompted to read Paul carefully in light of Jesus seeing his miracles as having eschatological and salvific significance.

A further question relating to Paul himself is (4) if he understood his ministry involved conducting miracles, how does he relate such a power-based ministry to his theology of weakness, suffering, and the cross?²³ Or, how can Paul write that he is a man of weakness, yet at the same time claim or be credited with works of power? Hence, we will go on to ask: (5) How does Paul relate the miraculous to other aspects of his theology and ministry? In doing so, we will test F. Gerald Downing's assertion that Paul achieved "very little integration" of the miraculous with his message and lifestyle.²⁴ Finally, if Paul thought he conducted miracles then (6) what kinds of miracles did he perform?

1.2 The Discussion So Far

If the major studies of Paul over the last century and more are a gauge, with some important exceptions (which I will discuss in a moment), there has been little interest in him in relation to the miraculous. Moreover, where the topic has been addressed, rarely and inadequately has it been shown what impact the miraculous should have on the interpretation of Paul's life, theology, and mission. Taking into account Pauline studies of enduring significance,²⁵ we

22. Jervell, "Signs," 91, citing Haenchen, *Acts*, 114.

23. E.g., Jacob Jervell, "Der schwache Charismatiker," in *Rechtfertigung: Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Johannes Friedrich, Wolfgang Pöhlmann, and Peter Stuhlmacher (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1976), 185.

24. F. Gerald Downing, *Cynics, Paul, and the Pauline Churches* (London: Routledge, 1998), 223.

25. For recent surveys of Pauline studies see, e.g., Bruce N. Fisk, "Paul: Life and Letters," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic; Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 283–325; James D. G. Dunn, "Paul's Theology," in McKnight and Osborne, *New Testament Studies*, 326–48.

begin with those in which the miraculous has a low profile or has been inadequately related to an overall assessment of Paul. In the next brief section I will piece together the results and implications of this survey.

(a) *Little or no interest in miracles.* Of the olympian figures in the scientific study of the New Testament who are celebrated in Albert Schweitzer's masterly and readable *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History* (1912), we need only draw attention to two individuals who remain significant for Pauline studies, Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860) of Tübingen and William Wrede (1859–1906) of Breslau.

Baur, who placed the critical study of early Christianity on sound methodological footings in allowing the New Testament texts to speak for themselves,²⁶ concluded that Acts (with its miracle stories associated with Paul) was not historically reliable and could not be brought into harmony with Paul's letters. Notably, however, Baur's historical method ruled out a miraculous interpretation of the texts.²⁷ What might appear in the narrative as a miracle was, in reality, no miracle at all.²⁸ Baur says that the "consciousness of miraculous power, the δύναμις τοῦ κυρίου ["power of the Lord"], was of course felt by the Apostles, and in this consciousness they may have looked upon the special results of their ministry as operations of a powerful energy, as σημεῖα, τέρατα, and δυνάμεις ["signs, wonders, and miracles"]."²⁹ In other words, miracles and the miraculous (having no reality) need not be taken into consideration in our reconstruction of the historical Paul. Wrede, whose shadow also still falls across Pauline studies,³⁰ showed little interest in Paul in relation to the miraculous, leaving a portrait of Paul that does not include performing miracles.³¹

Though not covered in Schweitzer's history, J. B. Lightfoot (1828–89) should be mentioned here not only because of his engagement with Baur,³² but also because he may be the finest Pauline commentator Britain has produced.³³ He makes his view clear in concluding that, "There are but few allusions

26. Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters*, 13.

27. Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings*, 2 vols. in 1 (1845; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:78; also 1:9, 13, 94–95, 153, 201–3.

28. *Ibid.*, 1:203.

29. *Ibid.*, 1:312–13n, citing 1 Cor. 10:21, 10–28; 2 Cor. 12:12.

30. See, e.g., E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977), 433n10; J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), index; Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 3n3, 3n7, 9n30, 340n22.

31. William Wrede, *Paul*, trans. Edward Lummis (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

32. Bruce N. Kaye, "Lightfoot and Baur on Early Christianity," *NovT* 26 (1984): 193–224.

33. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, "Lightfoot, J(oseph) B(arber) (1828–1889)," in *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald K. McKim, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 662.

in St Paul to his power of working miracles.”³⁴ The paucity of references to miracles, Lightfoot supposes, is “partly because he [Paul] assumes the fact as known to his hearers, and partly because doubtless he considered this a very poor and mean gift in comparison with the high spiritual powers with which he was endowed.”³⁵

Schweitzer himself makes only passing reference to what he calls “the sensible manifestations of the spiritual” in Paul.³⁶ Schweitzer takes it to be of tremendous importance that Paul, “in spite of sharing with his contemporaries the high estimation of the sensible manifestations of the spiritual, maintains . . . the higher right of the rational manifestations of the spiritual.”³⁷ Not surprisingly, Schweitzer leaves aside the miraculous in his assessment of Paul.

Going further into the twentieth century, Bultmann also sees Paul simply sharing, without reflection, popular notions of the time that the Spirit causes such strange phenomena as glossolalia, prophecy, and miracles of healing.³⁸ Yet, while Schweitzer saw Paul rising above the miraculous in giving preference to the rational, Bultmann sees Paul similarly rising, but in contesting the meaning of the miraculous. In Paul seeing the ministrations of love in the congregation as the “really characteristic feature of his conception of the Spirit,” he only “recognizes them to be caused by the Spirit of God as they produce unity in the congregation.”³⁹ Adolf Schlatter (1852–1938), a contemporary of Bultmann, argued that the Gospel record never consisted merely of Jesus’ words. It is surprising, therefore, that Schlatter makes only a brief passing reference to the “proofs of divine power” in discussing Paul.⁴⁰

Martin Dibelius (1883–1947) also makes only passing reference to the miraculous in his brief publication *Paul* (1949). He says, “There is no doubt that the young Christian churches experienced extraordinary things in their midst: cures and other ‘mighty works’; ecstatic rapture, especially a beatific stammering of sounds that were unintelligible to other people (they called it

34. J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on Epistles of St Paul from Unpublished Commentaries* (London: Macmillan, 1895), 13.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 169–72.

37. *Ibid.*, 171.

38. Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:337; cf. 1:333, citing Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 2:4.

39. *Ibid.*, 1:337. Further on Bultmann’s view of miracle, see Rudolf Bultmann, “The Question of Wonder,” in *Faith and Understanding*, ed. Robert W. Funk, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 247–61; Eldon R. Hay, “Bultmann’s View of Miracle,” *LQ* 24 (1972): 286–300.

40. Adolf Schlatter, *The Theology of the Apostles: The Development of New Testament Theology*, trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 192–93, referring to Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 6:6–7; 12:1–6, 12; cf. 279.

‘speaking in tongues’); clairvoyance, which could tell what was in other people’s minds.”⁴¹ Yet, these observations play no appreciable role in understanding Paul, who is described primarily in terms of being a preacher.⁴²

In more recent Pauline studies the vast majority of scholars either give little attention to the miraculous or say nothing about how it relates to Paul’s life, ministry, and theology.⁴³ For example, in his *Jesus and the Spirit*, a study of the religious and charismatic experience of Jesus and the first Christians, James D. G. Dunn says there can be no doubt that miracles took place in Paul’s ministry and in his communities. Yet, turning to Dunn’s *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, we find the miraculous appears to be of little interest. Most of what Dunn says about Paul and the miraculous is in his discussion of Paul’s apostolic authority.⁴⁴ Otherwise, Dunn does not spend any time directly on Paul and his involvement in the miraculous,⁴⁵ and in an otherwise masterly concluding chapter on Paul’s theology—his “Postlegomena to a Theology of Paul”—Dunn gives no place to Paul and the miraculous.⁴⁶

41. Martin Dibelius, *Paul*, ed. Werner Georg Kümmel, trans. Frank Clarke (London: Longmans, 1953), 92, citing 1 Cor. 14:25.

42. *Ibid.*, e.g., 68–69, 87.

43. Among many examples, see Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, trans. Frank Clarke (London: SCM, 1959), 159; Bornkamm, *Paul*, e.g., 187; Hans Dieter Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu seiner ‘Apologie’ 2 Korinther 10–13* (BHT 45; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1972), 71; D. E. H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), 36, 126; Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard de Witt (London: SPCK, 1977), 463; Beker, *Paul*, 114, 151, 295; cf. 286, 296; Thomas F. Best, “St Paul and the Decline of the Miraculous,” *Encounter* 44 (1983): 213–41; Gary W. Derickson, “The Cessation of Healing Miracles in Paul’s Ministry,” *BSac* 155 (1998): 299–315; Ben Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 212; Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson, eds., *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul’s Mission; In Honour of Peter T. O’Brien* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity; Leicester, Apollos, 2000); Erich Grässer, *Forschungen zur Apostelgeschichte* (WUNT 137; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 234–35; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity; Leicester: Apollos, 2001), 93, 351, 355–56, 358, 464–65; L. J. (Bert Jan) Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary* (CBET 34; Louvain: Peeters, 2003); Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2 vols. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity; Leicester, Apollos, 2004), 2:1357; Schnelle, *Paul*, 153, 174, 201, 259, 261–64; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic; Nottingham, Apollos, 2008), e.g., 354, 368, 453–55; Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan, *The First Paul: Reclaiming the Radical Visionary behind the Church’s Conservative Icon* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 196, 201; Trevor J. Burke, “The Holy Spirit as the Controlling Dynamic in Paul’s Role as Missionary to the Thessalonians,” in *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice*, ed. Trevor J. Burke and Brian S. Rosner (LNTS 420; London: T&T Clark, 2011), 142, 145–46.

44. Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 580; cf. 557n138.

45. Cf. *ibid.*, e.g., 48, 456, 483.

46. *Ibid.*, 713–37. Similarly, Beker (*Paul*, 151, 286) mentions but does not discuss Paul and the miraculous or Paul as a miracle worker.

Though we await what N. T. Wright calls his “fuller treatment” of Paul, he says his *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* is a pointer to what he has in mind.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the miraculous is not discussed.⁴⁸ Also, in his commentary on Romans Wright had noted that Paul mentions “the various ways in which his work has been accomplished: word and deed, the power of signs and wonders, and (though hardly a separable phenomenon) the power of God’s Spirit.” From this, and citing a number of passages, Wright concludes that Paul “clearly assumed that powerful deeds, particularly healings, were part of his gospel ministry. This is his regular *modus operandi*.”⁴⁹ Yet, so far, this *modus operandi* plays no role in informing how Wright understands Paul’s thinking or ministry.

The first book-length treatment on our topic, which compares the portraits of Paul in Acts and in the authentic Pauline letters, is Stefan Schreiber’s *Paulus als Wundertäter (Paul as Miracle Worker)*.⁵⁰ Schreiber finds that Luke takes the miracles as important in legitimizing, and making concrete, Paul’s proclamation of the gospel. In Acts Paul’s miracles establish him as part of the history of salvation. Moreover, Paul’s suffering and powerlessness are not underlined, as they are by Paul himself, for whom miracles are not essential in his theology, for in his letters this theme can only be faintly traced. Important in being able to come to these results is Schreiber concluding that three key statements by Paul—1 Corinthians 2:4; Galatians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:5 (see chap. 7 below)—do not refer to miracles but to the wondrous power of the proclamation. Schreiber also concludes that only two of the miracles associated with Paul in Acts can be taken as historical: the healing of the lame man (Acts 14:8–10) and the exorcism of the slave girl (16:16–18).⁵¹ In the course of this study I will be challenging some of Schreiber’s conclusions and supporting others, as well as coming to a different understanding of Paul in relation to the miraculous.

(b) *Paul as miracle worker*. There have been a number of studies taking more seriously, or giving a higher profile to, the issue of Paul and the

47. N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), xi.

48. A discussion of the miraculous is also absent from, e.g., Gerd Lüdemann, *Paul, the Founder of Christianity* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2002); Paul W. Barnett, *Paul: Missionary of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). Reports by Otto Merk (“Paulus-Forschung 1936–1985,” *TRu* 53 [1988]: 1–81) and Hans Hübner (“Paulusforschung seit 1945: Ein kritischer Literaturbericht,” *ANRW* II.25.4 [1987]: 2649–840) also do not mention the miraculous.

49. N. T. Wright, “Romans,” *NIB* 10:754, citing 1 Cor. 2:4; 2 Cor. 12:12; Gal. 3:5; 1 Thess. 1:5; “and the various scenes in Acts, e.g., 14:8–18.”

50. Stefan Schreiber, *Paulus als Wundertäter: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte und den authentischen Paulusbriefen* (BZNW 79; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996).

51. *Ibid.*, 287.

miraculous. We can note them in order of their appearance. Back in 1888, in publishing what became “the father of a myriad of books,”⁵² when he was only twenty-six, Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932) assailed the Hegelian idea that the Spirit was the equivalent of human consciousness or the principle of the religious-moral life.

Gunkel does not offer a long or developed study of Paul and the miraculous. However, he takes Paul to be “a pneumatic to an exceptionally high degree,” not only because of his experience of becoming a Christian (2 Cor. 4:6; Phil. 3:12), or because he united “almost all the gifts of the Spirit in one person,” but also because of his “signs, wonders, and mighty works” that were taken to legitimize an apostle (2 Cor. 12:12) and to be an essential part of his apostolic activity.⁵³ Such conclusions, though only intimations, will become significant as well as confirmed, even if modified, in this study.

In his discussions of Paul and the Spirit W. D. Davies (1911–2001), a key figure in Pauline studies in the latter half of the twentieth century, says that Paul’s speaking in tongues, his hearing God’s voice, his preaching and words being “in the Spirit,” his experience of being “caught up in the third heaven” (2 Cor. 12:2) are not isolated phenomena in Paul’s experience.⁵⁴ However, Davies says that miracles were, like ecstatic experiences, accorded a secondary place by Paul.⁵⁵ Notwithstanding, even if he did not explore or develop the point, Davies has maintained miracles and the miraculous as having an important, if subordinate, place in Paul’s life, theology, and ministry.

Ernst Käsemann (1906–98) briefly touches on Paul’s miracle working in his commentary on Romans.⁵⁶ Also, in a discussion on Paul’s concept of ministry or office (“Amt”) Käsemann draws the notion of miracle into the matrix of Paul’s theology. Käsemann notes that Paul’s concept of *charisma* (χάρισμα) “describes in a theologically exact and comprehensive way the essence and scope of every ecclesiastical ministry and function.”⁵⁷ For, the *charismata* (χαρίσματα), which include miraculous healing and exorcism,⁵⁸ exist only as

52. Edgar M. Krentz, review of *The Influence of the Holy Spirit: The Popular View of the Apostolic Age and the Teaching of the Apostle Paul*, by Hermann Gunkel, WW 2 (1982): 96.

53. Hermann Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit: The Popular View of the Apostolic Age and the Teaching of the Apostle Paul*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville and Philip A. Quanbeck II (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 77; cf. 112. Further, see §6.7 below.

54. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 197.

55. *Ibid.*, 198, 213.

56. Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (London: SCM, 1980), 394.

57. Ernst Käsemann, “Ministry and Community in the New Testament,” in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (SBT 41; London: SCM, 1964), 64.

58. *Ibid.*, 69.

manifestations and concretions of eternal life (Rom. 6:23).⁵⁹ Though Käsemann has given little space to the discussion of Paul and the miraculous, like Davies, he has successfully brought the theme into a direct relationship with Paul's theology, soteriology, and ecclesiology in a way that will require our attention later (see §10.3 [a] and [e] below).

For Hans Joachim Schoeps (1909–80) miracles and the miraculous are important to Paul. Schoeps argues that Paul, in his engagement with his opponents, invokes the Spirit-inspired “signs of the (or, a true) apostle” (σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου) as attesting the genuineness of his apostolic ministry. Schoeps takes these signs to be “the charismata connected with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:19; Gal. 3:5).”⁶⁰ Schoeps goes on to suggest that a detached survey of Paul's polemic shows that his visionary gift stands out, that he has seen Christ “in a trance” (ἐν ἑκστάσει, Acts 22:17), and that his preaching seems to depend on these very visions and revelations. Although he does not develop his argument,⁶¹ Schoeps, along with John Ashton, as we will see, is among the few who take Paul's ministry to have had an important ecstatic base and aspect (see 158n36 below).

A particularly important figure in the present discussion of Paul and the miraculous is Jacob Jervell, who in 1976 called attention to the scholarly avoidance of dealing with Paul and the miraculous. Jervell discusses Paul's response to his opponents, bringing into relationship Paul's admitted weakness and his supposed miraculous activity.⁶² In 1980 Jervell continued to explore this theme.⁶³ He begins by noting Bruno Bauer's comment back in 1850—still the generally accepted opinion for many exegetes⁶⁴—that through sufferings and temptations Paul waged war with the word alone.⁶⁵ It was in Acts, by contrast, that Paul emerged as a miracle worker, a magician.⁶⁶ In Jervell's view the perceived difficulty in finding links between Luke and Paul has to

59. *Ibid.*, 64.

60. Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in Light of the Jewish Religious History*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth, 1961), 81.

61. *Ibid.*, 87, citing, e.g., *Ps.-Clem. Rec.* 4.35; *Ps.-Clem. Hom.* 17.14–19.

62. Jervell, “Der schwache Charismatiker,” 185–98.

63. Jacob Jervell, “Die Zeichen des Apostels: Die Wunder beim lukanischen und paulinischen Paulus” *SNTSU* 5 (1980): 54–75; Jervell, “Signs,” 77–95, 169–72.

64. E.g., Bernd Kollmann, “Paulus als Wundertäter,” in *paulinische Christologie: Exegetische Beiträge; Hans Hübner zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Udo Schnelle, Thomas Söding, and Michael Labahn (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 76–77.

65. Bauer, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 7–25, cited by Jervell, “Signs,” 77; Kollmann, “Paulus als Wundertäter,” 76–77n4; cf. T. Michael McNulty, “Pauline Preaching: A Speech-Acts Analysis,” *Worship* 53 (1979): 207–14. See also below, and those cited by Jervell, “Der schwache Charismatiker,” 187.

66. Jervell, “Signs,” 77.

do with our working with an imperfect portrait of Paul from occasional letters, in which, *per definition*, not all is said. Notwithstanding, Jervell seeks to show that Luke and Paul are not as disconnected as is often assumed. Jervell grants that Luke says more about Paul being a miracle worker than any other of the apostles and missionaries. However, on the one hand, Jervell argues not only that Luke's portrait of Paul is based on Paul's call and the speeches rather than the miracles, but also, on the other hand, that the miracles in relation to other material are given a remarkably modest place in Acts. At this point Jervell also seeks to establish that the Paul of Acts remains consistent with the suffering Paul of the letters.⁶⁷ Indeed, Jervell goes so far as to say, "I wish to assert here that miracles assume a quite central role in Paul's preaching, almost to greater degree than in Acts."⁶⁸ Jervell's confidence is based largely on taking Paul's phrase "signs of the apostle" (2 Cor. 12:12) to refer to miraculous deeds only and, therefore, for them to be everywhere occurring in, and also fundamental to, Paul's understanding of his mission. Although often executed through broad brushstrokes, and therefore lacking detail and thorough argument, Jervell's pieces are suggestive and important for my enterprise. I will take the opportunity to test and, where necessary, correct Jervell's work.

E. P. Sanders says it is "not to be doubted" that Paul "did things which were counted in the ancient world as miracles,"⁶⁹ but also that these were part of his gospel and, for his readers, established his authority as a "true apostle, or at least a good one."⁷⁰ Sanders notes that Paul says that he speaks in tongues "more than all of you" (1 Cor. 14:18) and saw visions (2 Cor. 12:2–4, 7), and that Acts includes healings and exorcisms in its portrait of the apostle (Acts 16:16–18; 19:11–12). But "Paul himself says nothing of his own miracles." Instead, "when pressed for signs of his apostolic authority Paul appealed more to 'weakness' than to miracles, and more to the results of his missionary work than his prowess."⁷¹ Although not extensive, in these comments Sanders adds his voice to those who consider that Paul not only was involved in the miraculous but also functioned as a miracle worker, and that this was important in his ministry.

The exhaustive nine-hundred-page treatment of Pauline pneumatology by the Pentecostal scholar Gordon D. Fee deals with statements of Paul that are

67. *Ibid.*, 78 and n. 6; cf. 246.

68. *Ibid.*, 91.

69. E. P. Sanders, *Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 25; cf. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 450, citing, e.g., 1 Cor. 2:4; 2 Cor. 12:12; 1 Thess. 1:15.

70. Sanders, *Paul*, 24.

71. *Ibid.*, 25.

likely to have to do with the miraculous.⁷² He concludes that Paul's proclamation was regularly accompanied by signs and wonders or miracles.⁷³ He says, "It would never occur to him [Paul] that the miraculous would *not* accompany the proclamation of the gospel, or that in another time some would think of these two empowerings [word and deed] as 'either-or.'"⁷⁴ Further, Fee takes Galatians 3:5 to show that miracles "were also the regular expectation of the Pauline churches. . . . He would simply not have understood the presence of the Spirit that did not also include such manifestations of the Spirit that he termed 'powers,' which we translate 'miracles.'"⁷⁵ In my attempt to explore the miraculous more broadly in relation to Paul's life, theology and ministry, I will have cause to return to Fee's work.

In arguing that Paul resembled a shaman—a person of spiritual experience, power, and influence in a community—John Ashton may have done for Paul in recent times what Morton Smith once did for Jesus.⁷⁶ That is, Ashton argues for the need to assess Paul in first-century terms, and in categories that may not be comfortable for Western Christianity.⁷⁷ He argues that the performance of miracles was characteristic of Paul's ministry and gave rise to a literary evolution of the picture of Paul that can be traced through the canonical book of Acts and the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. In suggesting that Paul be placed among the shamans, Ashton has alerted us to the potential importance of religious experience and the miraculous in attempting to recover both Paul as a miracle worker and his attitudes toward the miraculous.

In an article, "Paulus als Wundertäter" ("Paul as Miracle Worker"), Bernd Kollmann argues that miracles or powerful works—part of the experience of the eschatological presence of God—were an aspect of Paul's ministry.⁷⁸ However, the low profile of the miraculous shows that they did not have a central place to Paul's ministry, and in the sequence "by word and deed" (Rom. 15:18) the miracles are shown to be subordinate to the proclamation. In fact, overall, Paul expected miracles to be the obvious side effects of his ministry.⁷⁹

72. Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 2:3–4; 12:4–11; 2 Cor. 12:12; Gal. 3:5; 1 Thess. 1:5.

73. Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 849.

74. *Ibid.*, 849–50, emphasis original.

75. *Ibid.*, 887.

76. Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (London: Gollancz, 1978).

77. John Ashton, *The Religion of Paul the Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); e.g., chap. 2, "Paul the Enigma."

78. Kollmann, "Paulus als Wundertäter," 76–96.

79. *Ibid.*, 82–83. Audrey Dawson (*Healing, Weakness and Power: Perspectives on Healing in the Writings of Mark, Luke and Paul* [PBM; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008], 207–8) is another who has concluded that healing was not a significant feature of Paul's ministry.

The work of Stefan Alkier on miracle and reality in the letters of Paul has a different focus from this present study.⁸⁰ Alkier deals with the issue and debate about “fact and fiction” in Paul, concluding that for Pauline Christianity miracles are events brought about by God and beyond human capabilities.

The burden of Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte’s contribution is that, on the basis of the evidence from later interpreters—especially canonical Acts, but also the *Acts of Paul* and the *Martyrdom of Paul*—as well as from his own writings, Paul performed miraculous deeds.⁸¹ Moreover, Lietaert Peerbolte concludes that these miracles presented Paul as a “legitimate envoy of Christ.”⁸² He notes that in both Paul and his later interpreters “the emphasis is consistently on the fact that Paul did not perform his miraculous deeds through his own power, but rather through the power of Jesus Christ.”⁸³ Notwithstanding, Lietaert Peerbolte says that we are, unfortunately, in total darkness as to the character of Paul’s miraculous deeds.⁸⁴ In this study I will attempt to probe the darkness to make some firm and, hopefully, reasonable suggestions about the nature, extent, and significance of Paul’s miraculous activity.

Finally, and more recently, rather than giving specific examples of miracles, Craig A. Evans takes Paul to allude to performing works of power.⁸⁵ Then, having discussed the portrait of Paul as a healer and exorcist in Acts, Evans concludes, “The stories of Paul in Acts not only cohere with comments in his letters, they explicate these comments and thus help us understand better what Paul means when, for example, he reminds his readers that he performed ‘the signs of the apostle’ while with them.”⁸⁶ While not disagreeing with Evans that Paul’s letters allude to the miraculous, on the one hand, I am not setting out to support any particular relationship between Acts and Paul, and on the other hand, we will see that Luke’s understanding of Paul as a miracle worker is very different from that of Paul himself.

80. Stefan Alkier, *Wunder und Wirklichkeit in den Briefen des Apostels Paulus: Ein Beitrag zu einem Wunderverständnis jenseits von Entmythologisierung und Rehistorisierung* (WUNT 134; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

81. Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, “Paul the Miracle Worker: Development and Background of Pauline Miracle Stories,” in *Wonders Never Cease: The Purpose of Narrating Miracle Stories in the New Testament and Its Religious Environment*, ed. Michael Labahn and Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte (LNTS 288; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 180–99.

82. *Ibid.*, 199.

83. *Ibid.*

84. *Ibid.*, 197.

85. Craig A. Evans, “Paul the Exorcist and Healer,” in *Paul and His Theology*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (PSt 3; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 363–64.

86. *Ibid.*, 379.

1.3 Results

This survey of significant Pauline studies since the rise of a critical approach to religion has shown clearly that the topic of the miraculous has not been prominent. In some cases, even in the major studies of Paul, the miraculous has not even featured. When the subject has been broached, it has not often been given a significant profile. Some studies, perhaps most, while supposing that miracles took place in Paul's churches and that Paul conducted miracles, made little attempt to show how this conclusion should shape our view of Paul's life, mission, and theology.

An early exception to this pattern was Hermann Gunkel arguing for the importance of the pneumatic in understanding the apostolic age, and in concluding that Paul's involvement in the miraculous was an essential aspect of his life, theology, and ministry. Of recent studies, it is Jacob Jervell who has been the most alert to the lack of attention to the subject, and the most adamant that miracles and the miraculous were a central activity of Paul and fundamental to understanding the apostle. How his results would play out in our understanding of Paul and his theology and mission we are not told.

My task is to test these results through reexamining Paul's letters and his early interpreters, and to extend and deepen the discussion, in order to recover the historical Paul in relation to the miraculous. I will pay particular attention to how any miraculous aspects and any miracle working that may legitimately be associated with the historical Paul and his ministry should cause us to rethink his life, theology, and mission.

1.4 My Approach

I readily acknowledge that this project is beset with difficulties. Notably, there is a paucity of immediately obvious data from which we can answer our questions. Not only is our Pauline corpus incomplete (1 Cor. 5:9; cf. Col. 4:16), but what we have that most likely comes from Paul's hand, on a first reading, has little to say about him in relation to the miraculous, and perhaps nothing to say about him performing miracles. To begin with, therefore, although ignorance may be, as Lytton Strachey drolly supposed, the first requisite of the historian, in that it simplifies and clarifies the endeavor,⁸⁷ we have to take seriously Aristotle's advice that we must not expect more precision from our

87. Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (1918; repr., New York: Modern Library, 1999), xiii. More fully on the problems of interpreting Paul, including in relation to the use of Acts, see Thomas E. Phillips, *Paul, His Letters, and Acts* (LPS; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 42–47.

sources than they permit (*Eth. Nic.* 1.3.24–25). Notwithstanding, to be in a position to read profitably with as much sensitivity and insight as possible the small amount of material available, my approach will involve three inter-related enquiries.

The first step will be to enquire what views Paul is likely to have inherited in relation to the miraculous (part 2). It was his Jewish heritage that he claimed determined his life (Phil. 3:4b–6; cf. 2 Cor. 11:22; Gal. 1:13–14), a point W. D. Davies reestablished for understanding Paul.⁸⁸ Therefore, I will examine Paul's Jewish traditions to see what he and those who knew him may have expected of him in relation to the miraculous. However, since Paul lived in a Greco-Roman world, through attention to the writings of Philo of Alexandria and Josephus, we will be able to see how Hellenized Jews like Paul are likely to have viewed miracles and the miraculous (chap. 2). Then, there is so much evidence that Paul saw himself as a prophet that I will enquire what impact this self-perception is likely to have had on his involvement in the miraculous (chap. 3). In that Paul became involved in missionary activity, in chapter 4 I will ask what implications and expectations this is likely to have had for him and those who knew him in terms of involvement in the miraculous. Further, since Paul makes claims in relation to Jesus and earlier Christians and their traditions, in chapter 5 I will examine what influence the Christianity he inherited—including knowledge of Jesus or traditions about him—is likely to have had on his understanding of, and practical interest in, the miraculous in his theology, life, and ministry. Taken together, these chapters on Paul's background and heritage can be expected to allow us to see what influences are likely to have been on him, and what attitudes and practices in relation to the miraculous he is likely to have brought with him into Christianity.

In light of the results of understanding Paul's inheritance, we will be in a stronger position to take a second step in reading his letters, or what are sometimes called his “orthonymous” writings.⁸⁹ In the first of two chapters in part 3 I will examine how Paul describes aspects of his own experience that relate most directly to the miraculous (chap. 6). This can be expected to help not only in drawing conclusions about his basic disposition toward the miraculous but also in seeing the possible place and significance of the miraculous in his thinking and ministry. Then, in chapter 7 I will examine carefully what Paul has to say about his ministry, as well as the experience of

88. Davies, *Paul*.

89. Cf. Hans-Joseph Klauck and Daniel P. Bailey (*Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* [Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006], 200): “an artificial word coined on the analogy of ‘pseudonymity’ . . . and composed of the two components ὀρθός, ‘correct,’ and ὄνομα, ‘name.’ . . . the true name.”

his readers, for their experiences are likely to shed light on Paul's understanding and experience of the miraculous.

The third step of these enquiries involves looking back on Paul through the lenses of his interpreters: first the canonical Acts of the Apostles, then the way he was remembered in pseudepigraphical literature associated with him, and finally the literature beyond the canon (part 4). It is recognizing Acts as a later and secondary source for possible knowledge of Paul (see §8.1 below) that I turn to Luke's text only after I have the results of the discussions of the primary literature from Paul in hand (chap. 8). Following the methodological principle of giving primacy to the letters of Paul,⁹⁰ I am attempting to avoid allowing Luke's portrait of Paul to exercise any decisive control over my reading of his letters.⁹¹ (Although Acts is a secondary source, and in Paul's letters we are dealing with firsthand information about him, we still need to read Paul critically because, like Luke, he had particular agendas that influenced his selection of material, his objectivity, and his expressions.)⁹² As a result of my discussion of Acts, I can expect also to make a small contribution to the question of the nature of the book of Acts, at least in terms of its usefulness in telling us about the historical Paul. Further, I will be able to contribute to the conversation about the problem of the difference between the Paul of his letters and the Paul of Luke's second volume.⁹³ Finally, in the pseudepigraphical

90. Cf., e.g., Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), vi; Lüdemann, *Paul*, 26.

91. The criticism by Murphy-O'Connor (*Paul: A Critical Life*, vi) of, e.g., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "A Life of Paul," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 1329–37; M.-F. Baslez, *Saint Paul* (Paris: Fayard, 1991); Simon Légasse, *Paul apôtre: Essai de biographie critique* (Paris: Cerf, 1991); the criticism by Lüdemann (*Paul*, 63) of Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission, Strategy, Theology*, trans. Doug Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

92. Cf. Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Livonia, MI: Dove, 2001), 134. In relation to the study of Paul, Colin J. Hemer (*The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* [WUNT 49; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989], 244) seeks to dispense with the distinction between primary and secondary evidence on the grounds that it imports the tacit presupposition that the sources are in conflict. However, the distinction is important in allowing the voice of each witness to be heard, and the voice of Paul, in whom we are particularly interested, to be given preference over his later interpreters.

93. Once an assured result of scholarship (see the survey by Michael F. Bird, "The Unity of Luke-Acts in Recent Discussion," *JSNT* 29 [2007]: 425–48), the assumption that the same author is responsible for the Gospel of Luke and the canonical Acts of the Apostles has been reopened and called into question by Patricia Walters, *The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts: A Reassessment of the Evidence* (SNTSMS 145; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For critical assessments of Walters, see the reviews by, e.g., Joel B. Green, *RBL* 12/2009 (http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/7084_7695.pdf); Paul Foster, *ExpTim* 121 (2010): 264–65. Against Gilbert Bouwman (*Das dritte Evangelium: Einübung in die formgeschichtliche Methode* [Düsseldorf:

and postcanonical literature (chap. 9)⁹⁴ I may find some support for, or at least clarification of, some of the conclusions already emerging from the discussion of Paul's letters and Acts. In these three interrelated enquiries—bracketing the interpretation of Paul's letters between an attention to the impact of inherited traditions on his thought and practice, and looking back on what he says through the lens of his early interpreters—I anticipate likely being able to reach conclusions about Paul and the miraculous in which I can have considerable confidence. These conclusions will be set out in the final chapter, particularly in the section carrying the title of this book (see §10.3). Before beginning this study, however, I need to consider how miracles and the miraculous should be defined in relation to this project.

1.5 Defining the Miraculous

In beginning his discussion, the English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) warned, “To discourse of miracle without defining what one means by the word miracle, is to make a shew, but in effect to talk of nothing.”⁹⁵ In turn, Harold Remus has shown that people of the Greco-Roman world “had various and differentiated canons by which to demarcate extraordinary from ordinary phenomena,” and that these canons varied “from one period to another, from one people and group to another, and often within a group and with social status, education and profession.”⁹⁶

In discussing what Paul may have thought about miracles and the miraculous, and what part this motif may have played in his life, theology, and ministry, there are two initial problems to consider in relation to a definition. First, whereas the miraculous was generally accepted in an ancient society,⁹⁷ this

Patmos-Verlag, 1968], 62–67), who, on the grounds of its more primitive theology and lack of reference to the Gospel, argues that Acts was written before the Gospel of Luke, see I. Howard Marshall, “Acts and the ‘Former Treatise,’” in *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1993), 163–82. Marshall, on the basis of the prologues, material in the Gospel anticipating Acts, and the ending of the Gospel, argues for the traditional order: Luke-Acts.

94. For this study, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon are taken to be by Paul. As reflected in the discussions in chap. 9, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, and the Pastoral Epistles are taken not to have been published by Paul.

95. John Locke, “A Discourse of Miracles” (1706), in *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, ed. I. T. Ramsey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958), 79.

96. Harold Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century* (PMS 10; Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983), 182.

97. Cf. Robert Garland, “Miracle in the Greek and Roman World,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles*, ed. Graham H. Twelftree (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 73–94.

is no longer the case. For many readers, miracles do not—cannot—happen, and therefore did not happen then.⁹⁸ While both careful enquiry and personal experience have caused me to conclude that miracles are possible and probably can be experienced, this is a historical study. The subject of interest is not my views, but rather those of Paul and his contemporaries. And, “if the past is to be understood,” as Geoffrey Elton put it, the past “must be given full respect in its own right.”⁹⁹ Therefore, as far as it is possible, it is important to bracket out my views—either for or against the possibility of the miraculous—in order to read the data with either as little credulity or, alternatively, as much sympathy as possible in order to recover more nearly the Paul of history rather than only the Paul of our presuppositions.¹⁰⁰

A second and more complex problem in relation to defining the miraculous is that we need to be working with ideas Paul would recognize. Moreover, since part of my larger project is an attempt to explain the apparent discontinuity between the ministries of Jesus and Paul in relation to the miraculous, I must work with a definition of miracle that is also appropriate to understanding the ministry of Jesus.

Since the debates in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, a “miracle” has come to refer to an occurrence, generally taken to be caused by a god, that violates a law of nature.¹⁰¹ However, for the biblical writers, what we call a miracle involved no infringement of any laws; rather, a miracle was simply a striking or surprising phenomenon that was humanly impossible and was thought to be brought about by and reveal a god.¹⁰² What were called “strange,” “wonderful,” or “remarkable” things (παράδοξοι)¹⁰³ included a range of the

98. See Michael P. Levine, “Philosophers on Miracles,” in Twelftree, *Companion to Miracles*, 291–329.

99. Geoffrey R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 42.

100. Ashton puts the point sharply: “It is surely impossible to get any real understanding of the religious Paul whilst wearing blinkers that shut out the sight of the spiritual and demonic world in which he lived” (*Religion of Paul*, 177).

101. Cf., e.g., Locke, “Discourse of Miracles,” 79; David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1902), 114–15; Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), 23–100.

102. John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately after the Execution of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 303; Eric Eve, *The Jewish Context of Jesus’ Miracles* (JSNTSup 231; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 1–2.

103. In the NT: Luke 5:26. In the LXX: Jdt. 13:13; 2 Macc. 9:24; 3 Macc. 6:33; 4 Macc. 2:14; Sir. 43:25; Wis. 5:2; 16:17; 19:5. In Josephus: *Ant.* 2.91, 223, 267, 285, 295, 345, 347; 3.1, 14, 30; 5.28, 125; 6.171; 8.130; 9.60; 10.28; 12.87; 13.140, 282; 14.455; 16.343; *J.W.* 1.518; 4.354; 6.102; *Ag. Ap.* 1.53; 2.114. In Philo: *Opif.* 1.124; *Sacr.* 1.100; *Det.* 1.44, 48, 94, 153; *Post.* 1.19, 50; *Deus.* 1.127; *Plant.* 1.62, 69; *Ebr.* 1.66, 178; *Conf.* 1.31, 59, 132; *Her.* 1.81, 95; *Congr.* 1.3;

inexplicable: genetic anomalies, strange natural phenomena, and reports of events bringing human health and safety.¹⁰⁴

In his public ministry Jesus associates bringing human health in his healings, exorcisms (Matt. 12:28 // Luke 11:20), and raisings of the dead (Matt. 11:2–6 // Luke 7:18–23) with the activity and disclosure of God (cf. Matt. 11:20–24 // Luke 10:12–15).¹⁰⁵ That, in our terms, Jesus would have taken these as miracles, not only in that they are caused by and reveal God, but also in that they are extraordinary or would not otherwise have taken place, is suggested by the crowd’s enthusiastic response to them, which is embedded in the earliest traditions about Jesus.¹⁰⁶

Turning to Paul, it is in his lists of gifts, or *charismata* (χαρίσματα), phenomena he took to be activated by and to express God,¹⁰⁷ that we probably gain access to a similar view of miracle. In one of his lists of gifts “helps” (ἀντιλήψεις) and “administration” (κυβέρνησεις), as well as “healings” (ιάματα) and “powers” or “miracles” (δυνάμεις), are expected in his churches as the result of the activity of God (1 Cor. 12:28–29). This eclectic, but hardly entirely supernatural, list is consistent with the ancient view, well represented in the Old Testament, that the miraculous involved any activity of a god.¹⁰⁸

However, earlier in his discussion of *charismata* there is a catalogue of more obviously humanly impossible or supranatural activities of God that he chooses, such as tongues, as equally extraordinary,¹⁰⁹ and that are directed to the health and welfare of the community (1 Cor. 12:7). Paul lists wisdom, knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues (12:8–10). Various suggestions have been made regarding what the order of the items in this list might imply about Paul’s thinking.¹¹⁰ At least

Fug. 1.180; *Somn.* 2.23, 136, 185; *Abr.* 1.196; *Mos.* 1.143, 202, 203; 2.125, 213; *Prob.* 1.58, 105; *Aet.* 1.48, 109; *Legat.* 80; *QG* 3.18. See also Gerhard Kittel, “παράδοξος,” *TDNT* 2:254; BDAG, “παράδοξος,” 763.

104. For a concise discussion, see Wendy Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1–2; more broadly, see Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 27–72.

105. On the possibility of these passages reflecting Jesus’ view, see Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 266–77.

106. Cf. Mark, e.g., 1:45; 2:4; 3:9; 5:21, 24; 7:33; and Q: Matt. 11:7 // Luke 7:24; Matt. 12:23 // Luke 11:14. Further, see Twelftree, “Miracles of Jesus,” 108–9.

107. 1 Cor. 12:4–7, 18, 24, 28.

108. Cf. Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (London: SCM, 1961–67), 2:162n4, citing Exod. 34:10; Num. 16:30; Isa. 48:7; Jer. 31:22.

109. Fee says, “What distinguishes this listing is the concretely visible nature of these items . . . chosen because they are, like tongues itself, extraordinary phenomena” (*God’s Empowering Presence*, 165). See also *ibid.*, 168.

110. For various suggestions how Paul may have intended his list to be categorized, see Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First*

part of what Paul has in mind is probably reflected in his change of word for “other” from ἄλλος to ἕτερος when he mentions faith early in the list (12:9) and tongues later in the list (12:10). In classical Greek ἕτερος signaled a definite division.¹¹¹ Even though, by Paul’s time, the distinction between ἄλλος and ἕτερος had largely been lost (cf. Gal. 1:6–7),¹¹² he can appear to use ἕτερος to indicate specific, qualitative differences,¹¹³ as he does here, probably reflecting a deliberate arrangement of his list. His use of ἕτερος separates the initial two items (wisdom and knowledge), which not only were of great interest to the Corinthians¹¹⁴ but also were related to the opening discussion on speaking by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 12:1–3). The last two gifts (tongues and their interpretation), which he considered overrated gifts (e.g., 14:19), are separated off at the end of the list by the use of ἕτερος.¹¹⁵ This, therefore, probably intentionally leaves together a set of five gifts—faith, healings, miracles, prophecy, and discernment of spirits.¹¹⁶

It is in this cluster of supernatural activities that we see the meaning and compass of Paul’s idea of miracle. For, along with the obviously miraculous gifts—healings and powers or miracles (also kept together in another list, 1 Cor. 12:28–29, suggesting their similarity)—he includes faith, prophecy, and discernment of spirits. Understanding the nature of each of these gifts, considered as a class, will help us see what Paul understood by the miraculous. First, “faith”

Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (ICC; Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1914), 265; Arnold Bittlinger, *Gifts and Graces: A Commentary on 1 Corinthians 12–14*, trans. Herbert Klassen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 20–22; F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971), 119; George G. Findlay, “St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 888; Jack W. MacGorman, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (Nashville: Broadman, 1974), 34–35; W. R. Jones, “The Nine Gifts of the Holy Spirit,” in *Pentecostal Doctrine*, ed. P. S. Brewster (Cheltenham: Grenehurst, 1976), 47–61; Ralph P. Martin, *The Spirit and the Congregation: Studies in 1 Corinthians 12–15* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 11–14; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 662–63.

111. James Hope Moulton, et al., *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908–76), 3:197; LSJ, “ἕτερος,” 702; cf. Matt. 10:23; 12:45; Luke 4:43; 10:1; 23:32.

112. Moulton, et al., *Grammar*, 3:197; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 749; BDF §306.

113. 1 Cor. 15:39–41; 2 Cor. 11:4, cited by Findlay, “St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians,” 888.

114. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:17–2:16; 8:1–3, 7; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975), 217–21.

115. Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 265; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 590–91.

116. For similar divisions of the list of gifts in 1 Cor. 12:8–10, see, e.g., Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 265; Findlay, “St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians,” 887–88; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 662–63.

(πίστις) in this context (cf. 12:9) is not related to salvation.¹¹⁷ Nor is faith a sovereign or overarching *charisma*,¹¹⁸ nor is it particularly associated with the operation of the gifts of healings or miracles.¹¹⁹ The structure of the sentence—“to another faith, to another healings, to another powers” (12:9)—accords faith its own identity and function. Occurring in a list of activities or tangible expressions of the Spirit, faith probably involves more than an “invincible confidence . . . assured by a supernatural instinct.”¹²⁰ Rather, as it emerges from the hyperbole of his argument for the necessity of love (13:1–3), containing his only other use of the word in this section, faith is the gift to remove mountains (13:2).¹²¹ Since the removal of mountains was a proverbial expression for the impossible or improbable,¹²² taking into account Paul’s hyperbole (he uses “all” [ἅς] three times in 12:2–3), faith in a list of *charismata* probably referred to the ability to be instrumental in accomplishing the ordinarily difficult or impossible. Given that Paul’s interest here is the corporate value of the gifts (12:7), the outcome of the faith is likely expected to relate at least to the health and well-being of the group and its members. We can only guess what they might be; perhaps it was perceived protection during travel or in a time of danger or persecution, or the provision of food or money, for example.

Second, since the singular “healing” (ἴαμα) would already carry the idea of repeated use, the plural gift of “healings” (ἰάματα) suggests Paul has in mind different kinds of healing (1 Cor. 12:9).¹²³ It is worth noting that the gift or

117. Raymond F. Collins speaks for most commentators: “The charismatic faith of which Paul writes is something different from the faith that characterizes all believers” (*First Corinthians* [SP 7; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999], 454). See also Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 211–12; Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 168.

118. Thomas W. Gillespie, *The First Theologians: A Study in Early Christian Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 112–13.

119. Anthony C. Thiselton (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 947) cites Lang, Kistemaker, Allo, and Senft as associating faith with the healing referred to in 1 Cor. 12:9. Similarly, Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. James W. Leitch, ed. George W. MacRae (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 209; Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 211.

120. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 211 (depending in part on Ferdinand Prat, *The Theology of Saint Paul*, trans. John L. Stoddard, 2 vols. [London: Barns, Oates & Washbourne, 1945], 1:426).

121. The noun, πίστις, occurs in 1 Cor. 2:5; 12:9; 13:13; 15:14, 17. The verb, πιστεύω, occurs in 1 Cor. 1:21; 3:5; 9:17; 11:18; 13:7; 14:22 (2x); 15:2, 11.

122. See W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols. (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–97), 2:727, citing Isa. 54:10; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.333; *T. Sol.* 23:1; *b. Sanh.* 24a; *b. Ber.* 64a; *b. B. Bat.* 3b; Homer, *Od.* 5.480–485; also Morna D. Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (BNTC; London: Black, 1991), 269; and the detailed discussion by Maureen W. Yeung, *Faith in Jesus and Paul: A Comparison with Special Reference to “Faith That Can Remove Mountains” and “Your Faith Has Healed/Saved You”* (WUNT 2/147; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 21–30.

123. Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 946.

expression of grace is, therefore, not the possession of healing power but its tangible realization in the healings.¹²⁴

Third, in Paul's world the plural "powers" (δυνάμεις) could refer to heavenly beings or bodies,¹²⁵ or, as the context requires here, to deeds that exhibited or expressed power—that is, miracles.¹²⁶

Fourth, "prophecy" (προφητεία, 1 Cor. 12:10) is a revelatory gift,¹²⁷ for Paul uses the word "revelation" (ἀποκάλυψις) referring to prophecy and knowledge when he is dealing with disclosing divine mysteries (cf. 14:6, 26). He also uses the term "revelation" for visionary experiences (2 Cor. 12:1, 7) and the gospel (Gal. 1:12) or God's will being revealed to him (2:2).¹²⁸ In this we see that Paul takes revelation to be in the same orbit of the miraculous with healing and miracles.¹²⁹

Fifth, the meaning of the "discernment of spirits" (διακρίσεις πνευμάτων) is not immediately obvious (1 Cor. 12:10).¹³⁰ It could refer to judging which spirit—holy or otherwise—is the source of some phenomena (cf. 1 John 4:1). More likely, here it is to be taken to relate to prophecy. For, further on in his discussion of the gifts, Paul pairs prophecy with the need to "judge" or "weigh" (διακρίνω) what is said. Also, in the only other place Paul discusses the use of prophecy among believers (1 Thess. 5:20–21) he also mentions the need to "examine" or "test" (δοκιμάζω) everything. Further, the two pairs of tongues/interpretation and prophecy/testing also found later in this section (1 Cor. 14:27–29) support the view that in the "discernment of spirits" following prophecy Paul has the testing of prophecy in mind.¹³¹ Thus, for Paul, discernment of spirits belongs with prophecy as a revelatory gift.

From this list of gifts—solidified expressions of grace¹³²—or humanly impossible activities of God, expressed in individuals, two things in particular

124. Cf. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 211.

125. In the NT, see Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:25; Luke 21:26; Rom. 8:38; Heb. 6:5.

126. In the NT, see Matt. 7:22; 11:20, 21, 23; 13:54, 58; 14:2; Mark 6:2, 14; Luke 10:13; Acts 8:13; 19:11; 1 Cor. 12:28, 29; Gal. 3:5. On the singular δύναμις ("power"), see §7.1 below.

127. Cf. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 212–25.

128. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 662–63.

129. Wayne A. Grudem (*The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* [Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982], 136–38, esp. 137) resists the conclusion that prophecy is miraculous for Paul in that it would mean that all the gifts would have to be deemed miraculous, and that the term "miracle" would be void of value in distinguishing various activities. Not only does this conception of miracle appear to arise from a post-Enlightenment perspective but it is exactly the opposite to what Paul wishes to convey.

130. See the summary of the debates by Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 965–70.

131. Note Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 171.

132. Cf. Käsemann ("Ministry and Community," 73), who defines *charisma* "as the concretion and individuation of grace or of the Spirit."

emerge about Paul's idea of the miraculous. First, the context leads the reader to assume that all these activities contribute to the health and welfare of both the community and its members. The miraculous could, therefore, be expected to include healings, exorcisms, as well as, perhaps, provision and protection.¹³³ Also, second, the close association of extraordinary faith, healings, and powers or miracles with revelatory gifts shows that Paul saw them as of the same order (1 Cor. 12:9–10): healings and miracles, the accomplishment of the impossible, and the experience and assessment of revelation were of a piece for Paul. This is an important conclusion for, as I examine literature of the period with a notion of miracle consistent with Paul's, I must take into account not only healings and works of power but also feats or experiences of the impossible, and prophecy and other revelatory experiences. (The implications for this study of the close connection that Paul sees between miracle and revelatory experience will be taken up in chap. 7.) For my use of terms, the understanding of the miraculous as covering a range of phenomena—from what we would term the apparently commonplace to the extraordinary—is also an important conclusion. Therefore, in line with the thinking that Paul shared with his readers, I will use the word “miraculous” to encompass the whole range of phenomena understood to be from God, and “miracles” and “miracle working” to refer to the occurrence of or direct involvement in, for example, healings or exorcisms or revelatory experiences. Since the terms overlap, I sometimes will use them interchangeably.

1.6 Conclusion

Not least in terms of the importance of the miraculous, our earliest witnesses to Paul—his own letters and his early interpreters—appear to offer conflicting portraits. Further, over against the high profile of miracle working in the reliable traditions about the historical Jesus, we have seen that it is generally agreed that performing miracles was not important to Paul, some scholars suggesting that Paul had little or no interest in miracles. When it is suggested that miracle working was important to Paul, it is not shown what impact this should have in our reconstruction of the historical Paul.

The proposal of this project is that, despite scholarly interest being almost entirely in him as a thinker and theologian, the historical Paul is to be understood not only in terms of his theological enterprise but also through taking into account his life and work, which includes his understanding and experience of the miraculous and the place of miracle working in his mission.

133. Cf. Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:325.

In what follows I will be examining Paul's testimony, as well as enquiring what his interpreters—Luke and the Pauline pseudepigraphical writings—can contribute to a reconstruction of the historical Paul in relation to the miraculous. I begin, in the next chapter, by setting out what views on miracles and the miraculous Paul is likely to have brought with him when he became one of the Christians.