

AN APOLOGETIC OF SIGNS AND WONDERS IN LUKE-ACTS

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ABSTRACT

This study is focused on the existence of patterned, precedent-setting, paradigmatic, and programmatic elements in the signs and wonders narratives of Luke-Acts that reveal the intentional establishment of a supernatural apologetic in the two-volume work. Signs and wonders were used to argue for the value, validity, and veracity of Jesus' messianic and prophetic ministry, death and resurrection, and ascension. Sixteen narratives that include Luke's primary signs and wonders terminology (*semeia* and *terata*) were analyzed and evaluated using the four exegetical principles of a holistic hermeneutic: (a) presuppositions concerning intentionality and the role of experience, (b) exegetical and literary analysis, (c) biblical and theological synthesis, and (d) application/verification. Lucan historiography was found to be complex, Hellenistic-Jewish, and didactic and apologetic in intent. The findings reveal that the original intent of the signs and wonders and Luke's emphasis on the signs and wonders narratives were to prove the value, validity, and veracity of the kerygma. The study concludes that contemporary signs and wonders should follow Luke's emphasis on biblically-based, Christocentric, eschatological, soteriological, and apologetic supernatural occurrences. Signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts reveal a realized eschatology that points to the fulfillment of God's promises in establishing His kingdom on earth and bringing salvation (spiritual, physical, and social) through Christ to individuals across ethnic and geographic barriers.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Topic

Luke begins his gospel with a formulaic statement of purpose in keeping with the introductions of several ancient Greek historical writings (Alexander 1993; Palmer 1993). In Luke's introduction to his two-volume work (Luke 1:1–4; cf., Acts 1:1), he reveals that many written and oral sources (compiled accounts) were extant and available to his audience (Luke 1:1–2). In addition to using sources, Luke “carefully investigated everything from the beginning” (Luke 1:3 NIV), and decided to write an “orderly” (*akribos kathexes*, “accurately ordered”) account for Theophilus (whose name means “dear to God”) (Bruce 1954, 31). Verse four sums up Luke's reasons for writing Luke-Acts—so that his reader would “know” for certain what had already been taught. The importance of Luke 1:4 to the present research is twofold: (1) it is a statement of intentionality by Luke that points to the didactic nature of his historical narrative; and (2) it is a statement of intentionality by Luke that points to the (at least partially) apologetic nature of his historical narrative. Luke intends to teach and to defend the “certainty” of what Theophilus had already been taught. Luke will do this by composing a two-volume historical narrative that is based on eyewitness accounts and oral and written traditions.

Acts 1:1–2 is a retrospective summary of Luke's gospel content (Jesus' words and deeds) (Witherington 1998, 106) and a prospective summary of Acts (Palmer 1993,

21–24). Luke records what Jesus “began” (*erxato*) to do and teach. “The verb *began*, frequently found in the three Gospels, is called an inchoative verb, which expresses the inauguration, the beginning, or the initiating of an action but not the termination of the action/activity initiated” (George R. Stotts, personal communication, April 25, 2005). In Acts, the disciples continue Jesus’ words and actions by the Holy Spirit (Strongstad 1984, 49). The preface to Acts points to the continuity in intent between the gospel of Luke and Acts (making both volumes apologetic and didactic), and directs the reader to the continuity of action between the kerygma and the words and deeds of typological prophets in Acts and beyond. How does Luke fulfill his didactic and apologetic intentions in Luke-Acts?

Luke is a master storyteller who is subtle in his methods of persuasion. His characters are realistic, but not drawn out in detail. Luke rarely comments on the significance of the events that transpire within his narratives. Recurring scenes and summaries in Luke-Acts (e.g., Paul’s accounts of his conversion) are never precisely the same but reveal in each new instance some previously unrevealed detail or emphasis. Luke is not merely recounting the history of Jesus and the early church with no didactic or apologetic aim.

Luke uses historiographical and rhetorical methods to present an apologetic of Christian beliefs. Luke uses detailed and summary signs and wonders narratives to convey a sense of the persuasiveness and continual reality of Spirit-empowered miracles in the ministry of Jesus and the early church. Signs and wonders prove the value, validity, and veracity of the *kerygma* (the content of gospel preaching concerning the messianic life, death and resurrection, and ascension of Jesus). Supernatural events

(in the form of languages, healings, resurrections, and exorcisms) point individuals in Luke and Acts to the truth of the kerygma. Signs reveal that there is power. Wonder is a supernatural response to signs that seeks to ascertain the source and/or purpose of the power or event. The power is God's power, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, and the purpose is to draw people into God's kingdom.

As an interpreter of biblical signs and wonders, my personal supernatural experiences are extremely important to my understandings of the texts. These supernatural experiences have given immediacy to Luke's purposes in the signs and wonders narratives and provide the backdrop for my personal quest into the importance of signs and wonders in Luke-Acts. I have personally experienced speaking in tongues, visions, and prophesying. I have witnessed many miracles. See the appendix for the author's personal testimony of experiences with signs and wonders. At the center of all of these personal experiences were the importance of the person of Christ and the growth of the kingdom of God. All of these signs and wonders were powerful presentations of the truth of the gospel, and people were drawn to Christ as a result.

The Question and Its Setting

Thesis Statement

The existence of patterned, precedent-setting, paradigmatic, and programmatic elements in the signs and wonders narratives of Luke-Acts point to Luke's intentional establishment of a supernatural apologetic in his two-volume work. Luke uses this supernatural apologetic to argue for the value, validity, and veracity of Jesus' messianic and prophetic ministry, death and resurrection, and ascension.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to examine Luke's theology of signs and wonders in order to understand the apologetic nature and purpose of signs and wonders and signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts.

Research Questions

The first research question. Is there a consistent pattern in Luke-Acts for the use of signs and wonders as an apologetic for the Christian faith (i.e., did signs and wonders have an apologetic purpose in the original events)?

The second research question. Are the signs and wonders in Luke-Acts intended to be an apologetic for Luke's readers (i.e., does Luke intentionally argue for Christianity by recording signs and wonders)?

The third research question. Does Luke intentionally present a paradigm of supernatural apologetics (i.e., is Luke's supernatural apologetic intended to be transferred to contemporary apologetic ministry)?

Assumptions

The first assumption. The first assumption is that the Bible is historically accurate and is not merely a compilation of fairy tales or moral stories.

The second assumption. The second assumption is that if a supernatural being created and sustains the natural world, supernatural manifestations in the physical world are to be expected.

The third assumption. The third assumption is that Luke is the author of both Luke and Acts.

The fourth assumption. The fourth assumption is that Luke and Acts are similar in genre (historical monographs), style, and explicit intent (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1) and should therefore be treated as two parts of a literary whole.

The fifth assumption. The fifth assumption is that historical narrative can have a didactic aim.

The sixth assumption. The sixth assumption is that Luke is an accurate historian who received much of his information from eyewitnesses.

The seventh assumption. The seventh assumption is that Luke's contributions to New Testament theology should be appreciated as distinct from, yet compatible with, the contributions of other New Testament writers such as John, Peter, and Paul.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation. The first limitation is that the research is limited to the New Testament books of Luke and Acts.

The second limitation. The second limitation is that the present study does not attempt to thoroughly examine every miracle, act of power, or reaction of amazement in Luke-Acts, but only those texts in Luke-Acts in which Luke specifically refers to these events as “signs” (*semeia*) or “wonders” (*terata*).

The third limitation. The third limitation is that the research does not deal with oral or written traditions behind the texts but accepts the texts as complete literary units.

The fourth limitation. The fourth limitation is that the study ignores textual variants if they are unimportant to the purposes of the research.

Definitions and Terms

Apologetic. An apologetic is a defense of the truth of something.

Eschatology. Eschatology is the study of the end times and end-time events.

Kerygma. Kerygma in Luke-Acts is the content of the gospel message, including details of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and ascension.

Pesher. Pesher is one of the hermeneutical traditions of ancient Jewish rabbis, which compared biblical texts or events to each other.

Pneumatology. Pneumatology is the study of God's Spirit (*pneuma*).

Power. Power in Luke-Acts is the supernatural ability to perform miracles, or is used to refer to miracles (i.e., "acts of power").

Signs. Signs in Luke-Acts are supernatural events that point to a supernatural cause.

Theophanies. For the purpose of this thesis, theophanies are events in which God reveals Himself through supernatural physical phenomena, not only God in anthropomorphic form.

Wonders. Wonders in Acts are supernatural events that cause amazement or bewilderment.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature that deals with signs and wonders and signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts is diverse. Apologists, commentators, theologians, biblical scholars, and missionaries have undertaken to write up accounts of Lucan literature, the miracle accounts in the New Testament, and the applicability of signs and wonders to contemporary Christianity (Bruce 1955; Corduan 1993; Malek 1991; Menzies 1989; Stronstad 1984; Wimber and Springer 1986). In an evaluation of the apologetic nature and purpose of signs and wonders and signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts, at least five main topics are at the forefront. Proper hermeneutics, Lucan historiography, past research on signs and wonders narratives, Lucan apologetics, and contemporary apologetics of signs and wonders are the five significant elements that are dealt with in this chapter.

First, the four exegetical principles of a holistic hermeneutic of signs and wonders narratives are delineated. Second, Luke's distinct historiography is evaluated, especially as it pertains to his accounts of the supernatural. Third, past research on signs and wonders and signs and wonders narratives is described and evaluated. Fourth, the apologetic nature and purpose of Luke-Acts is evaluated in light of its Jewish and Greco-Roman context. Fifth, a contemporary theology of supernatural apologetics is described and assessed.

A Holistic Hermeneutic

Four Exegetical Principles

What are some important exegetical principles to which the interpreter of the Bible must adhere? Four broad categories of interpretation, listed in the order in which they must be performed, are as follows: presuppositions, context, organization, and application. The presuppositions of the interpreter must be dealt with before the text is analyzed. The interpreter must be aware of his/her own theological, religious, cultural, and exegetical presuppositions before encountering the text and must be open to new presuppositional horizons uncovered in the text (Dockery 1992; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 1993). The context of the text is extremely important to interpretation. Authorial intent, literary genre, grammatical usage, historical-cultural background, and redactional issues must all be examined thoroughly in order to ascertain the meaning of the text in the context in which it was written (Arthur 1994; Fee 1991). Organizing the meanings in the texts (transforming biblical theology into systematic theology) is the next step in the hermeneutical process. Scripture must be compared with Scripture in order to develop a holistic analytical/synthetic framework upon which to build one's faith (Stronstad 1995, 29). Last, the interpreter must apply the text to his/her present reality. This is the verification level of the hermeneutical process (Stronstad 1995). The applications made must cohere with the systematic and biblical theology based on the context and presuppositions of the text itself.

Presuppositions

The primary presupposition of the present work is that the Bible is "the primary source of information about the Bible" (Arthur 1994, 8). The Bible should be used to

interpret itself. The interpreter should seek to ascertain and utilize the presuppositions of the original author and audience. In the present study, the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts are the two primary sources of information about signs and wonders and signs and wonders narratives in Luke and Acts. The research questions of the study were answered primarily through an evaluation of the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts and secondarily through an evaluation of studies of signs and wonders narratives by previous researchers.

As Stronstad (1995) has rightly observed, experiential presuppositions are also important in exegesis (61–63). Bible study is not a wholly detached and objective enterprise, but is an exploration of the “existential continuity” that exists between apostolic believers and modern experiences of the interpreter (Arrington 1988b, 383). Regarding the focus of the present study, those who have experienced miracles are more open and understanding when exegeting biblical history concerning miracles (Stronstad 1995, 62). If the experiences of the interpreter become the sole and unbridled starting point of interpretation, however, “the perceived meaning of Scripture becomes easily susceptible to distortion by the presuppositions of the interpreter” (Arrington 1988b, 384).

Erickson (1998, 71), Fee (1991, 27), Menzies (1987), and Strongstad (1995) contended that all interpreters approach scripture with experiential presuppositions that affect the outcome of their exegesis. Arrington (1988b) asserted that the relationship between personal experience and exegesis is dialogical: “At every point, experience informs the process of interpretation, and the fruit of interpretation informs experience” (384). In an exposition of the signs and wonders narratives, an openness to the

supernatural acts of God in history is necessary in order to properly understand and evaluate the sign value of miracles recorded in the text. Miracles are only as apologetic as they are experiential.

Exegesis and Explication

Literary-historical analysis and canonical-theological analysis are the “two interrelated phases” of a proper hermeneutic (Dockery 1992, 180). Exegesis is the historical-grammatical analysis of the text. Explication is the literary analysis of the text. In both exegesis and explication, the primacy of authorial intent should be upheld, and the importance of a text’s genre should be appreciated (Fee 1991, 43). While so-called “higher criticism” has been used by many Bible scholars since the rise of rationalism in the West, it is often too rationalistic and reductionistic to deal with signs and wonders narratives.

Regardless of a text’s history prior to canonization, its message must be understood holistically in light of its larger literary context using the supernaturalistic presuppositions of the original author and intended audience. The religio-historical context must not be ignored in an interpreter’s understanding of miraculous events (Strobel 2000, 92). The religio-historical context of first-century Hellenistic Jewish Christians includes an emphasis on the supernatural. Jesus’ miracles (and those of His disciples) were signs of His ministry, role, and identity, and were related to who He was and what He said historically. Luke’s redactions of his sources may in fact reflect his own particular interests and purposes in writing, but it is the finished work (Luke-Acts) that the exegete must seek to understand, not just the parts. The interpreter may only know

Luke's original intent as he/she encounters the entirety of Luke's completed work in Luke-Acts using grammatical-historical tools of analysis and literary explication.

Literary explication often avoids reductionistic and rationalistic tendencies. Ryken (1992) observed that "storytellers embody their point of view in their selectivity and arrangement of details" (85). Authorial assertion, normative spokespersons (characters who give the meaning or sum up the plot), implied authorial viewpoint, selectivity, and arrangement are all examples of "authorial devices of disclosure" (Ryken 1984, 62–63) that reveal what a story means and what it teaches. The four modes of narration are direct narrative (the author tells what happened in his/her own voice), dramatic narrative (dialogues and speeches), description (details of setting or character), and commentary (1992, 43).

Three basic ingredients of a story are setting, characters, and plot (Ryken 1984, 35). The settings in signs and wonders narratives in Acts progress from Jerusalem into all the world (following the expansion of Christianity). The characters move from Jewish apostles, to Hellenistic Jews, to God-fearers and proselytes, to Gentiles. The plots move from several lengthy signs and wonders accounts (Acts 2 and 3) to short paradigmatic summaries but continue to follow the miracle-explanation-response progression of chapter two. Three types of story settings are physical, temporal, and cultural (Ryken 1992, 62). Characters in a story may be sympathetic or unsympathetic, and they may be normative characters that embody "the standards, values, or norms that the story is offering for our approval" (72). When a character in a story gives a summary of the story's meaning, he/she is a "normative spokesperson" (85).

Biblical Theology

“In the hermeneutics of biblical history the major task of the interpreter is to discover the author’s intent in recording that history” (Fee 1976, 125). Biblical theology is a holistic understanding of a biblical book or books (Luke-Acts in this case) that seeks to analyze the key themes and agendas of the text in its historical setting (Ladd 1974, 25). The theology of a particular biblical writer is explicitly stated or implied in the work (Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 1993, 383). Daniel Fuller (1978) presented several guidelines for biblical theology: (a) compare texts by the same author before comparing them with texts of other authors; (b) analyze texts by the same author chronologically to discover progression; and (c) compare texts with texts of similar genre (195–196). In the present study, Luke’s writings were analyzed chronologically in light of his other writings. Since both Luke and Acts fit into a similar genre (that of the historical monograph), these two volumes provide the interpreter with ample examples of signs and wonders narratives in the same genre written by the same author.

Fee and Stuart (1993) asserted that when stories are in an explicitly didactic context they often serve as illustrations of what is being taught (130). The narratives in Acts 2–3 are examples of signs and wonders narratives in a context that is explicitly didactic concerning signs and wonders. In any biblical theology of Luke-Acts, emphasis must be placed on Luke’s distinctive kingdom Christology (Fee and Stuart 1993, 131). Time must be spent relating signs and wonders narratives to the “already” of God’s impending blessings and judgment, and the “not yet” of the total fulfillment of God’s plan for the world.

Systematic Theology

Erickson (1998) defined systematic theology as a discipline that “strives to give a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith based primarily on the Scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in a contemporary idiom, and related to the issues of life” (21). Fee and Stuart (1993) distinguished between the theological, ethical, experiential, and practical doctrines that can be derived from the texts of the Bible. Within these four areas, Fee and Stuart have identified primary doctrines (based on the explicit intent of the original author) and secondary doctrines (based on the implicit intent of the author). Fee and Stuart argued that the secondary experiential and practical areas are not meant to be normative for all time but are rather patterns or particular events that merely point to the wider purpose of the original author in his work (106).

The main story of the Bible as a whole, and Luke-Acts in particular (Witherington 1998), centers on God’s purposes and actions in history and is known as “salvation history” (Ryken 1984, 170). Signs and wonders narratives focus on an important aspect of God’s actions and purposes and are manifestations of God’s plan in salvation history. Signs and wonders narratives contribute to the Christology of Luke-Acts. The “resurrection-ascension-exaltation perspective” of the Christology of Acts is highlighted in the signs and wonders narratives (Stronstad 1995, 143), and the Christocentric sign value of miracles is shared by Luke with both John and Paul in their writings (John 7:4–8; 5:36; 9:30–33; 10:25; 11:47–48; 14:11–14; 15:24; 20:30–31; 2 Cor. 12:12; Gal. 3:1–5).

Application and Verification

William W. Menzies (1987) argued that exegesis and biblical theology must be verified in the life of the exegete (1–14). If findings are not verified by present experience, an interpreter’s hermeneutic fails. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993) presented a useful four-step methodology for the application of biblical texts to today: (a) determine the original application, (b) figure out how specific the original application was, (c) identify any cultural issues, and (d) determine what contemporary applications go along with the broader principles presented in the text (406–424). Consistent patterns and positive models indicate Luke’s intentions of establishing “normative, consistent behavior” (Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 1993, 350). How can the interpreter of Luke-Acts ascertain the normative value of a particular narrative in Luke-Acts? Fee and Stuart (1993) dismissed the normative value of narrative details based on the fact that the details are often incidental or ambiguous (107). Witherington (1998) offered the following three guidelines for assessing the normative value of a particular narrative: (a) look for positive repeated patterns; (b) be sure that a pattern does not change; and (c) assess whether a clear divine approval is given for belief, behavior, experience, or practice (100–101). Luke’s distinctive historiographical methods must be understood in order to ascertain the apologetic nature of signs and wonders and signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts.

An Introduction to Lucan Historiography

A Complex or Simple Approach to Lucan Historiography

The majority of scholars hold two main positions in the debate about the hermeneutics of historical narrative in contemporary biblical scholarship. The two views in conflict are the “simple” and the “complex” approaches to historical narrative. For

many, Luke-Acts has become the center of the controversy. Gordon Fee (a Pentecostal) and others (many of whom are cessationists) take what might be termed a “simple” approach to historical narrative. The “simple” approach pares down historical narrative to simple description (with little or no didactic purpose). This approach often denies the beneficial aspects of presuppositions in the hermeneutical task and views Luke as a historian and Gospel writer, not a theologian. When it is acknowledged that Luke may have had theological aims, Luke’s theology is often considered ambiguous or anomalous and it is argued that his theology should be interpreted through the clearer and more general theologies of John and Paul. The “simple” approach to historical narrative tends toward reductionism of: (a) the interpreter’s task, (b) the original author’s intent, and (c) the theological value of biblical historiography.

Within the “simple” approach two main views may be seen. The first of these views may be called the “strong simple” approach. This view is strong in its beliefs and applications of the “simple” approach to the hermeneutics of historical narrative. The “strong simple” approach usually denies the role of contemporary experience in the interpretation of historical narrative. This approach views patterns in Luke-Acts as unrepeatable, particularized historical accounts and finds in Luke-Acts no biblical precedents for contemporary experiences of supernatural phenomena (Stronstad 1995). This approach often denies the didactic and theological aims of Lucan historiography.

The second view within the “simple” approach is the “weak simple” approach. This view (held by Fee and others) is weak in that it holds very loosely to the “simple” approach and often makes concessions to the “complex” approach’s understandings of historical narrative. This view is not termed “weak” because it is a weak position, but

because it is open to dialogue with both sides, making it less firmly “simple.” The “weak simple” approach values the role of contemporary experience in interpretation but warns against excesses in this area. This approach acknowledges the importance of patterns in Lucan historiography but denies the normative value of biblical precedents that are experiential in nature (Fee and Stuart 1993). This approach recognizes the theological and didactic value of biblical history but continues to view Luke’s works (particularly his pneumatology) through the grids of John’s and Paul’s theologies. This approach calls for an exposition of authorial intent to establish normative value for the contemporary church.

The “complex” approach is likewise divided into two distinct camps. These approaches have been termed “complex” for the following reasons: (a) they recognize the value of presuppositions in the hermeneutical task (making contemporary experience one of the variables in interpretation); (b) they stress the importance of theological and didactic purposes in historical narrative; and (c) they view Luke’s writings through the grid of Old Testament and intertestamental historiography. The “popular complex” approach (espoused by most classic Pentecostals) views Luke’s historical narratives as establishing normative experiences and behavior that are to be applied to the contemporary church. This view emphasizes the role of contemporary Christian experiences in interpreting Luke’s works. Patterns in Luke-Acts are identified and applied as if they were intended by Luke to be norms for the church throughout history. The “popular complex” approach is pragmatic and experiential but is often unsystematic in its analyses of texts and the hermeneutical process and is overly devotional and subjective.

The second position within the “complex” approach is the “scholarly complex” approach. This view, held by William Menzies (1987) and Roger Stronstad (1995), is really just a more thoroughly developed “popular complex” approach, which seeks to make a scholarly, objective, and systematic case for the “complex” approach. Those who hold this position have recognized and analyzed the biblical precedent for historical precedence (norms and lessons in the Bible derived from earlier historical accounts in the Bible). Especially noteworthy in this respect is Stronstad’s (1993) analysis of the Jerusalem Council. The “scholarly complex” approach evaluates Luke’s historiography as theological and didactic through Luke’s use of episodic examples, typologies, programs, and paradigms (Stronstad 1995, 42). While the “popular complex” approach is pragmatic, the “scholarly complex” approach seeks to be based on the careful and systematic exegesis of biblical data.

What hermeneutic seems most appropriate for historical narrative, particularly the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts? The complex approach seems to fit best with the biblical evidence. Luke has been shown to be a theologian in his own right with strong ties to the historiography and terminology of the Septuagint and several intertestamental historians (Menzies 1989; Stronstad 1984). The “strong simple” approach undervalues the role of contemporary experience and fails to deal properly with the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts, which provide clearly identifiable phenomena accompanying Spirit empowerment, including but not limited to healing of the sick, deliverance from demon possession, and raising of the dead.

The pragmatic “popular complex” approach is not an adequate hermeneutic either. The role of experience is overemphasized, and the Bible may become

subjectivized. This approach reads Luke-Acts as if it were written directly for the church of today. Sound exegesis demands attention to original authorial intent and genre-specific explication. This approach often applies the Scriptures before it understands them.

The “weak simple” approach is correct in its emphases on genre, intentionality, and the danger of excessively experiential hermeneutics, but it fails to take the last step toward application of the texts. Fee (1993) argued that Luke’s history establishes patterns for behavior and experience, but that these patterns are not normative. What he meant by normative is that Christians “must” or “have to” do or experience things in the particular forms that Scripture portrays. He gave the illustration of Jesus’ disciples plucking grain as a historical precedent that was not meant by Jesus to be repeated as normative, but is only an illustration drawn from David and the consecrated bread (13–14). Fee denied that the behavior of the disciples is meant to be normative and argued that only the belief in man’s supremacy over the Sabbath is intended by Luke to be normative. This very illustration, however, shows the weakness of his position. Luke’s readers must have understood this passage as establishing a precedent for Luke’s later accounts of the Jerusalem Council and Peter’s vision of the unclean animals (and his trip to Cornelius’ house). In all of these passages, not only belief is in sight, but belief and behavior (concerning the law).

Fee’s aversion to the establishment of normative behaviors and experiences in historical narrative is tied directly to his dichotomization between the Law and the gospel. His views about “norms” are akin to his views on law. His arguments against legalism are valid, but his views concerning the Spirit passages are too narrow. Luke does not merely describe for his audience what the Spirit was doing through people and how

He was doing it. Luke shows in order to instruct (he writes intentionally didactic narrative). Luke instructs the reader not just about beliefs, but about experiences and behavior as well. Luke seeks to put away the Law through Jesus but to retain the Spirit of it. This Spirit is a “have to” Spirit. Obedience to the Spirit’s leading is a key to Luke’s narratives (encompassing his journey, rejection, proclamation, and empowerment motifs). This new law is inward and is supernatural in its source and its content.

The “scholarly complex” approach to the interpretation of the historical narratives in Luke-Acts (specifically with regard to the signs and wonders narratives) seems to be congruent with Luke’s original intent, the genre of Luke-Acts, and Luke’s attention to precedence. Normative beliefs, experiences, and behavior are all identified in Luke-Acts with a view to present-day application. The “holistic hermeneutic” of the scholarly complex approach is analytical, synthetic, and existential in its interpretations of the signs and wonders narratives. This approach recognizes that Luke-Acts is a complex yet cohesive whole.

The Unity and Complexity of Lucan Historiography

One key to understanding narratives in Luke-Acts is to recognize similarities between the two volumes and to appreciate Luke’s distinctive Hellenistic Jewish historiography. Henry J. Cadbury (1958) has established the literary unity of Luke and Acts. Palmer (1993) and Witherington (1998) contended that Acts (and most likely Luke as well) fits into the genre of the historical monograph in the tradition of the Greek historians Thucydides, Polybius, and Ephorus. F. F. Bruce (1987) commented that ancient writings such as these often “had a didactic quality and aim” (13). Stronstad (1984) acknowledged the unity of Luke-Acts and the didactic elements of Lucan

narratives and went on to present a forceful argument for the distinctiveness of Luke's theology (in comparison with John's or Paul's) that Stronstad postulated is partly a result of Luke's peculiar blend of Septuagintal terminology, Old Testament historiography, and Hellenistic historiographical influences (2).

The historiographical complexity of Luke-Acts led Stronstad (1995) to point out three aspects of Luke-Acts that are important in interpretation: (a) Luke's history is selective (101); (b) the context is progressively Greco-Roman (106); and (c) Luke has more than one purpose in mind in his two-volume work (105). Luke and Acts are mainly episodic in character (i.e., they are collections of self-contained units that are put together to develop certain themes, movements, and motifs) (Stronstad 1984). Because of the multiplex purpose, complex historiography, and episodic nature of Luke's two-volume work, it is often helpful to analyze individual narratives in Luke-Acts in light of the structure of the wider work.

Outlines of Luke and Acts abound. Stronstad (1998) divided the second volume into two major sections (the community of prophets in Acts 1:6–6:7 and the narratives of individual representative prophets in 6:8–28:31) (71). Many interpreters have contended that the progression of peoples reached in Acts serves as a useful outline of the book (based on Acts 1:8) (Fee and Stuart 1993; Olson 1998, 53; Stronstad 1984; Witherington 1998). Other important progressions that are often noted in Luke-Acts are the increasingly universalistic language, and the geographic movement of Jesus to Jerusalem and Christianity from Jerusalem to the rest of the world (Stronstad 1995; Witherington 1998). Signs and wonders narratives are spread quite evenly throughout Luke and Acts (six in Luke, ten in Acts) though they abruptly end in Acts 15:12. Luke often includes

them in summaries of Jesus' or the disciples' ministry in a particular geographic area.

Thus, the ethno-geographic progression of signs and wonders moves along with Luke's wider plot—toward Jerusalem, then away from Jerusalem—and becomes more universal in scope as the story progresses.

Detailed signs and wonders narratives seem to be clumped near the front of Luke's second volume, at the advent of the new eschatological community, leading some commentators to remark on the peculiarity of signs and wonders (Bruce 1955). In contrast, Stronstad (1984) interpreted these detailed accounts as exemplary episodes that are programmatic for the rest of Acts and beyond. Considering Luke's continual emphasis on signs and wonders throughout Luke-Acts, this must surely be the case. While each supernatural event was no doubt peculiar to the time and place it occurred, Luke seems to set up his introductory signs and wonders narratives in Acts as examples of what is going to happen in the rest of the signs and wonders episodes. Luke's later accounts of signs and wonders should be interpreted within this context of detailed examples that Luke has provided in his earlier episodes.

The narratives in Luke-Acts teach mainly through examples (Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 1993). The inclusion of certain episodes into Luke's narratives (and presumably the exclusion of others) points to the exemplary, illustrative, or precedent-setting nature of the events recorded (Stronstad 1995, 43–44). Stronstad recognized the theological and didactic purposes behind Luke's narratives and defends the idea that once Luke has established certain theological themes, "he uses narrative to establish, illustrate and reinforce those themes through specific historical episodes" (42).

Patterns in Lucan Narratives

Fee and Stuart (1993) asserted that biblical narratives can have “pattern value” even if the author did not intend them to have normative value (110). Repetition “gives appropriate weight to a significant development” (Satterthwaite 1993, 351) and is “the most reliable guide to what a story is about” (Ryken 1984, 59). Repetition in biblical narratives may include words, motifs, themes, and whole scenes (called “type scenes”) (Longman 1993, 76). Type scenes are recurring events or patterned accounts that follow understood conventions of particular types of stories (Ryken 1992, 50). Conventional elements in patterned structures are evident in nearly all of the signs and wonders narratives (52). Luke’s parallelism between Jesus’ anointing at the Jordan (with its corresponding theophanic manifestations) and the disciples’ anointing on Pentecost (with its corresponding theophanic manifestations) “strongly indicates that the disciples received the power of the Spirit by which Jesus had preached the gospel, healed the sick, and cast out demons” (Arrington 1988a, 19). The disciples were empowered like Jesus to perform validating signs and wonders. The theophanic signs at the Jordan and on Pentecost (following a pattern from the Old Testament) were ocular signs accompanied by auditory signs (Stronstad 1995, 121). Sinai, the Exodus, Bethlehem, Calvary, Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan, and the Day of Pentecost all had corresponding theophanic manifestations (Arrington 1988a, 20).

A common convention of Old Testament and New Testament storytelling was to create a pattern of three or four similar events, sometimes including an unexpected outcome in the last event (Ryken 1992, 47). In Luke-Acts, Jesus had three trials and was unjustly condemned to death afterward. Peter was arrested three times and escaped the

third time to safety. Paul stood trial three times and was left in prison with the outcome unknown. Jesus, Peter, and Paul performed similar miracles (they raised the dead, healed the sick, healed from a distance by word, shadow, and garment, and cast out demons) (Stronstad 1995, 131). After Jesus' anointing (Luke 3), He preached a programmatic message that touched on the potential universality of the kingdom, and His ministry was confirmed by His healing of a paralytic (Luke 5:17–26). The disciples' postempowerment sermon at Pentecost and healing of a lame man in the temple reveals a similar pattern (Stronstad 1998, 66).

Luke develops and inherits from Old Testament historians certain patterns between events or narratives (Stronstad 1995, 44). The recurrence of certain themes, ideas, events, or summaries helps interpreters to ascertain Luke's intent (i.e., Luke records again and again what he feels is important). Ryken (1992) and Goulder (1964) have identified a cycle of events that are repeated in Luke-Acts: (a) God raised up leaders who preached the gospel; (b) they performed mighty works; (c) crowds were drawn and many listeners were converted; (d) opposition and persecution arose against the leaders; and (e) God intervened to rescue them.

Plots in stories often follow this pattern: (a) background information, (b) inciting moment, (c) rising action, (d) turning point, (e) further complication, (f) climax, and (g) denouement (Ryken 1992, 517). Signs and wonders narratives often fall into the second and third and also sometimes the fifth or sixth stage of the plot movement in an episode. For instance, the inciting moment and rising action on the Day of Pentecost were the signs and the wonder of the crowd. Peter's witness highlights the importance of the signs

and wonders, further complicating the plot, and the climax is reached as the people responded to what they saw and heard (which included the signs and wonders).

Transformations often occur with characters that witness signs and wonders. Usually, the physical change is the sign (i.e., healing, deliverance from demons, visible or auditory theophanic phenomena) while the spiritual change takes place after the wonder and during or after the explanation. Following Aristotle's *Poetics*, Ryken (1984) observed that change is often the essence of a story (52). In a signs and wonders narrative, details given about transformations are central to the episode's meaning and purpose.

Paradigms, Precedents, and Programs in Lucan Narratives

Fee and Stuart (1993) argued that "historical precedent, to have normative value, must be related to *intent* (emphasis theirs)" (108). Fee and Stuart's assessment is based on their emphasis on relating authorial intentionality to contemporary dogma. Stronstad (1993) explored the weaknesses of their approach to biblical precedent and proposed a systematic alternative (1984). Stronstad's alternative explored the didactic aim of patterned, precedent-setting, paradigmatic, and programmatic narrative episodes in Lucan literature.

Luke and other biblical writers used historical precedents to establish norms of behavior and experience. The Jerusalem Council recognized the experiences of early Christians as establishing norms for the behavior and experiences of later Christians (Stronstad 1993). Sabbath observances (behavior) in Exodus are based on the prior behavior of God during creation week. David's behavior concerning the consecrated bread (1 Sam. 21:1–6) is a precedent for the behavior of Jesus' disciples on the Sabbath

day in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus' Spirit-leading and baptism (behavior and experience) become precedents for the believers' experiences and subsequent behavior patterns on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. This latter example becomes a precedent-setting experience/behavior pattern for the Jewish Christians' acceptance of the Gentiles' inclusion into God's plan for the world (Acts 10:47–48).

The question of whether or not historical precedents should establish norms for the contemporary church does not center on Luke's establishment of normative beliefs, but rather on his establishment of normative behavior and experiences (Fee 1991). From the evidence just given, it can be concluded that biblical historiography establishes not just normative beliefs, but behavior and experiences as well. Nevertheless, even within the conservative framework of Fee and Stuart's approach to the hermeneutic of biblical narrative, the interpreter of the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts finds abundant examples of apologetic intentionality establishing normative behavior and experiences.

Luke also presents the reader with certain paradigmatic elements in his narratives (Stronstad 1995). Luke often narrates events that present "the way things should be" (e.g., Luke's narratives that center on prayer as a key ingredient of renewal, commissioning, and supernatural power [Acts 1:12–14, 24–26; 2:1, 46; 3:1; 4:3; 6:6; 8:15; 9:11, 17, 40; 10:2; 13:3; 14:23; 16:25; 20:32, 36; 28:8]) (Stronstad 1995, 45). Witherington (1998) concluded that in Acts "the vast majority of the behavior of the *Christian* characters in the story are probably meant to be seen as exemplary (emphasis his)" (99). A cursory glance at Luke's characters reveals that Jesus, Peter, John, Paul, Barnabas, Stephen, and Philip all performed signs and wonders (Acts 2:22, 42; 3:1–10; 4:29–33; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 14:3) (Stronstad 1998, 75, 82, 86). Episodes may also be

paradigmatic. Ryken (1992) remarked that the signs and wonders narrative in Acts 3 is representative of later signs and wonders narratives and is a classic case of a paradigmatic episode (422).

Sometimes Luke uses an event or episode to serve as a program for later developments (Stronstad 1995, 44–45). Luke presents the reader with an episode that anticipates later episodes, such as how Jesus' Spirit-anointing for ministry in the Gospel of Luke anticipates the disciples' baptism in the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (45). Witherington (1998) discussed the summaries in Acts 2:43–47 and 4:32–37 and argued that they seem to act as intentional examples of normal Christianity (99). These summaries include references to power, signs, and wonders that are a part of the kerygma and are programmatic for the supernatural ministries of main characters in the rest of the book (i.e., Peter, John, Stephen, Philip, Paul, and Barnabas). Stronstad agreed with this assessment of the summaries, and added that Luke borrows the formulaic programmatic summary from Old Testament historiography (1998). Another exemplary programmatic event in Acts is the wonder of the crowd on Pentecost, which was programmatic for the Cornelius incident and continued to be the pattern in Acts (wonder following signs, power, and supernatural events) (Stronstad 1995, 131).

Empowerment in Luke-Acts

Empowerment by God is central to Luke's plot of the development of the church and is closely related to signs and wonders in Luke-Acts. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus gave instructions to His disciples about waiting in Jerusalem for empowerment to fulfill the Great Commission (Acts 1:2, 8). On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and filled the disciples (which for Luke meant that they were inspired to speak prophetically,

in tongues, praise, or proclamation) (Stronstad 1984; Acts 2:4). This divine empowerment made the newly established prophetic community bold witnesses of Christ's death and resurrection and was accompanied by signs (2:2–3, 19–20) and the wonder of the crowd (2:5–13, 19–20). God's empowerment was meant for all (2:3, 17–18, 21, 38–39).

Jesus' messianic ministry and divinity were proved by the power of God (Acts 2:22). Peter and John healed a crippled man by the power of Jesus (3:12; 4:7, 10). The Jerusalem disciples witnessed "with great power" (4:33). Stephen was full of God's power and did great signs and wonders (6:8). Simon the magician (known as "The Great Power") became a follower of "The Way" when he observed the power of God in Philip's ministry (in signs and wonders) (8:11, 13). Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit and with power in order to do good and to heal people (10:38). Last, God did works of uncommon power through Paul by healing the sick and delivering the demon possessed (19:11). In Acts, God's power is always associated with the ability to perform signs and wonders that testify to the validity of the gospel (specifically the messianic ministry and divinity of Jesus) (Menzie's 1989). Empowerment seems to be closely related to (but not identical with) the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which for Luke included (a) being filled with the Spirit (inspired to speak) (2:4), (b) empowerment to perform signs and wonders, (c) boldness to witness, and (d) anointing to prophetic ministry (1:8; Luke 4:18, 19; Stronstad 1995).

The empowerment theme in Acts is a further development of ideas introduced in Luke's first volume. The Pentecost experience is presented in language that is similar to Mary's experience of the conception of Jesus. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary, and the

power of God overshadowed her; this resulted in the actualization and validation of Jesus' identity (Luke 1:35). After Jesus' baptism and temptation, He returned to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit (4:14). It was this power that allowed Him to release people from demon possession (4:36) and to heal the sick (5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 10:13; 19:37). Jesus gave His twelve disciples (and later seventy-two others) this same power "to drive out all demons and to cure diseases and to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (9:1, 2; 10:19). Jesus said that near the end of time the world would see Him coming with great power (21:25–27), but until then, Jesus would be seated at the right hand of the power of God (22:69). Jesus would go to the Father, send what He had promised the disciples (the baptism in the Holy Spirit), and the disciples would be "clothed with power from on high" (24:49). God's empowerment would make the disciples witnesses of Jesus' death and resurrection (vv. 46–48). In Luke's Gospel, God's empowerment is seen as a validation of messianic, divine, and prophetic ministry, while in Acts (and in Luke 9:1; 10:19), Luke presents God's empowerment as the source of prophetic ministry (including the performance of signs and wonders) and as validation of the gospel message concerning Christ's divinity and messiahship.

Luke presented God's empowerment for prophetic ministry as paradigmatic for witnessing. The church is not sent out to testify to the truth of the gospel without God's own empowerment. The Holy Spirit inspired the disciples to speak, God gave them power to perform signs and wonders, and Jesus passed on His own prophetic ministry. Signs and wonders validated the gospel message and provided proof of God's eschatological ministry among His people (Acts 2:17–21). Empowerment is a promise by God (Luke 24:49), a major part of effective cross-cultural witnessing (Acts 1:8), and a

sign of prophetic ministry. Stronstad (1995) affirmed Luke's programmatic intentions concerning empowerment (49). The disciples were empowered on the Day of Pentecost, and "Luke will not continue to tell his readers that the signs and wonders" are a result of the disciples' empowerment because this fact is implied through association with earlier programmatic narratives such as Pentecost (50).

Miracle Narratives in the Old Testament

Stronstad (1995) rightly tied Luke's "teaching by example" narrative framework to "Luke's historiographical heritage in Jewish-Hellenistic historiography" (52). Bruce (1955), Jervell (1996), Menzies (1989), Rosner (1993), and Witherington (1998) have thoroughly established Luke's close ties with the Septuagint. Speeches and editorial asides are used by Luke and his historiographical predecessors to introduce or summarize key themes and to make transitions between episodes or blocks of episodes (Rosner 1993, 76; cf., the formulaic connectives used in 1 Kings 14:19–20, 31; 15:8, 24; Luke 1:80; 2:40, 52; 4:14–15; 8:1; Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–35; 5:42; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5).

The signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts have a mainly Jewish-Christian historiographical heritage. Ben Witherington III (1998) commented on Luke's use of miracle stories in Luke-Acts:

On the whole his manner of dealing with them differs little from the Synoptic approach to such acts or events, and all such accounts seem primarily indebted to the Old Testament in the way a miracle and its significance is conceived. (223)

Luke's accounts of miracles owe more to the miracle accounts of the Old Testament (especially the Pentateuchal and Elijah-Elisha material) than to Hellenistic miracle accounts (223). Signs and wonders in the Old Testament served as credentials of prophetic ministry and as portents of God's salvation (O'Reilly 1987, 178–179). Luke

presents Jesus' miracles as superior to those of the Old Testament prophets (Olson 1998, 68). The close parallels that exist between the Elijah-Elisha material and the miracles recorded in Luke-Acts (performed by Jesus, Peter, John, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, and Paul) point to Jesus and His disciples' roles as prophets and to Jesus' identity as the eschatological Christ (an Elijah figure who would pass His anointing on to His followers) (Stronstad 1984, 44).

The sign motif is not very well developed in the Old Testament history literature (contra Stronstad 1984, 21–22). However, Old Testament miracle accounts very often center on the immanent presence of God as the cause for supernatural events. This fits well with Luke's theology. In Luke-Acts, the power that the disciples and Jesus used to perform miracles was the "power of God." Miracle accounts in the Old Testament point forward to a future age when God's Spirit would be poured out on all people and the prophetic community would know God was with them by the signs and wonders He empowered them to perform.

Stronstad (1984) denied that Luke intentionally used Septuagintal "signs and wonders" terminology, but his analysis does not square with the evidence (78). Five times in Deuteronomy (7:19; 11:3; 26:8; 29:2; 34:11) the translators of the Septuagint used the same two primary terms for signs and wonders (*semeia* and *terata*) as Luke does in Acts (2:19, 22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12; Witherington 1998, 223). The strong linguistic similarities between the Greek descriptions of Moses' prophetic ministry and the prophetic ministry of Jesus and the disciples leads O'Reilly (1987) to conclude that "the Mosaic typology in Luke-Acts shows that the 'signs and wonders' of Jesus and his disciples are to be understood as inaugurating the time of eschatological salvation"

(188). Luke also quotes from the Septuagint translation of Joel 2:30 to introduce his own primary word for “wonders” in Acts (*terata*). Luke’s primary word for “signs” in Luke-Acts (*semeia*) is used in the Septuagint in connection with Hezekiah’s miraculous recovery twice in 2 Kings 20:8–11, once in 2 Chronicles 32:24, and once in Isaiah 38:4–8.

The pairing of “signs” with “wonders” in Luke-Acts and the use of Septuagintal vocabulary suggest that Luke intentionally used Septuagintal signs and wonders terminology and that Luke’s signs and wonders narratives are meant to be Hellenistic-Jewish in character. This is supported by the fact that Luke begins to use the phrase “signs and wonders” in the first Christian Hellenistic-Jewish context in Luke-Acts (Acts 2:43) and discontinues his signs and wonders terminology (and thus his signs and wonders narratives) after Acts 15:12 (at the Jerusalem Council; the last primarily Christian Hellenistic-Jewish speech event), and from then on increasingly uses Greco-Roman style miracle narratives (Witherington 1998). This follows Luke’s general trend in Acts of Septuagintalizing the first fifteen chapters (Winn 1960, 14). It might also be conjectured that Luke’s signs and wonders terminology ends abruptly in Acts 15 due to Luke’s movement from Septuagintal Greek to a more common Greek style of writing.

Past Research on Signs and Wonders Narratives

Classical Studies on Signs and Wonders Narratives

Ralph M. McInerny (1986), a prominent Catholic philosopher, suggested that miracles are not intended merely to bring wonder but are instead evidences of Jesus’ divinity. Jesus established his own authority by performing signs and wonders (37). The role of signs and wonders in the apostles’ ministries was to validate their message

concerning Christ (62). McNerny's conclusions relied in part on his interpretation of the Council of Ephesus, the first and third Council of Constantinople, and the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church (122–124). While Protestantism denies the supreme importance of tradition in exegesis, it is nonetheless indebted to the early church councils for its own formulations of central doctrines, especially in the area of Christology.

Many early church fathers spoke of Christ's miracles as proving His divinity (McInerny 1986, 126–127). Origen, Arnobius, Justin, Tertullian, and Augustine all wrote to some degree concerning the validating role of miracles. Augustine, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas developed definitions of miracles that centered on their sign value (128–130). According to Thomas Aquinas (in a translation by Anton C. Pegis 1955), the Bible's authority was "divinely confirmed by miracles" (77). A miracle was seen as "some imposing and unusual observable event which in the circumstances can only have been caused by God and whose purpose is to draw the mind beyond the natural to the supernatural" (McInerny 1986, 131). This definition highlights both signs and wonders. Events that seem unexplainable apart from supernatural explanations are wonders; these events cause people to wonder at the source or cause of the event. The sign points directly to the cause—God—and is dependant on outward circumstances for its veracity (i.e., the nature of the event, the person performing the event, prior claims surrounding the event, etc.). According to McNerny, miracles are impossible to perform unless they are done by God or "someone acting with a power granted to him by God" (137). Thus, popular disbelief in the miracles of Christ and his disciples was a "denial that what was seen was caused by divine intervention" (139), and since miracles were often audible or

visible, this amounted to a disbelief in their own eyes and ears (cf., Is. 6:9–10; Luke 11:29–32; Acts 2:22–24; 7:51).

W. Ward Gasque (1989) attempted to present a history of the interpretation of Acts, similar to Albert Schweitzer's histories of Gospel interpretation (1–2). Gasque highlighted the work of Karl Schrader, of the Tübingen School, who in 1836 posited that Acts was merely an apologetic and had no basis in actual history (31). Matthias Schneckenburger, a student of Baur, Hegel, and Schleiermacher, did a detailed study on the purpose of Acts in 1841 and concluded that, though Acts seemed to be apologetic, it was also accurate (32). These two conflicting views were common among nineteenth-century scholars who espoused the views of the Tübingen School. While the two views differed in their approaches at ascertaining the original historicity of the events recorded in Luke-Acts, they both recognized the apologetic intent of Lucan historiography and the signs and wonders narratives.

At the turn of the twentieth century, archeologist William Ramsay (1908) set out to demonstrate the historicity of Luke's two-volume work. Ramsay alleged that "the first century could find nothing real and true that was not accompanied by the marvelous and the 'supernatural.' The nineteenth century could find nothing real and true that was" (9). Ramsay suggested that Luke was a Greek Christian who became familiar with Judaism (based on linguistic peculiarities) and that Paul was a Jewish Christian who became Hellenistic (11–13). This would explain Luke's Septuagintal terminology in the signs and wonders narratives. Ramsay also argued that Luke's signs and wonders accounts could be trusted because Luke received them from eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1–4) and included important validating details (Acts 3; Ramsay 1915, 202–203).

Recent Studies on Signs and Wonders Narratives

James Dunn's (1975) research suggested that in the Synoptic Gospels wonder was a response to the authority of Jesus' teaching, as well as to the power of His miracles (76; Luke 4:36). Jesus' miracles were closely related to His teaching. There also exists a strong relationship between faith and Jesus' miracle-working power, according to Dunn, and this faith was the faith of others (not Jesus) in the power of God at work in and through Jesus (74–75). Dunn acknowledged that, based on the best textual criticism of the Gospels, the miracle accounts surrounding Jesus were not merely "a literary or apologetic device of the Christian mission" (77) but were in fact based on what transpired historically. Dunn admitted that other religions purport miracle-workers but argued that the miracles of the Bible should be seen as more "credible" than other religions' accounts. Dunn affirmed that miracles should be seen as proofs of Jesus' uniqueness (74). According to Robertson McQuilkin (1992), all of Christ's miracles were signs that revealed His identity (248).

Leo O'Reilly (1987), an Irish Catholic Priest, summed up the significance of signs and wonders in Luke-Acts by remarking that for Luke signs and wonders "point precisely to the Lordship of Jesus, to the risen and glorified Lord who sends the Spirit" (187). Perhaps O'Reilly's most important contributions to signs and wonders research in Luke-Acts are his arguments for a strong relationship between the "word" (*logos, rhemata*) and "signs and wonders" in Acts. He asserted that "every formal reference to miracles, whether of Jesus, Moses, or the apostles" (i.e., every instance of *semeia* or *terata* in Acts) is in the context of the "word" (Acts 2:14, 19, 22, 40–41, 43; 4:29–31; 5:12, 17, 20; 6:7–8; 7:35, 38; 8:4, 6, 13–14; 14:3; 15:7, 12). O'Reilly concluded that signs and

wonders are dependant on the word, though the word is relatively independent of signs and wonders (it occurs in passages other than signs and wonders narratives) (191–192). O’Reilly contended that signs and wonders in Acts authenticate the word and lead to faith in the word (or to opposition) (192–200). In each signs and wonders narrative in Acts, references to the “word” surround references to signs and wonders on both sides (creating what is called an *inclusio*), revealing a rhetorical literary pattern of highlighting the centrality of the word in signs and wonders and the relationship between witness and works of wonder in Acts (200–206).

Millard Erickson (1998) suggested three purposes of miracles. First, they are to glorify God (not the human channel) (434). Second, they are “to establish the supernatural basis of the revelation, which often accompanied them.” Third, they are to meet human needs. With regard to the second purpose of miracles, Erickson concluded that the Greek word *semeia* (signs) is a common term for miracles in the New Testament and “underscores this dimension” of the validation of revelation (434). With regard to the third purpose of miracles, signs and wonders in Luke-Acts seem to reveal the value of Christ’s ministry.

The apologist Winfried Corduan (1993) used the miracles recorded in Luke-Acts as a part of his defense of the truth-claims of the Christian faith. According to Corduan, Jesus’ miracles defend His claims to divinity against those who would label Him a liar, a lunatic, or a demon-possessed sorcerer (216). Corduan made an important distinction between truth claims and the apologetic nature of miracles. Christianity is not proved true by miracles. Rather, Christianity is true, and that truth is defended or attested to by miracles (148). In an analysis of the apologetic nature of signs and wonders in Luke-Acts,

attention should be given to the fact that, while these signs and wonders point to the power of God and the truth of His revelation, they can not be understood properly apart from Luke's didactic aims concerning the kerygma. The deep relationship between the content of revelation and the means by which God validates His revelation must be maintained.

Sobhi Malek (1991), a contemporary apologist who works among Muslims, pointed to John's theology of signs and wonders to lead the way in understanding signs and wonders in the New Testament and today (188). Signs are Christocentric and kerygmatic. According to Malek, signs, wonders, and miracles are "mighty deeds seen from three different aspects. In their ability to authenticate the message, they are signs. In that they evoke awe and astonishment, they are wonders. In their display of divine supernatural power, they are miracles" (182). Malek stressed divine intentionality in signs and wonders.

Some scholars have posited a soteriological aim in the signs and wonders narratives. Theissen's (1983) view of the miracle stories in Acts was that supernatural events often confirm the truth of the kerygma and are understood to be soteriological in nature (259). Witherington (1998) viewed signs and wonders in Luke-Acts not only as attractors to the faith, but also as "works of salvation" (143), speaking of Luke's broad usage of the term for "salvation" that encompasses spiritual, social, and physical dimensions (143–144). Healings and exorcisms are a vital aspect of Jesus' (and subsequently the disciples') kingdom ministry to the world and should be seen as vital aspects of the kerygma.

Fee and Stuart (1993) focused on the eschatological meaning of signs and wonders in Luke's narratives. Jesus' miracles were signs that the Messianic Age had begun, and the disciples' miracles were signs that the Age of the Spirit had begun (though Fee and Stuart do not follow the overly reductionistic tendencies of Conzelmann's three-part framework of the stages of salvation history in Luke-Acts) (131–134; Conzelmann 1982; Luke 11:20; 14:21; 15:1–2). Fee and Stuart claimed that the miracle stories in the Gospels are not intentionally moralistic or precedent-setting but are examples of God's power in Jesus' ministry (130). While Fee and Stuart rightly acknowledged the apologetic character of the miracle stories in Luke, their analysis fails in two respects. It does not account for the apparent continuity established in Luke-Acts between the Old Testament and New Testament miracle accounts, and it overlooks the fact that Luke and Acts are two volumes of the same work. In Acts, Jesus' miraculous Spirit-empowered ministry becomes a precedent for the disciples' miraculous Spirit-empowered ministry.

Keener (1997) pointed out that frequently signs and wonders in Acts drew crowds to hear the kerygma (209; Acts 2:5–41, 43; 3:11–4:4; 5:10–11, 12–16; 6:3, 5, 8–10; 8:6–7, 13, 39–40; 9:34–35, 40–42; 13:9–12; 14:3, 9; 15:12; 16:25–34; 19:11–20; 28:5–6, 8–10; cf., 8:18; 9:1–9; 10:3, 44–48; 12:23–24; 16:18; 20:10–12). Keener observed that signs and wonders in Luke-Acts follow the Old Testament motif of the Exodus theophanies and miracles (e.g., Deut. 4:34; 7:19) and suggested that the signs and wonders “function as a sign of God's eschatological Spirit throughout Acts” (196). Keener found it significant that “non-Christians continued to note Christian miracle working at least into the second century” and boldly asserted that “Acts assumes that

such attestation should continue” (198). According to Keener, “Luke clearly envisions signs and wonders as normative in the missionary endeavor” (211).

Keener interpreted the three signs at Pentecost (wind, fire, and tongues) as apologetic validations of Christ’s ascension and His establishment of God’s kingdom on earth (1996, 37). He emphasized the eschatological symbolic value of signs in the Pentecost narrative (193) and argued that the ultimate objective of the disciples and Jesus was not to perform signs, present the kerygma, or even expand the church. Keener suggested that “the goal to which these other activities lead is presenting people who are mature in Christ (Col. 1:28)” (44). Here Keener seemed to be more Pauline in thought than Lucan, but his analysis bears true even in Luke. While Luke is often more concerned with service and salvation than with sanctification, in his introductory address to Theophilus in Luke 1:1–4, he claims to have the aim of making Theophilus (a Christian, 1:2) more certain of what he has already been taught concerning Jesus’ prophetically promised words and deeds (1:1, 3; Acts 1:1). A transformation of main characters takes place in Luke-Acts (Peter and Paul), and signs and wonders narratives are set alongside kerygmatic and church growth summaries that are followed by transitions in the text to episodes in which transformations occur or maturity is developed (cf., Acts 2:42–47; 3:1–4:37; 6:8–7:60).

Roger Stronstad (1995) remarked that “though reports of the miraculous pervade Luke’s narrative . . . [he] is neither credulous nor a miracle monger” (121). Luke’s descriptions of the signs at Pentecost are typically theophanic (122). Stronstad claimed that Peter’s insertion of “signs” into the Joel passage during his Pentecost sermon points to Peter’s identification of the signs at Pentecost with the promised signs of Joel’s

passage (133). Further, the “signs of Pentecost (Acts 2:2–4) find their *functional fulfillment* in the complementary wonder of the crowd of devout worshippers (2:5–13) (emphasis mine)” (130). In Stronstad’s interpretation, the disciples believed in a realized eschatology that was based on their own experiences of God’s direct intervention in their lives (by prophecy, miracles, revelation, and the witness of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection).

Stronstad (1995) pointed out three typical components of signs and wonders narratives—signs, wonders, and an explanation of the signs and wonders (Acts 2:1–4, 5–13, 14–21; 3:1–8, 9–11, 12–16). He also divided the witness of the disciples in Acts into two complementary aspects—works and words—and showed how this twofold prophetic witness follows Jesus’ own example (1998, 65; Luke 24:19; Acts 1:1).

Stronstad argued that Acts 2:43 is programmatic for the disciples’ witnessing by signs and wonders (66). As Jesus’ identity had been attested to by His signs and wonders, the works and words of Jesus would be attested to by the signs and wonders that accompanied the disciples’ witness (58).

Stronstad affirmed that the sign motif in Luke-Acts often includes audible and visible signs that “attest to the anointing or messiahship of Jesus” and the “transfer of the Holy Spirit to the disciples on the Day of Pentecost” (1984, 78–79; Luke 3:22; Acts 2:2–4; 8:18; 10:45; 15:8; 19:6). One of the most often repeated auditory and ocular signs in Acts is speaking in other tongues. Other tongues were a “divinely ordained sign” that occurred on Pentecost, at Cornelius’ house (10:44–48), and at Ephesus (19:1–7), though in the Ephesus narrative no explicit statement was made concerning its function as a sign or wonder (Stronstad 1995, 141).

Luke's handling of narratives points to a "definite theological agenda" that provides evidence for Jesus' (and later the disciples') prophethood and Spirit-anointing (Woodward 2000, 126). Luke focuses on people's reactions to miracles (126). Commenting on the story of the miraculous catch of fish that is found in the Gospel of Luke, Woodward remarked that Simon Peter, James, and John's "call to become disciples" comes as a result of their seeing and being amazed by the miraculous power of Jesus" (127), a form often found in Lucan signs and wonders narratives. A miracle occurs, people wonder, and Jesus or the disciples call those who witness the miracle to repentance and faith.

Apologetics in Luke-Acts

The Apologetic Nature of Lucan Historiography

The apologetic nature and purpose of Luke's two volumes should be assessed before narrowing in on the apologetic nature and purpose of signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts. The universality of the gospel and a widespread Jewish rejection of the gospel are two key overarching themes in Luke-Acts. Witherington (1998) argued that in Luke-Acts the author is attempting to legitimate the Christian faith, not to defend Christianity from outsiders (37). Bruce (1952, 29–30), Dockery (1992, 35), Gasque (1989), Squires (1993, 191–194), and Witherington (1998, 37) found in Luke-Acts an apologetic intended for "insiders" (probably Hellenized Christians). Specifically, Dockery (1992) considered Luke-Acts to be a history of the church and an "apologetic for its existence based on the revelation of God in the Old Testament" (35). Eighteenth-century scholar C. A. Heumann argued that Luke was the first and foremost early Christian apologist (Gasque 1989, 21–22).

Having established the apologetic nature and purpose of Luke-Acts as a whole, an interpreter can move on to assess the apologetic nature and purpose of signs and wonders narratives in particular. In his evaluation of Luke's handling of miracle stories in Luke-Acts, Witherington (1998) suggested that "since Luke is something of an apologist and rhetor seeking to persuade his audience, it appears that he has simply left out tales he felt were lacking in credibility and historical substance" (222). Luke's selectivity in his choice of material reveals the implicitly apologetic intent of his writing (Satterthwaite 1993, 347; Palmer 1993, 18). The functions of the speeches in Luke-Acts are to give examples of the kerygma and to "offer defense of the apostles and their task" (Marshall 1993, 179).

Signs and wonders narratives are likewise apologetic in intent and Christocentric in focus, serving as examples to Luke's readers of how God's power can bring about God's salvation through obedient individuals. The power of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and ascension (i.e., the heart of the kerygma [Witherington 1998, 100]) are all attested to by Luke's accounts of signs and wonders. The following words of David Peterson (1993) are particularly apt: "As they debated with their contemporaries, Luke's readers would have been encouraged to claim that God was truly at work in their movement, fulfilling his ultimate saving purposes for the nations" (104).

The disciples' boldness on the Day of Pentecost and afterward, however, was not merely due to Christ's ministry, death and resurrection, and ascension. Their boldness came as a result of the empowerment by the Spirit of God with signs that accompanied the empowerment (Stronstad 1984, 60). Thus, the signs and wonders were part of a confirmation and validation of what the Holy Spirit was doing and what Christ had done.

“Chiefly, in the Lucan view of things, miracles serve conversionist ends, either by attracting people to the faith or by validating that the faith is powerful once believed” (Witherington 1998, 579). The original supernatural events attracted people to the message of Christ (and were part of the message of salvation and a realized eschatology), while Luke’s retelling of the events seem to be aimed more at validating the faith of those who already believed (Luke 1:1–4).

Ancient Jewish Supernatural Apologetics

Jervell (1996), Rosner (1993), and Sterling (1992) considered Luke-Acts to be Hellenized Jewish apologetic history. Luke-Acts is “about the fulfillment of the ends of sacred history caused by divine intrusion in human lives and situations” (Witherington 1998, 38). Supernatural attestation of the onslaught of the Messianic Age was something that Jews in the intertestamental period were desperately seeking (Stronstad 1984). Even Bultmann (1961) admitted that the existence of miracles and the supernatural were an accepted presupposition of first-century Christians, Jews, and individuals in the wider Greco-Roman cultural-religious context (1–5).

A general Jewish openness to divine validation by signs and wonders is attested to in the Gospels (especially John) and is highlighted in Gamaliel’s speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:35–39) and Philip’s encounter with the Samaritans (8:5–13). Often in the Gospels, the crowds desired to see a sign that would validate Christ’s ministry and message, but Jesus responded with rebuke at the people’s lack of faith and obedience to what they already knew (often His messianic identity is in view [Luke 11:29–32]). The early Christian tradition concerning false signs and wonders accompanying the coming of the “lawless one” could also be cited as an example of the widespread belief that signs

and wonders were intended (by God or Satan) to persuade people (2 Thess. 2:9). Paul argues with the Corinthians that the signs and wonders he performed (which he says are “the things that mark an apostle”) should have elicited the people’s commendation of his ministry (2 Cor. 12:11–12). The two primary signs and wonders narratives in Acts (Pentecost and the healing of the lame man at the temple [Acts 2–4]) both record that very large crowds of devout Jewish people gathered to hear the gospel as a result of signs and wonders. Signs and wonders were an effective apologetic tool in early Christian ministry among Hellenistic Jews.

In a section of the Talmud written in the second century A.D., Jesus is called a sorcerer and is said to have “enticed Israel to apostasy” (translated by Epstein 1935, 281). Christianity’s Jewish opponents in the second century did not deny Jesus’ miracle-working power and corresponding claims to Deity (Corduan 1993, 200). Apparently Christianity’s supernatural apologetic was persuasive enough to draw many Jews.

Ancient Greco-Roman Supernatural Apologetics

It is often assumed that all ancient peoples were undiscerning when it came to miracles and the supernatural, or what was acceptable as historical evidence when it came to supernatural phenomena. The ancient Greek and Roman historians Thucydides, Polybius, and Tacitus were often skeptical about claims of supernatural intervention in the world, while other ancient historians, particularly Plutarch and Herodotus, were more open to claims of the supernatural as long as the claims had evidence to back them up or seemed credible (Witherington 1998, 222). Ephorus was against recording supernatural events for merely entertainment purposes but allowed supernatural examples if they were intended to teach morality or justice (31). Thucydides was against the inclusion of

accounts concerning the miraculous into a historical monograph, while Herodotus, who has been called the “Father of Greek Historiography,” utilized a theological historiography in which supernatural events were central to the narrative.

Semeia, Luke’s primary term for “signs” in Luke-Acts, was used to mean “proof” in the context of reasoning in some ancient Greek literature and is so used in the works of Thucydides, Xenophon, Plato, and Antiphanes (Liddell and Scott 1894, 1383). In Aristotle’s *Logic*, a sign was “a probable argument in proof of a conclusion.” But more likely in Luke-Acts *semeia* assumes a more Septuagintal meaning, as a sign from God, such as is found also in the Greek works of Sophocles and Plato. *Terata* (Luke’s primary term for “wonders” in Acts) was used in ancient Greek literature to refer to “any appearance or event” that seemed to have supernatural origins (1541). The pairing of *semeia* with *terata* seems to be unique to the Septuagint, further revealing Luke’s firm Septuagintal heritage (especially in his theology of supernatural apologetics). Luke’s inclusion of signs and wonders narratives into Luke-Acts should probably be seen as an intentional continuation of Old Testament historiography and conservatively supernaturalistic Greek historiography.

The most common means of defending the validity of something in the Greco-Roman world was to use rhetorical methods of speech to persuade the audience. Quintilian, a contemporary of Luke, offered three aims of the rhetorical introduction (known in Latin as the *exordium*): (a) to secure good will, (b) to get attention, and (c) to arouse curiosity (Myrick 1965, 55). The context of an oration was also of prime importance. Two of the three purposes of the *exordium* are fulfilled when a miraculous sign occurs before a speech (as in the speeches of Acts 2 and 3 that are made to Diaspora

Jews, some of which were Hellenistic). In signs and wonders narratives, the context for the speech is set by offering an example of the power of the God to whom the speaker refers. Thus, the miraculous sign in an ancient Greco-Roman (or Jewish) setting is a rhetorical tool that brings the crowds to wonder, in order to persuade the crowd of the validity of the speaker's argument. As Kraft has argued, though, Jesus' miracles were part of His message (of salvation, kingdom rule, divine empowerment, and love), not just His method (1986, 24–27). The disciples likewise seemed to refer back to the precursor signs as part of the kerygma (Acts 2:16, 19, 22, 33, 38; 3:12; 4:9, 10, 30). Signs and wonders and signs and wonders narratives were useful apologetic tools in the first century A.D. and continue to be important in a postmodern global context.

A Contemporary Approach to Supernatural Apologetics

Contemporary Supernatural Apologetics

Many rationalists (Flew 1967; Hume 1955; Nowell-Smith 1955) viewed biblical and modern-day miracles as propaganda, superstition, and foolish contrivances of a premodern worldview. For instance, according to Ferdinand Baur and his student Eduard Zeller, Acts could not be considered reliable because it contained accounts of miracles (Gasque 1989, 44–45). Even many important conservative evangelical theologians and scholars have voiced their disbelief in modern miracles, signs, and wonders (Edgar 1988; Morris 1960; Ruthven 1989; Warfield 1918). The rationalists and the cessationists share a common disregard for modern evidences of signs and wonders, but a growing contingency among evangelicals and other more liberal mainstream churches recognizes the importance and validity of contemporary supernatural apologetics. Christiaan DeWet (1982) cited George Ladd's argument that contemporary exorcisms are signs of the

kingdom (26). In 1982, the Lausanne Committee's "Consultation On the Relationship of Evangelism to Social Responsibility" stated in a report that some of the contemporary signs of God's kingdom were "making the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the sick whole, raising the dead, stilling the storm, and multiplying loaves and fishes" (Wagner 1992, 58). A growing number of evangelicals (especially those involved in mission work) are becoming aware of the importance of signs and wonders in evangelism (DeRidder 1975, 222; Wagner 1992, 45–59; Warner 1985). "Contemporary peoples, like the ancient Israelites, are very desirous of gaining more spiritual power to enable them to deal better with the vagaries of life" (Kraft 1991, 305).

At the forefront of the fight for the importance and validity of signs and wonders in the contemporary church are the Pentecostals. Since the early part of the twentieth century, Pentecostals have witnessed a tremendous outpouring of God's supernatural manifestations. Pentecostals view their own role as "restoring to the church the sense of the supernatural stolen by the enlightenment" (York 2000, 151; Pomerville 1985). Menzies (1987), a Pentecostal scholar and theologian, argued for the importance of supernatural experiences in the hermeneutical processes of presuppositions, exegesis, theology, and verification/application. Modern experiences of miracles enable Pentecostals "to understand the charismatic life of the apostolic church, as Luke reports it, better than those contemporary Christians who lack this experience" (Stronstad 1995, 57–58). C. Peter Wagner (1991) argued that modern Pentecostals have been such a powerful force in modern mission endeavors because of their belief "that the Holy Spirit would accompany the preaching of the word with supernatural signs and wonders" (271).

Consequently, thousands in the Pentecostal movement in America have testified to being healed from sickness and demon possession (McGee 1991; Thomson and Elwell 1984).

Signs and wonders have been witnessed outside of America in even greater numbers. A few examples should suffice. In the animistic culture that lives in the Maredumilli Samitha jungles in India, a man named Prem Sagar cast out demons, healed people, and witnessed an answer to prayer in an instance where a person had been bitten by a poisonous snake and was protected from any harm (Sargunam 1992, 181). Close to two hundred thousand people attended meetings in Argentina where American evangelist Tommy Hicks ministered, and many were healed, and “miracles and prophecies were widely reported” (Wilson 1991, 80). In Sri Lanka, missionary Richard DeRidder (1975) cast out demons in the name of the Lord. Two students of Fuller Theological Seminary cast out demons from people in Costa Rica (Wagner 1992). Three other missionaries witnessed signs and wonders (56). On the continent of Africa, where exorcisms and divine healings are almost too numerous to reckon, theologian A. O. Igueza (1985) pointed out that, based on Luke 11:20 and Acts 1:8, Spirit commissioning and empowerment are central to biblical and modern exorcisms and healings (181).

A Contemporary Theology of Supernatural Apologetics

Contemporary experiences of healing, prophecy, miracles, tongues, and exorcisms are evidence that God continues to act in the world as He did in the past (Ervin 1981, 24). While some disbelieve in contemporary signs and wonders, those who have experienced miracles firsthand can attest to their authenticity. But miracles (in biblical or postmodern times) are not merely for entertainment value or for emotional ecstasy. The purpose of signs and wonders continues to center on defending the gospel’s validity and power.

Malek (1991) asserted that miraculous signs may soften an unbeliever's heart so that they are more responsive to Christ's claims (183).

If supernatural intervention in the world is accepted as a reality (and this was a fundamental presupposition of many people in the first century), miracles may serve to attest to the truth of Christianity (Corduan 1993, 147). But what do apologists do with other religions' supposed miraculous validations? One effective way to deal with this problem is known as the "power encounter," a term created by the missionary anthropologist Alan Tippett (1971). "A power encounter is an open, public confrontation between opposing forces," one of God, and one of unsaved people and evil supernatural beings (Malek 1991, 181). This idea was developed from the biblical examples of Elijah's encounter with the prophets of Baal and Asherah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:16–46), Gideon's encounter with the people in his town after he destroyed their idol (Judg. 6:25–32), Philip's encounter with Simon the magician (Acts 8:4–13), and Paul's encounter with Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:6–12). When God's power is shown to be superior, often people will be drawn from their false religion to Christianity. Don Newman (1992, 153) and Sobhi Malek (1991) emphasized the importance of power encounters in evangelism and apologetics among people groups who are open to supernatural manifestations (especially Muslims and animists).

The related term, "power evangelism," originated by John Wimber and Kevin Springer (1986), has less confrontational connotations. When healings and other miracles are used to point a person to Christ, the signs and wonders are referred to as power evangelism. "For most of the peoples of the world, healing is a theological problem," and presenting Christ without mentioning (or demonstrating) the power of Christ over spirits

and diseases is seen as inadequate (Kraft 1991, 303). Contemporary missiologists recognize that many Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and animists find rational explanations or arguments for Christianity not as convincing as miraculous validations of Christianity in signs and wonders (Wagner 1991, 272).

It is significant that no founder of a major world religion made claims to deity comparable to Jesus' own claims (Olson 1998, 67). The claims that were made by Jesus and His followers provide a context in which to properly understand signs and wonders narratives. Unnatural events that occur seemingly without reason, or that lack a context of supernatural claims, may be branded "scientific anomalies," but supernatural events that contain contextual circumstances that point to a particular interpretation of the events are deemed apologetic in character (Corduan 1993, 160–161). Not only do signs and wonders provide a backdrop and apologetic of the truth of Christianity, they also serve as fulfillments of supernatural claims made by Christianity.

Summary

The four exegetical principles of a holistic hermeneutic are presuppositions, analysis, synthesis, and application. Experiential presuppositions are valid and necessary to the interpreter's task in understanding signs and wonders narratives. Exegesis and explication require attention to Luke's authorial intent and the literary genre of signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts. A biblical and systematic theology of the signs and wonders narratives should center on the eschatological and Christocentric aspects of Luke's theology of miracles. The application/verification phase of the interpretation process in Luke-Acts should be focused on examples in the texts that intentionally

establish normative beliefs, ethics, behavior, or experiences concerning signs and wonders.

Lucan historiography is complex and Hellenistic-Jewish and fits the genre of the historical monograph. Luke had a multiplex purpose in writing his two volumes, but Luke-Acts retains a unified framework that follows the ethno-geographic progression of gospel ministry (which includes signs and wonders). Luke teaches through example, especially through repeated patterns, precedents, paradigms, and programs. Spirit empowerment in Luke-Acts is closely tied to signs and wonders. God empowered Jesus and His disciples to perform signs and wonders and to live and preach the kerygma. Luke's miracle accounts closely follow those of Old Testament historians.

Past research on signs and wonders narratives has shown that miracles and miracle stories are used in the New Testament to establish the validity of the kerygma. Signs and wonders are Christocentric, soteriological, and eschatological and are a part of the kerygma. Signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts reveal a realized eschatology that points to the fulfillment of God's promises in establishing His kingdom on earth and bringing salvation (spiritual, physical, and social) to individuals across ethnic and geographic barriers.

Luke-Acts is intentionally apologetic and is meant for Hellenistic (and perhaps Jewish) Christians. Luke reveals his apologetic intent in Luke-Acts through his selection and arrangement of material. Signs and wonders were an effective apologetic among first-century Jews. When compared to other ancient Greco-Roman historians, Luke's history writing is conservatively supernaturalistic. Luke's arrangement of the details in

signs and wonders narratives would work well as Greco-Roman rhetorical/apologetic devices, particularly when in the context of a speech or explanation.

There is great need for a contemporary theology of supernatural apologetics. Power encounters (public confrontations between the power of God and Satan) and power evangelism (healing, exorcisms, visions, and miracles) are biblically-based tools of the modern apologist and missionary. Signs and wonders continue to lead people that are open to the supernatural world to evaluate the validity of Christianity and Christ's claims of divinity. Signs and wonders can be an important part of Christianity's contemporary presentation of the kerygma.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to examine Luke's theology of signs and wonders in order to understand the apologetic nature and purpose of signs and wonders and signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts. The existence of patterned, precedent-setting, paradigmatic, and programmatic elements in the signs and wonders narratives of Luke-Acts point to Luke's intentional establishment of a supernatural apologetic in his two-volume work. Luke uses this supernatural apologetic to argue for the value, validity, and veracity of Jesus' messianic and prophetic ministry, death and resurrection, and ascension.

Rationale for Qualitative Analysis

The use of qualitative methods of analysis in this research is tied to the nature of the research. While a statistical analysis of Luke's vocabulary concerning supernatural events might prove to be fruitful, it is nevertheless out of the scope of the present study. The study was narrowly focused on the exegetical analysis of signs and wonders narratives (narratives in which Luke actually refers to signs or wonders). The study covered only sixteen texts and was limited in its technical treatment of each text. Luke's ideology/theology was ascertained using accepted tools of exegetical analysis (which are mainly qualitative). The signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts were reflected upon

and evaluated in an attempt to understand the apologetic nature and purpose of signs and wonders in Luke-Acts. The nonquantifiable nature of the problem suggests the aptness of a qualitative approach.

Texts

Identification of the Texts

The study dealt with texts in Luke and Acts that refer specifically to signs or wonders. A thorough examination of every miracle text in Luke-Acts would require a much broader research study. The texts that specifically mention signs or wonders were chosen because they are Luke's explicit references to miracles as pointers to something else and also as catalysts that elicit predictable responses of amazement. While references to miracles serve as important validations of a person's ministry and words in Luke-Acts, Luke's references to signs and wonders bring the apologetic nature and purpose of such supernatural events to the forefront.

Signs and wonders narratives are used by Luke as exemplary accounts of the validation aspect of miracles. They help to explain why supernatural events are significant. Signs and wonders narratives appear at important junctures in the story and are often formulaic (Stronstad 1995). Signs and wonders serve as supernatural defenses of the words and actions of Jesus, and the narratives in which Luke describes them are intentional validations of a Christocentric witness. The two aspects of intentionality in signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts are the original purpose of signs and wonders and the authorial intention of Luke in recording them. Once the nature and significance of signs and wonders narratives are understood, the apologetic aspects of numerous other accounts of miracles in Luke-Acts will likely become more readily accessible.

Groupings of the Texts

Signs and wonders narratives may be divided into groupings for further study. Luke-Acts is mainly historical narrative, and as such it often uses episodes to convey certain points or themes. While the texts share a common genre (historical narrative), each text's subgenre should be identified and its purpose within the episode should be ascertained. The subgenre of a signs and wonders narrative is linked with the structure of the episode in which it is found. Usually, signs and wonders narratives are contained in a wider episodic account of an event and would be classified as fitting the subgenre of narrative description. Sometimes, signs and wonders form the overarching structure of the wider narrative. In Acts 2, the signs and wonders narrative provides a useful outline for the whole episode (signs, wonder, explanation) (Stronstad 1995). Sometimes, Luke explains certain miracles as signs and wonders in a subgenre known as an explanatory aside (also called an authorial assertion), though this subgenre is rare in Luke-Acts (Ryken 1992, 84). In some instances Luke lets his characters (as normative spokespersons) in the narratives explain the signs and wonders (as Peter did on Pentecost) in a subgenre called explanatory dialogue (Ryken 1992, 120). Sometimes Luke includes signs and wonders as part of a summary (Acts 2:43). Often, texts that fit the subgenre of the summary are programmatic for later episodes and paradigmatic for supernatural ministry in the wider context of Luke-Acts.

In this study, each text was analyzed according to its particular subgenre. Each subgenre was treated according to the "rules" of that subgenre. If the signs and wonders narrative is a summary, an explanatory aside, or a narrative description, the text was analyzed primarily for Lucan apologetic intent and only secondarily for the apologetic

intent of the original event. This is because summaries, explanatory asides, and narrative descriptions often deal primarily with Luke's own understanding and interpretation of the events, and secondarily with the original eyewitness' understanding and interpretation of the events. That is not to say that Luke is an unfaithful witness of what he has received from others, but rather to say that Luke as a historian understands and interprets certain events in particularly Lucan ways. If the signs and wonders narrative is part of an explanatory dialogue, the text was analyzed primarily for the apologetic intent of the original event and only secondarily for the Lucan apologetic intent. This is because explanatory dialogue in Luke-Acts often relies very heavily on oral or written tradition or eyewitnesses (Bruce 1942; Witherington 1998; cf., Dibelius 1956; Haenchen 1971). Explanatory dialogues deal primarily with the original eyewitness' understanding and interpretation of the events, and secondarily with Luke's understanding and interpretation of the original eyewitness' understanding and interpretation of the events.

Several signs and wonders narratives (e.g., Acts 2) mix subgenres and required a more complex analysis than simpler narratives. In these special cases, each text within the larger episode was analyzed separately and then all of them were analyzed in light of the episode as a whole. Each text's subgenre is related to its subpurpose.

Four subpurposes of signs and wonders narratives were identified. The subpurpose of each narrative was explored. The first and second research questions of the study ask whether or not all of the signs and wonders narratives fit into the wider purpose of Christocentric apologetics. Each signs and wonders narrative was further identified as one or more of the following: (a) a pattern, (b) a precedent, (c) a program, and/or (d) a paradigm. This fourfold subdivision of the nature and purpose of a particular episode or

narrative within the wider context of Luke-Acts is derived from Roger Stronstad's (1984; 1995) hermeneutic of historical narrative in Luke-Acts. By this further subdivision of the texts, the interpreter may identify how Luke fulfilled his intentions in the narratives, how each text relates to the others and to the wider context of miracles in Luke-Acts, and why the original events were significant to the original eyewitnesses and to Luke. Each text's subgenre and subpurpose was identified and analyzed to answer the stated research questions of the study (i.e., to identify and analyze the apologetic nature and purpose of signs and wonders, signs and wonders narratives, and their paradigmatic value in Luke-Acts).

Procedures

Identify Patterns in the Narratives

There are several patterns that were identified in the signs and wonders narratives. Structural patterns are recurring structures or formulas for the construction of signs and wonders narratives (such as that found in Acts 2). Vocabulary patterns are recurring word usages that are related to signs and wonders (such as the pairing of signs or power with wonders, or the references to power when speaking of signs). Episodic patterns are recurring events that seem to have typological connections (such as the parallel summaries of Acts 2:43 and Acts 5:12). Thematic patterns are recurring ideas in the narratives (such as the recurring idea that it is by God's power that signs are accomplished).

These four patterns were identified in the texts and were analyzed primarily through the use of four tables (one for each type of pattern and one for an overview of all four patterns). The first four tables note patterns that have been identified in the texts and

give references to the texts that utilize these patterns. The last table gives references to all of the signs and wonders texts, and what patterns those texts seem to utilize. The tables are preceded by an explanation of the patterns (similar to the explanations found here) and followed by a summary of the results contained in the tables.

Identify and Analyze Precedents, Paradigms, and Programs

Precedents, paradigms, and programs in the historical narratives of Luke-Acts are more subtle forms of “patterning.” The signs and wonders narratives were examined to determine if any of the texts sets precedents for later narratives and events. A precedent is an example or a model that is later dealt with as a standard or norm for belief, morals, behavior, or experience. Often one sign sets a precedent for a later similar sign. It is also common for entire ministry summations in Luke-Acts to be precedent-setting (as it was common in Old Testament historiographical works to compare later kings with David). Precedents are difficult to analyze because they can be negative or positive (e.g., the negative example of wonder in Acts 7:36). Precedents may also be implicit or explicit (e.g., the negative explicit precedent in Luke 11:29–32).

The signs and wonders narratives were examined to determine if any of the texts establish paradigms for later narratives, events, or themes. A paradigm is similar to a precedent in that both are examples, but different in that a precedent is something that happened before that serves as the basis of a similar thing happening again, while a paradigm is something that happened before that must or should happen again in that way (but not necessarily in exactly the same way). While a precedent describes to establish norms, a paradigm prescribes. Because paradigms are prescriptive, in the Bible they are mainly positive and are often explicit. In Luke-Acts, however, only the paradigms that

are part of an explanatory dialogue are explicit, while paradigms that are part of a summary, explanatory aside, or narrative description are implicit. Paradigms may be set to prescribe belief, morals, behavior, or experience (for a summary of the debate surrounding the experientially prescriptive nature of paradigms and precedents in Lucan narratives, cf., Fee 1993; Stronstad 1993).

The signs and wonders narratives will be examined to determine if any of the texts establish programs for later activities or events in Luke-Acts. A program is “a brief outline of the order to be pursued” by an individual or group (*Merriam-Webster* 1994, s.v. “program”). Programmatic elements provide the reader with insights into the later chapters of Luke-Acts. For example, in Acts 1:8 Jesus outlines the progression and expansion of Christianity into all the world. Programs are often explicit (as in Luke 4:18–21). They are also usually positive. Programs set outlines for future behavior and experiences, but not for future beliefs (although they usually transform the beliefs of the individuals involved as the programs are fulfilled, as in Peter’s transformation in Acts 10:44–48 that continues the fulfillment of Acts 1:8). As outlines of future events, programmatic narratives are usually in the context of precedent-setting or paradigmatic events and are prescriptive and/or descriptive.

Each signs and wonders narrative was analyzed for precedent-setting, paradigmatic, and programmatic elements. Each precedent found was identified as negative or positive, as implicit or explicit, and as an example of belief, morals, behavior, or experience. Each paradigm found was identified as negative or positive, as implicit or explicit, and as a standard for belief, morals, behavior, or experience. Each program found was analyzed to determine what behavior or experiences it outlines, whether it is

implicit or explicit, whether it is negative or positive, what prescriptions and/or descriptions it makes, and how it is fulfilled in later narratives of Luke-Acts.

Data Analysis

A Description of the Data

The data that were collected for this study were qualitative in nature and were gathered from an exegesis of sixteen texts in Luke-Acts in which Luke's primary terms for signs (*semeia*) and wonders (*terata*) appear (Luke 2:8–12, 34–35; 11:14–20, 29–32; 21:5–36; 23:8–11; Acts 2:1–41, 42–47; 4:1–22, 23–31; 5:12–16; 6:8–10; 7:35–39; 8:5–13; 14:1–3; 15:12). The primary term for signs in Luke-Acts is *semeia*, which appears nine times in Luke and thirteen times in Acts. The primary term for wonders in Acts is *terata*, which appears nine times in Acts and not at all in Luke. Every instance of *terata* in Acts is paired with *semeia*. In fact, the Greek word *terata* is never used in the New Testament except in conjunction with *semeia* (Bruce 1954, 70). The four secondary terms for wonder in Luke-Acts are *thaumazo*, which appears thirteen times in Luke and five times in Acts, *existemi*, which appears three times in Luke and eight times in Acts, *ekplesso*, which appears three times in Luke and one time in Acts, and *thambos*, which appears two times in Luke and one time in Acts. The study only dealt with the texts in which the primary terms are found. If the study would have included all of the terms for signs and wonders, thirty-seven texts would have had to been analyzed, which was beyond the scope of the present research.

The data were words, ideas, themes, patterns, precedents, paradigms, and programs related to signs and wonders narratives. The data were mainly literary and

theological in nature. Where the original language of Greek was necessary in the study, the data consisted of grammar, syntax, or vocabulary relevant to the study.

Data Gathering Methods

The data were gathered through careful readings and exegesis of the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts. A holistic hermeneutic was utilized in the task of exegeting these texts (Stronstad 1995). The literary subgenre, literary and historical subpurpose, patterned, precedent-setting, paradigmatic, and programmatic elements of each text were identified and analyzed. Each signs and wonders narrative was dealt with individually, then specific groups were dealt with as a whole.

Data Reduction Procedures

The data reduction procedures that were used in this study include the exegetical paradigms of literary explication, grammatical/historical exegesis, biblical and systematic theological evaluation, and experiential verification. The literary explication in the study followed the literary theories and methods of Fee and Stuart (1993), Frye (1965), and Ryken (1992). The grammatical/historical exegesis in the study followed the exegetical theories and methods espoused by Bruce (1955), Fee and Stuart (1993), Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993), and Menzies (1989). The biblical theological evaluation in the study was patterned after that of Menzies (1989) and Stronstad (1984). The systematic theological evaluation in the study followed the traditional evangelical theories and methods of Erickson (1998). The experiential verification in the study followed the holistic hermeneutics of Menzies (1987) and Stronstad (1984). The large amounts of data that were dealt with in this study prevented a thorough analysis of every verse in every signs and wonders narrative in Luke-Acts. Each verse that specifically refers to signs or

wonders in Luke-Acts using Luke's primary terminology (*semeia* and *terata*), however, was explored and its context was analyzed.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Analysis of the Texts: Patterns

The signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts contain several different types of patterns. Structural patterns are recurring structures or formulas for the construction of signs and wonders narratives. Vocabulary patterns are recurring word usages that are related to signs and wonders. Episodic patterns are recurring events that seem to have typological connections. Thematic patterns are recurring ideas in the narratives. These four patterns have been identified in the texts and have been analyzed primarily through the use of five tables (one for each type of pattern and one for an overview of all four patterns). The first four tables note patterns that have been identified in the texts and give references to the texts that utilize these patterns. Table 5 gives references to all of the signs and wonders texts and what patterns those texts seem to utilize.

Structural Patterns

The structural patterns in the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts that have been identified deal mainly with the subgenre of the text or the structure of the plot. The structural patterns that have been analyzed are presented in table 1:

TABLE 1
STRUCTURAL PATTERNS

Signs or wonders in the context of explanatory dialogue:	Luke 2:8–12, 34–35; 11:29–32; 21:5–36; Acts 2:1–41; 4:1–22, 23–31; 7:35–39
Signs or wonders in the context of narrative description:	Luke 11:14–20; 23:8–11
Signs or wonders in the context of explanatory aside:	Luke 23:8–11; Acts 4:1–22
Signs or wonders in the context of summary:	Acts 2:42–47; 5:12–16; 6:8–10; 8:5–13; 14:1–3; 15:12
Signs or wonders that precede rejection and opposition:	Luke 2:34–35; 11:14–20, 29–32; 23:8–11; Acts 2:1–41, 42–47; 4:1–22; 5:12–16; 6:8–10; 7:35–39; 14:1–3
A miracle, an explanation, and a response are recorded:	Luke 2:8–12; 11:14–20; 21:5–36; 23:8–11; Acts 2:1–41; 4:1–22; 6:8–10; 7:35–39; 8:5–13

The subgenre of explanatory dialogue is Luke's most widely used subgenre in signs and wonders narratives (it is used eight times), with the summary at a close second (six times). Luke's signs and wonders theology is greatly indebted to the content of the speeches in Luke-Acts. The explanatory dialogues are spread evenly throughout the Luke-Acts texts (four in each volume), while the summaries are found only in Acts. Signs or wonders in Luke-Acts precede opposition and rejection in all but four of the sixteen texts, and the structure of miracle-explanation-response occurs in nine of the texts. Thus, in Luke-Acts, signs and wonders are usually explained by characters in the narrative, are part of a larger presentation of the gospel, and usually result in the rejection of the prophet or prophets who perform them.

Vocabulary Patterns

The vocabulary patterns in the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts that have been identified deal mainly with the repetitious use of certain terms or pairs of terms. The vocabulary patterns that have been analyzed are presented in table 2:

TABLE 2
VOCABULARY PATTERNS

Signs are paired with wonders:	Acts 2:1–41 (2x), 42–47; 4:23–31; 5:12–16; 6:8–10; 7:35–39; 14:1–3; 15:12
A sign or wonder is referred to more than once:	Luke 11:29–32 (3x); 21:5–36 (3x); Acts 2:1–41 (2x); 4:1–22 (2x); 8:5–13 (2x)
Jesus is identified as Christ or Lord in the context of a sign or wonder:	Luke 2:8–12, 34–35; 11:29–32; 21:5–36; 23:8–11; Acts 2:1–41; 4:1–22, 23–31; 5:12–16; 6:8–10; 7:35–39; 8:5–13; 15:12
Signs or wonders are in the context of power:	Luke 21:5–36; Acts 2:1–41; 4:1–22, 23–31; 6:8–10; 8:5–13
Signs or wonders are in the context of fear:	Luke 2:8–12; 21:5–36; Acts 2:42–47
Signs or wonders are associated with hands:	Acts 4:23–31; 5:12–16; 6:8–10; 14:1–3

Luke’s primary “signs and wonders” terminology (*semeia* paired with *terata*) only appears in the first half of Luke’s second volume. Signs appear several times in groups of three in Luke, and in groups of two in Acts. Jesus is central in every signs and wonders narrative and is identified as Christ or Lord in all but three of the texts. Signs are often associated with the power of God and are sometimes followed by fear (but are usually

followed by amazement). In Acts, the hand of God performs signs and wonders through the hands of the apostles.

Episodic Patterns

The episodic patterns in the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts that have been identified deal mainly with prophets and reveal a realized eschatology. The episodic patterns that have been analyzed are presented in table 3:

TABLE 3
EPISODIC PATTERNS

Typologically connected prophets who performed signs or wonders:			
Moses, Acts 7:35–39	Jesus, Acts 2:1–41	Jerusalem apostles, Acts 2:42–47; 4:1–22, 23–31; 5:12–16	Stephen, Acts 6:8–10
Philip, Acts 8:5–13	Paul and Barnabas, Acts 14:1–3; 15:12		
Eschatological events associated with supernatural phenomena (signs or wonders):			
The second coming of Christ, Luke 21:5–36		Pentecost, Acts 2:1–41	
The prophet is the sign:			
Jonah, Luke 11:29–32	Jesus, Luke 11:29–32		

In Luke, Jesus is seen as the implied sign. On one occasion, Jesus explicitly compares the sign value of the prophet Jonah to his own sign value (11:29–32). In Acts, prophets perform signs and wonders. The prophetic community is part of Jesus'

eschatological kingdom, and the signs and wonders may be understood as signals of the end times of Christ's redemption and judgment and the Holy Spirit's outpouring. The early disciples seem to have developed a realized eschatology that was tied to Jesus' ascension and their own empowerment to preach the kingdom (in words and works). Throughout Luke-Acts, prophets are shown as validating their ministries through the performance of miracles. The miracles in Luke's gospel are tied to the identity of Christ, and the miracles in Acts share this common Christocentrism.

Thematic Patterns

The thematic patterns in the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts that have been identified deal mainly with what the signs were, who performed them, and how they were performed. The thematic patterns that have been analyzed are presented in table 4:

TABLE 4
THEMATIC PATTERNS

Jesus is the (implicit or explicit) sign:	Luke 2:8–12, 34–35; 11:29–32; 21:5–36; 23:8–11
The sign or wonder is not described:	Luke 2:34–35; Acts 2:42–47; 4:23–31; 6:8–10; 14:1–3; 15:12
The sign or wonder is healing from demon possession:	Luke 11:14–20; Acts 5:12–16
The sign or wonder is the healing of a crippled person:	Acts 4:1–22; 5:12–16; 8:5–13
The sign or wonder is an eschatological event:	Luke 11:29–32; 21:5–36; Acts 2:1–41
Additional signs are sought, but none are given:	Luke 11:14–20; 23:8–11
Jesus performs a sign or wonder:	Luke 11:14–20; Acts 2:1–41
Jerusalem apostles perform (or pray to perform) signs and wonders:	Acts 2:42–47; 4:1–22, 23–31; 5:12–16
One of the seven performs a sign or wonder:	Acts 6:8–10; 8:5–13
Paul and Barnabas perform signs and wonders:	Acts 14:1–3; 15:12
A past sign or wonder is referred to as validation:	Acts 2:1–41; 7:35–39; 15:12
Signs and wonders are done in the name of Jesus:	Acts 4:1–22, 23–31
Signs and wonders are associated with prayer:	Acts 2:1–41, 42–47; 4:1–22, 23–31
Unbelievers or opponents admit to the validity of the sign or wonder:	Luke 21:5–36; 23:8–11; Acts 4:1–22; 6:8–10; 7:35–39; 8:5–13

In Luke, Jesus is often the implied sign. In Acts, signs are more thoroughly Septuagintal and indicate actual supernatural phenomena that point to Jesus' messianic or

divine identity. Signs and wonders in Luke-Acts are often related to the healing of the sick or demon possessed, or are theophanic phenomena. None of the signs and wonders narratives that utilize Luke's primary terms for signs or wonders in Luke-Acts (*semeia* and *terata*) refer explicitly to the raising of the dead; however, one passage (Luke 8:56) utilizes one of Luke's secondary terms for wonder (*existemi*) in the context of a resurrection. In Acts, Luke does not describe what the sign or wonder was in half of the narratives (due in part to the summary nature of these later narratives). In Luke, additional signs are sought by the unbelievers, but Jesus provides no further proof of his identity through miracles. In Acts, no such narratives are found. In Acts, every central protagonist in the story is said to perform signs and wonders in their ministry of the gospel, and several times characters in the story refer back to earlier performances of signs and wonders as validations. Signs and wonders were done in Jesus' name, were associated with prayer, and often resulted in admissions of validity by unbelievers.

Overview of Patterns

The patterns in the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts that have been identified paint a complex and powerful picture of early Christian supernatural apologetics. The numbers at the top of table 5 represent the following consecutive signs and wonders passages in Luke-Acts: (1) Luke 2:8–12; (2) 2:34–35; (3) 11:14–20; (4) 11:29–32; (5) 21:5–36; (6) 23:8–11; (7) Acts 2:1–41; (8) 2:42–47; (9) 4:1–22; (10) 4:23–31; (11) 5:12–16; (12) 6:8–10; (13) 7:35–39; (14) 8:5–13; (15) 14:1–3; (16) 15:12. The patterns that have been analyzed are presented in table 5:

TABLE 5
OVERVIEW OF PATTERNS

Patterns	Texts from Luke						Texts from Acts									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Explanatory dialogue	x	x		x	x		x		x	x			x			
Narrative description			x			x										
Explanatory aside						x			x							
Summary								x			x	x		x	x	x
Precedes opposition		x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	
Miracle, explanation, response	x		x		x	x	x		x			x	x	x		
Signs paired with wonders							x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x
Sign or wonder referred to more than once				x	x		x		x					x		
Jesus is identified as Christ or Lord	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x
In the context of power					x		x		x	x		x		x		
In the context of fear	x				x			x								
Associated with hands										x	x	x			x	
Typological prophets							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Eschatological phenomena					x		x									
The sign is a prophet				x												
Jesus is the sign	x	x		x	x	x										
The sign or wonder is not explicitly described		x							x		x		x		x	x
Healed demon possessed			x								x					
Healed cripple									x		x			x		
Eschatological event				x	x		x									
Additional sign sought			x			x										
Performed by Jesus			x				x									
Performed by Jerusalem apostles									x	x	x	x				

TABLE 5—Continued

Patterns	Texts from Luke						Texts from Acts									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Performed by one of the seven												x		x		
Performed by Paul and Barnabas															x	x
Past sign or wonder referred to as validation							x						x			x
Done in the name of Jesus									x	x						
Associated with prayer							x	x	x	x						
Opponents admit validity of sign or wonder					x	x			x			x	x	x		

Every signs and wonders narrative in Acts describes the supernatural ministry of a typological prophet. Signs and wonders are used extensively as an apologetic by central characters, and are shown by Luke as powerful defenses of the gospel (though they often resulted in persecution and rejection). Early on in Acts, prayer is presented as a central part of supernatural ministry. Supernatural ministry is presented as a God-empowered corollary of the gospel message.

Jesus' identity as God or the Messiah is argued for in all but three of the signs and wonders narratives (making it the strongest pattern in all of the narratives). This fact, coupled with the extensive use of explanatory dialogues in these narratives, argues for a strong relationship between preaching the gospel and performing signs and wonders. Almost as strong is Luke's own creative interpretation of the events in his summaries, which make up a large bulk of the remaining narratives. At the center of Luke's signs and wonders theology is the story of Pentecost and the narrative of the Sanhedrin's response

to the apostles' healing of a crippled man in the temple, which reveal more signs-and-wonders-related patterns than any other signs and wonders narrative in Luke-Acts (they both follow thirteen identified patterns). The patterns in these narratives reveal forceful Lucan and original emphases on Christocentrism, apologetics, eschatology, and prophetic ministry. Luke seems to have intended signs and wonders to be part of an apologetic of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and ascension. Luke seems to have derived this emphasis from the original intent of the events. The precedents, paradigms, and programs in the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts reveal similar conclusions.

Analysis of the Texts: Precedents, Paradigms, and Programs

The sixteen signs and wonders narratives have been analyzed diachronically. In each text, the subgenre, primary and secondary intent, purpose, subpurpose, relevant exegetical details, precedents, paradigms, and programs have been identified and analyzed in order to ascertain whether or not signs and wonders and signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts have an apologetic nature and purpose. After the textual analyses, a summary of the data has been given.

Luke 2:8–12: The Angel and the Shepherds

The first text fits the subgenre of explanatory dialogue. In the analysis of the text, the original intent of the event has been given primary attention, and Luke's intents in the passage have been given secondary attention. The purpose of the angel's speech to the shepherds (especially in his reference to a specific sign) centered on the veracity of the angel's news about Jesus' ministry as "Savior," "Christ," and "Lord" (2:11). The subpurpose of the text was to present a precedent and a paradigm.

Luke 2:8–12 begins with a group of shepherds being visited by an angel. The angel announced the good news of the Messiah’s coming and gave the shepherds a sign concerning this newborn Messiah. Jesus’ lineage, saving ministry to Israel, Messiahship, and Lordship were all verified by the sign’s fulfillment (vv. 11, 16, 17). Jesus is the “Lord,” the one who sent the angel (v. 9) and who revealed the good news to the shepherds (v. 15). Jesus was identified not as the Lord’s Christ, but as Christ the Lord. Jesus’ divine life and ministry was proved by the sign to the shepherds (v. 20). The angel’s news was for all the people (reflecting Luke’s concern for showing the universality of the gospel). Jesus was identified as being born in the city of David, and as being the Savior, Christ, and Lord. The sign that was given (that Jesus would be found in extremely humble circumstances) was a prophecy that challenged preconceptions regarding the Messiah. Later, after the sign’s fulfillment, the shepherds glorified and praised God for all they had seen and heard (v. 20).

The precedent that was set in this text was the description of the belief that Jesus’ identity was proved by a sign. This is a positive precedent and is explicit (vv. 10–12). The paradigm that was established in the text was the angel’s prescription of belief in Jesus as Christ, Savior, and Lord (God), which was attested to by the sign. This positive paradigm is explicit in the text (v. 11).

The event of finding baby Jesus just as the angel had predicted profoundly affected the shepherds. While the angel’s words and the signs that were given stirred the shepherds to action and curiosity (v. 15), the fulfillment of the sign resulted in the shepherds’ enthusiastic spreading of the good news (v. 17), the amazement of those who heard them (v. 18), and the pondering of Jesus’ mother (v. 19). Luke intended to present

Jesus as the promised Messiah through a fulfilled sign concerning the Christ. In the wider context of signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts, this text reveals a focus on the centrality of Jesus in the fulfillment of prophecy. While elsewhere in Luke, Jesus refused to provide a sign for his incredulous audience (Luke 11:14–20; 23:8–11), here the angel’s sign was not asked for and was responded to positively.

Luke 2:34–35: Simeon’s Prophecy

The second text fits the subgenre of explanatory dialogue. In the analysis of the text, the original intent of the event has been given primary attention, and Luke’s intents in the passage have been given secondary attention. The purpose of Simeon’s prophecy was to show the value of Jesus’ ministry and death (to reveal the thoughts of many hearts, 2:35) and to confirm the validity of Jesus’ messianic ministry (vv. 30–32). The subpurpose of the text was to establish a paradigm.

When Jesus was brought as a baby to the temple in Jerusalem, a very aged and righteous man named Simeon encountered Jesus and His parents and prophesied concerning Jesus’ messianic future. Simeon spoke of Jesus as “salvation” (v. 30), and as a light for universal revelation and glory (vv. 31–32). Simeon prophesied concerning the future controversial ministry and suffering of Jesus. Jesus would not only bring to light God’s revelation of salvation for humanity, but would also cause the thoughts of many hearts to be revealed (for good or bad). Jesus was the sign in this passage—a sign that would be rejected and opposed by many (v. 34).

The paradigm that was established in this text was the description of Jesus’ behavior as causing great havoc, and the description of Jesus (and Mary, his mother) as experiencing great suffering in the future (as a result of Jesus’ ministry as a sign). While

both the response to Jesus and the experience of Jesus would be negative, the end results would be positive (Jesus would bring salvation to the Gentiles and glory to Israel, vv. 30–32). As part of a prophecy, the paradigm is explicit.

Simeon's identification of Jesus as a sign, the Christ, salvation, revelation, light, and rejected sufferer caused Jesus' father and mother to wonder (Luke uses his secondary term *thaumazo* for wonder here). The event also seemed to impassion Anna, a prophetess in Jerusalem, to thank God and spread the news about Jesus in Jerusalem to everyone who was "looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem" (36–38). Luke intended to present Jesus as the promised Messiah through a fulfilled sign (of rejection, suffering, revelation, etc.). In the wider context of signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts, this text reveals a focus on the centrality of Jesus in the fulfillment of prophecy as Israel's suffering servant.

Luke 11:14–20: Jesus Asked for a Sign

The third text is a mixed subgenre. In a narrative description, a crowd asked Jesus for a sign, and in an explanatory dialogue, Jesus explained that His healing of a demon-possessed man was a sign. In the analysis of the text, with regard to Luke's account of the people's response to Jesus, the primary focus has been given to Luke's intent, and the secondary focus has been given to the original intent of the event. With regard to Jesus' response to the crowd, the primary focus has been given to the original intent of the event and the secondary focus was on Luke's intent in the passage. The purpose of the narrative centered on the value of Jesus' ministry (healing from demon possession), the validity of Jesus' ministry (Jesus had the power to deliver people from demon possession), and the veracity of Jesus' claims (demonically empowered people could not perform this kind of

miracle). The subpurpose of the text was to set a precedent of rejection and unbelief in Jesus in the face of His wonder-working power.

Jesus healed a demon-possessed man, and the crowd was amazed (*thaumazo*, one of Luke's secondary terms for wonder). Some people attributed the source of Jesus' power to Beelzebub (Satan, vv. 15, 18). Others "tempted" Him by asking for a sign (v. 16), as the Devil had tempted Jesus earlier (4:2) and as Ananias and Sapphira would tempt the Holy Spirit later (Acts 5:9). The people sought a sign from heaven, where God was (Luke 11:13, 16). Jesus' power was from heaven, not hell, for if His power were from Satan, He could not cast out demons. Also, if demons could cast out demons, the power of the Jews to cast out demons could also be attributed to Satan (v. 19). Jesus was proved stronger than the demon (v. 22) and from a different kingdom (God's kingdom). Jesus' healing of the demon-possessed man was a sign from God. Jesus denounced the people's search for a sign in the face of miracles (vv. 29–32).

The precedent that was set in this text was the description of unbelief by the people of Jesus' miracle-working divine power. This was a negative precedent that was set by the peoples' doubting and desire to see further proof of Jesus' divine calling and empowerment. The precedent was implicit but was repeated by Herod at Jesus' trial (Luke 23:8–11).

Luke informs the reader of the people's disbelief and desire for a sign. Luke intends to present the idea that, though people may come into contact with miracles, they still may not believe what they see. Luke shows the reader that to ignore the evidence of Jesus' miracles is to ignore reason and one's own eyes (the people had seen and heard the results of the miracle and should have reasoned that demons do not cast out demons).

Jesus turned the people's false quest for further proof of His messianic identity into a lesson on the nature of spiritual warfare. As Simeon had predicted, Jesus uncovered the thoughts of the unbelievers (11:17) and responded accordingly (vv. 17–26). Jesus' point was that it was God who worked in Him to perform miracles, not Satan. Jesus' miraculous sign had already proved that the kingdom of God was breaking into the world, and Jesus would next respond to the people's search for a further sign with a refusal (v. 29). Luke intended to show Jesus as the Spirit-anointed Christ that released the oppressed and proclaimed the prisoners free (Luke 4:18–19). Jesus' actions were seen as “signs from heaven” that He was the prophet of the kingdom of God (11:16, 20). This narrative, however, is incomplete without the following narrative of the sign of Jonah and the Son of Man.

Luke 11:29–32: The Sign of Jonah and the Son of Man

The fourth text fits the subgenre of explanatory dialogue. In the analysis of the text, the original intent of the event has been given primary attention, and Luke's intents in the passage have been given secondary attention. The purpose of Jesus' response to the crowd's unbelief in the sign of the healing of a demon-possessed man centered on establishing the validity of Jesus' messianic and prophetic ministry by comparisons with the ministry of Jonah and the wisdom of Solomon. Jesus was far greater than both (v. 32). The subpurpose of the narrative was to set a precedent and to reveal a program concerning the unbelief of signs.

Jesus revealed that He was the sign that the people sought, as Jonah was the sign to the Ninevites (v. 30). Luke leaves out Matthew's explanation of the death and resurrection parallel with Jonah and instead centers on the importance of Jesus' identity

rather than the importance of Jesus' actions (which Luke included earlier) (cf. Matt. 12:38–40; 16:4; Luke 11:20, 29–30). The Queen of the South (Sheba, 1 Kings 10:1–10) and the Ninevites were open to God's prophets, and Jesus claimed that these great men of God (Solomon and Jonah) were not as important as He was. The only sign Jesus would give the people was a comparison between Jonah and Jesus and the contrast between the effectiveness of their respective ministries. The people were wicked to ask Jesus for a sign (Luke 11:29). Perhaps their wrong motives were in view here, but quite possibly Jesus could have been referring to their overlooking of Jesus' teaching and miracles up to that point. The people had all they needed to believe. They were more obstinate than a heathen queen and a heathen city and would reap a harvest of judgment in the end (vv. 31–32).

The precedent that was set in this text was the unbelief in a man of God. This negative precedent was explicitly spelled out as contrasting with the responses of past groups of Gentiles to God's holy men. Jesus also revealed a program concerning unbelief in the sign (Himself). Jesus would be the sign as Jonah was before Him, and as a result of the people's unbelief, they would be condemned by those who repented after encountering lesser prophets. This program is a description of the condemnation of those who seek some great miracle that would point to Jesus' divine empowerment and ignore Jesus' divinity. This negative program is explicit and outlines the rejection of Christ and the condemnation of willfully ignorant people at the end of time.

Jesus' words would come to pass in part as the Jewish people came to reject Him, His message, and His miracles. Jesus stood up to His own people and revealed their wickedness and coming judgment (v. 29) as Jonah had preached the wickedness and

judgment of the Ninevites before Him. As Jonah's presence in Nineveh made him a sign of God's impending judgment or blessing (depending upon their response), so also Jesus' presence in Israel made Him a sign of God's coming judgment or blessing (depending upon their response).

Luke seems to use this typological comparison of Jesus with Jonah to forward his ideas of the potential universality of the gospel (and signs) and the primacy of Jesus' prophetic sign value. This narrative relates to the wider context of signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts in its Christocentrism and follows the Gospel of Luke's focus on Jesus as the sign (cf. 2:8–12, 34, 35; 23:8–11).

Luke 21:5–36: Signs of the End

The fifth text fits the subgenre of explanatory dialogue. In the analysis of the text, the original intent of the event has been given primary attention, and Luke's intents in the passage have been given secondary attention. The purpose of Jesus' discourse on the signs of the end centered on the value and validity of the future ascension of Jesus (cf. Acts 1:9–11). Jesus would come from the sky and establish His kingdom on the earth. Believers need not be surprised but must be watchful. The subpurpose of the text was to reveal a program concerning the signs of the times.

The narrative begins with the disciples seeking a sign for the destruction of the temple. Jesus provided the signs of the eschaton and indicators of Jerusalem's destruction (Luke 21:20–24). Luke's account differs from those in Matthew 24:29–30 and Mark 13:24–26 in his paraphrase of the Isaiah passages that deal with the signs of the end (13:10; 34:4). Luke's two additions of *semeia* (Luke 21:11, 25) to the written tradition (Mark and perhaps Matthew) seems to partition off his sections on the persecution of

believers and the fall of Jerusalem that occur before the signs of the end times from the rest of the narrative that deals with those signs. In Matthew 24:30, the Son of Man's sign is related to the sky and the Isaiah prophecy, making explicit what Luke makes implicit (that the sign is Christocentric). The sign is also heavenly, and men "will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:27–28). The heavenly signs in Luke 21:25 (from the Isaiah prophecy) are tied together with Jesus' eschatological return, which His disciples are to look for in the sky. Jesus' return will mean the establishment of God's kingdom on earth (v. 31). This end time will follow the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem (vv. 20–24), persecution (vv. 12–19), and great catastrophes on earth (vv. 10, 11, 25, 26, 36). In this narrative, Luke also left out a reference to false prophets who would perform "signs and wonders" (*semeia kai terata*) that existed in the written tradition (Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; cf. John 4:48), probably because of the "negative evaluation of 'signs and wonders' found there which he does not share" (O'Reilly 1987, 161).

The program that was revealed in the text was a description of end-time signs and a prescription for the disciples' future behavior (they were to watch and be ready). The negative program of judgment on the earth is contrasted with the positive program of the disciples' redemption from Jerusalem and later from the earth. Jesus explicitly presented these programs concerning the signs in the heaven and the armies surrounding Jerusalem (Luke 21:20). Implicitly, Luke presents Christ as the sign. The behavior that is outlined is the watchfulness of the disciples and the fear of unbelievers. The experiences that are outlined are the signs of the eschaton that are witnessed by the inhabitants of the earth.

Verses twelve through nineteen are partially fulfilled in the persecution of the disciples in Acts. Jerusalem's fall occurred immediately following the events recorded in Luke-Acts. The Son of Man has not yet come back with accompanying catastrophes and signs (vv. 10–11, 25–36).

Jesus' dialogue on end-time events made a significant impact on the rest of New Testament eschatology. The passage's Christocentrism, vagueness about exact dates, emphases on watchfulness, enduring persecution, and signs from heaven all are further elaborated on by later New Testament writers. The focal point of Jesus' discourse was on His own return, which presumed His death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus' return would be accompanied by many signs, but He would be the primary sign of the time.

It seems likely that Luke intended to use this narrative to teach later Christians what Jesus actually spoke concerning the end-time events. Luke also brings the signs of the end times into direct relationship with the Pentecost sermon's signs of the end. Thus, the signs of the end times were partially fulfilled in the empowerment of the prophetic community of disciples in Acts.

Luke 23:8–11: Herod Seeks a Sign

The sixth text is a mixed subgenre. The passage is a narrative description until the phrase "because for a long time" in Luke 23:8, which begins Luke's explanatory aside, until the beginning of verse nine, which is again a narrative description until the end of the passage. The narrative description portions deal mainly with Herod's treatment of Jesus, while the explanatory aside gives reasons for Herod's treatment. This episode is briefly alluded to in Matthew and Mark, but there is no mention of Herod. Because this narrative's "sign" portion is part of an explanatory aside, and its narrative description

portion is peculiar to Luke, the primary focus of the research has been on Lucan intent, and the secondary focus has been on the original intent of the event. The purpose of the passage centered on the question of the validity of Jesus' ministry and identity. The subpurpose of the text was to follow the precedent established in Luke 11:14–20.

Herod had heard about Jesus and the amazing things He had done, and wanted to see Jesus do something firsthand, perhaps as proof of His identity. Jesus would not reply to any questions, accusations, mocking, ridicule, or humiliation. Herod dressed Jesus in an elegant robe in mockery of the claim to kingship (Mark 15:17–18) or Christhood (Luke 23:2), which was the accusation of the priests and teachers of the Law (v. 10). Herod had wanted to see Jesus since Jesus' early days of ministry (9:7–9) to discover Jesus' identity (whether as a resurrected John the Baptist, Elijah, or some other Old Testament prophet). Herod wanted a sign that would reveal Jesus' identity. Herod apparently wanted to kill Jesus because of His reported prophetic ministry (13:31–35). A miracle from Jesus would have proved Jesus' Christhood and kingship. Jesus admitted to the charges of the Jewish leaders (of being a Christ/King, 23:2–3) but gave no reply to Herod. Apparently, for Herod, Jesus' silence was a reply, for Herod dressed Jesus like a king and sent Him back to Pilate as an innocent man (perhaps Herod realized Jesus' aspirations were nonpolitical) (vv. 15–16).

The precedent that was repeated in this text was the description of Herod's unbelief in Jesus' miracle-working power. Herod's search for further signs revealed his lack of faith in Jesus' earlier ministry validations. This is an implicitly negative precedent that is set in Luke 11:14–20 by the people's doubting, and their desire to see further proof of Jesus' divine calling and empowerment.

Luke's intentions in the narrative seem to center on the ties between Jesus' identity and His miracles. Herod wanted a magic show, the chief priest and teachers of the Law desired Jesus' death (for blaspheming), and Pilate wanted to release Jesus (probably because he realized Jesus was "merely" a Christ/King). But Pilate caved in to the insistent demands of the Jewish crowd (who had seen Jesus' miracles but rejected Him as Christ). It seems that for Luke the Roman authorities found Jesus to be a mere curiosity rather than a political threat, while the religious Jewish leaders found Jesus to be an intolerable competitor for the hearts and minds of the children of Israel. Luke reveals that Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel all conspired against Jesus (Acts 4:27). While Jesus was silent, performed no sign, and accepted His own persecution and death (by God's will), the disciples would speak up and perform signs and wonders, yet they would still endure persecution and death in a Christlike manner (Acts 4:28–30; 7:59–60).

Acts 2:1–41: Pentecost

The sixth text is arguably the most important signs and wonders narrative in Luke-Acts and will require more attention than any other text. The passages that refer directly to signs and wonders in this episode (Acts 2:16–24) are the focal point of the present research, and not only fit the subgenre of explanatory dialogue, but also are explicitly identified as explanations of the Pentecost phenomena (v. 14). In the analysis of the text, the original intent of Peter's sermon has been given primary attention, while Luke's intents in recording this event have been given secondary attention. The purpose of Peter's speech (especially concerning signs and wonders) centered on the value, validity, and veracity of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and ascension. The value was

in the salvation of the repentant listeners and the prophethood of the believers. Jesus' messianic ministry and Lordship were validated (v. 36). The veracity of the kerygma was proved by the continuing signs of Jesus' ongoing ministry among the apostles. The subpurpose of the text was to set a precedent, present a paradigm, and reveal a program. While Luke uses a secondary term for wonder in describing the amazement of the crowd at Pentecost (*existemi*, vv. 7, 12), the focus of the present research is on Luke's primary signs and wonders terminology (*semeia* and *terata*, vv. 19, 22).

On the Day of Pentecost, an amazing event took place. In fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, the disciples were filled with power by the Holy Spirit in order to be Christ's witnesses in all the earth (1:8). There was what looked like fire, and what sounded like wind, and the disciples praised God in languages they never learned. Many Jews that were visiting Jerusalem overheard this last phenomenon and were amazed (*existemi* is used twice to refer to the crowd's reaction to "other tongues" [2:7, 12]). Peter explains the supernatural phenomena with a quote from Joel 2. Peter subtly changes the Septuagint (LXX) translation of Joel 2:28–32 and offers a Peshier interpretation ("this is that" [Acts 2:16]). The Pentecost phenomena (particularly the speech miracle) fulfilled the first half of the passage (concerning the potential universality of prophecy), which Peter read in an eschatological light (cf. Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28). In the last half of the Joel prophecy, Peter introduced the LXX signs and wonders terminology into Luke-Acts. God had promised to show wonders (*terata*) in the heavens and on the earth (LXX), and Peter slightly changes the passage to include "signs" (*semeia*) on the earth below (Acts 2:19), thus tying the Pentecost event not only to the promised eschatological Age of the Spirit, but

also to the supernatural phenomena that accompanied Moses' ministry (which is where Luke derives this terminology).

What were the signs and wonders that Peter spoke of? Were they the miracles of Jesus or the disciples (Menzies 1989, 214–215)? Were they the events surrounding the crucifixion? Were they the phenomena that accompanied the disciples' infilling on Pentecost (Stronstad 1995)? These signs and wonders seemed to point to a time when Jesus would return to redeem the faithful and judge the wicked (cf. Luke 21:25; Is. 13:10; 34:4). These signs and wonders would precede "the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord" (Acts 2:20) that seems to clearly show their eschatological significance. Menzies (1989) has rightly commented that in Luke-Acts the end times were not first signaled by the Pentecostal phenomena, but instead extended "from the miraculous events associated with the birth and ministry of Jesus to the cosmic portents yet to come and heralds the imminent arrival of the day of the Lord" (221).

This all-encompassing interpretation of Peter's use of "signs and wonders" in the Pentecost sermon finds further support in Peter's explanation of Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus was accredited by signs, wonders, and power. The power was the same as that promised to the disciples (Acts 1:8) and that Jesus was reported to have had in Luke 4:14. Jesus' works of power, signs, and wonders presumably included His healings, exorcisms, and resurrection of the dead. These were things the crowd would have heard about (Acts 2:25). Jesus' signs and wonders probably did not include His resurrection or ascension because the crowd knew nothing yet of those events. Jesus performed the works of the prophet and Christ and was put to death by the people according to God's purposes. But Jesus rose from the grave according to prophecy and ascended into heaven, thereby

sending His disciples the promised Holy Spirit. God made the crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ (v. 36).

The precedent that was set in this text was the description of belief in miracles, signs, and wonders as God's accreditation of Jesus. God revealed and proved Jesus' anointing through His miraculous ministry. This was a positive confirmation from God concerning Jesus and was explicitly identified by Peter in his sermon (v. 22). The paradigm that was established in the text was Peter's (and subsequently Luke's) borrowing of LXX miracle terminology (the pairing of *terata* with *semeia*) in the description of Jesus' ministry and the end-time events. Luke continues to utilize this paradigm until Acts 15:12. This implicit paradigm seems to fit well with Luke's intended Hellenistic-Jewish-Christian audience. The program outlined in the text gives a description of the eschaton. The Spirit would be poured out on everyone that called on Jesus' name, and there would be supernatural events in heaven and on earth. The Christ would have His "day," and salvation would be given to all who were willing. This was a negative program of judgment on the unbelieving and unrepentant and a positive program of redemption and inclusion into the eschatological prophetic community for the believing and repentant. This program is explicit. The sun, moon, darkness, blood, fire, and smoke are all part of this program. The experience that the program outlines is one of judgment or redemption, depending on the reaction of the audience.

Peter's Pentecost sermon was pneumatically inspired (2:4) and was a call for repentance and action. As the crowd had witnessed the phenomena surrounding the coming of the Christ, so they now saw the phenomena surrounding the coming of the

Holy Spirit on all believers. Jesus' ongoing supernatural ministry through the disciples was further proof of His resurrection and ascension.

Luke intended to present the Pentecost sermon as a precedent-setting, paradigmatic, and programmatic summary of Peter's original speech. Luke greatly condensed Peter's sermon (v. 40) but still managed to retain the Hellenistic-Jewish flavor of the event. This narrative, along with Acts 3 and 4, makes up the core of Luke's presentation of signs and wonders theology. The centrality of Christ and the forceful yet elegant presentation of the kerygma are central to Luke's arrangement of the material, and Luke interprets later signs and wonders of the disciples through the paradigms and precedents that are established here (v. 43).

Acts 2:42–47: The Early Jerusalem Church

The eighth text fits the subgenre of the summary. In the analysis of the text, Luke's intent in the passage has been given primary focus, and the original intent of the event has been given secondary focus. The purpose of Luke's summary of the early disciples' supernatural ministry centered on the veracity of what the disciples taught concerning Christ and the end times (Acts 2:19, 22, 42) and the validity of the disciples' ministries as Spirit-empowered prophets like Jesus. The subpurpose of the text was to set a precedent and to establish a paradigm.

The teaching of the apostles (v. 42) was presumably the kerygma. Another two aspects of early ministry were fellowship and prayer, which were both precursors to signs and wonders in Jesus' life and the disciples' ministry. Everyone was filled with fear. In this context, fear seems to be the Christians' response to miraculous events, meaning the fear of God (5:11), but this might also be a reference to the fear of unbelievers (5:12–14).

The newly established community carved out the central actions of their faith—teaching the kerygma, fellowship, communion, prayer, signs and wonders, sharing, meeting and eating together, praising God, and evangelizing/discipling new people (2:42–47). This contrasts sharply with the days of Israel’s exodus (which is the location in the LXX where Luke derives his signs and wonders terminology), with the establishment of a community of prophets instead of a nation of unbelievers and complainers (Acts 2:17–18; 4:29–31; 5:12, 15–16; 7:36–39).

The precedent that was set in this text was the description of the apostles’ behavior of performing signs and wonders. This was a positive precedent and was implicit (the text does not explicitly say that the apostles would always be able to do the same kinds of miracles, but instead describes their behavior as exemplary and later records similar events). Following their empowerment by the Holy Spirit, the apostles could now be prophets like Jesus. The paradigm that was established in the text was the behavior and experience of the disciples (in performing signs and wonders) and the belief in ongoing supernatural ministry. This positive paradigm was implied in Luke’s repetition of this formulaic transitional summary and was similar to Old Testament historians’ recording of paradigmatic kingships (cf. 2 Chron. 17:3–6).

Luke seems to have intended these paradigmatic transitional summaries to instruct his readers about the behavior, experience, and belief of the early Christians. He must have intended their examples to be emulated by his readers, in the fulfillment of the Great Commission, or these details would serve no purpose except as historical oddities. Luke’s summaries are concentrations of what he feels are important and useful for later readers. It seems that Luke intended for his audience to grasp the importance of signs and

wonders (and their relationship to the kerygma) in the expansion of Christianity throughout the earth. The original results of the apostles' signs and wonders were fear, community, praise, and the expansion of the church. These are all recurring themes surrounding miraculous events in Luke-Acts (Acts 4:1–22, 23–31; 5:12–16; 14:1–3; 15:12; 19:17–20). Signs, wonders, and acts of power continue to be central to Luke's understanding of church ministry in Acts.

Acts 4:1–22: Peter and John Heal a Crippled Man

The ninth text is a mixed subgenre. In the portions of the text that fit the subgenre of explanatory dialogue (particularly v. 16), the original intent of the event has been given primary attention, and Luke's intents in the passage have been given secondary attention. In the portions of the text that fit the subgenre of explanatory aside (particularly v. 22), Luke's intents in the passage have been given primary attention, and the original intent of the event has been given secondary attention. The purpose of the passage seems to center on the value of gospel ministry (i.e., "kindness shown to a cripple," v. 9), and the validity of the life, death and resurrection, and ascension of Jesus (3:12–21; 4:10–12). The subpurpose of the text was to establish a paradigm.

Everyone in Jerusalem knew that the apostles had performed the sign of healing a crippled man, and the temple crowd praised God for the event (4:16, 21). This sign, Peter claimed, was performed in the "name" and "power" of the risen Christ. The Sanhedrin later forbade the apostles to speak or teach in Jesus' name (in order to stop the influence of the sign, vv. 17–18). Peter and John replied that they could not help speaking about what they had seen and heard (the kerygma, cf. Luke 24:46–49). What the apostles had seen and heard was the content of Luke's first volume (Luke 1:1–4; 24:19; Acts 1:1). In

Acts 3, Peter presented the kerygma as the basis and power of the sign (and again in 4:10–12). The Jewish leaders were convinced of the healing, referred to it as a sign, and could not deny it because they had seen its validity before their very eyes (v. 14). They would not deny the sign, but they would not accept it either, and because of popular assent to the sign of healing, they could not decide how to punish the disciples.

The paradigm that was established in the text was the nature and manner of the apostles' supernatural ministry. Peter and John performed a sign in Jesus' name, and by the power of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and ascension (3:6, 12–16, 22, 26; 4:7, 10, 12, 17, 18, 20). The apostles believed in the accompaniment of signs in their kerygmatic ministries and behaved like true prophets (by healing the sick, staying true to God in the face of rejection and opposition, and preaching God's message). The witnesses of the sign (including the man who was healed) experienced a supernatural occurrence that gave them a choice—to believe, listen to Peter's message, and repent, or to remain stubborn, not listen, and oppose the apostles' ministry and message. This positive paradigm is the implied example for Luke of what a sign looks like in the apostles' ministries, and what kinds of belief, behavior, and experiences should (and should not) accompany these types of events.

Luke spells out the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the sign that took place and continues to report similar miracles and preaching all the way to the end of Acts. Luke explains that the healing could not be denied or ignored, but it could be opposed and rejected. Luke presents the reader with a foil—while the people believed and many were saved (v. 4), the Jewish authorities accepted the sign value of the healing, but refused to believe and were shown to be fools for not accepting the message that

accompanied the sign. The Jewish authorities would not own up to what their own eyes and ears accepted as true, that the apostles were empowered by God and Jesus was indeed the Christ and risen Lord. As a result of the Jewish leaders' opposition and rejection of the apostles' message, the believers later prayed for further signs and wonders to be performed in Jesus' name (v. 30).

Acts 4:23–31: The Prayer of the Disciples

The tenth text fits the subgenre of explanatory dialogue. In the analysis of the text, the original intent of the event has been given primary focus, and Luke's intents in the passage have been given secondary focus. The purpose of the disciples' prayer was to petition God to prove the veracity of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (Acts 4:25–29, 33) by the bold and empowered witnessing of the apostles. The subpurpose of the text was to present a precedent and a paradigm.

Directly after the incident with the healing of the crippled man and the opposition and warnings of the Sanhedrin, the disciples prayed for the Lord to “consider their threats” (vv. 17, 21). Jesus was God's “holy Servant” that was anointed, and so also the disciples (as God's “servants,” v. 29) prayed for enablement, boldness, and the hand of God (the source of healing, signs, and wonders, which were performed by the name of God's “holy Servant Jesus,” v. 30). Several central words from the passage are *Lord*, *anointed*, *servant*, *boldness*, *Jerusalem*, *holy*, *Spirit*, *prayer*, and *God*. By God's plan, Jerusalem's leaders attempted to silence the Christ, and now they were persecuting and attempting to silence the disciples' witness (both their divinely inspired words and their divinely empowered works of signs and wonders).

The precedent that was set in this text was the description of the disciples' behavior of praying for the ability to perform (and experience) signs and wonders. The disciples prayed for signs and wonders because they believed that God's will for them was to be bold and powerful witnesses. This positive precedent was an implied example for later believers (who also faced persecution and opposition and needed boldness for witnessing). The paradigm that is established in the text is the centrality of signs and wonders in empowered witnessing. The disciples obviously believed that they needed to perform signs and wonders and that God would empower them to do so in order to witness of Christ, because the disciples prayed for this to happen (unless one is to discount the entire account as a product of Luke's imagination, in which case the paradigm remains as a didactic narrative for later readers). The disciples' behavior of praying for signs and wonders is closely followed by their experience of Spirit-filling and boldness in witnessing (v. 31). This positive paradigm is implied in Luke's selection and arrangement of the material.

The disciples' prayer marked an important turn of events for the disciples. The rejection and opposition they faced were the same as Jesus faced, and they responded with bold prayer, followed by bold witnessing (vv. 31, 33). The disciples (and more importantly, the gospel) could not be stopped if God's hand was truly with them (v. 30). Luke seems to have chosen this material to highlight the prophetic character of the disciples' ministry. His attention to miracles, preaching, call to repentance, rejection and opposition, prayer, and signs and wonders all point to a typological parallelism between the ministries of Moses, Jesus, the Jerusalem apostles, Stephen, Philip, Paul, and Barnabas (2:1–41, 42–47; 6:8–10; 7:35–39; 8:5–13; 14:1–3; 15:12). Luke arranges his

material in this episode in a way that highlights the strong relationship between the ministry of the word and the ministry of the “works” (i.e., healings, signs, and wonders). This holistic approach to ministry resulted in greater Christian unity, greater persecution, and eventually the dispersion of the believers into the surrounding regions (4:32–35; 5:17–42; 8:1, 4).

Acts 5:12–16: The Ministry of the Apostles

The eleventh text fits the subgenre of summary. In the analysis of the text, Luke’s intents in the passage have been given primary focus, and the original intent of the event has been given secondary focus. The purpose of the summary centered on the validity of belief in the Lord, the value of the gospel (in healing and release from demon possession), and the veracity of the gospel message (God continued to do through the apostles what He had done through Christ). The subpurpose of the text was to present a precedent for performing signs and wonders in the face of opposition.

After the Jerusalem believers prayed for the “hand” (*ceira*) of God to perform signs and wonders (Acts 4:30), signs and wonders were performed at the “hands” (*ceiron*) of the apostles (5:12). The believers were meeting in Solomon’s Colonnade (5:12) where Peter’s sermon had taken place after the healing of the crippled man (3:11–12). This was in direct and public defiance of the Sanhedrin’s earlier warnings (4:18, 21). From the Temple Mount, the miracles spread even to the streets of Jerusalem (5:15) and attracted crowds from towns surrounding Jerusalem (v. 16), thus spreading the message of Jesus, drawing people to the temple and Jerusalem to come into contact with God’s power. The signs and wonders in this text are associated with the apostles’ healing

of the sick and demon possessed (vv. 15–16), and perhaps even the Ananias and Sapphira affair (divine judgment) (cf. 5:5, 11–12).

The precedent that was set in the text was the description of the disciples performing signs and wonders in the face of opposition. This rejection and opposition followed the pattern of Jesus (2:22–23; 4:18, 21, 25–30). The disciples had prayed earlier for the ability to perform signs and wonders in the face of opposition (4:23–31), and now God answered their prayers. Heavier persecution broke out in Jerusalem against the believers immediately following the widespread signs and wonders of the apostles in Jerusalem (5:17–41), but even this greater persecution failed to deter them from God's purposes (vv. 38–39, 42). This positive precedent is implied.

Luke seems to intend to present the signs and wonders of the early Jerusalem apostles as associated with the preaching of the gospel (5:14, 28, 40, 42). The disciples were witnesses of the life, death and resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, and so was the Holy Spirit that God had given them. The disciples' divine source of purpose and activity was shown by their continually successful efforts at evangelization and discipleship across the Roman Empire (vv. 38–39). The apostles' signs and wonders caused many of the people of Jerusalem to highly regard the believers, and many others believed in the Lord and became Christians (vv. 13–14). Many were healed from sickness and demon possession, and these miracles, accompanied by the disciples' bold preaching of the gospel, made the Sadducees jealous and the Sanhedrin furiously murderous (v. 17). This is the last time that the Jerusalem apostles were recorded as having performed signs and wonders, probably because the focus in Acts immediately changed to the ministries of the

Hellenistic Jews (particularly Stephen, Philip, Paul, and Barnabas) among the Judeans, Samaritans, and later the Greeks and Romans.

Acts 6:8–10: The Ministry of Stephen

The twelfth text fits the subgenre of summary. In the analysis of the text, Luke's intents in the passage have been given primary focus, and the original intent of the event has been given secondary focus. The purpose of the summary centered on the validity of the gospel, specifically in the prophetic ministry of Stephen (cf. 6:8; 7:35–39). The subpurpose of the text was to present a precedent concerning the supernatural ministry of a Grecian Jew that was not an apostle.

Stephen's signs and wonders were said to be "great" (*megala*). Stephen was "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (6:3), "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (v. 5), and "full of God's grace and power" (v. 8). The Holy Spirit empowered him to perform signs and wonders (v. 8). Stephen's ministry (and the ministries of the other seven Grecian Jewish leaders) seems to have spread from the priestly class to a wide variety of former slaves from all over the Empire (vv. 7–8). Stephen's ministry was exceptionally powerful, and so also was the opposition that arose against it.

The precedent that was set in the text was the description of the behavior and experience of the Grecian Jew Stephen. He was not an apostle, yet he was a Spirit-filled prophet who performed signs and wonders in the manner of Moses, Jesus, and the apostles before him. The apostles had laid hands on Stephen and the other six Grecian Jewish leaders and prayed for them in their commission to help the Grecian Jewish widows, but Stephen is said to have been full of the Holy Spirit before his commissioning

(vv. 3, 5). He derived his prophetic ministry not from the apostles, but from God. This positive precedent is implied.

Luke's intentions are apparent in the details and repetition of the narrative. Three times Stephen is said to be "full" of two things (the Spirit and wisdom, v. 3; faith and the Holy Spirit, v. 5; and God's grace and power, v. 8). Luke impresses the reader with Stephen's divine empowerment and enablement. The miracles Stephen performed are said to be "great" (v. 8), like the miracles of the early Jerusalem apostles (4:33). While his opponents accused him of speaking blasphemy against Moses and God, Stephen is clearly presented as being in the tradition of prophets like Moses (cf. 6:8; 7:36).

Opposition arose as a result of Stephen's signs and wonders, and this opposition led to further Spirit-empowered preaching by Stephen (6:10). The people, the elders, the teachers of the Law, and the Sanhedrin all joined in opposing Stephen and his message (v. 12). Stephen's martyrdom, and the following persecution of the church, caused the scattering of gospel ministry to new parts of the world, including Philip's supernatural ministry in Samaria (8:1–25).

Acts 7:35–39: The Ministry of Moses

The thirteenth text fits the subgenre of explanatory dialogue. In the analysis of the text, the original intent of the event has been given primary focus, and Luke's intents in the passage have been given secondary focus. The purpose of Stephen's explanation of Moses' ministry centered on the validity of Moses' leadership, the value of Moses' prophethood, and the veracity of Moses' claims to have received his ministry from God. Moses was seen as the typological prophet who was the forerunner of the Christ (Acts 7:37), making Stephen's comments concerning the value, validity, and veracity of Moses'

prophetic ministry an apologetic of Jesus' prophetic and messianic ministry. The subpurpose of the text was to establish a paradigm concerning prophethood.

“This is that Moses” (v. 37) is a *Pesher* interpretation by Stephen, relating Moses' signs and wonders (v. 36) to Jesus' prophethood (v. 37), and ultimately to Moses' reception of “living words” from God (v. 38). Moses' prophetic ministry closely parallels Stephen's own signs and wonders and Spirit-inspired words (6:8, 10). Moses was sent by God to rule and deliver Israel (7:35) as Christ was later sent to rule and deliver His people. Stephen mentioned the Lord's angel with reference to the burning bush (vv. 35, 38) and the Law (v. 53). The Israelites ultimately ignored both angelic visits, though the angels brought God's messages. In a similar vein, Stephen, with the face of an angel (6:15), spoke God's message to the Sanhedrin and was ignored and killed. Stephen's sermon addressed the stiff-necked attitude of God's people throughout Israel's history, in their resistance of the Holy Spirit, persecution of the prophets, and murder of the Christ (the great prophet like Moses, vv. 51–52). True to form, the leaders of the Sanhedrin murdered Stephen, a prophet of God, and like Moses and Christ before him, Stephen had mercy on his opponents (Ex. 34:9; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60).

The paradigm that is established in the text is Stephen's description of Moses' prophetic ministry and Jewish rejection and opposition. Stephen reveals the paradigmatic behavior of prophets (in listening to and obeying God, performing signs and wonders, and bringing God's message to His people despite persecution and rejection). This positive paradigm of prophetic ministry is contrasted with the negative response of the Israelites to prophets throughout the ages. The paradigm is explicitly referred to in

verse 37, which parallels the prophetic ministry of Moses (including signs and wonders, Acts 7:36) with that of the promised Christ.

Moses' signs and wonders (i.e., the parting of the Red Sea, v. 36; the plagues in Egypt, and God's miraculous provision of food, water, and protection in the desert, Deut. 29:3) were part of his validation as a prophet from God. After forty years of witnessing the signs and wonders, the people of Israel continued in their stubborn disobedience to God and rejection of His prophet (7:39–43). It was this same Moses that prophesied concerning Christ's prophetic ministry (v. 37). Luke's recording of Stephen's sermon is thoroughly Septuagintal in terminology (i.e., the "signs and wonders" of Moses), loose paraphrases (cf. 7:37; Deut. 18:15), and details (i.e., seventy-five people went to Egypt with Jacob in the Septuagint, instead of seventy as in the Hebrew text) (Foster 1995, 1658n7:14). Luke seems to be presenting a Hellenistic Jewish defense of Christ's ministry, including the signs and wonders of Moses as part of that apologetic. As Moses' and Jesus' prophetic supernatural ministries were rejected, so also was Stephen's (Acts 7:57–60).

Acts 8:5–13: The Ministry of Philip

The fourteenth text fits the subgenre of summary. In the analysis of the text, Luke's intents in the passage have been given primary focus, and the original intent of the event has been given secondary focus. The purpose of Luke's summary of Philip's supernatural ministry centered on the value of the kerygma (in healing paralytics, cripples, and demon-possessed people, Acts 8:7), the validity of Philip's message (v. 6), and the veracity of Christocentric supernatural ministry (contrasted with the self-centered

sorcery of Simon, vv. 9–13). The subpurpose of the text was to present two separate precedents.

When Philip proclaimed the Messiah in Samaria (v. 5), crowds gathered together (a common reaction to miracles) to hear Philip and see the signs that were done. This twofold approach (preaching Christ and performing signs like Christ) gathered attention and belief in Christ. The miracles in verse seven were undeniable signs of spiritual power—visible and audible (v. 13). The people of Samaria’s response to the good news accompanied by miracles was joy (as predicted by the angel of God to the shepherds in an earlier sign narrative, Luke 2:10).

Philip encountered a roadblock to the gospel in his ministry. A man named Simon practiced magic in Samaria and caused the whole nation of Samaria to wonder (*existemi*, Luke’s secondary term for wonder), proclaiming himself “great” (Acts 8:9). Simon convinced everyone (both small and great) that he was the power of God that is called “great.” Even great people (v. 10) acknowledged Simon’s ultimate greatness because of his spiritual power. The people followed Simon because his magic made them wonder (the second time *existemi* is used in reference to Simon). Philip came to the area, and his message and supernatural ministry brought many people (including Simon) to believe in Christ and be baptized, and Simon wondered (the third occurrence of *existemi* in this passage) at the signs and “great power” that Philip performed (v. 13).

Philip’s preaching and supernatural ministry brought joy to the people (v. 8). They were formerly under the sway of Simon, but when Philip preached the gospel concerning the kingdom of God and Jesus’ name, they believed and were baptized. Simon is said to have believed and was baptized in the same way. Simon clung to Philip

because he (the great astonisher) was greatly astonished at the miracles performed by Philip (v. 13). Later, Simon offered the apostles money for the ability to impart the Holy Spirit to people, and Peter said that Simon had no part in their ministry, because Simon's heart was wrong, and he needed to repent and pray to the Lord, for he was "full of bitterness and captive to sin" (8:23).

The first precedent that is set in this text is the description of Simon's power encounter and Philip's power evangelism. Comparisons were made of Simon's sorcery and Philip's supernatural ministry and message, and God's prophet was shown to be superior. This encounter was positive (it led to the salvation of many Samaritans, including Simon) and seems to be an implicit example for later encounters (cf. 8:11–12; 13:8–12). The second precedent is a description of the behavior of a nonapostle (Philip) performing signs and wonders outside of Jerusalem and Judea as a central part of his ministry. This extension of signs and wonders accompanies the preaching of the gospel into all the earth, following the progression of the book of Acts (1:8). The precedent is positive and is implied in Luke's selection of the material and extensive portrayal of Philip as a cross-cultural prophet (8:26–40).

Luke seems to intend to present a second nonapostle in a prophetic role performing miracles and preaching the gospel in new areas. Philip's supernatural ministry (and thus the message also) is shown to be more powerful than the magic of Simon. Luke makes this clear through his repetitious use of *existemi* and his contrast between Simon's self-proclaimed greatness and Philip's great Christocentric signs. The evangelization of the Samaritans apparently followed a socially acceptable pattern—Philip's message was accompanied by great miracles. This was how Simon had earlier amazed the Samaritans,

and how Philip showed all the people that God's kingdom was more powerful than any magician. Supernatural verification of Philip's message made the people pay attention to the good news, and obedience to the good news saved them (vv. 6, 12–13). Later, Paul and Barnabas performed similar signs and wonders among the Gentiles (14:1–3), and this supernatural ministry was used as a verification of God's inclusion of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God (15:12). In Samaria, the people's acceptance of God's Word was verified by their response to Philip's ministry and their filling with the Spirit under John and Peter's pneumatic ministry (8:14–25).

Acts 14:1–3: The Ministry of Paul and Barnabas

The fifteenth text fits the subgenre of summary. In the analysis of the text, Luke's intents in the passage have been given primary focus, and the original intent of the event has been given secondary focus. The purpose of the summary concerning Paul and Barnabas' ministry in Iconium centered on the validity of the apostles' message (the kerygma, Acts 14:3). The subpurpose of the text was to set a precedent, establish a paradigm, and present a program.

God bore witness or testified to (*marturio*, NIV "confirmed") his Word of grace (i.e., the good news, v. 7) by enabling signs and wonders to come to pass by the hands of the apostles (note that Paul and Barnabas are spoken of as apostles in verse 4). In response to Paul and Barnabas' supernatural ministry and message, many Jews and Gentiles believed, and other Jews and Gentiles disbelieved. Here the contrast is not between Jews and Gentiles, but between belief and unbelief (vv. 1, 2, 4, 5).

The precedent that was set in the text was the description that the Gentiles were reached with the gospel that was confirmed by signs and wonders. The Gentiles

experienced the value, validity, and veracity of God's Word through the apostles' behavior (bold preaching and performing signs and wonders). This positive precedent was implicit in the text and was made explicit in Acts 15:12. The paradigm that was established in the text was God's confirmation of His witnesses' words by witnessing to the truth using signs and wonders. God's signs and wonders were used here as an apologetic of the gospel that was preached by Paul and Barnabas. This positive paradigm patterned Jesus' own supernatural ministry (2:22) and is explicitly stated by Luke (14:3). The positive program that is implied in the text is the behavior and experience of the disciples and Gentiles in the mission to the Gentiles. This summary functions as a program for Paul and Barnabas' supernatural ministry among the Gentiles (cf. 15:12), perhaps including the healing of the lame man in Lystra (14:8–10) and Saul's recovery from stoning (vv. 19–20; 15:26). The apostles would preach the gospel to the Jews and Gentiles in each city, and signs and wonders would accompany their preaching. This narrative serves as an outline for the ministry of the apostles among the Gentiles. Acts 15:12 reports this program's fulfillment (at least partially).

Luke intends to present this summary as another step in the gospel's expansion to the nations and as another example of the prophetic words and deeds of God's prophets. Paul and Barnabas preached boldly, but it was not only their words or actions that brought people to believe but rather God's words of grace (the kerygma) and God's enablement to perform signs and wonders that resulted in belief and opposition (and later rejection). The kingdom of God, the end times, and the Age of the Spirit had come to the Gentiles in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:17–21).

Acts 15:12: Paul and Barnabas' Ministry to the Gentiles

The sixteenth (and last) text that refers to signs and wonders in Luke-Acts fits the subgenre of summary. In the analysis of the text, the original intent of the event has been given primary focus, and Luke's intents in the passage have been given secondary focus. The purpose of Paul and Barnabas' words at the Jerusalem Council was to show the validity of Gentile ministry and the veracity of God's will concerning the Gentiles' salvation. The subpurpose of the text was to refer back to the precedent and program of Acts 14:3 (because this precedent and program were analyzed earlier, they are not discussed further here).

It was ultimately God who performed the signs and wonders (15:12) that revealed His plan concerning salvation and the Gentiles (apparently Paul and Barnabas saw signs and wonders as powerful validations of the gospel's truth). God used Barnabas and Paul to perform these miracles. Note the prominence of Barnabas' name before Paul's. This was a convention that was discontinued by Luke after Paul confronted Elymas the sorcerer on Cyprus (13:9, 13, 16, 42, 43, 46, 50; 14:1, 3, 9, 11, 12, 19, 20, 23; 15:12) with the exception of two times at Lystra, where it was Barnabas' name who was again given prominence (14:12, 14). Barnabas was probably more familiar with the Jerusalem believers and so was perhaps given importance over Paul at the Jerusalem Council (Foster 1995, 1677n15:12). After Peter had argued convincingly for the equality of the Jews and Gentiles before God, the believers were all silent. At this moment, Barnabas and Paul testified to what God had done through them among the Gentiles. When they were silent, James began to speak about the biblical precedent for inclusion of the Gentiles into the community of believers. Note that Barnabas and Paul were not said to

have spoken about the salvation of the Gentiles (cf. 15:3, 12), but merely the signs and wonders performed among them (perhaps the resulting salvation is implied). Peter had already testified concerning the Gentiles' salvation and pneumatic empowerment, and Barnabas and Paul's message concerned supernatural ministry among the Gentiles, seeming to point to the fact that this was another part of the argument for the Gentiles' inclusion into God's plans for world evangelization.

Perhaps Luke does not intend to be redundant at this point by recording Barnabas and Paul's successes among the Gentiles in the areas of conversion and empowerment. One thing is certain—Luke focuses in on the precedent of supernatural ministry among the Gentiles as a key to understanding the Jewish-Gentile problem that was partially resolved at the Jerusalem Council. It is also apparent from the Council's choice of delegates to spread the decision of the Council to the Gentiles that Barnabas and Paul's Gentile ministry was well received and approved of at the Council (15:22, 26).

Although Acts 15:12 is the last of the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts, Luke continues to record many miracles (e.g., 16:18, 26; 19:11–12; 20:9–12; 28:2–6, 8–9), but no longer refers to them as signs or wonders. Perhaps this is because he has already established twice that Paul (who is at the center of the action in the rest of the book) worked signs and wonders in his ministry (14:3; 15:12) and did not want to repeat this a third time. It could also be that, with the disappearance of Luke's Septuagintal terminology in the rest of the book, his Septuagintal signs and wonders terminology becomes no longer appropriate in the wider Greco-Roman context (as opposed to the mainly Hellenistic-Jewish context in the first fifteen chapters of Acts). Luke takes the reader from the sign of Jesus' birth and the announcement of the good news to the

shepherds (Luke 2:12) to the signs and wonders of the apostles and the spread of the good news into all the world.

Summary of the Findings

The signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts are full of precedents, paradigms, and programs that reveal the apologetic nature and purpose of signs and wonders and signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts. Three negative precedents were found in Luke (11:14–20, 29–32; 23:8–11) that revealed unbelief in Jesus' messianic and divine ministry. Of the thirteen precedents that were identified in the texts, four of them seemed to be explicit in their intentionality of precedence, and nine seemed to be implicit. Every precedent in the Gospel of Luke centered on belief, while in Acts only three precedents centered on belief, eight focused on behavior, and six focused on experience. None of the precedents, paradigms, or programs identified in the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts focused on morals. Luke uses precedents in the signs and wonders narratives to establish the validity of Jesus' messianic ministry and the prophetic ministries of the disciples. He seems to deliberately repeat these precedents in order to instruct later readers on the importance of supernatural ministry in the presentation/defense of the gospel.

In Luke, the paradigmatic sign narratives pointed mainly to Jesus as a prophetic sign (following the Old Testament sign motif), while in Acts, the paradigmatic signs and wonders narratives pointed mainly to the signs and wonders as confirmations of Jesus' (and his disciples') prophetic ministry, and were in the context of a more thoroughly developed presentation of the kerygma. In Peter's Pentecost sermon, there was an implied parallelism (made apparent in the Septuagintal Mosaic signs and wonders terminology)

between the paradigmatic messianic ministry of Jesus and the earlier ministry of Moses (Acts 2:22). This parallel was made explicit later in Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin (7:35–39). Jesus' paradigmatic supernatural ministry (2:22) was carried on by his successors (2:42–47). All eight of the paradigmatic signs and wonders narratives took place in the context of a formal apologetic or presentation of Christ's life, death and resurrection, and ascension (Luke 2:8–12, 34–35; Acts 2:1–41, 42–47; 4:1–22, 23–31; 7:35–39; 14:1–3). All of the paradigmatic passages except Acts 2:42–47 pointed to the importance of a positive response to the kerygma. Four of the paradigms were explicit, and four of the paradigms were implied. Five of the paradigms focused on belief, seven focused on behavior, and only three focused on experience. Belief usually centered on Jesus as the Christ.

All five of the programs focused on belief, behavior, and experience (Luke 11:29–32; 21:5–36; Acts 2:1–41; 14:1–3; 15:12). All of the programs were explicit except Acts 14:1–3. The implied program in Acts 14:1–3 (that Paul and Barnabas' gospel ministry among the Gentiles would be accompanied by signs and wonders) was reiterated and made explicit in 15:12. Each of the programs revealed a choice. The people who experienced the power of Jesus (often in signs and wonders) were required to choose to believe and act on what they saw and heard, or they would face judgment. This coincided with Jesus' kingdom eschatology, which offered either blessings or judgments depending upon one's response. Acts 2:19–20 seems to act as the central program in Luke-Acts and makes this eschatological decision clear. Programmatic signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts pointed to the eschatological choice that must follow signs and wonders. If Jesus is the Christ (as proven by signs and wonders), and if He was empowered by God

to bring God's salvation and judgment to the world (often in the form of signs and wonders), then the person who witnesses Jesus' (or his disciples') signs and wonders must put faith in Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and ascension, and "call on the name of the Lord" to be saved from "this corrupt generation" (2:21, 40).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Review of Findings

The three research questions of the current study focused on apologetics. First, is there a consistent pattern in Luke-Acts for the use of signs and wonders as an apologetic for the Christian faith (i.e., did signs and wonders have an apologetic purpose in the original events)? Second, are the signs and wonders in Luke-Acts intended to be an apologetic for Luke's readers (i.e., does Luke intentionally argue for Christianity by recording signs and wonders)? Third, does Luke intentionally present a paradigm of supernatural apologetics (i.e., is Luke's supernatural apologetic intended to be transferred to contemporary apologetic ministry)? These three research questions were answered by an analysis of all of Luke's signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts that used Luke's primary terms for signs and wonders (*semeia* and *terata*). The findings were divided into patterns (which were identified, analyzed, and presented in five separate tables) and precedents, paradigms, and programs (which were presented in diachronic exegeses of the texts).

The patterns in the signs and wonders narratives of Luke-Acts revealed forceful Lucan and original emphases on Christocentrism, apologetics, eschatology, and prophetic ministry. Every signs and wonders narrative in Acts described the supernatural ministry of a typological prophet. Central characters in Luke-Acts extensively used signs and

wonders as an apologetic. Luke uses signs and wonders as a powerful defense of the gospel (though they often resulted in persecution and rejection). Supernatural ministry was presented as a God-empowered corollary of the gospel message.

Jesus' identity as God or the Messiah was defended in all but three of the signs and wonders narratives (making it the strongest pattern in all of the narratives). This fact, coupled with the extensive use of explanatory dialogues in these narratives, argues for a strong relationship between preaching the gospel and performing signs and wonders. Almost as strong was Luke's own creative interpretation of the events in his summaries, which make up a large bulk of the remaining narratives. Acts 2:1–41 and 4:1–22 were found to be at the center of Luke's signs and wonders theology. Luke seemed to have intended signs and wonders to be part of an apologetic of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and ascension, and this is presented most clearly in the patterns that are evident in these two narratives. Luke seems to have derived this emphasis from the original intent of the events. The precedents, paradigms, and programs in the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts revealed similar conclusions.

The precedents, paradigms, and programs in the signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts revealed an emphasis on belief, behavior, and experiences, and centered on the value, validity, and veracity of the kerygma. The kerygma was able to save people from judgment, sickness, and demon possession. The miraculous events in the kerygma were shown to be true by the miraculous events that were performed by its defenders. Jesus was shown to be the messianic prophet in His life, death and resurrection, and ascension, through the powerful works that He (and later His disciples) performed. Jesus' miraculous ministry was ongoing in the ministries of His successors Peter, John, the

Jerusalem apostles, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, and Paul. In the following paragraphs, the strongest cases for Lucan and original apologetic intent in the signs and wonders narratives of Luke-Acts are identified and evaluated, in order to ascertain whether or not Luke intended to present a paradigm of supernatural apologetics.

In the Gospel of Luke, Herod sought a sign as a defense of Jesus' identity (23:8–11). Luke presented this in an explanatory aside, which was an indicator of Lucan intent (especially in this case where Luke's material differs from both Matthew and Mark). Though Herod's search for a sign was negative (it revealed his unbelief), the search for a sign occurred in the context of a defense of Jesus' identity (as if a sign were a valid means of identifying the Messiah). This pointed to Lucan intentionality concerning the apologetic nature and purpose of signs in Luke.

The sign that the angel gave the shepherds proved Jesus' identity (Luke 2:8–12). Simeon's prophecy concerning Jesus' ministry included that Jesus was to be the sign (2:34–35), and Jesus was explicitly presented in His own words as a sign like Jonah (11:29–32). All three of these Christocentric sign narratives occurred in explanatory dialogues, revealing the original intent of the signs as pointing to (or being) Jesus.

In Acts, signs and wonders were explicitly said to have confirmed the ministries and message of Jesus, Philip, Paul, and Barnabas (2:22; 8:5; 14:3). Jesus' confirmation by signs and wonders was elucidated in an explanatory dialogue (revealing the original intent of the signs and wonders), and Philip, Paul, and Barnabas' messages were confirmed by signs and wonders in summaries (revealing Lucan intent). All three of these narratives explicitly revealed the relationship between the preaching of the word and the validation of the word by miracles. Jesus' ministry was said to have been accredited

(*apodeiknumi*) by signs and wonders. This same word was used by Luke in Acts 25:7 in a judicial sense. The Jews could not “prove” any of their charges against Paul before Festus. O’Reilly (1987) noted that *apodeiknumi* “in the sense of attesting or legitimating is rare in the Greek Bible,” making Luke’s usage significant and pointedly Hellenistic (179; Esther 3:13). Signs and wonders were evidence that helped to prove Jesus’ messianic and prophetic identity.

Stephen’s Moses-Jesus parallel occurred in an explanatory dialogue (showing Stephen’s original intent) that is part of an apologetic of the gospel and Stephen’s prophetic words and actions (including signs and wonders) (Acts 6:8; 7:35–39). The original intent of Stephen’s sermon (which included an account of the signs and wonders of Moses as validations of his ministry and pointers to the coming Messiah) was to defend the gospel against those who had seen the words and miracles of Jesus, but who had rejected and killed Him.

The disciples prayed for signs and wonders (4:23–31) in an explanatory dialogue (revealing original intent). This narrative revealed the purpose of signs and wonders—to point to the name of Jesus in the accompaniment of bold (and Spirit-inspired) preaching. God answered the prayers of the disciples and enabled them to perform signs and wonders (5:12–16). Luke recorded this in a summary (revealing Lucan intent) and the resulting signs and wonders must be understood as a confirmation of what the disciples believed concerning the relationship between preaching the kerygma and signs and wonders.

Signs and wonders in Luke-Acts defend the messianic and prophetic character of Jesus’ ministry, death and resurrection, and ascension. Signs and wonders were

historically apologetic, leading people to belief or rejection of the gospel. Luke used signs and wonders in his narratives to prove to his readers the value, validity, and veracity of the kerygma. Luke intended his signs and wonders narratives to be apologetic, and to be used as models for future supernatural apologetic ministry.

Implications

The existence of patterned, precedent-setting, paradigmatic, and programmatic elements in the signs and wonders narratives of Luke-Acts point to Luke's intentional establishment of a supernatural apologetic in his two-volume work. Luke intentionally presented a paradigm of supernatural apologetics. Two of the purposes of Luke's two-volume work were (1) to teach through historical narrative and (2) to defend the gospel and Christianity (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1). Luke's past teachings and apologetics have present applications for readers today. Luke's supernatural apologetic was intended to be transferred to the apologetic ministries of his contemporaries. Luke seems to have presented a powerful supernatural apologetic in order to teach his readers the normative manner of gospel dissemination. Each of Luke's main characters performs signs and wonders in their presentation and defense of the gospel. From the announcement of Jesus' birth to the Pauline ministry to the Gentiles of the nations, Luke presents signs and wonders as a corollary and defense of the kerygma.

There are no hints in Luke-Acts that Luke believed supernatural gospel ministry to be a phenomenon of the past. In fact, the opposite is true. Luke presents signs and wonders as evidences of the eschatological coming of the kingdom of God (Acts 2:1–41). This kingdom is still growing, and the end times are still upon the world; therefore, the signs and wonders of the eschatological kingdom of God should still be occurring in

contemporary gospel ministry. The present study has already touched on the existence and importance of contemporary supernatural apologetics, but several things should be said about the nature of contemporary supernatural apologetics in light of the present research.

A contemporary supernatural apologetic must be biblical. The prophetic words and actions of the Old Testament prophets (among whom Moses is perhaps the foremost), Jesus, Peter, John, the Jerusalem apostles, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, and Paul should serve as examples of the nature and purpose of signs and wonders. Contemporary signs and wonders must be Christocentric. Miracles that do not point to Christ are not signs or wonders (signs and wonders are always Christocentric in Luke's theology of supernatural apologetics). Contemporary signs and wonders must point to the eschatological kingdom of God. Miracles that do not present a choice between both belief and salvation on the one hand, and rejection and judgment on the other, are not signs and wonders. Contemporary signs and wonders must be soteriological in aim. Miracles that do not bring (or point to) salvation from sin, sickness, or demon possession (while they may be interesting and necessary in their own right) are not signs and wonders. Contemporary signs and wonders should accompany the defense of the gospel. Miracles should be seen in their apologetic light, as powerful presentations of the value, validity, and veracity of the kerygma.

While the terms *signs* and *wonders* are Hellenistic-Jewish in origin, the ideas that they convey are still useful in contemporary apologetics. The Septuagintal-Lucan terminology may be antiquarian, but the usefulness of supernatural apologetics in contemporary missionary, evangelism, and apologetic ministry remains. Terms such as

power evangelism and *power encounter* have been coined in an effort to contemporize Luke's theology of supernatural apologetics, but the focus remains the same—on showing the value, validity, and veracity of Christ's life, death and resurrection, and ascension.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research on the apologetic nature and purpose of signs and wonders in Luke-Acts might include a broadening of the terminology that is studied. All six of Luke's terms for signs or wonders (*semeia*, *terata*, *thaumazo*, *existemi*, *ekplesso*, and *thambos*) could be analyzed in their contexts in Luke-Acts. A more thorough study could be done on each narrative. This would give the interpreter a wider context by which to understand Luke's theology of signs and wonders. A statistical analysis of Luke's vocabulary concerning supernatural events could be performed, utilizing quantitative methods of analysis, which would focus on the similarities and differences of each reference. The study could be enlarged to include every reference to the miraculous in the Lucan corpus (i.e., not limited to Luke's signs and wonders terminology). A study similar to Menzies' (1989) research on early Christian pneumatology might also be done on the effects of Luke's redactions of his sources on the resulting theology of supernatural apologetics in Luke-Acts. A study similar to the present research could be done focusing on the apologetic nature and purpose of signs and wonders in John's Gospel. The study might also be expanded to include all of the New Testament and Old Testament (LXX) references to signs and wonders.

Summary and Conclusion

This study focused on the existence of patterned, precedent-setting, paradigmatic, and programmatic elements in the signs and wonders narratives of Luke-Acts that reveal the intentional establishment of a supernatural apologetic in the two-volume work. Signs and wonders were used to argue for the value, validity, and veracity of Jesus' messianic and prophetic ministry, death and resurrection, and ascension. Sixteen narratives that include Luke's primary signs and wonders terminology (*semeia* and *terata*) were analyzed and evaluated using the four exegetical principles of a holistic hermeneutic: (a) presuppositions concerning intentionality and the role of experience, (b) exegetical and literary analysis, (c) biblical and theological synthesis, and (d) application/verification. Experiential presuppositions are valid and necessary to the interpreter's task in understanding signs and wonders narratives. Exegesis and explication require attention to Luke's authorial intent and the literary genre of signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts. A biblical and systematic theology of the signs and wonders narratives should center on the eschatological and Christocentric aspects of Luke's theology of miracles. The application/verification phase of the interpretation process in Luke-Acts should be focused on examples in the texts that intentionally establish normative beliefs, ethics, behavior, or experiences concerning signs and wonders.

Lucan historiography is complex, Hellenistic-Jewish, and fits the genre of the historical monograph. Luke had a multiplex purpose in writing his two volumes, but Luke-Acts retains a unified framework that follows the ethno-geographic progression of gospel ministry (which includes signs and wonders). Luke taught through examples, especially through repeated patterns, precedents, paradigms, and programs. Spirit

empowerment in Luke-Acts was closely tied to signs and wonders. God empowered Jesus and His disciples to perform signs and wonders and to live and preach the kerygma. Luke's miracle accounts closely followed those of Old Testament historians. Past research on signs and wonders narratives has shown that miracles and miracle stories were used in the New Testament to establish the validity of the kerygma. Signs and wonders were Christocentric, soteriological, eschatological, and were a part of the kerygma.

Luke-Acts was intentionally apologetic and was meant for Hellenistic (and perhaps Jewish) Christians. Luke revealed his apologetic intent in Luke-Acts through his selection and arrangement of material. Signs and wonders were an effective apologetic among first-century Jews. When compared to other ancient Greco-Roman historians, Luke's historiography is conservatively supernaturalistic. Luke's arrangement of the details in signs and wonders narratives would work well as Greco-Roman rhetorical/apologetic devices, particularly in the context of a speech or explanation.

There is great need for a contemporary theology of supernatural apologetics. Power encounters (public confrontations between the power of God and Satan) and power evangelism (healing, exorcisms, visions, and miracles) are biblically based tools of the modern apologist and missionary. Signs and wonders continue to lead people that are open to the supernatural world to evaluate the validity of Christianity and Christ's claims of divinity. Signs and wonders should be an important part of Christianity's contemporary presentation of the kerygma.

The findings reveal that the original intent of signs and wonders and the Lucan intent of the signs and wonders narratives were to prove the value, validity, and veracity

of the kerygma. The study concludes that contemporary signs and wonders should follow Luke's emphases on biblically based, Christocentric, eschatological, soteriological, and apologetic supernatural occurrences. Signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts reveal a realized eschatology that points to the fulfillment of God's promises in establishing His kingdom on earth and bringing salvation (spiritual, physical, and social) through Christ to individuals across ethnic and geographic barriers.

APPENDIX
PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF SIGNS AND WONDERS

As an interpreter of Biblical signs and wonders, my personal supernatural experiences are extremely important to my understandings of the texts. My youngest sister Jewel-Lee was born with the HIV virus, and after much prayer, she was miraculously healed from any traces of the deadly virus. While it is not unheard of that children may naturally rid HIV from their bodies, all of the other babies that were born with HIV in my sister's hospital ward that year died from HIV-related illnesses within the year. My second brother Alfonso was born with a muscle development disability, and was not given any hope of ever being able to walk, but was completely healed of this after prayer. My father had a large tumor in his brain that miraculously disappeared after prayer (MRI scans showed the presence and later the absence of the tumor). On two separate occasions I have prayed for women who could not have children. In one of the cases, the woman had had a hysterectomy, and was no longer able to conceive, but greatly desired to have a child. In the other case, a woman was proclaimed barren by medical doctors, but still wanted to bear a child. In both cases God answered our prayers and miraculously gave them children. In all of these cases medical professionals, friends, and family all wondered at the miracles, and were presented with the gospel.

When I was younger a missionary from Sri Lanka came to my church. His English was amazing, and even more amazing was the fact that he had never learned English, but spoke it with fluency purely by the power of the Holy Spirit. In my church, the youth pastor was praying one day and felt like God wanted him to minister on the piano. Having never taken lessons or even played on the instrument before, he sat down and miraculously played several worship songs. From then on he used his musical ability for worship, and when he attempted to play anything else, he found that he could not

(because he did not know how). During my last semester at Trinity Bible College, I discovered that I was in need of an additional seven hundred and fifty dollars to continue with my schooling (which I did not have). I prayed about the matter, and when I went to check on the bill, I was amazed to find that God had nudged someone to secretly pay my bill (though I had told only my parents and brother). Several years later my wife and I felt as if God was leading us to attend the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Grand Forks, North Dakota. We needed nearly three thousand dollars in order to begin our courses, but had no means of obtaining the money. The week before the bill had to be paid God miraculously met our need. Several months ago my wife and I felt like God wanted us to move to Indiana. We packed up and came to Bloomington, Indiana, without a prospective job, house, or church. God provided a nice affordable apartment the first day, and a great home church the second week. The very next week a staff position opened up in the church, and my wife has become the new youth minister. God still provides miraculously for the needs of those who seek the kingdom of God.

Two months ago my father (Pastor of Baseview Assembly of God, Emerado, North Dakota) assisted in an exorcism. A young woman was visiting the church, and when she began to scream and thrash and mutilate herself, my father and some other concerned Christians prayed for the girl, and she was freed from her oppression and later prayed to receive Christ. This event became a sign for those involved that God was more powerful than Satan and that God continued to empower His prophets in order to confirm His words. Contemporary experiences of signs and wonders are Christocentric and apologetic, and in many cases parallel signs and wonders narratives in Luke-Acts.

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