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, Blomburg, 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 Jordon (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) (Menzies 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). McInerny'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 McInerny, 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.